

Tailoring local services to local needs

In this special edition newsletter I am pleased to advise you of the local offers that we have developed in consultation with you.

We have reviewed the results of surveys and consultations to identify the most important services to you and the issues that impact your quality of life to develop a range of local offers that are tailored to your requirements. We have developed a range of local offers around the Tenant Service Authority (TSA) standards of Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, Home and Neighbourhood and Community.

Deborah Upton - Assistant Director Housing and Corporate Services

Tenant Services Authority standards and local offers - our duty to you

The TSA, which regulates housing providers, consulted residents during 2009 about the best way to identify areas of importance. Following this consultation the TSA

developed the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, which became effective from 1 April 2010. This required that we set out in our Annual Report to Tenants 2010 how our services meet the TSA's obligations, and to work with tenants and leaseholders to identify any areas for

improvement in the following year for the standards below:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment - which includes requirements relating to customer service, choice and complaints; involvement and empowerment and understanding and responding to diverse needs

of tenants.

- Home - which includes requirements relating to quality of accommodation and repairs and maintenance.
- Tenancy - which includes requirements relating to allocations; rent* and tenure.
- Neighbourhood and community - which includes requirements relating to neighbourhood management; local area co-operation and anti-social behaviour.
- Value for money.

We are required to deliver on these commitments and be held accountable by you for our compliance with all the



standards in all areas where we operate. We have recently developed a new Resident Involvement Structure to provide you with a range of ways, for you to feedback, challenge, and scrutinise the service we provide to you. To do this we will also be working with members of our tenant and leasehold focus groups and the Housing Improvement Board to monitor our progress, and assess how we have improved the services in areas of weakness which tenants and leaseholders identified in our Annual Report to Tenants 2010. We will also be working with you to develop our Annual Report to you this year.

Developing local standards for you

In addition to meeting the national standards, there is a requirement that we consult with tenants and leaseholders on the desirability and scope of local offers for the following standards:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment
- Home

- Neighbourhood and community

Local offers are about developing local standards with tenants and leaseholders to improve our services to you locally and identify what issues are important to you. Following your feedback we are required to advise you of the local offers we have established through consultation with you by 1 April 2011.

How we developed local offers with you

We worked with you when developing local offers to provide you with the opportunity to feedback, challenge and influence how housing services are delivered in your community as follows:

- Strengths and weaknesses exercise around the Tenant Services Authority standards with residents in summer 2010.
- Your feedback from the survey in the summer 2010 edition of Housing Matters.
- Consultation with the

- Sheltered Housing Forum.
- Analysis of your complaints.
- Feedback from a range of customer satisfaction surveys.
- Working with Young Inspectors to prioritise issues for young customers.
- Feedback from focus groups and residents meetings.
- Consultation with the Asset Management Group, which includes tenants, on the Medway Decent Homes standards.
- Informal feedback from housing officers.
- Analysis of anti-social behaviour complaints.
- Survey results from the spring 2011 edition of Housing Matters.
- Consultation with Sheltered Housing residents.
- Development of partnership working with other housing organisations.
- Development of offers with the relevant focus groups.
- Feedback provided at Community Futures workshops.
- Continued consultation with residents via housing officers and estate inspections.

How we will monitor local offers

To ensure that we are delivering our local offers and to broaden and strengthen opportunities for involvement, following consultation with tenants, we have created a new structure for tenant involvement. The diagram on the following page shows how tenants will be involved in reviewing services and making recommendations for improvements and changes. Service improvement groups (SIGs), made up of tenants and leaseholders working with staff, will be monitoring if we are meeting the National Standards and our local offers.

Local offers will also be monitored by the Housing Improvement Board, which will also be established to oversee the work of the service improvement groups. Members of the Housing Improvement Board will ensure that tenants are fully involved in shaping services and making decisions about what matters to tenants. The Housing Improvement Board will be evaluating the services delivered to tenants and making recommendations for change and improvements.

We will also keep you updated with how we are progressing with local offers through action plans at our focus groups, in Housing Matters, on the website and at our contact points and during our housing surgeries.





1. Tenant involvement and empowerment

- **Customer service and choice** – information and communication that suits your needs
- **Complaints** – a clear, simple and accessible approach that ensures complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly
- **Involvement and empowerment** – offering a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of our housing
- **Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of our customers** – making sure our services are accessible to all

1. What you requested

Providing you with greater opportunity for involvement within the resident engagement strategy. Through consultation we will provide a variety of options for you to become involved, so you can feedback at a time and manner that is convenient to you.

1. Your local offer

Formal publication of the new resident involvement structure to highlight the many ways you can become involved. The new structure is even more flexible, so you can provide feedback at a time and in a manner that is convenient to you. We have also published a resident involvement calendar to keep you informed of all our events in 2011.

2. What you requested

Holding local housing management surgeries with appropriate staff in an agreed location in your area.

2. Your local offer

Local housing management surgeries have been established in an agreed location on estates. Residents are consulted on how frequently they would want the surgeries held and what issues to cover.

2. Home standard

- **Quality of accommodation** – homes that meet and maintain the Decent Homes Standard
- **Repairs and maintenance** – cost effective, high quality repairs that are done right first time

1. What you requested

Development of a Medway Homes Standard to follow on from the Decent Homes Standard. Developed with residents to ensure all properties which have capital works undertaken meet an agreed standard of upgrade and are uniform.

1. Your local offer

We have been working with residents who are members of the Repairs Focus Group and Asset Management Group to establish a Medway Homes Standard for all our properties.

We will also let you know in advance of any major works planned to your home.

- **Quality of accommodation** – homes that meet and maintain the Decent Homes Standard
- **Repairs and maintenance** – cost effective, high quality repairs that are done right first time

2. What you requested

Assessing, with customers, capital work that might be due in a particular property or estate and whether the work planned to be undertaken over the next five years could be conducted in a single period. This would mean a customer would get the next five years' work in one go, with only one period of disruption. This would reflect local improvement priorities and allow us to adjust timescales accordingly or complete the works to one street in one go.

2. Your local offer

When developing any capital works to an estate or area we will work with customers in the area and customer focus groups to prioritise the work to be undertaken and establish with customers if they would like the work completed in a single period, rather than to be spread over a five year period. Monitoring and reporting standards have been agreed with customers and are shared with all customers at each focus group.



3. Neighbourhood and community standard

- **Neighbourhood management** – working with you to maintain safe areas to live and improve your neighbourhoods
- **Local area co-operation** – working with partners to promote social, environmental and economic well-being

1. What you requested

Following feedback a number of Sheltered Housing customers have requested the term Sheltered Housing is re-branded to a more descriptive term.

1. Your local offer

Following consultation with residents in each scheme the term Sheltered Housing was rebranded to Homes for Independent Living.

2. What you requested

To look at methods to reduce anti-social behaviour in specific areas.

2. Your local offer

We are working with customers in areas such as Arden Street to redesign their estate to reduce instances of anti-social behaviour.

In consultation with customers a programme of planting and fencing is being established to reduce instances of anti-social behaviour in properties, provide better lighting and utilising the Community Payback Team to remove graffiti and conduct weeding in specified areas.

Residents in Cornwallis Avenue have also been working with us to develop measures to increase security in the neighbourhood and prevent flytipping of rubbish.

Following customers' requests to the council we have been working with the police to help in establishing local police surgeries in Benenden Manor.

