



ANNUAL REPORT

**Housing Annual Report to
tenants and leaseholders 2011-2012**

DARTFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Contents

1. Foreword	2
2. Introduction	3
3. The Standards	4
4. How do we compare with other similar landlord organisations?	8
5. Monitoring performance	11
6. Additional information	11

1. Foreword

Welcome to our second annual housing report to tenants and leaseholders. It has been developed following feedback from our tenants and from measuring our performance across a range of housing services and from the development of local standards.

The work we do with the Dartford Borough Resident's Forum (DBRF) is invaluable in ensuring we continue to deliver housing services which make a difference to tenants and leaseholders.

We have done a lot of work over the last year to ensure that we met our targets in the action plan and we have also developed our first set of local standards in addition to our core service standards.

We hope that you enjoy reading this report and find the information both interesting and informative. We remain committed to working with tenants across a range of services and to make continuous improvements.

More information on the ways in which you can get involved can be found on page 9.



Councillor Pat Coleman
Cabinet Member
for Housing

2. Introduction

The regulatory framework developed by the Tenant Services Authority has now become a part of everyday life for tenants and the Council alike.

This report will outline to you what we have been working on over the last 12 months as a result of the self assessment we did based on the requirements of the framework and tenant feedback. It will show you what we have achieved and detail those areas where we still have work to do in order to meet our targets.

In addition we will show you statistical information on how our performance compares with similar landlords and give details of the local standards that have been developed – ‘our promise to you’ – following tenant feedback as well as what you have said you want us to achieve over the coming year.

The five national standards are:

Standard

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Home
- Tenancy
- Value for Money

Main Areas

- Customer service, choice and complaints
- Involvement and empowerment
- Diversity
- Neighbourhood Management
- Quality of accommodation
- Allocations
- Tenure
- Applies to all standards to show that the landlord is achieving value for money

3. The Standards

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

What have we done?

- We have consulted with tenants and leaseholders and developed our local standards which will be monitored by the Dartford Borough Residents' Forum.
- We have reviewed and updated the Housing Customer Charter and publicised it more widely.
- We have considered more innovative ways of communicating and a pilot scheme using Facebook and Twitter is to go ahead.
- Our housing maintenance and repairs contractors now use texting to confirm appointments.
- We reviewed the way customer satisfaction is carried out across the service and found that it adequately captures satisfaction at a local level.
- We have ensured that our performance information is published regularly online and in the tenants' and leaseholders newsletter The Link.
- We have made our mutual exchange scheme available through Kent Homechoice.
- We have set up a complaints database to ensure that complaints are monitored effectively.
- We have developed a new resident involvement leaflet to be included in all new tenant welcome packs.
- We are in the process of developing further neighbourhood agreements for Temple Hill.



Our promises to you:

We will:

- Carry out a Resident Satisfaction Survey and report the findings.
- Inform you about events, services and Council news by newsletters, website, notice boards and email.
- Send you a copy of the Link newsletter four times per year.
- Send information on request about how you can get involved in shaping the service.
- Let you know when estate inspections take place in your area and provide feedback on previous issues.

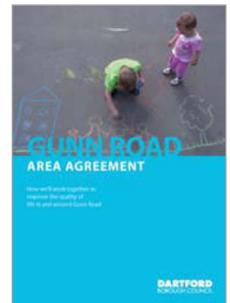


- Provide performance information on our services to tenants and leaseholders on a regular basis in an easy to read, clear and standardised format.
- Consult with you on any major changes to our services and on new housing policies and procedures.
- Be available at appropriate external events.
- Support residents' groups and the Dartford Borough Residents' Forum.
- Develop further links with local groups to ensure that hard to reach customers are included.
- Provide training to help develop residents' skills.

Neighbourhood and Community

What have we done?

- We carried out regular resident satisfaction surveys on our estates for cleaning with satisfaction rates of 83.4% in 2011.
- Developed Neighbourhood Agreements for Gunn Road and Temple Hill.
- Encouraged more residents to get involved in estate inspections.
- Carried out a review of mobility storage in our supported housing schemes.
- Continued to work effectively with other agencies for example the One Stop Shop.
- Consulted our residents in supported housing on our services.
- Improved our recording of Anti-Social Behaviour complaints to better identify patterns of Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Agreed with residents a local standard addressing Anti-Social Behaviour.



Our promises to you:

We will:

- Carry out further customer satisfaction surveys across all estates in 2012.
- Proactively look to prevent incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour occurring, for example by working with the CSU to help protect vulnerable people.
- Review the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy for housing and involve residents in this review.
- Involve the DBRF in more In depth monitoring of standards for estates services.

- Introduce the Council's repairs contractor across estates enabling minor repairs to be carried out on the spot.
- Make the best use of opportunities provided by community payback to get works undertaken on estates including garden clearance.
- Support the Dartford Borough Residents' Forum in building an awareness of the Community Safety Unit.
- Aim to provide specific ASB training via the CIH and TPAS as part of the new training plan for the DBRF.
- Ensure that customer satisfaction information is obtained from victims of Anti-Social Behaviour to help improve the service .
- Carry out a benchmarking exercise for the housing management service to compare costs and performance.

Home and Tenancy

What have we done?

- We have brought 98.62% tenant's homes up to a decent standard as at 1/1/2012.
- We have improved the energy efficiency of homes by fitting PV panels to 116 properties.
- We have reduced the costs of works associated with re-letting properties by introducing a flat rate charge which also saves time.
- We improved insulation in around 200 properties through the 'Here to Help' scheme.
- We produced a new repairs handbook in partnership with the Breyer Group.
- We update notice boards on a three monthly basis.
- We installed energy efficiency light fittings and extractor fans to all newly rewired properties (around 500 in 2010/2011).
- We completed 96% of repairs right first time.
- We reduced our relet time from 24 to 22 days.
- We carried out a tenancy fraud audit on 500 properties with no instances of fraud found.
- We have developed an Anti Tenancy-Fraud Policy including a hotline number for people to anonymously report instances of tenancy fraud to the council, and/or speak to trained investigators.



- We have developed a Home Enterprise Policy to encourage tenants to work from home.

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Offer both morning and afternoon appointments for repairs and work towards having a two hour appointment window.
- Offer a job reference number at the time of reporting a repair.
- Offer contact information for contractors.
- Monitor our customer satisfaction levels.
- Enable members of the Dartford Borough Residents' Forum to attend a number of void inspections to monitor quality.
- Encourage our contractors to become involved with local events.
- Give you a choice of fixtures and fittings if you have improvements to your home.
- Make sure that all tenants are made aware of their responsibilities when they sign up to a new tenancy.
- Develop a Kent wide Tenancy Strategy and local Tenancy Policy following legislation contained in the Localism Act 2011.
- Carry out a review of our Choice Based Lettings Policy.
- Consider a common assessment process for housing applicants across Kent.



Value for Money

What we have done:

- Introduced basket rates for void repairs, rewires and bathroom and kitchen replacement which helped to free up some staff time to concentrate on quality control.
- Carried out photo-voltaic (PV) installation with our current partnering contractor on a number of suitable properties which gives the customer free use of electricity during daylight hours. The Council receives a percentage of the feed-in tariff to assist in future projects.
- Undertaken a review of the housing service to ensure that we are providing the most efficient and best value service for our customers.



Our promises to you:

We will:

- Introduce more efficient and effective ways of running services on an on-going basis.
- Carry out a benchmarking exercise for housing management with other similar authorities.
- Implement actions coming out of the housing services review.
- Ensure that the adaptations service achieves value for money.

4. How do we compare with other similar landlord organisations?

The table below shows how we compare with other similar landlords. It uses a smiley face system which highlights if we are top performing or if we need to make some improvements.

It should be noted that benchmarking data does not always give a true picture of cost in terms of value for money. For example, in number 3, although we are ranked 51 out of 70 and are not in the top quartile, we have invested in major works programmes, including fitting new kitchens and bathrooms across the stock which has increased our overall costs. However, these improvements have made a difference and benefitted our tenants.

In addition, other authorities will not always deliver services in exactly the same way and the smiley faces are only an indicator of how we perform against other authorities delivering *similar* services.

Key:

Upper	Middle	Lower
		

	Area	Our performance	Position	Number compared to	Upper quartile threshold
1	Total Cost Per Property of Major Works, e.g. renewal of bathrooms and kitchens (Staff costs)	£49.02	16 😊	70	£54.33
2	Total Cost Per Property of Major Works (Contractor costs)	£1,219.35	51 😐	70	£758.74
3	Percentage of dwellings failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard	3.00%	36 😐	73	0.00%
4	Average Energy efficiency rating of self-contained dwellings	71.6	19 😐	69	72.00
5	Direct Cost Per Property of Responsive Repairs e.g. plumbing issues or broken windows (Staffing costs)	£80.77	49 😐	70	£48.38
6	Average cost of a responsive repair (including voids). (Contractor costs)	£119.82	42 😐	64	£89.66
7	Percentage of all repairs completed on time	90.9%	42 😐	65	96.2%
8	Average costs per property for Voids Works	£100.36	14 😊	70	£111.79
9	Average time in days to re-let empty properties	24.11	22 😐	73	23.90
10	Rent loss due to empty properties (voids) as a percentage of rent due	0.53%	5 😊	73	0.88
11	Total Cost Per Property of Rent Arrears & Collection	48.95	10 😊	70	£49.26

	Area	Our performance	Position	Number compared to	Upper quartile threshold
12	Current tenant rent arrears as a percentage of rent due	3.09%	62 😞	73	1.41%
13	Percentage of rent collected (excluding current arrears brought forward)	99.3%	57 😞	71	100%

5. Monitoring Performance

The landlord service will monitor performance using information provided through customer surveys and through the scrutiny role of the Dartford Borough Residents' Forum and Joint Liaison Group (comprising Members and residents). Details will be fed back to tenants and leaseholders using the Council's website and the tenant newsletter 'The Link'.

We will continue to monitor internal performance on a regular basis and report this back to senior management and Councillors.

Local Offers for 2012/2013 will be monitored throughout the year and reviewed with the Dartford Borough Residents' Forum.

6. Additional information

The housing service can be accessed in a variety of ways including visiting, phoning or writing to us, visiting the cash office, live chat, texting and estate surgeries or by visiting our website at www.dartford.gov.uk

If you would like any more information on documents mentioned in this report or any other information on the housing service please look on our website: www.dartford.gov.uk or contact us directly.

For more information about TSA and the regulatory framework visit www.tenantservicesauthority.org

If you have any comments on the report or would like to get more involved with how housing services are delivered in Dartford email resident.involvement@dartford.gov.uk

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ Punjabi 01322 343610	தமிழ் Tamil 01322 343611	Polski Polish 01322 343612	česky Czech 01322 343613	简体中文 Mandarin 01322 343614	Français French 01322 343615
-----------------------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------------	------------------------------------

If you or anybody you know requires this or any other council information in another language, please contact us and we will do our best to provide this for you. Braille, audio tape and large print versions of this document are available upon request.

Tel: 01322 343434

Fax: 01322 343432

Email: customer.services@dartford.gov.uk

Calls are welcome via [typtalk](https://www.typtalk.com)

HC 01032012 01

Dartford Borough Council

Civic Centre
Home Gardens
Dartford
Kent
DA1 1DR
01322 343434

www.dartford.gov.uk/housing

DARTFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL