

Customer Voice Homefinder Review January 2021 – July 2021

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About Customer Voice

Customer Voice is Derby Homes' resident scrutiny panel who review and analyse services that are delivered to customers. We make recommendations to the Operational Board, of the improvements that we believe can be made to the service Derby Homes provide to improve value for money and quality services for customers.

Customer Voice Members:

Shirley Green (Chair)
Lyn Gadsby (Acting Chair)
Alan Martin
Allison Burke
Cindy Carter-Foster
Claudia Bain

Dale Durrant
Lesley Buxton-Kay
Patricia Bhurton
Ruth Collie
Win Buchan

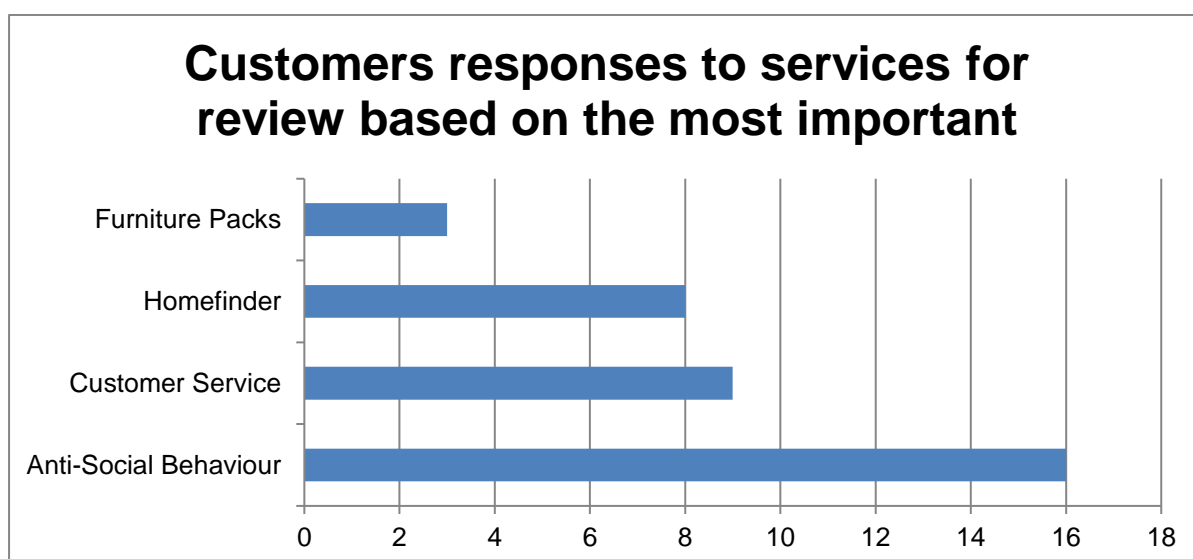
Phase One – Customer Survey

Customer Voice conducted an online survey with customers, asking them to rate potential review topics in order of importance. The topics were as follows;

- ✓ Anti-Social Behaviour
- ✓ Customer Service Team
- ✓ Homefinder
- ✓ Furniture Packs

The results from the survey indicated the majority of respondents wanted Customer Voice to review Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) policy and procedure. Due to the current pandemic and government restrictions it was agreed that Customer Voice would choose a topic available for immediate review given the restrictions. As we are unable to shadow operatives, hold meetings with staff and have face-to-face contact with customers, we have chosen to address the services provided by the Homefinder team.

It should be noted that ASB has been addressed as a “mini project” in the interim. The ASB Manager from Derby Homes has attended a meeting with Customer Voice and an information sheet has been developed to provide to customers. The information sheet highlights what represents ASB and how to report an incident (see appendix 1). Once Government restrictions around the Pandemic are relaxed within the City, Customer Voice will address the topic in detail.



We then created a Homefinder scoping document to help prioritise what we needed to investigate further but we considered the primary questions to be:

- How accessible is the Homefinder process from application to bidding for all customers?
- Are property adverts on Homefinder providing potential customers with adequate and appropriate information to make an informed decision to apply?

Introduction to Homefinder

HOMEFINDER is an operating system used by Derby Homes to advertise available properties. It provides customers with housing search, registration and application processing. Derby Homes works with 12 other Derby based housing associations that are bound by the same policies and procedures when presenting a property through Homefinder. Homefinder property allocations run alongside numerous qualifying factors based on potential customer relevant circumstance and information.

Phase Two – Researching the Scope

Meetings with staff

On 3rd February 2021 we met with the Housing Options and Transformation Manager online to clarify customer's initial responses and to help us fully understand the service they provide. This was a valuable exercise for Customer Voice as it highlighted the different elements of the service.

On 10th March we met with Housing Options and Transformation Manager and Head of Housing Options and Homelessness. We prepared questions to find out more information about customers needs and how they access the service.

During this meeting we learnt of the external services that work with Derby Homes to ensure housing needs are met for the customer and, in particular, how customers with extenuating circumstances are supported during the application process.

On 12th May we met with Senior Allocations Officer to discuss property adverts. The meeting and further investigations highlighted inconsistencies within adverts and the need for advert information to be addressed fully to improve accessibility, suitability and to ensure the right person bids on the appropriate properties.

We later met with the Senior Homefinder and Registration Officer on 4th August 2021. The meeting was predominantly to clarify any findings so far and to understand updated recent changes to the Homefinder online application process.

Homefinder team

During the meeting with the Senior Homefinder and Registration Officer in August 2021 it was explained that, on average, there are 25 new Homefinder applications a day and currently over 12,000 live applications. As some people have been on the housing register for a considerable time, the Homefinder team are constantly checking applications to ensure the customers information is still current and changes in circumstances are recorded.

Anyone can apply for housing. Once an application is completed the system will generate automatic email and allocate the housing band, depending on the answers. An applicant would only require speaking to someone if:

- Information is incorrect and needs rectifying
- Band queries
- Assistance with form filling
- Changes to personal circumstances

The bands are:

1. "Corporate needs" – severe medical need, releasing a large property, severe overcrowding (1000 points awarded for each circumstance)
2. "Priority needs" – needing an extra bedroom, homelessness, general medical need (100 points awarded for each circumstance)
3. "General band" – due to employment, generally looking for accommodation (10 points awarded for each circumstance)

While all properties are visible on the search page, applicants can only bid on properties in their band. Short-listing is done automatically based on banding, if more than one applicant with the same banding were at the top of the list and have the same needs it would be based on who had been on Homefinder the longest.

The Access Team can help with all general enquires, such as questions on where you have come on a shortlist. The Access Team address homelessness separately.

The team can receive hundreds of calls every week. Most enquiries received by the Homefinder team relate to category banding and why applicants can't bid on certain properties. To combat the growing number of applicants and enquiries, a new Customer Advisor and a Senior Officer have recently been recruited.

The Registration Team go through all new applications and all applications are reviewed before an offer is made.

Since the new Allocations Policy (October 2020), if a customer turns down 2 properties which are believed to be unreasonably turned down, their application is suspended for 6 months.

Policy & Procedures

Customer Voice read the Discretionary Allocations Policy and the Allocations Policy to understand any limitations there may be. While we recognise these documents are available to the public and are intended for the housing staff team, it did inform us of the boundaries we should work within when making any recommendations.

Both policies were deemed by Customer Voice to be out of scope, but have all required information and raised no concerns or questions.

Application process

Customer Voice completed test online applications to the Homefinder register. We chose to do this to see how accessible the system was and to look if there were any improvements that could be made. While our findings are set out below, we have already started working with the Senior Allocations Officer to implement some of these changes.

Members of Customer Voice who had registered with Homefinder in previous years, acknowledged that the current registration form was easier to complete and the process was quicker.

There were several shared experiences around accessibility and difficulties depending on what device was used to register an application. We found that the audio icon only partially worked within the website and certain devices didn't zoom on the web pages. Both issues raised concerns around access and automated support.

During the registration process there were questions around the language used and lack of supporting information to accurately complete the online form.

The application asks:

- "Are you currently living in a Category 1 Hazard home?"
- "Do you have a looked after child?"
- "Is someone in your household at serious risk of harm?"

Although some questions have an attached information box i.e icon, the supporting information was missing.

In other instances, there is no explanation and you have to respond "yes" or "no" to proceed with the application.

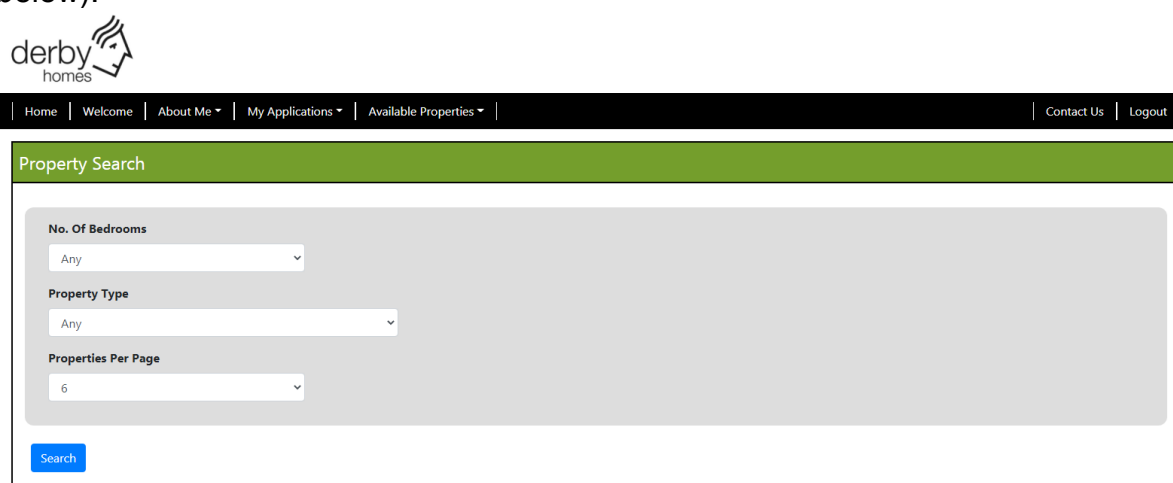
In the case of "risk of serious harm" it should be clearly defined, rather than rely on an applicant's judgement. "A looked after child" could be misunderstood as a dependant when it actually refers to children in the care system.

These examples could be determining factors and should be asked differently or explained clearly. Giving inaccurate information requires Derby Homes intervention, it can also provide a false banding which will void any property bids.

There is a section during registration that asks information on disability – simply, "Do you have a disability?" Customer Voice recognises the scope of disabilities, diagnosed or not. A request on the application for further information and a space to describe a condition would allow for both physical and mental health conditions.

Customer Voice found that navigating the website and application process is difficult for many people. There are accessibility concerns, language barriers, confusing jargon and issues with customers unfamiliar with internet use. While there are options for support from the housing team for people who struggle with internet use, it is not made clearly available. All telephone contact and application details refer to internet use. It is clear that, for many varying reasons, internet applications are not always the most appropriate. People's circumstances and personal needs can be easily verified and the most accurate assessment for housing can be determined with an initial face-2-face meeting. This could also be the point of verifying personal identification which is often difficult online due to file size and programmes used.

At the Homefinder main page you are able to see all the properties available. The search option allows you to input number of bedrooms and property type (as shown below).



derby homes

Home | Welcome | About Me | My Applications | Available Properties | Contact Us | Logout

Property Search

No. Of Bedrooms
Any

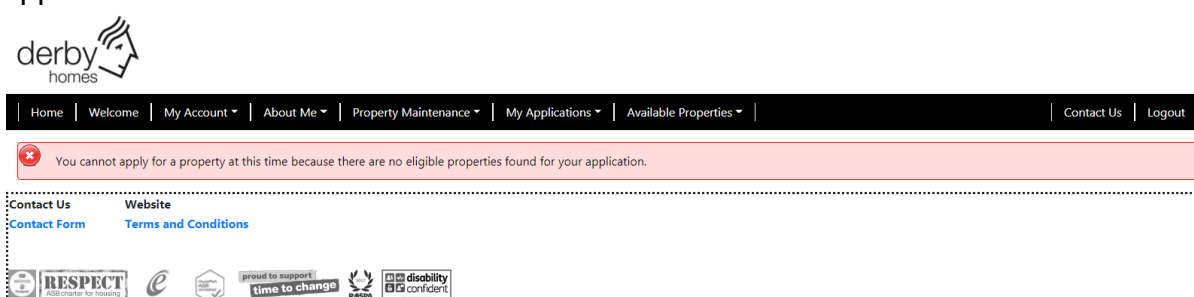
Property Type
Any

Properties Per Page
6

Search

When a customer presses search, the webpage shows all available properties based on the search. During our research it became apparent that these properties are not necessarily properties available to the customer. For example, a search for 2 bedrooms - any property type resulted in 18 properties. None of these were a true reflection of available properties. In fact, there were no eligible properties due to the customers housing band. Having a drop-box to input customer banding or reference number would show relevant properties available and reduce the search time for customers or further disappointment during what can be a stressful experience.

Finally, if a customer presses "place bid" tab the image below is a familiar response. This not only reflects the lack of available properties but also how rigid the system is. People are adaptable – while personal needs being met are essential, there are compromises that can be made if a customer finds a desired property that the online application does not allow.



derby homes

Home | Welcome | My Account | About Me | Property Maintenance | My Applications | Available Properties | Contact Us | Logout

You cannot apply for a property at this time because there are no eligible properties found for your application.

Contact Us | Website
Contact Form | Terms and Conditions

RESPECT | time to change | disability confident

Research with other Housing Providers

Customer Voice researched other Housing providers. Whilst we received sufficient responses, there were housing providers that didn't respond. We believe this to be due to the Pandemic and current working conditions. The housing providers who responded to our information requests were:

Birmingham City Council
Stoke on Trent City Council
Wyre Forest District Council
Rykneld
Nottingham City Homes
Leicester City Council

Birmingham City Council was difficult to contact and calls were not returned, however the website was good and easy to navigate and the property adverts had a lot of clear information. The website allows a customer to look at available properties prior to registration.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council provided a quick response after making contact. There is a link at the start of the application for emergency / interim housing that combines both short and long term needs. The website was clear and after navigating the homepage you can save information and return to your application later. It allows you to request property notifications based on the information provided and even the preferred area to live.

We were unable to make contact with Wyre Forest District Council allocations team but did look online at properties. The information on adverts was concise and to the point. Had icon images, if mouse was on the icon it tells you what it means.

Rykneld and Nottingham City Homes provide the same information and format as Derby Homefinder but provide a detailed information sheet about the Neighbourhood including GP, pharmacies etc.

Housing Providers we have contacted but have not received a response were:

- Stockport Homes
- Sheffield City Council
- Worcester City Council
- Metropolitan Housing
- Leeds City Council

Complaints

Customer Voice reviewed Derby Homes 2020/2021 complaints report. It registers 12 complaints about Housing options and 4 complaints about Allocations. It is difficult to review how customer complaints affect our review of Homefinder as Derby Homes does not publish the complaint details.

In the report it states that the allocations team awarded £700 in compensation after a complaint was upheld by the Allocations team. The complaint arose after the complaining customer had been housed in an unsuitable property and was made overcrowded.

The report stated that 16 complaints were made over the 12 month period. While the complaints are diverse, 5 of the 16 concern time spent on the housing register.

12 Housing Options complaints

1. Time on housing register- property given to another tenant.
2. Time on housing register- feels supporting needs not accounted for.
3. Time on housing register- feels supporting needs not accounted for.
4. Unhappy with how housing application was handled by Housing Options.
5. Unhappy with how ex-partner & child were being rehoused- felt he should have been offered a specific property.
6. Unhappy with how they were treated in relation to finding accommodation.
7. Unable to bid for correct properties.
8. Suitability of properties available to customer.
9. Overcrowded & given incorrect information on housing policy.
10. Suitability of areas bid on by Auto bid, unhappy with wording in email.
11. Standard of temporary accommodation.
12. Unhappy with property & area rehoused in.

4 Allocations complaints

1. Tenant was made over crowded at original allocation and was still on housing register
2. Time waiting to be rehoused whilst living with ongoing ASB issues
3. The customer had been awarded a discretionary allocation to move, but was still waiting to do so.
4. Unable to bid for correct properties – This was originally investigated as a Housing Options complaint as it related to errors on the housing application, but when it was escalated it was felt that it related to Allocations.

Support Services

Derby Homes works indirectly with external organisations that may need to access Homefinder on behalf of a customer. These may include refuges, temporary housing associations, homelessness organisations and emergency access projects such as Salvation Army and British Red Cross.

Much of our research has indicated that applicants are receiving support to complete applications to the housing register. The reasons given fall into 2 main categories:

1. Unable to use or access the internet
2. Extenuating circumstances

In the case of extenuating circumstances, customers often receive support from external organisations / groups. For example, where a person is receiving temporary accommodation and support from Milestone House due to homelessness, a support worker would fill out the application form. This could equally be the case where a person fleeing domestic violence is staying in a refuge.

We contacted some Derby based support services for feedback on their experience of the application process;

Milestone House
Womens work
Derby Womens Centre
Salvation Army
British Red Cross
Derby City Mission
Derby Night Shelter
Green Pastures (Derby)

The general feedback was that support staff found it difficult to get onto the system but the application process itself was easiest enough to use. The consensus from talking to these organisations was that it was extremely time consuming to support people in the process. With several sessions needed to apply via Homefinder, and then further sessions to look at progress and to deal with any questions. Clients were also often unable to communicate issues with the key worker. It was felt that having a direct contact with the Derby Homes team would smooth the process as complications could be addressed.

To avoid a major increase in telephone enquiries it was felt that Derby Homes could offer a partnership to supporting organisations which deal with homelessness and those with critical housing needs.

Derby Homes could list support organisations on their website and other publicity. Training could be given to advisors/support workers as part of the partnership. This would help to improve community links and reduce miscommunication and other issues.

Due to data-protection regulations, an organisation may not be able to receive the most up-to-date information and as a result provide inadequate support to the applicant. A data protection waiver could be completed by the applicant at the start of the process. This would then allow the key worker to discuss any problems on behalf of the applicant and to help the application to progress in a timely manner.

This could also be mutually beneficial for the supporting organisation if direct access was agreed with Homefinder.

In the case of Milestone House, for example, if a person is not actively bidding on property's or completing actions requested by Derby Homes they are taking up accommodation with Milestone House that could be accessed by another person. Equally, not actively looking for accommodation is a breach of their service user agreement.

REST team

During our review of Homefinder, we met with the Rehousing Engagement Support Team (REST) within Derby Homes. The team provides support to homeless people in Derby and predominantly those people who are considered rough sleeping. The team works with people to find stable accommodation and access support services.

People in Derby can access the REST team through the outreach project or by going into the Council House and declaring homelessness. They have links with Food Alliance Group, Doctors surgeries and emergency housing.

While the REST team essentially work with rapid temporary housing solutions, they also use the Homefinder process for those people wishing to access permanent housing. They work in conjunction with many supporting groups who can assist in drug and alcohol misuse, debt and benefits, general and mental health related concerns and social / environmental issues such as fleeing domestic violence.

As with other groups and organisations, the biggest issue is internet access and providing up-to-date information and support.

In the case of homeless applicants there is difficulty with current address. It may be that circumstances change on a daily basis if a person is using temporary housing. Although the REST team can work on an applicant's behalf and have accommodation available, applicants often go missing due to circumstance and life choices. At present there is no system in place to track changes without having internet access and the person may be required to make a new application.

Post Let Survey - April 2021-June 2021

After a customer is allocated a property, Derby Homes require a Post-let survey to be completed. As part of the questionnaire, customers are asked if they were satisfied with the Homefinder application process. Customer Voice made telephone calls to customers who completed the post let survey and expressed dissatisfaction with Homefinder. It soon highlighted a problem with the post-let survey. From the 18 calls we made, none of the customers had bid on properties themselves or completed their application online and a third party did this for them.

The first question in the post-let survey asks how an applicant found the Homefinder process. It gives no option to state that the customer did not directly complete the application. If, as it is reflected, many people do not complete the application without support, the further questions can be deemed false reflections of the experience.

While the section relating to Homefinder on the Post-let survey could be irrelevant to anyone who did not use the system themselves, we were able to review customers additional comments from the survey which support our findings:

- Communication with Homefinder team, tenant found it difficult to speak to anyone to update her application.
- Daughter helped with this process.
- I do not know how to use the internet so my support worker at Derventio did everything for me. If he hadn't then I would still be where I was. There should be a facility for people like myself who don't use the internet.
- My daughter did everything as I struggle using the internet, without her help I couldn't have managed any of it.
- Some adverts didn't have any photos.
- The system could be more user-friendly.

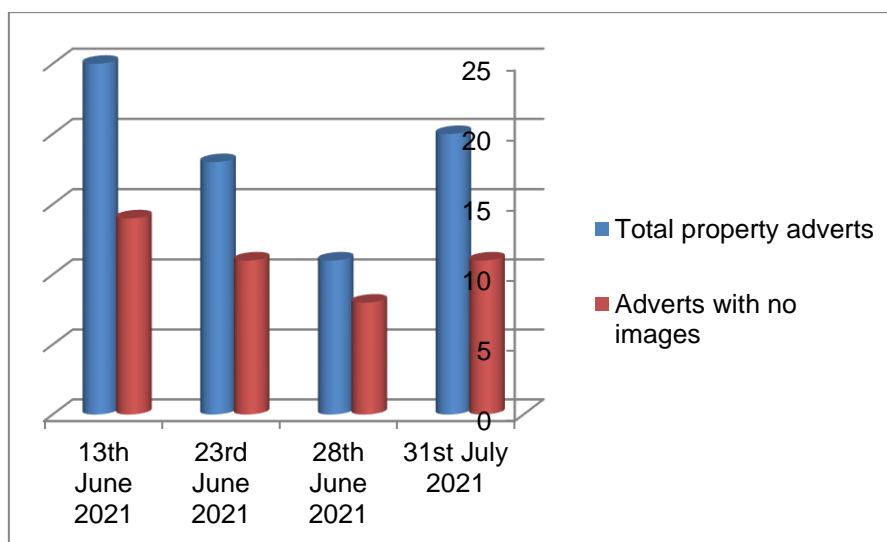
Homefinder Property Adverts

We carried out research with other Housing providers to understand what systems they use and what information property adverts included. This exercise allowed an essential comparison between providers. There were several examples of good practice that Derby Homefinder could easily incorporate to address the issues raised in the recommendations.

Homefinder had many inconsistencies with the property address format on the adverts. Some adverts gave the street name, area and postcode while others only had some of the required information.

Adverts referred to restrictions that may make an application void such as “sensitive let” and “corporate needs band”. However, there was no information on what the criteria is so an applicant may apply and be refused due to lack of information.

We looked specifically at the search results page on the website. It was evident while looking at Homefinder that adverts do not provide adequate photographs of properties. During randomly selected checks the following research was gathered regarding Homefinder and whether images were included.



On every occasion, the number of missing images was at least half of the total advertised properties.

Customer Voice has used the collective information researched to produce a sample advert. It allows for the current system to remain and any restrictions when changing layout.

Homefinder Advert Sample

Current Homefinder Derby Homes Advert: Summery Page

Sheldon Court, Stonebroom Walk, Shelton
Lock

1 Bedroom Flat
£81.87 a week

awaiting
image



14 applicants are interested so far.

Customer Voice Suggested Example: Summery Page

Sheldon Court, Stonebroom Walk, Shelton
Lock DE24 9QS

derby
homes

1 Bedroom Flat
£81.87 a week



Include all address details - street name, area and postcode

Include street view / photograph on all adverts

Include housing provider logo

Include all icons that provide explanation if mouse is hovered over



14 applicants are interested so far.

Current Homefinder Derby Homes Advert: Information Page

Sheldon Court, Stonebroom Walk, Shelton Lock

1 Bedroom Flat £81.87 a week

Landlord: Derby Homes Limited

awaiting
image



Details

Full Description

All rent must be paid in advance. The first weeks rent will need to be paid on the day of the sign up if paying weekly and four weeks in advance if paying monthly. Please note that if you claim universal credit then some of the rent charges are not covered by this benefit and you will need to budget for these costs. If you are offered accommodation then this will be explained in more detail at the property viewing

Preferences

Advertised to Priority Needs Band One bed over 60s ground floor flat with walk in shower, Communal car parking and communal garden areas Will be allocated to make best use of

Restrictions

This property is designated for persons over 60 years of age. Applicants over 18 years old who are in receipt of DLA/PIP may be considered for the property at the discretion of the landlord. To keep a pet at this property you will need to apply for permission from Derby Homes.

Key Features

- 1 Bedrooms
- Flat
- Gas Central Heating

Customer Voice Suggested Example: Information Page

Sheldon Court, Stonebroom Walk, Shelton Lock DE24 9QS

1 Bedroom Flat £81.87 a week

Landlord: Derby Homes Limited



Details

Property Reference: 281365

Closing date: 02/08/2021

Accommodation type: Ground floor 1 bedroom flat

Financial details:

Rent	Service Charge	Furniture Pack	Decorating Scheme	Total Monthly rent
£304.48	£13.00	£5.00	£5.00	£327.48

Other details:

Pets allowed	Yes	Minimum age	60 years
Garden	Communal	Council Tax band	A
Parking	Communal	Heating	Gas Central Heating
Decorating Scheme	Yes	Residents Communal Area	Yes
Furniture Pack	Yes		

Full Description:

The property is designated for persons over 60 years of age. Applicants over 18 years who are in receipt of DLA/PIP may be considered. To keep a pet at the property you will require permission from Derby Homes. This property offers a 1 bedroom flat suitable for couple or single person. The property has double glazing and is partially adapted to include a walk in shower, grab rails and emergency communication device. [Floor Plan Link](#)

Homefinder Advert Additions / Alterations Explained

The following explains the above sample adverts and the rationale behind the changes. This information is reinforced in brief in the recommendations section later in this report.

- Always include street view image.
- Include postcode - Provides easy search information and area geographic particularly when area is unknown.
- Use more icons for quick reference – pets, adaptations and bedroom space could be determining factors for customers.
- Show closing date - Gives applicants guide to how long they can consider the property and when to apply. Avoids disappointment to customer and gives Derby Homes the greatest number of interested applicants.
- Include a reference number for each property bid application and customers' further enquiries.
- Include Derby Homes logo - provides a quick reference if customers have desired housing provider preference.
- Breakdown the rental costs and service charges –allows customers to make an informed decision. E.g. allows those customers requiring white goods to select appropriate properties.
- Make the property attractive – with positive statements in description.
- Include the housing band – allows customer to quickly identify eligibility and avoid unnecessary communication / void application.
- Floor plan – for many reasons additional space may be required. This is particularly the case when a customer has mobility aides in the home and specific equipment. A floor plan will allow customers to establish property restrictions, including size, metres and ft.
- Have a property reference number – when further enquiries are necessary it reduces search times for all parties especially when several properties at the same street address are advertised.

NB: The information regarding rent in advance and benefits could be included to the summary page as it appears on every advert rather than in its current place as a description of the property. This will free up space to allow for more relevant property details.

Homefinder Application Case Study

At the time of researching Homefinder, we were able to shadow an application in working progress. Although the group hasn't used the direct information, the evidence has been used to support some research and recommendations. The case study below shows examples of the Derby Homefinder property searches and application outcomes.


Arthur Court, Tintagel Close, Derby


Arthur Court, Tintagel Close, Derby

2 Bedroom Flat

£91.55 a week

Landlord: Derby Homes Limited





Details

Full Description
2 Bed Ground floor flat with communal garden . All rent must be paid in advance. The first weeks rent will need to be paid on the day of the sign up if paying weekly and four weeks in advance if paying monthly. Please note that if you claim universal credit then some of the rent charges are not covered by this benefit and you will need to budget for these costs. If you are offered accommodation then this will be explained in more detail at the property viewing.

Key Features

- 2 Bedrooms
- Flat
- Gas Central Heating

Preferences
Corporate Needs Band

Restrictions
To keep a pet at this property you will need to apply for permission from Derby Homes.

On the 23rd, June 2021, the above property was advertised by Derby Homes on Homefinder with two street addresses. The photograph also shows one street while the postcode indicated another. The only information on the property was 2 bedroom ground floor flat with gas central heating. In this instance there was no indication of mobility adaption's, parking, if the bedrooms were both double or even if it was attached to additional charges such as a white goods or decorating scheme that would increase the rent and may deter some applicants from the property. To resolve the questions, the customer contacted the Engagement Officer and Housing Options Team who were unable to give any further information on the property. They took contact details and referred the enquiry to the Applications Team who never made future contact. The delay in response resulted in the advert closing and the property no longer being available.


After further research we found that there was a service charge attached to the property and white goods and decorating scheme charges would be included in the rent. All of this information was omitted from the advertisement and would aid an applicant making a genuine informed application.


The required information would have potentially reduced unnecessary viewing for Derby Homes and the applicant. For example, if an applicant was employed or had their own white goods and didn't require the additional start-up support. Equally, if the applicant required adaptations and the property only provided for a shower above the bath, they may refuse the property at viewing. In both instances and due to the lack of information the viewing would have occurred and the refusal would be counted against the 2 refusals allowed by Derby Homes.

Alexandra Gardens, Derby

Alexandra Gardens, Derby,

2 Bedroom House Inner Terrace
£90.79 a week
Landlord: Derby Homes Limited





Details

Full Description
2 Double bed house with front 7 rear garden, on street parking. All rent must be paid in advance. The first weeks rent will need to be paid on the day of the sign up if paying weekly and four weeks in advance if paying monthly. Please note that if you claim universal credit then some of the rent charges are not covered by this benefit and you will need to budget for these costs. If you are offered accommodation, then this will be explained in more detail at the property viewing.

Key Features

- 2 Bedrooms
- House Inner Terrace
- Gas Central Heating

Restrictions
We will allocate this property to ensure it is fully occupied, taking into account welfare reform implications and affordability. Houses will usually be offered to households with children under the age of 16 years. To keep a pet at this property you will need to apply for permission from Derby Homes.

The above property was advertised on 30.07.2021. Again, as with the Tintagel Close property, it was in an ideal position and suited the needs of the customer. The customer was unable to bid on the property and enquired via email to register interest. The response (the same day) explained that the property was not in the correct category band. The customer had a "priority needs band". There are no indications on any of the Homefinder adverts informing customers of the property banding. In this case the customer was disappointed, knowing that the property was more than suitable. Having the information available would have clarified the customers' position and avoided the time taken by Derby Homes to respond with emails on 2 separate occasions to resolve the enquiry.

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Finally, after further investigation, it was found that Derby Homes had misinformed the customer and both properties were in fact available within the correct banding.

In both cases above there is no postcode provided, no breakdown of additional costs and services and no reference to property adaptations. On the Alexandra Gardens property there is no indication of banding. All evidenced through the customer needing to contact Derby Homes for further information and clarification.

As late as 12/8/2021, a week after the disappointment – the person was still registered wrongly and only offered property out of her band. It still required derby homes and customer intervention to allow the customer to bid successfully on a property.

Phase Three - Customer Voice Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Reason for recommendation	Comments from management	Update in six months time
1.	Audio aids to be working at all times for customers	During testing of the application process the audio facility did not work for the duration of the time of completing an application.	Advice to be taken from IT project team regarding this facility.	Completed – spoken with IT team. Scoping needs to happen with Capita. Estimated completion date is 6 months (May 2022 if it's technically possible) due to Capita lead time.
2.	Where no internet access is available to the customer, alternative access to be recommended. Access team to be clear on places / supporting partners for assistance in the application process i.e. library and council house.	CV found repeated issues around access to internet. It is evidenced in test runs, supporting services, post-let reviews and complaints report.	Acknowledged that this has been impacted by Covid restrictions as previous options of signposting to Library or Council House were not appropriate during those times. We are able to assist any applicant with registering over the telephone, or face to face as appropriate. This information can be made clear with all those who are likely to come into contact with people wishing to be rehoused, including DH staff and supporting partners.	Completed - We can assist with applications over the phone and on face to face visits. Access Team trained on how to signpost people to seek assistance.
3.	Language barriers and additional support restrictions: at the beginning	DH should acknowledge that customers may have physical and	Investigation needed with the IT project team to see if the	See point one. The same solution would

	<p>of the application form, give “what language” as an initial question and translate the entire application.</p> <p>Alternative ways (not internet) to complete the application process should be made available at sign-up. This is for customers requiring support and unable to complete the form.</p>	<p>personal restrictions to access based on disability, special requirements and languages.</p> <p>CV found that other housing associations were actively working to support those individual needs. Making translation available and alternative support clear provides equality of access.</p> <p>Will reduce customer complaints as the majority were based on access to information.</p>	<p>application form can be translated into other language?</p> <p>As above</p>	<p>be needed to address this recommendation.</p>
4.	<p>To include a banding explanation on the automated response after completion of the application.</p>	<p>CV found that the majority of customer service access team enquiries was around banding – e.g. what the banding meant, how it was determined and not being able to bid on properties out of their band. This would reduce unnecessary calls and complaints.</p>	<p>A document has already been drafted to be uploaded into the system that will address these points, including banding, and searching for and bid on properties.</p>	<p>Include a link to a user guide to include all the information a customer will need. Lead time 6 weeks to complete.</p>
5.	<p>There are a few questions that use corporate jargon. We recommend having an ‘i’ icon next to the question for customers to hover over and find out more information or remove the jargon.</p>	<p>During testing of applications we found some questions were not clear on what they were asking.</p> <p>Examples of questions: ‘Category 1 Hazard need’ ‘Looked after child’</p> <p>By providing more information at the stage of application it will reduce the amount of admin having to take place from staff to rectify any errors during the validation process.</p>	<p>The help text for the icons has all be written and tested and is ready to be promoted to the live system.</p>	<p>Completed.</p>
6.	<p>All partners and Derby Homes to follow the same format for completing adverts</p>	<p>All advertisers follow their own layout and included information which makes it very inconsistent when trying to search for desired property</p>	<p>This is ongoing with work and training through the Homefinder steering group.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Standard agenda item on the Homefinder Steering</p>

		and included assets. As evidenced in the case study, consistent inclusive information will reduce enquiries and inaccurate bidding.	<p>Allocations team to check each advert before it is uploaded to help reinforce consistency.</p> <p>However, there are some system limitations which will need to be considered and may restrict some elements. This will be explored with IT Project Team.</p>	Group meeting which takes place bi-monthly.
7.	More information on advert i.e. Pictures on all adverts/ area/ ward/ school/ supermarket etc	<p>Providing more information on property adverts will hopefully reduce the amount of refusals on properties, it will enable customers to be able to bid on properties they know are in an area suitable for them.</p> <p>Based on the research we have carried out, Leicester Home Choice (Leicester City Council) use a very good system, a weekly magazine that has information about the local area and thorough property details.</p>	<p>We have recently worked on refreshing the style and content of our adverts. Adverts now use more positive language and more specific information to allow the applicant to make a more informed choice.</p> <p>For DH adverts we always aim to include a photograph, these are often taken from Goggle Map images due to time constraints. A postcode map showing the location of the property is included for every property.</p> <p>Historically, local information has been provided but it was difficult to ensure it remained up to date</p>	<p>Completed - Scoping with IT team complete.</p> <p>Estimated 3 month lead time for completion.</p>
8.	Floor plan of properties and/or room sizes so can establish if rooms are	Providing this information for customers will ensure that bidding	This is currently being investigated as to how floor	Business decision needed on how we

	double or single	only takes place if the size is suitable. Some customers require double bedrooms for mobility aids.	plans could be achieved. The advert refresh work has included information on the size of bedrooms for each property.	collect the data needed to create floor plans. As point 7, functionality can be added for this within the same timescale.
9.	More positive text on adverts (selling the property)	Derby Homes property adverts are currently focussed on eligibility, restrictions and are unattractive. We would recommend on the adverts being sold, sharing the properties benefits and locations encouraging customers to bid on them by selling it. The best examples we have seen are from Leicester City Council and Birmingham City Council.	Agree and links to point 7 above.	Completed/ongoing.
10.	On the summary advert page it doesn't tell you who the Landlord/provider is. Would recommend it showing the providers logo (see advert example in report)	When looking down the summary list of suitable properties available, we would recommend the system having the landlord's logo to show customers who the provider is. Once you click on the advert it does tell you (sometimes). We feel some customers may have a preference of the landlord they wish to remain with or move to.	This may be a system restriction, but we will explore the IT options and capability to do this. We would usually encourage all applicants to be as flexible as possible when considering suitable properties, areas, or landlords.	Dependant on partners providing us with a logo but can be achieved within the same 3 month timescale.

11.	Provide a guide to customers that is automated after their application is received.	It would advise customers to review an area before bidding and also outline the process/ time taken etc. It could include basic rental and financial statement that is currently on every advert and would free up space for specific property details.	This will be included in the new worded email we have drafted. We will also be producing a FAQ page to be uploaded onto the website which will also answer the questions asked most often.	We will include a link to a customer user guide within the automated email. 6 weeks to completion for this.
12.	Include breakdown of service charges and if it's included with Housing benefit. Such as Decorating scheme, solar panels, furniture packs, etc	Additional charges could deter customers and be a deciding factor in applying for a property. Including the information would allow an informed decision when bidding on a property and reduce refusals.	The suggested layout for this is really good, there are however some system limitations in how the rent figure can be broken down. This will be explored further with It Project team.	
13.	Include customer services telephone number and the option to stop an application and save progress.	The helpdesk phone number isn't on the application page. Recommendation to add if a customer is stuck on the page.	You can currently save an application and return to complete it at a later date. We will seek to have the contact number added to the page.	
14.	Main Derby based supporting organisations to be given the option to enter into a service level agreement with Derby Homes	It provides organisations, Derby homes and the applicant with a holistic view. Lessens enquiries. Reduce misinformation and banding difficulties. Strengthens Derby Homes community relationships.	I think there is already some good partnership work that takes places between agencies and DH in relation to this. An offer for further training has been made to all the Homefinder partners, and supported housing advisors that we work closely with. There is an option to nominate another person as	

			the main point of contact, or with applicant's permission we will speak to another agency/support worker. I do not think a SLA is required for this.	
15.	Derby Homes to provide training to support services focusing on the application process, banding and allocations.	Addresses the issue of access, provides appropriate and informed support. Develops community links and consultation opportunities.	As in point 14, this is already in place and plans made to expand further. Training has been provided to Housing Management and Support teams, Customer Service and ASB teams within Derby Homes. We have also attended a DWP multi agency meeting explaining our services and support available.	Ongoing.
16.	Homefinder registration page to include guidance / contact details for anyone completing the application on behalf of a customer ie external supporting services.	Provides a clear line of communication. Ensures that an allocated person can receive information on the process. Informs Homefinder when accessing and verifying applications.	Will be included in the FAQ page	As point 11 above.
17.	A waiver to be agreed between supporting organisations and customer that is endorsed by Derby Homes that doesn't impinge on customers data protection rights.	Ensures lines of communication and responsibilities are clear and agreed prior to application.	See point 14	
18.	Include a fraud warning on application.	Having a clear message regarding fraud and misinformation may reduce further investigation, verification and potential bidding suspension.	This is included as part of the Declaration statement at the end of the application, prior to submitting an application.	Completed.

Appendix 1 –Anti-Social Behaviour Information Sheet

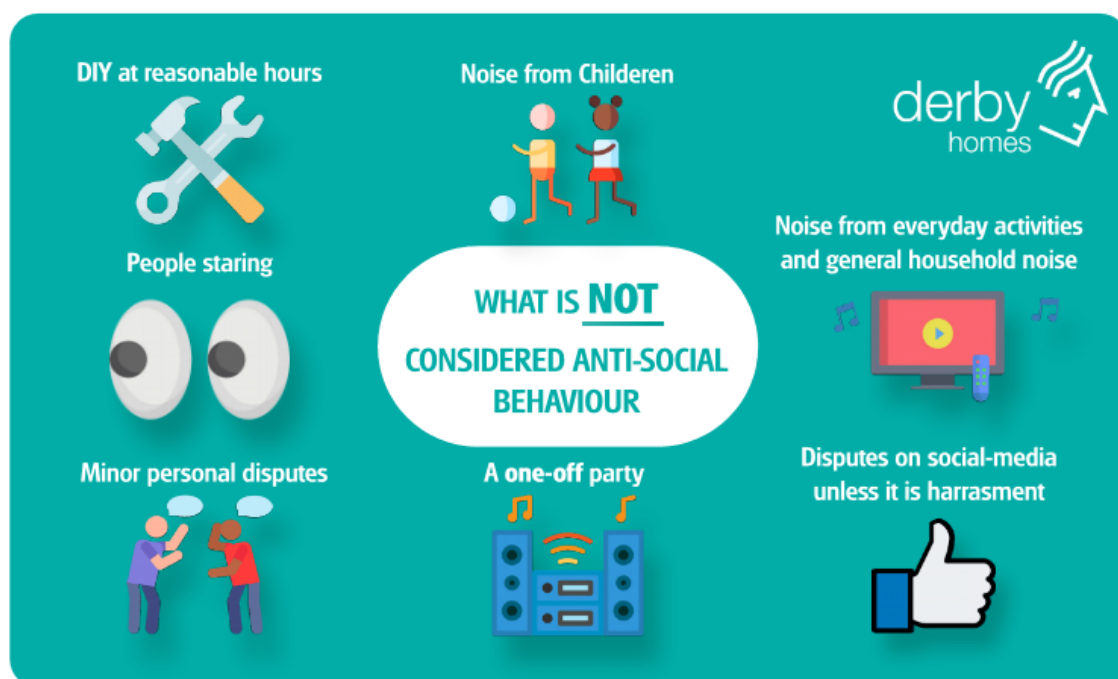
What is ASB and How to Report it | Guide

Antisocial behaviour (ASB) is defined as 'behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person'. A full list of what Derby Homes **does** consider to be ASB can be found in our Antisocial Behavior Policy. You can report ASB on our website derbyhomes.org or by calling **01332 888777**

As we've spent more time at home than usual over the past 18 months, we've seen a rise in the number of ASB reports that we do **not** consider to be ASB. With the help of our scrutiny panel Customer Voice, we've put together a list of things that are not ASB.

What is considered ASB

- Harassment / intimidation / threatening behaviour
- Domestic abuse
- Physical violence
- Hate crimes/incidents
- Drugs, substance misuse, drug dealing
- excessive noise at unreasonable hours
- Verbal abuse
- Vandalism and damage to property
- Alcohol related incidents
- prostitution, sexual acts, kerb crawling, loitering
- Other criminal behaviour
- Misuse of shared areas and public space
- Pets and animal nuisance
- Nuisance from vehicles



Local area priorities

Some ASB is dealt with by housing management and not our ASB team:

- Parking issues
- Dog Fowling
- Fly tipping

You can report these by calling **01332 888777**

When to contact the Police

- Covid Breaches
- Rowdy groups in parks/public areas
- Threats or acts of violence

In an emergency always call **999** if your situation is not urgent call **101**



Appendix 2 - Customer Voice Survey 2019

Customer Voice Survey 2020

All information provided will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. We will only use this information as part of Derby Homes feedback. All of the information you provide will remain confidential and will not be shared with any third party. This on-line method does not capture any personal information for example, your e-mail address or PC number.

Please click [here](#) to read our Fair Processing Notice in full.

- Q1 Do you consent to the processing and storing of your response for the purpose of this survey (Please select one)
- 22 Yes
- 0 No
- Q2 I am aware that I have the right to withdraw my consent to be contacted by Derby Homes for the purposes of this survey.
- 22 Yes
- 0 No
- Q3 In what capacity are you responding to this survey?
- 22 Tenant of Derby Homes or Derby City Council
- 0 Leaseholder of Derby City Council

Introduction

Customer Voice is Derby Homes' resident scrutiny panel who review and analyse services that are delivered to customers. We make recommendations to the Operational Board, of the improvements that we believe can be made to the service Derby Homes provide to improve value for money or a better service for customers.

We review performance information and complaint trends in order to decide on our next project. We have suggested the below projects but would like other customers involvement in making the final decision. Please state which service you feel, from your experience, would benefit from us investigating further to try and improve.

We have just completed our review of the quality of repairs, with thanks to you for suggesting this was our next topic. It is going to the Operational Board on 3rd December, for approval and comments. Outcomes from the meeting will be fed back to you.

If you could number in order of importance, 1 being the most important and 4 being the least.

Q4 **Furniture Packs** - Some of Derby Homes' properties are classed as furnished, as they have beds, settees, Whitegoods and/or carpets installed. A customer has an additional charge to pay weekly for such items. This continues throughout the course of their tenancy.

3 1 Most Important
9 2
3 3
8 4 Least important

Q5 **Anti-social Behaviour** - Derby Homes has a specialist department which deals with all Anti-social Behaviour Complaints.

16 1 Most Important
4 2
2 3
0 4 Least Important

Q6 **The Customer Service Centre** - How calls are dealt with and if they are dealt with at first point of contact).

9 1 Most Important
7 2
4 3
2 4 Least Important

Q7 **Derby Home finder** - The system used to allocate properties.

8 1 Most Important
10 2
4 3
0 4 Least Important

Q8 Do you have any suggestions of other service areas you feel may require reviewing?

9

Q9 Are you interested in getting involved in joining our Customer Voice group to make recommendations to improve services within Derby Homes?

9 Yes
10 No

Q10 If yes please leave your name and contact details.

11

Thank you for your feedback.
Please click 'submit' to complete the survey.

Appendix 3—Post-let survey

Post Let Survey Results

April 2021-June 2021

I found it easy to access the home finder online housing application.

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Total
I found it easy to access the Homefinder online housing application.	40	11	20	1	72
Total	40	11	20	1	72

I found it easy to bid on or express an interest in a property.

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Total
I found it easy to bid on, or express an interest in a property.	39	14	18	1	72
Total	39	14	18	1	72

I found it easy to understand the information on the property advert.

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Total
I found it easy to bid on, or express an interest in a property.	39	14	18	1	72
Total	39	14	18	1	72

Overall, I found the Homefinder process easy.

	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Total
Overall, I found the Homefinder process easy.	39	1	12	19	1	72
Total	39	1	12	19	1	72

Are there any aspects of applying for a property that you think we could improve on? If so, can you let us know about them?

- Community with homefinder team, tenant found it difficult to speak to anyone to update her application.
- Daughter helped with this process.
- I do not know how to use the internet so my support worker at Derwentio did everything for me. If he hadn't then I would still be where I was. There should be a facility for people like myself who don't use the internet.
- My daughter did everything as I struggle using the internet, without her help I couldn't have managed any of it.
- Some adverts didn't have any photos.
- The system could be more user friendly.