



**South
Derbyshire
District Council**

Guide to Housing Services



BOOKLET
4

www.south-derbys.gov.uk

The Council's Vision

Our vision is to:

“Make South Derbyshire a healthier, more prosperous and safer place to live”.

Our Values

The following principles will guide our actions and govern our relationships with local people and partners. We will:

- Make decisions openly and with integrity
- Involve the community in choices about services and priorities
- Be open and responsive to change
- Treat people fairly in everything we do
- Value employees and the essential role they play in service delivery

Strategic Objectives

We intend to achieve our Vision by taking actions that will:

- Enhance the quality of life of all South Derbyshire residents
- Safeguard the environment now and for the benefit of future generations
- Put residents at the centre of Council decision-making
- Secure continuous improvement in the quality and efficiency of our services
- Support local businesses and create a climate for good inward investment

Our Priorities

Because we cannot do everything at once, we have had to identify some priorities. There are just three and these are:

- Safer and healthier communities
- A cleaner and greener environment
- More efficient, customer focused services

Improving customer service:

We want your help to make our services better. We want you to let us know if you've got a comment to make, whether it's good or bad, on any of our services.

You can do this by filling in a form from our Customer Services section, or on our website at www.south-derbys.gov.uk/complaintsprocedure.htm or by writing direct to:

Customer Services Manager
South Derbyshire District Council
Civic Offices, Civic Way
Swadlincote
Derbyshire DE11 0AH

We will take your comments and complaints seriously. We will find out if our service has failed, explain the circumstances to you and correct the failure, if we can. You can refer the complaint to our Chief Executive, then to the Ombudsman if you're not satisfied.

Housing Service Standards

	Page
1. Introduction	2
2. New Tenants	3
3. Customer Care	4
4. Rent	6
5. Repairs	7
6. Sheltered Housing	8
7. Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement	9
8. Antisocial Behaviour	10
9. Housing Options	12
10. What we expect from you	13

Introduction

South Derbyshire District Council's Mission statement for Housing is
"Through high quality services, delivered in partnership, the provision of well maintained affordable homes that meet the requirements and aspirations of the people of South Derbyshire"

We want to deliver this vision to all of our tenants and to achieve this the service has identified three key themes:

- Constant performance improvement
- Listening to and putting customers first
- Valuing staff commitment

These are the driving elements for the Housing Service, which will deliver service improvements and ensure we achieve the Government's Decent Homes Standard ahead of their 2010 deadline.

We hope that you have found applying for a house, moving into and living in our homes and using our various services to be a pleasant experience. If you would like to be involved in improving the services that you receive, please see the section on Tenant Involvement. Housing Services has greatly increased the ways in which you can get involved in our services at all levels, and we are always keen to find out your views because without them we simply cannot do our job effectively

New Tenants

Introductory Tenancies are given to people when they become social housing tenants for the first time.

An Introductory Tenancy is a "trial" period lasting 12 months, which allows us to see if new tenants are willing to keep to the terms and conditions of their tenancy agreement. During the trial period they must show us that they understand their responsibilities to the Council and their neighbours, by:

- paying their rent on time
- ensuring that they, or anyone living with them and their visitors do not cause a nuisance to their neighbours or the local community
- looking after their home and garden
- meeting the other conditions of the Tenancy Agreement

If an Introductory Tenant breaches the conditions of their tenancy we will offer as much advice and support as we can to help them get back on track. However, if they refuse to accept our help or continue to break the rules we can either extend this trial period for a further six months or evict them.

During the first year, a Housing Officer will visit to ensure that all is well. At the end of the first year, or the extended period, as long as the tenants are compliant with the terms and conditions of their tenancy agreement, they become secure tenants.

More details of this can be found in the Tenants Handbook or online at www.south-derbys.gov.uk

Customer Care

Improving customer service is the aim of this Authority and setting standards makes it possible for us to measure how much we have improved.

The Code of Practice sets out the way in which you can expect to be dealt with whether by letter, telephone, face to face, e-mail or another form of communication.

Our promise to our customers

When you make contact with us we will:

- Be welcoming and courteous
- Be fair and respectful
- Be helpful and responsive
- Provide good quality information suited to your needs
- Communicate clearly
- Let you know what we can provide or who to contact and how
- Let you know how to make suggestions for improvements
- Keep you informed

To help us achieve this we ask that you:

- Are courteous and respectful towards us
- Provide the information we need
- Make suggestions on improving our service

Our Customer Service Standards

If you telephone us we will:

- Try to answer within 10 seconds or four rings
- Tell you who you are speaking to
- Try to deal with your enquiry within one working day
- Respond to any voicemail message you leave us within one day

If you write, fax or email us we will:

- Acknowledge your e-mail within 24 hours
- Try to reply to you within 10 working days by telephone, fax letter or email

- Be clear and use plain language
- Use Braille, large print and different languages if you need us to

If you visit us we will:

- Welcome you on arrival
- Deal with you promptly keeping any delays down to 20 minutes
- Keep our reception areas clean, warm and comfortable

If we visit you we will:

- Be prompt and try to keep any delays down to 10 minutes
- Show you our South Derbyshire District Council identity card

We will ask for your views on the services you use. We will:

- Use your comments to help us improve

If you are unhappy with the service you receive, we want to know. You can

- Fill in a leaflet available from reception area
- Call us on 01283 595795
- Fill in the form online at **www.south-derbys.gov.uk**
- Write directly to us:

Customer Services Manager
South Derbyshire District Council
Civic Offices
Civic Way
Swadlincote
Derbys
DE11 0AH

If you make a complaint we will:

- Acknowledge your complaint within five working days
- Investigate your complaint
- Provide a written response within 20 working days.

Rent

Your rent is very important as it helps to pay for the housing services we provide to tenants and the maintenance of your home. We have a firm but fair collection policy - we will offer advice and support to help you manage your rent account but we will always take action against those who do not pay their rent or will not work with us to pay off their arrears.

Remember that your Housing Officer is here to help you.

We will:

- Provide a variety of payment methods so you will always have a choice about how to pay including direct debit, standing order, cash, cheque or debit card;
- Give you accurate information about your rent and other charges due;
- Send you a rent statement showing all payments and charges to your rent account 4 times a year;
- Contact you within 3 weeks if you fall behind with your rent and offer advice to help you deal with your arrears before they become too difficult to manage;
- Give you advice on your entitlement to Housing Benefit;
- Provide a Money Advice Service to help you manage your money if you are in debt or have financial problems;
- Work with you to set up a realistic and affordable agreement to clear any rent arrears or debt;
- Pursue all tenants (both former and current) who fail to reduce their arrears using a variety of recovery methods, including possession proceedings;

Repairs

We aim to provide you with a safe and comfortable home. It is in both your interest and ours to deal with repairs quickly and efficiently.

When we are working at your home, you can expect us and our contractors to:

- Show you an identification card;
- Give you at least 48 hours notice before starting any major work;
- Arrange an appointment.
- Be presentable, and polite and consider ourselves guests in your home
- Visit you between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday, unless you have agreed otherwise or there is an emergency;
- Ask your permission to come into your home and garden;
- Protect your furniture and carpets with dust sheets and ask you to move your valuables;
- Make safe any emergency work and follow health and safety regulations;
- Completely clean and clear at the end of the job;
- Make certain you are satisfied with the work and that all the services are working when the job is finished;
- Not be rude or over familiar or use bad language;

To ensure we give a fair, and efficient service all repairs are given a priority. There are three repairs priorities

Emergency: Within 24 hours, repairs that involve immediate risk to:

- Life and limb
- Serious damage to your home
- Security of the home
- Severe inconvenience

Urgent: Within 3 working days where delay could cause:

- Danger to life and limb
- Damage to your home
- A security risk
- Considerable inconvenience

Routine: Within 20 days - all other jobs.

You can report a repair to Housing Services by:

- Telephone on **01283 595808/ 595809**,
- Visiting civic offices during office hours or
- Our on-line reporting form found at:
www.south-derbys.gov.uk/Housing/HousingRepairs

If your repair is an emergency and it is “out of office” hours please contact 01283 221225 for assistance.

Sheltered Housing

We offer a comprehensive sheltered housing scheme, which includes Careline, our 24-hour social alarm response centre.

When in contact with us or receiving Sheltered Housing Services from us, you can expect to:

- be treated with courtesy, honesty and respect;
- be helped to achieve the maximum possible independence;
- be involved in decision making and to receive enough information to enable you to make informed choices;
- be treated fairly regardless of age, gender, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation or any other reason;
- be able to complain about the standard of service you receive without being victimised because you complain;
- receive a support service and warden visit at a frequency that meets your needs, Monday to Friday, and that can respond to changing needs;
- have any alarm system call answered quickly, courteously and efficiently by Careline staff;
- have the opportunity to be involved in consultation where you are able to make suggestions about your individual scheme and identify issues for future consideration;
- have a choice and to be consulted regarding decisions about facilities where you live;
- have a peaceful enjoyment of your tenancy without harassment or interference from others;

- have personal information be treated in a confidential manner.
- have your needs reviewed and a support plan agreed with you at least every six months

Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement

We will:

- Work with our communities to make sure tenants are fairly represented and can get involved;
- Provide a range of ways for involvement that meets the needs of individuals and groups;
- Help develop and support a tenant involvement structure that represents local communities;
- Provide start up grants and ongoing funding to recognised tenants' groups;
- Review annually the Tenant Participation Agreement and set an action plan in partnership with The South Derbyshire Tenant's Forum
- Make sure that all information provided to tenants and leaseholders is clear, relevant and easy to understand;
- Consult on plans to change our services or policies and ask for feedback and ideas on how you feel we can improve;
- Treat you fairly with respect and ensure involvement is accessible regardless of age, disability, sex, religion or belief, race, sexuality or any other reason.

Anti Social Behaviour

We are committed to doing all we reasonably can to provide good services and to tackle anti-social behaviour and contribute to creating a culture of respect through our housing management role and our broader involvement in neighbourhood management.

If you are affected by anti social behaviour we will:

- . provide you with details of a named officer who will investigate your complaint;
- . respond to very serious complaints such as harassment or any serious criminal activity within 24 hours;
- . respond to serious breaches of tenancy, threats or intimidation within 5 working days;
- . respond to minor breaches of tenancy or disputes within 10 working days;
- . not disclose the identity of complainants to alleged perpetrators;
- . investigate all complaints fairly and without prejudice;
- . offer mediation services where appropriate;
- . liaise with the Police, Safer South Derbyshire Partnership and other relevant agencies to ensure thorough investigations and 'joined up' responses;
- . use the lowest level of enforcement possible to resolve disputes. This may include;
 - . Serving a Notice Seeking Possession of perpetrators' homes;
 - . Court injunctions;
 - . Demotion of secure tenancies back to introductory status;
 - . Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC);
 - . Extending an Introductory Tenancy for a further six months
- . Remove victims to a place of safety where necessary
- . keep complainants informed and work with complainants to agree appropriate courses of action

We will always:

- Provide induction loops if you have hearing difficulties;
- Provide sign language or interpreters in minority languages if you let us know before hand;
- Provide information in Braille, on audiotape or large print if necessary;
- Take actions to deal with hate crime such as racial, religious or homophobic harassment, or domestic violence.

An Antisocial Behaviour Helpline is run by South Derbyshire District Council and is open from 9.30 to 4.30 pm 5 days a week. The Helpline number is 01283 595795.

Housing Options

Housing Services is committed to preventing homelessness wherever possible and appropriate.

We will;

- provide you with details of a named officer who will assist you with your housing options, process your homeless declaration or housing application;
- treat all clients courteously and fairly regardless of age, gender, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation or any other reason;
- assist you with applications to other landlords in the area to increase your housing options;
- negotiate with landlords or relatives / friends with whom you live to enable you to stay;
- arrange a convenient appointment within 5 working days of your initial enquiry;
- if you are 'homeless tonight' assist you with securing temporary accommodation;
- follow up housing options interviews and homelessness enquiries in writing, detailing decisions and advice in plain English;
- complete all homelessness investigations and advise clients within 45 days;
- process all completed housing application forms within 10 working days;
- advise all clients that their homelessness decision or housing application points award can be reviewed;
- ensure that a senior officer, not originally involved in the decisions carries out the review;
- complete all reviews and notify clients within 56 days.

What we expect from you

We have set out standards to provide you with the best service we can. In return we expect you to do the following:

- To pay your rent on time and let us know immediately if you are having difficulties paying;
- Be a good neighbour, not cause noise nuisance or behave in an antisocial way;
- Look after your home and garden, please remove any rubbish properly and report any repairs to your home that are needed;
- Give us at least 4 weeks notice if you decide to end your tenancy and leave your home in a good condition;
- Be polite and respectful when speaking to our staff, understand that there are times when staff are very busy and staff may not be immediately available;
- Let us know if we are failing to meet any of the standards

If you would like this document in another language, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please contact us. This information is also available in large print, Braille or audio format upon request.



01283 595795

e-mail: customer.services@south-derbys.gov.uk

यदि आपको ये दस्तावेज किसी दूसरी भाषा में चाहिये, या किसी टूभाषिये की सेवाओं की जरूरत है तो हमें सम्पर्क करने की कृपया करें। ये जानकारी माँग करने पर बड़े अक्षरों, ब्रेअल या आडिओ के रूप में भी उपलब्ध की जा सकती है।



01283 595795

ई-मेल: customer.services@south-derbys.gov.uk

如果你需要这份文件的中文翻译，或者需要传译员的帮助，请联系我们 这些数据也备有 大字体印本、盲人点字和录音带，欢迎索取。



01283 595795

电邮: customer.services@south-derbys.gov.uk

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਸਰੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀਆਂ ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ

ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਮੰਗ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬ੍ਰੇਅਲ ਜਾਂ ਆਡਿਉ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਉਪਲੱਬਧ ਕਰਵਾਈ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।



01283 595795

ਈਮੇਲ: customer.services@southderbys.gov.uk

اگر آپ یہ ڈاکیومنٹ کسی اور زبان میں چاہتے ہوں، یا اگر آپ کو کسی ترجمان کی خدمات درکار ہوں، تو براہ کرم ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

درخواست کرنے پر یہ معلومات بڑے پرنٹ، بریل یا آڈیو فارمیٹ میں بھی دستیاب ہیں۔



فون: 01283 595795

ای میل: customer.services@south-derbys.gov.uk

Service Standards

Published by South Derbyshire District Council
Civic Offices, Civic Way, Swadlincote.

Derbyshire DE11 0AH.

Phone: 01283 221000

Fax: 01283 595964

Email: customer.services@south-derbys.gov.uk

Website: www.south-derbys.gov.uk

