

Service Summary Sheet

Directorate	Housing and Communities		
Year	2023-24	Quarter	Quarter 3 performance reporting (as at quarter ended 31/12/2023)
Benchmarking with local authorities/nearest neighbours Please consider if a <u>Delivering Better Outcomes proforma</u> should be completed also.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant Satisfaction Measures - The Housing Strategy and Performance Teams are approaching local and neighbouring stock holding councils and partner Registered Providers to determine if there is an appetite to develop a local benchmarking/good practice group – a number of organisations are interested and willing to share their data and experiences. Initial meeting to be set up in Q4. • Customer Service Team – is continuing to liaise with other Housing Authorities in obtaining good practice around Complaint Customer Services and improved Complaint Handling processes. Work with Wolverhampton Homes around process mapping and performance reporting has proved valuable. • Housing Training Team – are continuing to work with Chartered Institute of Housing to become members of established LA Network Groups. In addition Dudley Housing Training Team to lead on organising a West Midlands Councils Benchmarking Training Session on imminent Professionalism Agenda in Quarter 4 to which Chartered Institute of Housing to be invited. 			
Overview of service delivery Include any issues / risk			
<p>Housing Customer Service Team The team have embedded new working practices including weekly updating of Complaints and MP/Member Enquiries with Heads of Services, this is leading to increased performance on response times. The team is also spending time with Heads of Services and Team Managers in streamlining response times. The team are reviewing performance measures and examining better ways to present performance data.</p> <p>Housing Training Team The team are continuing to develop their understanding of the ‘Professionalism Agenda’ which is due to be implemented from 2024/25. The team have been in discussions with the Chartered Institute of Housing about the changes to be brought in. Furthermore, the team have developed a ‘Qualifications Database’ to record current qualifications for all Housing staff in anticipation of the requirements under the Professionalism agenda.</p>			

Housing Finance

Quarter 3 housing finance rent arrears continues to see a reduction in debt outstanding. Arrears stood at £2,160,672 which is down by 6.88% on the previous year.

Our preferred payment method is direct debit (collection - £23,934,229.25 with 44.85% of tenants paying via this method) and we allow our tenants to spread their rent arrears across the year when paying via this method. It is important to note that this impacts on the level of debt that we are carrying which stands at £235,962 against £178,442 for 22/23 so there is further work for us to do on this area of collection.

Rent debt outstanding excluding direct debit is down 10.14% on last year.

We benchmark against our neighbouring authorities, see table below:

Organisation	Level of Arrears	Average Debt
Birmingham City Council	£20,090,908	£353.53
Dudley MBC	£2,160,673	£105.93
Sandwell MBC	£6,092,542	£213.77
Wolverhampton Homes	£2,455,783	£121.88
Walsall Housing Group	£3,117,648	£145.24

Challenges in the forthcoming year

DWP have announced that managed migration will be implemented in 24/25 with all migration notices being issued by December 2024. We have approximately 3,300 tenants who will be subject to the move and we are working closely with our Welfare Rights Team to provide support and advice to ensure that tenants are able to migrate successfully and understand the importance of paying their rent.

See below the planned migration (please note, DWP have already brought forward Tax Credit Claimants by 3 weeks and it is anticipated that this program may change):

Target Date	Benefit Group
19 th February 24	Tax Credits Only
April 2024 - June 2024	Income Support
April 2024 onwards	Tax Credits with Housing Benefit
April 2024 onwards	Housing Benefit only
July – September 2024	Employment Support Allowance with Child Tax Credits
September 2024 onwards	Job Seekers Allowance
To be confirmed	All other ESA Claimants

2024/25 is a 53 week rent year, for our tenants who are claiming universal credit, (just shy of 9,000 tenants) this will mean that they will need to find the additional weeks rent as universal credit legislation only allows payments over 52 weeks.

Information has been included in the Your Borough Your Homes next edition and we will continue to work with our tenants throughout the year.

Community Housing Teams

The neighbourhood model is now fully embedded. Community Housing Officers and Assistants are getting to know their residents and areas, building good relationships with both residents and stakeholders, and working with other Housing Teams to ensure our residents can feel safe and heard in their homes.

Work on reducing the number of illegal occupiers/trespassers continues and we have been successful in rehousing or resolving a large number of cases.

The team is working very closely with our colleagues in Compliance to ensure access into our property is gained for gas and electrical inspections and work.

Door knocking exercises continue to take place regularly with Community Housing Officers visiting customers to discuss and raise the profile of the Savills stock condition surveys and make appointments on behalf of residents.

We are working closely with our colleagues in Street Scene to review all sites currently maintained with a view to removing or adding sites and agreeing a standard service across all areas.

The latest Home Review satisfaction feedback is as follows:

In summary for Q3, the results are :-

- 94.5% satisfaction Community Housing Officer being polite & courteous
- 92.1% satisfaction Community Housing Officer listening to tenant
- 92.7% satisfaction Community Housing Officer answering questions/queries
- 95.1% satisfaction Community Housing Officer showing respect
- 91.5% satisfaction with home review visit
- 59.7% satisfaction with our estates services

The feedback demonstrates high levels satisfaction in our service delivery however it does emphasise the importance of partnership working with those services that have a significant impact on the appearance of our estates.

Housing Options & Support

Sheltered

- Jack Newell Court: Following a major refurbishment all tenants who had been decanted out of the scheme have now moved back into their new, modern and spacious homes. They celebrated their return with a Christmas Party.
- Church View: All tenants have moved to their preferred suitable alternative accommodation and the building has now been closed due to no longer being viable.

- Grange Court: Formal consultation has been completed with tenants regarding the potential closure of the scheme due to non-viability. All tenants have viewed and selected their preferred suitable alternative accommodation.

Community Safety Team

The community safety team continue to support and co-ordinate the work of Safe and Sound, Dudley's Community Safety Partnership and its subgroups, in addition to 'leading' on a number of work streams

Communications

A significant amount of communications continue to take place through CAPA with monthly plans for our social media channels and a regular e-bulletin going out to a growing distribution list (currently **2,900** subscribers - **up 513** from last quarter). These bulletins are also sent to the Council's General News topic list.

Key Highlights in Q3 include:

- Topics covered in this quarter's plans:
 - Darker nights
 - Domestic abuse
 - Halloween and bonfire safety
 - Christmas safety messages
 - modern slavery
 - illegal money lending
 - hate crime
 - Nitrous oxide
 - online safety
 - community cohesion
 - ACT
 - Safe places
- 16 days of action campaign delivered
- Phase two review of website and site map produced for upgraded site
- Communications action plan approved by board
- Safer Dudley (Think First) campaign planned for implementation in Feb 2024
- Initial literature produced and communications planned for Dudley Have your Say – the CSP's annual statutory public meeting and survey

The top 3 viewed pages on the website in Q3 were: Darker nights; Online safety and Domestic abuse

2 conferences have been organised to take place in Q4, one focussed on online Harms and community safety which will include a range of presentations around the online Safety Act, online grooming and exploitation (adults and children) online relationship abuse including stalking and sexual abuse, illegal money lending, frauds and scams, money mules, online hate crime and radicalisation and cybercrime.

The second conference is focussed on Domestic Abuse and VAWG and will include a range of presentation by our local service providers.

The online harms conference only has 4 spaces remaining at time of writing, with the domestic abuse/VAWG one being fully booked.

Domestic Abuse

- The DA Board continues to implement the DA Act and progress actions identified from the needs assessment and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs).
- The updated DA strategy has been agreed by the DA board and is awaiting final sign off for the lead member for housing and communities. The recommendations from this strategy and several of our recent and ongoing DHRs have informed the new DA board action plan.
- There continues to be a risk around amount of active DHR's in terms of capacity and funding.
- A local MARAC governance group continues to meet to support the restructure of MARAC regionally.
- The 'refreshed' DA and VAWG forum met in Q3 and the meeting was well received by all in attendance.
- The Domestic Abuse training offer continues to be promoted widely and continues to develop further modules and resources – these can be accessed at: <https://blackcountrywa.thinkific.com/pages/dudley-safe-and-sound>

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

- The VAWG group continues to meet and progress their work plan.

Modern Slavery

- The community safety team continue to support modern slavery work in the borough and regionally, with 2 significant work streams progressing locally around modern slavery and the care sector and consent for the NRM process.
- The team also continue to support the exploitation work streams of DSPP.

Violence prevention

- Work in relation to the implementation of the serious violence duty continues and we are on track in respect of this.

Prevent

- Work continues in respect of the Prevent duty.
- Chanel Panel continues to meet to discuss relevant cases.

ASB

- Work is ongoing around new PSPOs for the borough, around public places and open spaces, and anti-social vehicle usage.
- Work is on-going within the borough to reduce the risk of harm as a result of car cruising with a zero tolerance approach being adopted by DMBC and Police partners. CCTV is being installed at one of our hotspot locations.

Hate Crime and Community Cohesion

- A new TOR and strategy have been developed for the Hate and Cohesion Delivery Group and are awaiting sign off from the group.
- An event is being planned to launch the 'refreshed' group.

ASB

The ASB Team have triaged a total of 437 complaints that have come into the service through the period of October through to the end of December 2023. 198 of these cases have been accepted as ASB cases and have been allocated to ASB Officers for investigation. 130 have been assigned to Community Housing Officers to progress as either tenancy management issues or categorised as 'low level' ASB. 109 reports have been logged as information only which are one off incidents, not ASB and/or referred to other agencies.

As we have implemented new policies and procedures in this time the ASB Team have worked hard to instil these new ways of working and have been able to contact all 437 complainants on the day they initially reported their concerns. This means that initial advice and action plans have been implemented on day one. We are hoping that by taking this approach that over time confidence in the service will increase.

As a result of this we have increased our presence in the Community and in the month of December 2023, completed 75 visits to Complainants and Subjects to resolve ASB at an early stage, a fundamental in ASB Case Management, this a significant rise from the previous month.

To compliment the above figures we have seen a small rise in satisfaction against the 5 areas we record in Customer satisfaction from Q2 to Q3. We hope that this trend will continue. This is as follows;

- *How easy was it for you to contact us to report your initial complaint?*
Q2 – **66%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied Q3 – **70%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied
- *How well would you rate our initial advice and explanation of how we could help you?*
Q2 – **60%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied Q3 – **65%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied
- *How informed and updated were you about the progress of your complaint?*
Q2 – **49%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied Q3 – **52%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied
- *Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your anti-social behaviour complaint was handled?*
Q2 – **45%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied Q3 – **50%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied
- *Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the outcome of your anti-social behaviour complaint?*
Q2 – **36%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied Q3 – **52%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied

As the above shows performance has improved in each of these questions. Despite a low return rate on surveys, out of the 147 customers surveyed on 40 provided feedback; 27%.

The ASB Team have only recently implemented a new process that once the case is closed the survey will be completed either immediately by an Assistant or as soon as possible following the closure. It is believed that with this new process returns rates will be much higher and results will truly reflect the work that is being carried out, highlighting areas of good practice and/or areas that require improvement. We hope that this will allow us to pick up dissatisfaction earlier and take steps to address it.

The ASB Team has also refined work with the Community Housing Teams providing support and training on how to deal with complaints. This includes monthly workshops where CHO's and Team Managers can discuss cases with an assigned ASB Officer to that area. Furthermore, a procedure/manual is in the developmental stage that will further provide ASB Officers and Council staff with a guide on how DMBC handles and tackles ASB in the borough.

Street Officers

Two street officers, to help to prevent and respond to ASB, are now in post. A further two are due to start at a later date. The officers will be patrolling our hot spots and responding to requests from colleagues and the public.

Outreach Officers

We have two officers in post, responding to all reports of rough sleeping. Officers work with rough sleepers, proving advice and support, to help them find immediate shelter and longer term accommodation.

The team have been active throughout the cold weather period and in partnership with the homeless service have ensured that during winter everyone is in.

This scheme has been running for two years and has shown positive results in reducing rough sleeping and will now be working with the new street officer team to increase coverage and to pool resources.

ASB OOH Service - Response Officers

A team of six staff members respond to reports of ASB during the hours of 6pm – 2am every night of the year. Officers have attended addresses within the borough where ASB had been reported as in progress, have patrolled areas and continue to respond to an average of 4 calls per night.

This is an established team who work with all various teams within Dudley MBC and will be working together with both the new street officers and the outreach team to provide for a wider response service.

Site and Enforcement Officers

The team continue to successfully manage illegal incursions in the borough. Illegal occupants have been swiftly removed, with a group of 6+ vans removed most recently in a joint operation with police and bailiffs.

The team is managing Oak Lane and in doing so are undertaking a series of improvement works and implementing additional safety measures.

Homeless Prevention

There has been an increase in demand, approaches to the service have doubled. In Q2 there were 1245 approaches to the service (applications taken). Q3 is currently showing a similar figure 1207, although data is as yet unconfirmed.

We have seen an increase in the discontinuations of NASS accommodation and we expect this to increase, we have been working jointly with the Resettlement and Inclusion Team, and achieved some good outcomes.

Other issues and further implications for the service; lack of resources, including affordable housing solutions.

We have historically been able to keep TA figures low, and we never exceed 6 weeks in B&B. We will continue to try and maintain this, but there is a significant risk given the housing stock issues that we currently have.

Although the numbers are increasing and we have not increased the number of staff to deal with the number of applicants, we have met the demand by re-training current staff to deal with single applicants and make some basic statutory decisions.

On a positive note the team continue to work hard and provide an excellent service to our customers and Dudley residents. They are a dedicated team. There have been days that we have exceeded 25+ on duty presenting as roofless and then staff also working the out of hours service which continues to be exceptionally busy.

Resettlement & Inclusion

The Resettlement and Inclusion Team have been very busy following the recent hotel closures and increase in Home Office decisions on asylum cases. We have supported refugees from a variety of countries which include Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Kuwait, Libya, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

We are also approaching 2 years of supporting people on the Dudley Homes for Ukraine scheme. The government has extended the scheme for a 3rd year. This now means residents in Dudley can host arrivals on the scheme for a maximum of 3 years and continue to receive monthly 'Thank You Payments'. We recently announced a property assistance scheme last year, offering to help those leaving their Homes for Ukraine host properties with securing their very own private rented accommodation. We launched the scheme using the government funding we received for Homes for Ukraine. The assistance scheme runs alongside the Dudley Homes for Ukraine project and was announced to help reduce the risk of homelessness. Help includes financial assistance towards upfront rent payments, rent deposits and furniture.

Housing Maintenance

The Housing Maintenance Team have commenced the remodelling of the maintenance delivery service to create greater operating efficiencies that will enable demonstrable value for money, whilst enhancing the service to customers.

Asset Management and Development and Building Safety

The Building Safety and Compliance team have set up the following key activities to ensure greater transparency of building compliance:

- Developed an overall Control and Assurance Plan for the Compliance Reporting Programme. The control plan evidences the robust rationale, validation and roles and responsibilities for compliance reporting.
- Introduced weekly and monthly reconciliation of our certificate and asset data improving the accuracy of our asset data.
- The introduction of a new single BS&C asset management team who manage and validate all compliance certification.
- The implementation of C365, the chosen compliance data management system. This has included the set-up of the big six compliance categories to improve compliance monitoring and validation. All available certification has been loaded into C365 to provide transparent and robust compliance monitoring.
- The team have undertaken a significant overhaul of the contract supply chain to standardise and improve delivery from the contractors. Improvements in contractor billing processes have allowed greater challenge and improved contractor cost recovery.
- Developed monthly spend profiling and tighter controls over purchase orders and validation processes.
- Developed a full suite of Building Safety and Compliance documentation that form the revised policies and management plans.
- Implemented a new “No Access” process in partnership with the Housing Team. The No access process has been trialled where we have been unable to gain access to conduct gas safety inspections. The process will be rolled out right across our housing stock and enable us to drive down non-compliance.

The Asset Management and Development team are working on the following key tasks:

- A full review of the Disrepair process in line with Section 11 protocol, aiming to have an alternative dispute resolution route in place dealing with tenant compensation where necessary, mitigating solicitors' costs.
- Phase three of the SCS exercise has been successfully rolled out with a focus on SCS no access properties jointly managed with our compliance section with the use of internal surveying team & Community Housing Officers. Real successes but this is resource hungry, and we are looking to prioritise where we have limited to no repair requests or at the other end of the spectrum where we perceive we have too many attributed to the property.
- Jack Newell and Woodhouse Court schemes completed, work on closing down final accounts ongoing which may lead to final claim for damages ratified via external forensic quantity surveyor.

- The asset team have been managing the asset viability process of every void property which exceeds the threshold of viable investment. Circa 120 properties identified to be disposed of by end of 23/24.
- Core specification group to review specifications across New Build, Regen identifying any lessons learnt on Jack Newell and Woodhouse for consistency in delivering the Swan Street development.
- Recently 8 properties have been acquired, purchased via offsetting 'Right to Buy' receipts and have been successfully let with a further 11 acquisitions within the legal process due mid Feb.

Service achievements

Report of any external accreditation, awards, positive publicity, during the past quarter

Customer Service Team – good progress is being made since the adoption of new processes in Complaint Handling and MP/Member Enquiries. Response times have been reduced and greater ownership of complaints and enquiries is being taken by officers and managers.

Homelessness Prevention Strategy Update – has been completed and consulted upon and should be signed off by Cabinet Member in Q4.

Opportunities for improvement

Information relating to service complaints / compliments and learning from these

Any additional information relating to performance