

Housing Service

Service Statement 2018 – 2021

Service Director: Paul Jones
Head of Service: Philip Soderquest
Lead Member: John Riddle

March 2018

Housing Service

Purpose:

To lead the Council's place shaping role in promoting housing growth across the region.

To manage, maintain and repair the dedicated housing stock for Council tenants and leaseholders.

To secure the provision of decent homes for all residents and to create sustainable communities across the County.

Primary functions - Strategic Housing.

- Housing Options and Homelessness Service (including Out of Hours Service)
- Private Sector Housing Initiatives
- Refugee and Asylum Seeker Service
- Policy & Strategy
- Management of Unauthorised Encampments
- Community-Led Housing

Primary functions - Housing Delivery.

- Estate Management
- Income Management
- Anti-Social Behaviour management
- Gypsy Roma Traveller Service
- Homefinder Service
- Leaseholder Management
- Resident Involvement
- Right to Buy Management
- Tenancy Management
- Voids and Allocations Management
- Welfare and Advice Service

Primary functions - Housing Maintenance.

- Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Service
- Emergency Out of Hours Service
- Annual gas and solid fuel statutory testing
- Management of planned work programmes

Service Parameters

Key Service Facts and Figures – Strategic Housing.

- Monitors long term empty homes throughout the County;
- Brought back to use 128 empty private properties in 2017/18
- Processed 279 Homelessness applications in 2017/18;
- Provided support to 575 people to be housed through the Homelessness service in 2017/18;
- Supported 15 Refugee families (63 people, 26 adults, 37 children) to resettle in Northumberland during 2017/18
- Managed 70 Unauthorised Encampments (313 trailers) during 2017/18
- Approved 5 applications for Community Housing Funding in 2017/18

Key Service Facts and Figures – Housing Operations.

- Manages the Council owned social housing portfolio consisting of 8,559 rented homes and 259 leaseholders;
- Manages 2 Gypsy Roma Traveller sites in Hartford Bridge and Lynemouth;
- Allocated 750 council properties in 2017/18;
- Processed 85 Right to Buy applications in 2017/18;
- Provided financial and tenancy sustainability advice to over 1000 Council tenants in 2017/18;
- Provides a variety of opportunities for Council tenants and Leaseholders to directly engage with the service via a dedicated Resident Involvement team;
- Collects and manages an annual rent debit of £32,000,000 and collected 98.49% of this debit during 2017/18
- Provided support to 2,643 people to be housed through the Homefinder service in 2017/18;

Key Service Facts and Figures – Housing Maintenance.

- Undertook 36,722 responsive repairs to council properties in 2017/18
- Carried out 8,800 gas services to council properties in 2017/18
- Carried out 180-solid fuel services to council properties in 2017/18
- Completed external painting of 1075 council properties in 2017/18
- Provided out of hours callout service to council housing and public buildings
- Provided repairs and maintenance across two gypsy roma traveller sites in Hartford Bridge and Lyneburn Cottages
- Delivered 190 handyman service jobs for the elderly to council properties in 2017/18

- Inspected 219 tenant improvement requests in council properties in 2017/18

Summary of Service Resources at 1 April 2018

Function	Number of FTE posts	Staffing Expenditure	Non Staffing Expenditure	Income	Capital investment
Housing Services (GF)	38.66	£1,342,340	£1,339,600	£989,500	£485,000
Housing Operations (HRA)	84	£1,805,300	£20,789,870	£32,682,080	£9,916,330
Housing Maintenance (HRA)	116.23	£3,949,200	£3,489,760	£181,090	£0
Total for Service	207.88	£7,096,840	£25,619,230	£33,852,670	£10,401,330

Contribution to the Corporate Plan

[How] We want to be efficient, open & work for everyone

The corporate plan requires us to be resourceful, making every pound count - we will review the structure of Housing Management Service to ensure income is maximised & complete a review of the Common Allocation Policy to maximise use of stock and increase income.

We will review our Tenant Involvement Framework with the intention of empowering residents within estates managed by NCC.

[Living] We want you to feel safe healthy & cared for

The Council wants to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Through development of the Homelessness Service and the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act requirements the Council will support our vulnerable residents to ensure they have somewhere safe to live.

The Council invests in its housing stock through both capital investment and by providing an effective and responsive repairs and maintenance service, to

enable tenants to live in an environment where they feel safe and comfortable.

We are reviewing our Sheltered Housing Service and our aim is to provide high quality housing in self-contained accommodation where tenants may live independently or with support and managed care when needed. Through this approach we wish to enable older people aged over 60 to live independently longer in the community and to reduce their reliance on health services and delay admission into long term care.

Through promotion of our Property and Tenant Accreditation schemes we will ensure that homes are safe and warm and suitable to live in whilst supporting tenants through accreditation to access properties in the private rented sector.

We support our vulnerable tenants to access all available benefits and budgeting advice through joint funding of a money advice worker with CAB. This worker works directly with our tenants to help maximise income. We also work with new and existing tenants who were once, or still are, part of our Armed Forces, with two Armed Forces Veteran Workers based in Housing Services helping veterans and serving personnel access the help and support they need.

The Housing teams actively support Safeguarding and contribute to both the Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards and sub-committees, ensuring that the workforce are appropriately trained to identify and support those at risk.

[Enjoying] We want you to love where you Live

We want people to be proud of where they live and have developed Estate Gradings for all of our Estates and we will roll out a new programme of Estate Inspections and Walkabouts with residents and partners to help develop and improve areas.

We are also developing a Volunteer Policy to work specifically with Asylum Seekers and Refugees living in Northumberland benefiting not only the families being supported, but also helping to engage with the local host communities where they live. The proposal will therefore have a strategic benefit in supporting the Council's wider objectives for community engagement.

The Council was allocated £1.314m in 2017 from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Community Housing Fund (CHF). Housing Services will use this funding to work in partnership with local communities to develop Community Led Housing (CLH). The aim is to establish a new bespoke development vehicle to facilitate and encourage local communities to accelerate the construction of community led housing.

[Connecting] We want to have access to the things you need

Our new Housing Management system will introduce a Tenant Portal where tenants will be able to access their personal accounts, self-serve and access more services on-line

[Learning] We want you to achieve and realise your potential

We recognise that for our services to be sustainable and for succession planning it is important to have appropriate recruitment processes in place. We actively support the appointment of apprentices giving people in our county the opportunity to develop skills that will support future employability for the rest of their working lives.

We will contribute to a Joint North of Tyne ESF Bid to develop employment support for workless housing households, through a team of Employability Officers. We have a direct interest in supporting tenancies and our communities and have the mechanisms to engage directly with those of our tenants who are workless. We have an established relationship with our tenants and operate in areas with high levels of deprivation.

We have developed two Learning Hives, one in Blyth and one in Alnwick in partnership with the Northern Learning Trust, and funded by Prosper. They provide an identified need in the community for help with finding work, improving skills and employability.

External Validation

Inspections

We are members of the Housing Quality Network who have introduced a number of accreditations for:

- Income Management
- Repairs and maintenance
- Estate Management Lettings

We will explore these over the next three years as they are a visible sign that the service meets or exceeds good practice standards and offers a best in class service to tenants.

We are actively engaged with The Tenant Participation Service (TPAS) through which we seek to develop and enhance current service delivery. We intend to explore accreditation for Tenant engagement, to evidence that we are actively working with, listening and responding to the needs of our tenants.

Customer Perception

- **Tenant Involvement Framework:**

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the regulator for all housing providers.

It promotes a co-regulatory approach to service delivery which underpins the need for tenants to be involved and included in how the services they receive are monitored and scrutinised.

A dedicated Resident Involvement Team was set up in July 2015 to engage specifically with Council tenants and Leaseholders. Their remit is to develop and deliver an overarching framework of engagement opportunities for customers to get more involved with Housing Services.

- **Benchmarking**

We continue to participate in informal benchmarking via the sharing of regular intelligence with other social housing providers throughout the North East and are looking to develop Regional benchmarking groups.

Priorities for 2018 – 2021

Priority Area	Key Milestones
(Carried forward from 2017/18) Implement Northgate NPS Housing Management System	Complete solution design workshops and build new system utilising internal resources [July 2017] Develop robust testing programme and conduct User Acceptance Testing (UAT) with staff. R&M to undertake end to end testing from NPS through to Total Mobile Optimise Introduction of new repairs category A2 (14 calendar days) to go live with new Optimise roll-out designed to give tenants an improved service Programming of staff training in preparation for Optimise go live Conduct training needs analysis (January 2018)

	<p>Develop and implement new documentation, letters and forms (March 2018).</p> <p>Develop training manuals and course content (April 2018).</p> <p>Provide training to Housing Services and Customer Service Centre staff (June 2018).</p> <p>Migrate OHMS data for Go Live (June 2018)</p> <p>Develop cutover plan for repairs (May 2018)</p> <p>Go live July 2018</p>
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Priority Area	Key Milestones
<p>Develop Community engagement and social responsibility through partnership working.</p>	<p>Learning Hives</p> <p>Continue to support and monitor the Newsham Community Matters Project.</p> <p>Continue to support and monitor the Alnwick Matters Project.</p> <p>Tenants/Residents Forum</p> <p>Review the role and membership of the Tenant forum</p> <p>GRT Community</p> <p>Develop engagement/support/training with GRT Communities in Hartford Bridge and Lynemouth</p> <p>Partnership Working</p> <p>Contribute to wider partnership events with other NCC Departments and initiatives on our Estates</p> <p>Continue to work with colleagues in the Youth Service and Adolescent Services in developing information for young tenants across the county, providing vital information in order to maximise sustainable tenancies (Ongoing)</p> <p>Explore the development of a Volunteer Policy to support the community engagement work with Refugees and Asylum Seekers</p>

	Further develop routes into volunteering and employment for Refugee families settled under the SVPRS and VCRS schemes
Review of HFN's Tenancy Agreements	Revise Council's Tenancy Agreement and its underpinning terms and conditions [
Service review of Allocations Procedures	Complete Service review of the Common Allocation Policy to ensure that it supports the delivery of the Council's statutory responsibilities and partners' priorities Complete service review of Void property process and procedures
Develop Estate gradings and Neighbourhood profiles	Develop an Estate Grading programme across all Council housing areas Roll out estate Grading programme with tenants Review Estate Walkabouts in partnership with wider services Develop neighbourhood profiles for every Council housing area area Use profiles to tailor services to individual areas
(Carried forward from 2017/18) Complete service review of Sheltered Housing Accommodation	Prepare report on results of review for informal Cabinet and Implement recommendations and next steps Work with Adult Services to identify the priorities for the provision of housing for older people and contribute to Extra Care and Supported Living Strategy
Consider the Introduction of Service Charges in Sheltered Accommodation	Research and develop a process for Service Charges Prepare report to Informal Cabinet to include recommendations and next steps Develop implementation plan and carry out consultation exercise with residents
(carried forward from 2017/18) Develop an Action Plan to mitigate the roll out of universal Credit	Review and revise structure/resources to support the full service introduction of Universal Credit Review policies and procedures i.e. rent and allocations
Review all Housing Management procedures	Develop review plan

in line with current legislation	Carry out review of all relevant procedures
Consider use of Council's hard to let properties for temporary accommodation	<p>Determine the existing gaps in existing temporary accommodation provision and identify the need & type required</p> <p>Review the existing hard to let properties to determine suitability of type & locations</p> <p>Conduct a pilot of one property, bringing it into use, reviewing its effectiveness and usage on a rolling monthly basis, applying any learning to any subsequent properties brought on line</p> <p>Work with other Supported Accommodation providers to identify if any properties would be suitable for use with their clients.</p>
Review all existing Housing Strategies to identify whether they are still fit for purpose and reflect the implications of new legislation including the Housing & Planning Act, Homeless Reduction Act etc	<p>Refresh the Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2013 – 2018</p> <p>Refresh the the Homelessness Strategy for Northumberland 2016 - 2021 and its associated Action Plan to ensure that the priorities remain appropriate following the implementation of the Homeless reduction Act and the priority detailed in page 6 of the Corporate Plan “We want you to feel Safe, Healthy and Cared for”</p> <p>Monitor the implementation and delivery of the Private Sector Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2015 - 2020 Action Plan [March 2019]</p> <p>When final guidance is issued, update the Tenancy Strategy to reflect the requirements within the Housing & Planning Act for the implementation of flexible tenancies [September 2018]</p>
(carried forward from 2017/18) Implement a process for temporary stopping places for the GRT community	<p>Final sites to be agree by Head of Service and Policy Board Member</p> <p>Completion of Remedial Works to identified sites to be progressed</p> <p>Implementation to be progressed during 2018</p>
(carried forward from	The application of the EDMO process for 30 properties to

<p>2017/18) Completion of Lease and Repair and Acquisition and Repair scheme to be achieved</p>	<p>ensure the achievement of the Lease and Repair scheme in line with HCA funding requirements [March 2019]</p> <p>The acquisition of 5 properties to ensure the achievement of the Lease and Repair scheme in line with HCA funding requirements [March 2018]</p> <p>Housing Operations Team to manage these properties on a daily basis</p>
<p>Allocation of the Government grant to support Community-Led Housing across the county to support the delivery within the Council's Corporate Plan [page 10] "We want to Attract More and Better Jobs"</p>	<p>Review in consultation with Director and Portfolio Holder the opportunities and options to support development through use of NCC land assets</p> <p>To work with Development Management to identify and encourage landowners/developers able to support provision of CLH either as part of larger or individual developments</p> <p>To work with Registered Providers to encourage and support provision of CLH either as part of larger or individual developments</p>
<p>Continue to implement the Council's offer to support the re-settlement of 48 families under the revised Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) & the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS)</p>	<p>Additional 33 families to be resettled in Northumberland by December 2019</p>
<p>Develop the services available for Asylum Seekers placed in Northumberland, working closely with the contract provider (currently G4S) to support vulnerable people.</p>	<p>In partnership with other services & agencies to develop services to support Asylum Seekers including access to Education for children and ESOL provision for adults</p>
<p>Continue to promote Safeguarding across the Housing workforce, particularly with regard to recognising the signs of</p>	<p>Ensure all appropriate training is delivered to staff and that the Record of Learning is completed</p> <p>Develop effective pathways to ensure that all staff are aware of the correct routes for referrals</p>

<p>Domestic abuse, Modern Day Slavery and Sexual Exploitation</p>	<p>Develop an Housing Offer to support the Police Protocol when working with victims of Modern Day Slavery (MDS) or Sexual Exploitation.</p> <p>Work in partnership with DAHA to ensure that the housing offer for council tenants recognises and supports victims of Domestic Abuse</p>
<p>Contribute to the development and delivery of the Local Plan</p>	<p>Work in Partnership with Strategic Planning colleagues to determine the offer for Housing, contributing to the development of the Local Plan</p>
<p>Contribute to the delivery of the Housing Offer specified within the NoT Devolution agreement.</p>	<p>Consider the use of Shared Ownership on Rural Exception Sites</p> <p>Consider the role of Housing Associations plus partnerships with local communities</p> <p>Completion of a county-wide housing needs assessments and the locating of potential rural development sites</p> <p>Robust plan for liaison with land owners including Church of England (Diocese of Newcastle) and redundant community assets or empty homes</p> <p>Develop the role of the NE Community led Network to support groups and broker conversations</p>
<p>Develop Income Generation Opportunities to contribute to the Housing Services General Fund budget</p>	<p>Develop a proposal for a Managed Services Scheme for private landlords</p> <p>Review the Private Landlord Property Accreditation Scheme and opportunities for charging within that.</p>
<p>Complete a review of the internal stores service to ensure value for money is achieved</p>	<p>Conduct an audit of the existing process and benchmark against other providers</p> <p>produce recommendations for the stores service</p>
<p>Complete a review out of hours call-out service within R&M</p>	<p>Reviewing existing out of hours call centre SLA and operations trades terms and conditions to establish value for money and tenant's service level</p> <p>produce recommendations for the OOH service</p>
<p>Working in partnership</p>	<p>R&M using Operatives feedback and Team Leader</p>

with asset management team to share information regarding properties condition to more effectively maintain and upgrade stock	<p>knowledge to update Capital Team on areas of Housing Properties that require major works to improve tenants homes</p> <p>interrogate total mobile and nps to identify numbers of repairs types to properties</p>
Health and Safety - New working practices and workforce investment	<p>Continued professional development in workforce to ensure safe working practices for employees and stakeholders</p> <p>Complete evaluation of application of health and safety training requirements to ensure compliance with legislation</p>
Review of delivery of R&M service to explore opportunities and apply best practice in line with industry standards	<p>benchmark existing service against peer organisations</p> <p>monitor industry new initiatives and best practices coming through as part of industry developments</p>

Performance framework

Measure	Outturn 2016-17	Outturn 2017-18	Target 2018-19	Target 2019-20	Target 2020-21
% of current tenant rent collected	98.28%	98.49%	98%	98%	98%
% rent lost through vacant council housing	1.36%	2.08%	1.5%	1%	1%
% of Homefinder applications registered within 10 days	75.91%	64.02%	90%	90%	90%
Number of private sector dwellings vacant for more than 6 months returned into occupation	181	128	160	160	160
% of priority unauthorised encampments moved on within 10 working days of arrival	91.67%	98.55%	90%	90%	90%
% of solid fuel servicing certificates completed	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
% of gas servicing certificates completed	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

% of emergency repairs completed within 24 hours	96.85%	99.43%	99.2%	TBA	TBA
% of responsive repairs completed within target time	96.15%	99.31%	98%	TBA	TBA
% of Homelessness cases prevented within 56 days (new performance indicator)	n/a	n/a	to be agreed	to be agreed	to be agreed
% of Homelessness cases relieved within 56 days (new performance indicator)	n/a	n/a	to be agreed	to be agreed	to be agreed
% of Homelessness cases where a Homeless decision has been made (new performance indicator)	n/a	n/a	to be agreed	to be agreed	to be agreed