

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 Operations (Housing Management & Housing Options)

Homefinder Changes - Delay

In my last Operational Board update I advised of the planned 'go live' date in September 18 for our move from Abritas to OPEN Housing, for allocating properties, and the benefits that this move will bring. Unfortunately we have had to delay this move until late January 2019.

We want to ensure that the system is fully functioning and that any niggles have been ironed out prior to launch. This includes adequate preparation work to ensure the migration of data is correct & swift. It is also paramount that any 'down time' is managed and that it is kept to an absolute minimum.

This delay will put back our communications plan until the beginning of January 19, which will notify all existing and potential new customers of the changes ahead. Nearer to the time, we will use a variety of channels to engage with customers through: emails, web messages, DH website, Homefinder website, DHN Publications, Social Media Channels, phone script messages when calling Housing Options & letters and text messaging.

Hoarding Project

Following attendance at a very informative health conference earlier this year that concentrated on new approaches to dealing with hoarding and its links to mental health, our Safeguarding Lead Lorraine Testro has met with Council colleagues to scope a project focussing on new approach to tackling hoarding in Derby City.

Hoarding is a problem that affects many people and dealing with it involves many agencies and takes both time and resources, often with minimal success. There are various types of hoarders; many are vulnerable people whose hoarding can be linked to traumatic events in their lives such as bereavement or childhood neglect. These sorts of deep rooted trauma can need specialist intervention which is not currently freely available.

The first multi-agency collaborative meeting will take place on 1 October to examine the appetite of partners to buy into a new radical approach to hoarding. At present we manage and contain these problems as best we can, we want to explore if there is an opportunity to do more to understand and tackle deeper causal links.

Compactor Days – Local Customer Priorities

One of the areas that can contribute to a neighbourhood appearing neglected is an accumulation of unwanted large bulky waste. On 18th September, Officers from Stockbrook Street local housing office accompanied Council Officers and Members around the areas of Darley and Normanton to offer the opportunity for free collection of these items. The day was a great success, with over 20 tons of waste being collected on the day.

Such initiatives have an impact on the quality of life for a lot of residents. Examples from the day include a disabled elderly resident who had no means of getting rid of his old mattress or even getting out of his house, or the mother of three who is battling a vermin problem in her garden, but had a lot of waste in her garden with no car or means to get rid of the waste, who now has a garden where her children can play.

Both the Council's Neighbourhood teams, and Derby Homes, intend to continue to support a programme of compactor days throughout 2018/19.

REST – Rehousing Engagement Support Team

The REST team has been established following a successful bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) with the aim of reducing rough sleeping across the city by half. The statutory rough sleeper return for last year was 37 and our target is to reduce this to 18. The team consists of a part time coordinator, a project manager and 9 support workers.

The role of the support workers is to engage with rough sleepers on the streets, supporting them to overcome barriers and to access accommodation. There is also an equally important element of working with police and probation to challenge negative behaviours amongst some rough sleepers, such as drug and alcohol use, ASB and aggressive begging. Support workers will also work with our supported accommodation partners to help ensure former rough sleepers can maintain their tenancies and not return to the streets as is often the case.

The MHCLG funding has also been used to secure the extension of a night shelter provision in the city. Last year's churches night shelter operated from 1st December until 31st March. The additional shelter, which will operate from 1st October, is based at Charnwood Street and will help us to engage better with current rough sleepers.

A final element of the funding is going to be used as a 'dreams and aspirations fund' and is for asset based personal budgets of around £500 per client following positive steps by them.

Head of Operations (Income Management & Customer Services)

Income Management

The full universal credit service for new claimants is now in full flow, we had 300 cases as at 8th August which has increased to 529 cases as at 25th September.

Migration of existing claimants on the live service to the full service has also commenced and will continue until completed in November 2018. We have been working with the Derby Job Centre which is located in the council house to identify, advice and assist new universal credit claimants so they understand their obligation for paying rent and council tax. We have done this by arranging for Derby Homes Officers to be present at the council house every day to talk to new claimants whilst they are still at the job centre. Monthly strategic meetings continue to be held between the Job

Centre managers to discuss any issues that may arise and come up with the best way to deal with them.

Access to the DWP's universal credit portal has been set up for Derby Homes Income and Welfare Reform Team Officers. This allows them to access details about who has claimed universal credit and request direct payments for current housing costs, where they have not been paid for a period of time to allow collection of rent arrears. These are known as Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA's).

We continue our attendance at Housemark welfare reform groups as well as East and West Midlands best practice groups to learn from other organisations who have been dealing with universal credit and about best income collection practices around the country.

The triage-style approach to dealing with new universal credit claimants is working well with the Welfare Reform Team carrying out the initial setting up for Universal Credit claims and then passing the cases on to Income Recovery Officers for monitoring. Income Recovery Officers are then monitoring and supporting the tenants, making sure the rent is paid and signposting them to services that may be able to support them if they are struggling.

We are looking at more efficient ways of helping to address the additional workloads that will come from universal credit claimants being personally responsible for paying the housing costs (rent) to Derby Homes. This includes looking deeper into the other IT products. Depending on findings, we may put forward a business case. We have carried out a site visit to an organisation already using a product called RentSense to expecting the developers to present back what they can provide for us in early November.

Rental Control

Recruitment is now completed and roles have been amended to reflect some of the changes to tasks and processes, following the implementation of Open Housing.

Eaton Court service charges have been updated using the annual Rent Variation process.

Work is now under way to write off old debts to ensure account balances reflect the true debt due.

Leasehold

The 'Actual' Service charges have now been calculated and applied to the accounts. The statements were issued on time and in accordance with the lease. The next leasehold form is booked for 31 October 2018 and we are working with the Customer Engagement team on a wider consultation plan for leaseholders.

Open Housing Testing

Rents and Leasehold have and are still carrying out testing. We are waiting for the system to be rolled forward so we can test Direct Debits (this has always been the case regardless of which version/system we have used).

Derby Advice

Derby Advice receives funding from Macmillan Cancer Care to provide specialist welfare rights advice to cancer patients living in Derby City. We deliver this from Derby Royal. This successful project has been running since 2015 and has been repeat

funded each year due to the outputs and outcomes that the project is able to demonstrate. In the last quarter, the staff member working on the project advised 75 patients. The financial value of the benefits the adviser claimed with them, together with the Macmillan grants she submitted, totalled £197,911.74.

In addition, the project ran a Macmillan coffee morning at Derby Royal on the 28 September which raised over £1,300.

Derby Advice is beginning to deal with an increasing amount of queries relating to Universal Credit now that Full Service has gone live in Derby City. Derby Advice staff are advising on the more complex enquiries, where other Derby Homes staff are unable to help. We are also helping claimants challenge incorrect decisions. We anticipate that the number of enquiries will increase as more tenants claim Universal Credit.
Customer Service and Equalities

The Customer Service team have now relocated to London Road. This has worked really well and is proving to be both effective and efficient.

The Customer Service team has reduced in size significantly, due in the main to Customer Service Advisors gaining promotions within other team at Derby Homes. To fill the gap we have recruited some agency staff.

The 24/7 campaign has been a major project delivered jointly with the Communications Team in September, this project is ongoing to promote accessing services on line, up to March 31 2019.

A revised Complaints, Comment and Compliments Policy will be presented to the Operational Board in October, alongside changes to the Vexatious and Compensation Policy, in line with the Customer First Strategy.
Customer Communications

Website

Derby Homes' website switched to a new site on 20 September that has been created by Derby City Council's Web Development Team. The site was created as a copy of the previous one and is the first of a number of planned changes and improvements. There have only been minor amends made and much of the site has just been copied as it was. There will now be a period where the newly populated site is indexed by search engines and the new pages start to show up in search listings. The next stages are to get the site responsive/mobile friendly and work with the council on a redesign project looking at improving our overall website style and user experience. We also intend to carry out a full review on content (hopefully with some customers) to ensure the information we publish is aligned with our Customer First strategy.

Campaigns

We have worked with the Customer Service Manager to promote the 24/7 campaign and first prize draw, which took place at the start of September and saw 158 people win brand new 8" tablets for signing up to use **MyAccount**. Related promotional work has included designing a flyer to make it easy for trade staff to hand out on visits to promote the scheme and online reporting of repairs. These were distributed at toolbox talks and are now with responsive repairs staff and gas servicing teams. Winners were notified by direct email and initially invited to collect their prizes at London Road. They were also invited to take part in promotional photographs to help us advertise the campaign further.

We supported the pilot e-consultations for the Customer Engagement Team's Your Service, Your Say campaign and the recent Green Paper discussion events by utilising direct mailing. This had great success, with high numbers of people engaging with the messages and taking part in the surveys.

Following on from the agreement of the new Customer Priorities in August, we've begun to work with managers to support promotion of the priorities and some of the key actions in the related work plan.

Current work

Award season has started and we've already submitted an entry into the Resolve ASB awards. We're now working on further submissions for other ceremonies with deadlines within the next two months.

We're collating all the final parts for our "customer" Annual Report for 2017/8. Following the theme of last year, we're aiming to make this completely online and have gone for a "customer first" approach to informing the content, working with the Customer Voice scrutiny group. We also plan to break up the content into bite size pieces to reach more people.

Team

We've had a new apprentice join our team! Joshua is our Creative Content Apprentice who will be learning about real world communication and new media as part of his "Digital Marketer" apprenticeship. We're sure he'll soon become a familiar face with both staff and board members.

Head of Repairs

Day to Day

At the end of August, performance in terms of 'repairs completed in time' is as follows:

- Emergencies – 100%
- Very urgent works – 100%
- Urgent works – 100%
- Routine works – 99.70%
- Planned works – 97.7%

Performance up until the end of August is generally pleasing with all priorities above / better than the 99% targets other than planned works. There has been an improvement in performance in the last couple of months and we are working hard to try and ensure the target is achieved by year end.

We are currently unable to report on the Appointments Kept Target due to issues with reports having to be rebuilt since the implementation of Open Housing. We are working hard along with IT colleagues to resolve the issues. We are working with IT teams and looking at other ways this figure can be obtained.

Tenant satisfaction with repairs remains high and above target at 99.7% up until the end of August. During the month of August out of 1079 surveys sent out only 3 were dissatisfied.

We have generated rechargeable repairs up to the end of August realising £8,146.50

We currently have 6 live disrepair cases.

Void Repairs

Up to the end of August, the Voids Team has completed 277 active voids compared to 299 for the same period last year. Performance is currently averaging **16.46** days cumulatively to inspect and complete works.

The total number of void works carried out both active and passive is 381 voids compared to 387 voids last year.

The relet time is continuing to reduce month on month and we are confident this improved performance will continue.

Gas Servicing and Electrical Testing

At the end of August both the Gas and Electrical teams have met target and have achieved full compliance. Gas servicing and electrical periodic testing both finished at 100%.

Up to the end of August the Gas team carried out 6094 services.

We attained high levels of first time access for gas servicing which so far this year averages 82%.

There has been issues with the Open Housing servicing module which has meant the go live date has had to be moved back until the 14th January. Testing is still ongoing and once the system goes live it will mean that all the Gas servicing will be raised in the Open Housing system and information will be recorded on the system so customers and co-workers can see the individual services booked and all the certification will be completed and stored electronically.

We have carried out the tenants' consultation at Kestrel House to install air source heating within the properties as we have at Rivermead House. This system has proved to be a success on cost saving and customer satisfaction. We have now ordered the materials and will be starting the work at the beginning of October and it will last period of 6 weeks.

Head of Governance & Corporate Support

Employee Development

Derby Homes now have a total of 25 apprentices following this year's recruitment. We recruited 14 apprentices across a range of different service areas. Apprenticeships include 4 Plumbing, 2 Joinery, 2 Electrical, 1 Surveying, 1 Quantity Surveying, 3 Housing, and 1 Digital Marketing. The Quantity Surveying Apprenticeship is Derby Homes' first Degree Level Apprenticeship, the individual is undertaking the Level 6 Chartered Surveyor Degree Apprenticeship which offers the opportunity to gain a full honours degree, whilst developing valuable industry-specific work experience. Within this year's recruitment, it is also pleasing to report that we have recruited two females into trade apprenticeships; they are taking up the positions of apprentice joiner and apprentice plumber.

Our existing apprentices are continuing to do well, they have progressed to years 2 and 3. We continue to support them through their development by rotating the teams they work in so that they get a broad knowledge of all services to increase their skills.

Over the summer, we also had a high number of employees wanting to undertake a qualification through our Qualification Training Scheme. This is great to see employees wanting to develop and improve their knowledge. We have also been able to utilise the Apprenticeship Levy funds for some of the qualifications.