

Derby Homes News

Autumn 2020



01332 888777

www.derbyhomes.org

ContactUs@derbyhomes.org



 @DerbyHomes
 facebook.com/derbyhomes

Welcome to our autumn edition of Derby Homes News. This time, we're writing to you in the middle of the second lockdown, with little uncertainty of what measures will be in place for Derby or nationally when we reach the planned end date. This makes it very difficult to publish information that clearly tells you how our services will be running. We have tried to give you a simple guide to how we're responding to the pandemic and how any future restrictions or lockdowns may potentially affect us.

We will always do our best to prioritise your health and safety, which means prioritising emergency or urgent work, helping the most vulnerable and ensuring measures are in place to reduce risks where we have to see you in person to deliver our services.

During any lockdowns, our phone lines will be busy and we may need to suspend non-essential work, so please make sure you only contact us for urgent or emergency repairs and use online services where possible.

Most of our other services are managing to operate as normal, but relying more on remote working, phone calls and email or messaging, so please don't think our services have stopped because we're all still here!

To stay up to date with service changes as they happen, please take two minutes to do the following. Log on to MyAccount and make sure we have your current email address. ✉ Give us a quick follow on Facebook  and Twitter.  We can't publish a newsletter for each Government update, but we'll always post online to keep you informed.

We've tried to include a mix of information this time. Even though things are challenging and stressful, our lives and work goes on and there are a lot of positive things happening in the city.

For example, Derby has been awarded £2.4million of funding - half from the Government's Next Steps Assistance Programme, half from Derby City Council - to continue our work to tackle homelessness. It will be used for specialist accommodation for rough sleepers, and to provide floating support service over the next three years.

Until next time, stay safe and let's do the right thing for Derby.

m. m. m. p. h. y.



by keeping our distance



by staying home if we have symptoms, and applying for a test

let's do the right thing for Derby

COVID-19 - control the virus

derby.gov.uk/coronavirus



by washing our hands



by wearing a face covering, if we can



QUICK UPDATES

Rent Free Weeks

The next rent free weeks (for those whose rent is calculated over 48 weeks) fall on the weeks starting:

21 December 2020
28 December 2020

Remember, if you are up to date (one week in advance) with your rent, you can choose not to pay during these weeks. You should continue to pay if you need to ensure your account is one week in advance. If you are in arrears, you must still pay during these weeks to reduce the amount you owe.



New Allocations Policy

The Housing Register reopened in September, following the first lockdown and properties are being advertised as normal with current guidance that allocating properties can continue in COVID-secure ways.

If you have an existing housing application, you will need to check that all your details are correct and what properties you are able to bid for - you may have been reprioritised under the new 'Needs Bands'. If you're unsure, or need help with your application, contact the Housing Options Team directly at housing.options@derby.gov.uk or call **01332 888777** (option 5).

Downsizing? We could give you £560

Have you got too much space and are looking to move? We can offer a financial incentive if you move to a smaller home. Some properties advertised on Derby Homefinder even give preference to those who are releasing a larger property.

You can apply for the **Home Release Scheme** if you are moving to a smaller property with another Council, Housing Association or a private landlord. For more information, contact the Housing Options Team at housing.options@derby.gov.uk or call **01332 888777** (option 5).

Christmas Opening Times

Over the Christmas period our offices and phone lines will be closed from **Friday 25 December** until **Friday 1 January 2021**. We will reopen as normal on **Monday 4 January 2021**.



Pension Credit: Are you eligible?

From 1 August 2020, the BBC started charging those aged over 75 and not on Pension Credit for their TV Licence. The current TV Licence fee is £157.50. More than 3 million households are eligible to claim Pension Credit but one in three don't claim, often because they aren't aware they are entitled to it.

Pension credit is an income-related benefit aimed at people over state pension age offering a top-up to their income. It's available to single pensioners (including widows and widowers), as well as couples.

It's easy to check your eligibility. Phone the pension credit claim line on **0800 99 1234** or you can find out more and claim online at www.gov.uk/pension-credit.

Job Centre Opening Hours

From **30 November**, Derby City Jobcentre's normal opening hours will be extended. On Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday they will be available from **9AM - 8PM**. On Wednesdays the office will be open **10AM - 8PM**.

The office is still closed to the public to comply with national restrictions, but staff will be on hand to assist customers and residents of Derby either by phone or digital channels.

From **Saturday 5 December 2020 9AM to 5PM** the centre's usual service will re-open: appointments can be booked in advance or by drop-in on the day.

**Please call or check online in case current plans change.*

Annual General Meeting | Rounding up the Year



This year's Annual General Meeting was an unusual one - it was held virtually, and our first meeting ever broadcast live on YouTube!

At the meeting, we officially launched our Annual Report, which gives an overview of our activities, achievements and performance for the financial year 2019/20. It follows the style of our free history booklet by taking a walk through the year, month-by-month.

We'd love to know what you think. Did you read it? Was

it useful? Did you learn something?



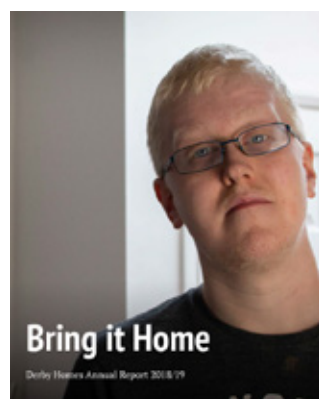
The full report can be found on our website at www.derbyhomes.org/about/annualreport

AWARDS | Something to Celebrate!

Speaking of our Annual Report: last year's edition has been Highly Commended by the Public Finance Innovation (PFI) Awards (fourth time shortlisting too)!

The PFI Awards are a national ceremony, and we were competing in the 'Achievement in Financial Reporting and Accountability' category, alongside major public organisations such as the University of Edinburgh and UK Export Finance, the Government's export credit agency.

The theme of our "Highly Commended", 2018/19 annual report was 'Bring it Home', inspired by a poem written and performed by Derby Homes' tenant Matthew Fowler - you can watch Matthew performing his poem on our YouTube channel.



And if that wasn't enough, we've also been awarded the RSPCA Silver 'PawPrints' Award.

This celebrates good practice from local authorities and housing providers in relation to animal welfare. We were recognised for our on-going commitment to encouraging responsible pet ownership and animal welfare amongst our tenants.



Since attaining our first silver award in 2017, we continue to promote our Pets Policy, and work with local animal charities on our localised customer priorities to reduce dog fouling and educate pet owners on our estates.

We also issue pet permits either at the start of a new tenancy or retrospectively for existing tenants, and promote partnership organisations who can give residents advice and assistance on pet ownership.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE | Working in Your Home

We were still able to carry out urgent repairs during previous lockdowns and outside of lockdowns, all routine repairs will still follow COVID-secure guidelines with just a few modifications to our usual way of working.

Whilst in your home, we'll be taking extra precautions and you can help us ensure things go smoothly and keep everyone safe.

We will:

- ✓ Call you beforehand to explain how the visit will go
- ✓ Call on the day of visit to check if you have symptoms
- ✓ Wash our hands before, during and after job (using our own towel)

- ✓ Follow national distancing guidance
- ✓ Use PPE, if required
- ✓ Safely remove all wipes, gloves and materials

What you can do:

- ✓ Tell us if you have any specific concerns about our visit
- ✓ Open your door and stand back when we arrive
- ✓ Ventilate the work area if possible, e.g. open windows
- ✓ Follow government distancing guidance
- ✓ Stay in a separate room during the visit

- ✗ No need to provide drinks, but thanks!
- ✗ No need to sign anything – any essential documents will be emailed or posted to you

HEALTH AND SAFETY | Face Coverings

We've got our masks! Have you?

In line with the government recommendations, we've issued face masks to our staff (thanks UTS Jaymac Derby).

These are different to the PPE that our operatives wear when they visit you at home to carry out repairs. Cloth face masks are largely intended to protect others, not the wearer, against the spread of coronavirus because they cover the nose and mouth, which are the main confirmed sources of transmission.

If we need to meet you in person, we'll still be following the appropriate social distancing and hygiene rules to the best of our ability - but we'll be wearing masks as well. There's more info on the different types of face masks, and how to make your own, on the government's website.

www.gov.uk/coronavirus



WASH



HANDS

COVER



FACE

MAKE



SPACE

100 Years of Council Housing

As you might have heard us mention once or twice, this year marks the 100th anniversary of council housing in Derby. In 1920, the keys were handed over to the very first tenants, to newly build homes on Victory Road. The 1919 Housing Act had allowed the large-scale building of new council houses across the country after the First World War, and marked the start of state-owned housing in Britain.

Over the past twelve months, we've been exploring the history of council housing since the Act was first passed, and looking at how things have changed over the decades. We've taken part in all kinds of special events: we've planted trees, brewed coffee, created our own beer... and no doubt many of you will have seen our staff out and about in their bright pink t-shirts.

Under normal circumstances, we would have been celebrating the centenary this summer at Marble Hall, alongside our friends, tenants and partners who've helped to make the past year amazing. Unfortunately, we had to pause the party for the moment, but that doesn't mean we can't remember the good times! On our website and Facebook, you'll find plenty of photos from the past year, along with a specially produced booklet [FREE download] on the history of council housing over the past century. **Here's to the next 100!**



CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT | Working with You

Virtual Panel

We've recently launched our Virtual Panel: a new way for you to get involved with us remotely and have your say on the service areas that matter to you. This is a chance to directly impact the services that affect you, and you don't even have to leave the house!



How does it work?

Head over to www.derbyhomes.org/get-involved and click the button to sign-up to the virtual panel.

Choose the service areas that you're interested in, and when we hold a consultation we'll send you an email with a link to a survey to complete. It's that simple! You can choose your own level of engagement, and there is no obligation to fill out any of the consultations you get sent.

Customer Voice

Our 'Customer Voice' panel have been working on their 'Quality of Repairs' project over the last year.

Though progress has been slower than they hoped due to COVID-19, they have spent the year consulting with customers, interviewing staff and attending team meetings (pre-COVID) to gather evidence and looking at ways to improve the repairs service for staff and customers.

They have made 10 recommendations which will be presented to the next Operational Board meeting on 3 December 2020. You can read the report in full by going to derbyhomes.cmis.uk.com/derbyhomes, selecting **Current Meetings** and then **Operational Board**.



How the pandemic has affected our services

REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENT WORK

Status: Reduced service during lockdowns. We may only accept essential repairs during lockdowns. Appointments may take longer than usual due to staffing issues. Some scheduled works may also need to be paused during lockdowns. Social distancing and other COVID safe measures are in place.

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Status: Operating as normal. Online and email contact is the best way to reach us and report repairs. If necessary, you can still call us, but during lockdowns we may prioritise emergencies and the vulnerable.

ALLOCATION OF COUNCIL PROPERTIES

Status: Operating as normal. Derby Homefinder is fully open and allocation of general needs properties is back to normal and was still able to continue in safe ways during the November 2020 lockdown. The new allocations policy (2020-25) applies.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE & CLEANING

Status: Operating as normal and on track. We have increased cleaning in some higher risk areas such as the council's Category 2 sheltered schemes, Parkland View and Rose Homes.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Status: Operating as normal with alternative delivery. Services will be delivered remotely where possible and visits will take place where necessary, following COVID-secure guidelines.



**CORONA
SERVICE U**

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All information c
publishing, sub

Remember, this information might change at any time if new national or local measures come into force or if the pandemic impacts our services in other ways. Always check our website, or follow us on social media, for the most up-to-date service updates.



@DerbyHomes



facebook.com/derbyhomes

COVID-19 UPDATES

NOVEMBER

correct at time of
project to change

FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Status: Taking place only where necessary and safe. Most of our services will take place remotely where they can, with only the most essential visits and appointments taking place in COVID-secure ways. **Lockdowns may change this.**

OFFICES & BUILDINGS

Status: Suspended. All offices remain closed to the public for drop in services. You should contact us before attempting to visit. Where visits are necessary, we will arrange directly with you.

Community rooms remain closed until we can open them safely.

HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Status: Operating as normal. We are open as usual, albeit customer contact is operating remotely. Anyone experiencing homelessness should please contact us on 01332 888777 (Option 5).

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Status: Alternative delivery. We continue with online and telephone engagement and surveys, but face-to-face group meetings and events remain on hold and under review.

Join our Virtual Panel to get involved.

RENT & SERVICE CHARGE PAYMENTS

Status: Operating as normal. Payments can be made via direct debit, standing order, online, telephone and at local PayPoint outlets. If you are having difficulty paying your rent during this time, please contact us.

VOLUNTEERS | Making a Difference

Lockdown really highlighted just how much of an impact volunteers make to their communities. We heard stories about people all over Derby who've been stepping up to help during the coronavirus pandemic, alongside our regular volunteers who have been coming up with new ways to support vulnerable and isolated people.

To celebrate, we asked some of our volunteers to record themselves describing what volunteering means to them, and we've been hearing some amazing, inspirational stories.

Cindy, a user of Tintagel Close Common Room, has been volunteering with the Community Action Derby Derby COVID Community Response Hub, calling vulnerable people who don't have anyone around them, to help combat loneliness and isolation. She has also been running a laundry service with four other volunteers and has been extremely busy washing, drying and ironing clothes.

There's been a real sense of community spirit at Tintagel. Everyone is looking out for each other and Cindy walks around the estate daily to check in on everyone (from a safe social distance, of course!). She has also been crafting decorations to go in windows and on trees to brighten the estate and lift everyone's spirits.

We would like to thank Cindy for all the hard work she is doing in her community, she truly is an inspiration! If you would like to share stories of what is happening in your community, or if you're interested in volunteering with us, please email hub@derbyhomes.org



WE'RE LOOKING FOR BOARD MEMBERS

If you are a Derby Homes or Council secure tenant or leaseholder, our Operational Board is an opportunity to get involved and help make real decisions affecting the way Derby Homes runs its services.

Experience is not necessary as your knowledge and experience as a customer, and your commitment and enthusiasm is all that you need.

YOU CAN FIND MORE INFO & HOW TO APPLY ON OUR WEBSITE

WWW.DERBYHOMES.ORG/GOVERNANCE



DON'T MISS OUT!
APPLICATIONS CLOSE ON 14
DECEMBER AT 5PM!

Community Response Hub

Derby City Council are working with Community Action Derby, Derby Homes and a number of community organisations across the city, to help with shopping, collecting prescriptions and befriending for anyone who is:

- self-isolating because someone in their household is at risk
- struggling to meet their basic needs
- pregnant
- at risk because of underlying health conditions
- aged 70 or over

Community Action

Volunteers needed!

If you need help or want to volunteer, contact DerbyDirect on **01332 640000**. Lines are open between 8.30AM and 5.00PM, Monday to Friday. Please encourage anyone who may need help to get in touch.

There's also a dedicated email address if you're unable to call: covidsupport@communityactionderby.org.uk



01332 640 000



covidsupport@communityactionderby.org.uk

Our Neighbourhoods are No Place for Hate

It's likely you have heard of the phrase 'Black Lives Matter' this year. It's a statement which has become an important way for people to show their support for members of the black community who have experienced discrimination simply because of the colour of their skin.

The phrase became an important statement for many following the death of an African-American man George Floyd. On 25th May 2020, George, a black man, died while handcuffed face down on the ground. His death prompted an overwhelming response in the USA, and subsequently across the world, provoking protests, conversation, debate and education.

Racism exists. It exists and it must not be tolerated. Derby Homes will not tolerate racism and we wish to assure our tenants and staff that we stand with you, and we support you.

As an organisation, we recognise the historic and institutional injustice experienced across the world, including our own communities, and will continue to work with Derby City Council and other partners to tackle discrimination. As a large company in Derby, we recognise the need to work alongside our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)

customers, colleagues and partners to ensure we're able to develop a culture and environment that promotes race equality, inclusion and individual human rights in our communities and in our workplace.

We take a zero tolerance approach to hate crime and work with partners to ensure housing has a strong role in tackling it in Derby. There is no place for racism in our city, and we must all strive to educate ourselves on these matters, no matter our race, profession or age. We must be active with our support and not shy away from having difficult discussions.

We support the council in their actions to:

- Adopt an actively anti-racist outlook in areas we have influence
- Scrutinise and act on any available information about the impact of the Covid pandemic on BAME communities
- Ensure all staff receive training about the dangers of unconscious bias
- Work with relevant local campaign groups to develop policies to inform our work with the BAME community

Derby is a city only strengthened by its rich diversity. We can all agree that all people should be treated with respect and dignity.

COMPLAINTS | New Housing Ombudsman Code

In July, the Housing Ombudsman published a new Complaint Handling Code, setting out good practice that will enable landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

The code should mean landlords:

- Work with a universal definition of a complaint
- Give easy access to the complaints procedure and promote it to residents, along with their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service
- Use a simple, two-stage process with clear timeframes for responses
- Ensure fairness, with a resident-focused process
- Take action to put things right and offer appropriate remedies
- Create a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement

Landlords will be asked to self-assess against the Code by 31 December 2020 and publish the results.

You can find our full complaints procedure on our website. It includes details about our complaints service and how to access it.

Remember, you have the right to take a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.



Contact the Housing Ombudsman

☎ 0300 111 3000
✉ info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
📍 *Housing Ombudsman Service,
PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ*
🌐 www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

🌐 www.derbyhomes.org/contact/complaints
✉ housing.complaints@derbyhomes.org



Derbyshire

Fire & Rescue Service

Making Derbyshire Safer Together

Christmas is looking a little different this year, but it's still a time for celebrations and enjoying festivities. Without taking extra care, it is easy to become distracted with Zoom calls and Christmas quizzes, and easy for disaster to strike. Ensure you have a safe and happy festive season by following our top tips:



Check all Christmas lights conform to the British Standard.



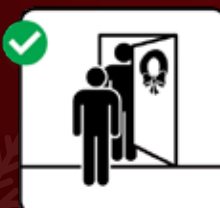
Test your smoke alarms every week.



Make a fire escape plan.



Always make sure cigarettes are completely extinguished.



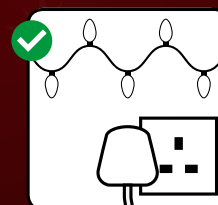
Take the time to check on the elderly.



Use a fireguard with an open fire and never store fuel close by.



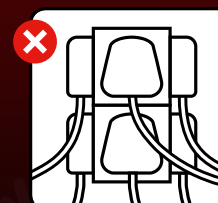
Never leave cooking unattended.



Switch off and unplug Christmas lights before bed.



Keep candles away from flammable objects and always fully extinguish.



Never overload electrical sockets.



Don't attach decorations to lights or heaters.



It is against the law to drive under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol.



www.derbyshire-fire.gov.uk