

## **HEADS OF SERVICE UPDATE**

This is a joint report prepared by Heads of Service. The report provides Operational Board Members with a general overview and update on current issues.

### **Head of Housing Management and Housing Options**

- **Local Housing Allowance 'Info-graphic'**

From 1 April 2018, the government is changing the way Housing Benefit (or the housing element of Universal Credit) is calculated. Tenants signing up to new tenancies from 1 April 2016 may be affected.

We have worked with colleagues within the Council to prepare and design a letter and info-graphic for customers to communicate these changes.

The letter and info-graphic is now available on our website and on the Homefinder website. We are also including copies in the next Derby Homes News. All new applicants for housing and all new Derby Homes tenants will receive a paper copy.

The changes are complex and not easy to absorb and we hope by preparing the info-graphic that we have been able to share this information with a wide range of people in a more accessible format.

Copies of both the letter and info-graphic will be made available at the Operational Board Meeting.

- **TPAS awards**

Derby Homes has won three awards in the central regional final of the TPAS Awards. The TPAS awards showcase the compelling and inspirational stories of the success of tenants, landlords and contractors working together to drive up standards in social housing.

We were recognised for excellence in the production of the Annual Report 2014/15 and for excellence in employment skills and training through the Apprenticeship Scheme. Kirsty Glover, Derby's Deputy Youth Mayor won the category for Young Tenant of the Year.

The TPAS awards are highly regarded in the sector and our successes demonstrate our commitment to customers and young people as well as the importance we place on creating real employment opportunities.

We will go on to the National final in Warwickshire on 14 July.

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# IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT YOUR HOUSING BENEFIT



From April 2018, the way Housing Benefit is calculated will **change**. Currently, Housing Benefit is calculated based on how much your rent is. In the future, it will be calculated based on **Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**. LHA is based on the number of bedrooms you are assessed as needing, not the size of your property.

If you start a tenancy on or after April 1st 2016, you need to think about whether you will be still able to afford your rent when the changes take place



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### APRIL 2016

If you **sign or renew a tenancy** on or after April 1st 2016, you will be affected by the changes.

### APRIL 2017

If you **sign or renew a supported tenancy** on or after April 1st 2017, you will be affected by the changes.

### APRIL 2018

Benefit changes come into force on **April 1st 2018**. The amount of benefit you receive may change.

## HOW WILL HOUSING BENEFIT BE CALCULATED?

At the moment your housing benefit is calculated against the rent due for your home. After **April 2018** it will be based on the Local Housing Allowance. The amount you can receive depends on the size of your household. LHA is based on the number of bedrooms you are assessed as needing, not on the number of bedrooms in the property.

**REMEMBER - IF YOU DO NOT  
PAY YOUR RENT YOU ARE AT  
RISK OF LOSING YOUR HOME**

### ONE BEDROOM IS ALLOCATED FOR:

- ☞ every adult couple
- ☞ every other adult aged 16 or over
- ☞ any two children regardless of gender under 10 years old
- ☞ any two children of the same gender under 16 years old
- ☞ any other child

## LHA AND THE UNDER-OCCUPANCY CHARGE

If you're classed as having a spare bedroom from April 2018, your benefit will be reduced by **either** the under-occupancy charge **or** the difference between your rent and the LHA, not both. Your benefit will be reduced by whichever is the largest.

## IF YOU ARE UNDER 35:

You are only entitled to receive the standard rate for a bedroom in **shared accommodation**. This shared rate will be based on properties where you have the use of **one bedroom** and where you share the use of one or more of:



A KITCHEN



A BATHROOM



A TOILET



A LIVING ROOM

## IF YOU ARE:

- ☞ Single and over 35
- ☞ A care leaver under 22
- ☞ A couple with no dependent children

You will be entitled to the rate for a **one bedroom property**.

## LHA RATES FOR

**2015/2016**



Shared Room rate	£58.82/week
One Bedroom	£84.75/week
Two Bedrooms (single or couple plus 1 or 2 children)	£103.56/week
Three Bedrooms	£117.70/week
Four Bedrooms (max)	£155.34/week

*Note: LHA rates are calculated over 52 weeks.  
Derby City Council rents are calculated over 48 weeks.  
Actual 52 week rent values are around 8% lower.*

## HOUSEHOLD EXAMPLES



**SINGLE PERSON  
UNDER 35  
ONE BED PROPERTY**

Rent and Service Charge =  
**£75 a week**  
Entitlement = shared rate  
**£58.82**  
Shortfall = **£16.18 a week**



**SINGLE PERSON  
OVER 35  
ONE BED PROPERTY**

Rent and Service Charge =  
**£75 a week**  
Entitlement = one bed  
**£84.75**  
Shortfall = **£nil**



**ADULT(S) & TWO  
CHILDREN UNDER 10,  
3 BED PROPERTY**

Rent and Service Charge =  
**£90 a week**  
Entitlement = **two bed**  
**£103.56**  
Shortfall = **£nil**



**COUPLE (ANY AGE)  
NO CHILDREN  
3 BED PROPERTY**

Rent and Service Charge =  
**£90 a week**  
Entitlement = **one bed**  
**£84.75**  
Shortfall = **£5.25 a week**

If you have any questions about benefit changes or are concerned about paying your rent, please contact Derby Homes on **01332 888777**

## **Head of Income Management & Advice**

- **Income Team**

### **Restructure/ Resources**

Following recruitment, we have successfully recruited 3 Income Recovery Officers (fulltime) and an Income Recovery Officer for Former Tenant Arrears and Sundry Debts. Due to posts being offered to internal applicants, we now have a further round of recruitment to complete to backfill these vacancies. We expect to have complete team for July 2016.

I will be going through the new structure at the Operational Board meeting.

### **Illegal Money Lending**

We are supporting the re-launch of the Illegal Money Lending service in the Derby area. Training has been arranged for a wide range of frontline staff during April and May and there will be a presentation at a staff briefing later this year. Articles went out in Derby Homes News and they will be attending a number of community events over the coming months. If any Operational Board members are interested in the training, please let me know.

### **Debt Collection**

We have prepared a tender document to outsource sundry debt collection in our search for a new debt collection agency. A new waiver has been agreed whilst we go out to tender. We expect the new contractor to be in place during Quarter 2. A dedicated officer has been recruited to work with the new contractor on all former tenants' arrears and sundry debt collection.

### **Tenant Profiling**

We have now received the profiling report that looks at tenant's financial capabilities, debts, rent arrears and access to digital services. This is broken down into estates and at street level so we can take our campaigns directly to the area where we know the issues exist.

### **Networking**

We continue to attend Housemark welfare reform as well as East and East Midlands best practice groups to learn from organisations who have been dealing with universal credit for the last couple of years and sharing best practice, building relations and working with DWP and JCP on universal credit challenges.

### **Rent Free Weeks**

Around 3000 letters went out to remind tenants in arrears to pay over the rent free weeks. This has contributed to the excellent year end out turn for income collection.

### **Money Advice, Income and Advice Surgeries**

These continue to be very well attended and working well in providing support to tenants who need advice and support on claiming housing benefit.

- **Rental Control Team**

### **Rent Variation**

All rent variation letters completed and sent out on time. This is a big job for the Rental Control Team during February, so well done to this team.

### **Payment cards**

There has been a backlog on payment cards being sent out to tenants due to a change in supplier, this has now been resolved and cards are being issued on schedule.

### **Contents Insurance Training**

In order to promote this scheme, we have planned a staff training day to be held on the 26 May 2016 and delivered by Thistle, our providers. Topics to be covered will include:

- Background of the scheme
- Perceived barriers from tenants as to why they do not have insurance
- The response to those perceived barriers and the benefits
- What the policies cover
- Benefits of insurance

Promotion of Contents Insurance continues through website, social media, Derby Homes News and at sign up of new tenancies.

If any Operational Board members are interested in the training, please let me know.

- **Derby Advice**

### **Derby Winter Nightshelter**

March has seen the final weeks of the Derby Winter Nightshelter. Welfare Rights Officers have been giving advice on benefits and basic financial capability skills to guests at the nightshelter each Wednesday morning since the beginning of November. The co-ordinator of the nightshelter has praised the knowledge and the caring/professional approach of Derby Advice staff.

### **Training**

Staff at Derby Advice have delivered a range of training session in benefits and money advice to staff at Derby City Council. These DCC staff will be receiving contacts from the Jobcentre work coaches who are working with new UC claimants. The aim is to raise the awareness and triaging skills of these staff so that they refer the claimants on to appropriate further support – particularly around budgeting skills.

### **Head of Repairs**

- **Day to Day**

At the end of February, performance in terms of 'repairs completed in time' are as follows:

- Emergencies – 100%
- Very urgent works – 99.77%
- Urgent works – 99.90%
- Routine works – 99.98%
- Planned works – 99.82%

Performance at the end of February is pleasing with all priorities on or above target except for planned works. Although we have only missed one job this month on the planned works priority we are likely to finish the year just off target. This is due to periods of inclement weather that have caused delays to our planned works teams such as roofers and fencers. This combined with the very challenging target of 99.95% which only allows us to only miss 2 jobs in the full year.

The 'appointments kept' target ended the month at 99.86% against a target of 99.75%.

Tenant satisfaction with repairs remains high and well above target at 99.64% for the month of February.

There has been some progress with the implementation of the Tablet PC's. A number of issues have been resolved which has allowed us to trial a tablet with one of our electricians on the live system. Subject to the live testing being successful we will be rolling out more tablets to our operatives in the day to day and gas breakdown teams during the month of April.

- **Void Repairs**

During the month of February the team have completed 82 voids compared to 72 for the same period last year. Performance remains consistent in terms of turnaround times, currently averaging 16.3 days to inspect and complete works.

- **Gas Servicing & Electrical Testing**

At the end of February, both the Gas and Electrical teams are on target and have achieved full compliance. Gas servicing and electrical periodic testing both finished the month at 100%.

We continue to make good progress with the gas fire replacements with electric fire suites and other projects such as LED lighting replacements in communal areas continue to progress well.

## **Head of Housing Investment**

- **Field Lane Flats**

A programme of works has been put together, following tenant and leaseholder consultation, to create a more welcoming aspect to the flats at Field Lane, Alvaston. Programmed works will include replacement of balcony panels, general painting of the communal areas, such as the stairs, along with the outside of the flats and the repair and replacement of the floor covers on the communal walkways where these have been leaking and uneven along with the creation of covered walkways from the communal stairs to individual front doors. Works are almost complete with the external painting due to finish by the end of April.

- **Development and In-house new build**

Our build team are making good progress at Coronation Avenue, Peel Street and Whitecross Street. Coronation Avenue is our largest in-house build project so far, with 13 new houses and 2 flats, and we are working jointly with the Council. Work on

refurbishing the old Co-Op and fishing tackle shop at Nightingale Road is continuing using our own workforce. The conversion to new flats has created great opportunities for our apprentices to further their experience and provide examples of practical work to support their trade qualifications.

Parklands, the Extra Care scheme at Bath Street, has now been completed and handed over to the Council who have passed the management of the scheme to Derby Homes. The care provider is now in place and the commissioning of the building is now taking place.

Future schemes in the development pipeline include bungalows, houses and flats within the Osmaston Joint Venture area of former Rolls Royce land and a variety of smaller sites of 'infill' housing land such as Wood Road which we anticipate to have planning permission for in late April 2016.

- **Insulation work to reduce fuel bills and energy use**

Work at Alum Close has now started with increased insulation being installed to 24 bungalows along with replacements of fascia and soffits then finished in a traditional pea gravel effect. This will increase the heat retention in the buildings, reducing tenant bills, as well as giving a new refresh of the outside of the homes. Works are due to complete in June.

- **Wates Door replacement**

The Wates properties in Alvaston, Mackworth and Chaddesden were built using and aluminium glazed door. These are not only poor at retaining heat and drafts but are also difficult to maintain as parts are not readily available. We are about to commence a programme of replacing the doors on 157 of these properties with a composite door. This will increase heat retention, cut out drafts and provide a higher degree of security to the homes.

## **Head of Personnel**

We have made good progress with the development of the Customer Service Strategy. We are working with interested groups to put together a clear action plan. This work will involve liaison with our Communication Team to ensure that we use the best and most effective communication methods.

Customer satisfaction with the Customer Service team remains high. Call waiting times are continuing to reduce which may be a result of the new team members recruited in November.

	Call waiting times Year to date	% of inbound call answered year to date	Customer satisfaction with CST year to date
Nov	146 seconds	81.1%	98.75%
Dec	138 seconds	81.97%	98.89%
Jan	136 seconds	82.27%	96.8%
Feb	129 Seconds	83.12%	96.73%
March	125 Seconds	83.62%	99.17%