



The Strategic Housing Services *“Homes for our Community”* Service Charter

The services we provide...

We aim to deliver a good quality Housing services to meet the needs of our customers.

The Housing Service of Stafford Borough Council is part of the Environmental and Health Service. The Housing Group is divided into 3 main areas:

- The Housing Options Team offers housing related advice and assistance and provides help to homeless households. Wherever possible we will work with our customers to prevent them becoming homeless, to help them in finding accommodation and to support them in maintaining settled accommodation.
- The Housing Standards Team offers grants for adaptation work and financial support to assist vulnerable households to maintain their property. The Team enforces property standards in the privately rented sector. We work with landlord, tenants and homeowners to ensure that all housing in Stafford Borough is safe and healthy to live in.
- The Housing Strategy Team is responsible for developing and delivering the housing strategy to ensure the provision of decent, affordable and sustainable housing in the Borough. We work with partners to implement our Housing Strategy and we monitor agreements between the Council and the Housing Associations operating in the Borough.

What you can expect from us...

As a Service we are committed to providing a high quality service and aim to meet the following standards:

- We will respond to all letters and emails within seven working days, or tell you if it is going to take longer – this may be by telephone, e-mail or in writing.
- We will answer the telephone promptly.
- We will see you within 10 minutes of your arrival for your appointment or tell you if it is going to take longer.
- We will be friendly, helpful and attentive.
- We will avoid jargon and explain technical terms.
- We will respect people's differences and treat everybody fairly and to the same high standard.
- We will not make promises we cannot keep.
- We will offer and direct you to an interpretation service, if English is not your first language and you are having difficulty in communicating with us.
- We will make home visits when needed.
- We will regularly ask our customers' opinions and suggestions on the service we give, and look at ways in which we can improve our service to you.
- We will provide a 24hour homeless advice service if you become homeless outside office hours.

When you come and see us...

- You can be seen in a private interview room.
- You can make an appointment for a specific time – just ring us.
- We will help you to complete your forms.
- Up to date information will be available for you to take away.
- We will keep all your details confidential.
- On request we will ensure that you see an Officer of the same sex in cases of domestic violence.
- If we cannot answer your query when you visit us, we will tell you when we have the information you need.

If we visit you...

- All our staff will carry identification from the council.
- The visiting officer will tell you whom to ring if you want to confirm their identity.
- If we have made an appointment to see you, we will arrive within fifteen minutes of the time arranged or contact you if there is likely to be an unexpected delay.

If you have special needs....

- We will arrange a home visit if you are housebound or disabled and cannot visit the Civic Centre.
- On request, we will arrange for leaflets, letters or other information to be available in large print or on audiotape.
- On request, we will make arrangements for any document to be translated.

What you can do to help us provide a good service to you...

- Give us the information we ask for as soon as possible. This will help speed up the process.
- Always make an appointment to see your caseworker.
- Attend appointments on time with all the information requested.
- Tell us about any changes in your circumstances
- Please be patient. There are times when we are very busy. We do what we can to keep waiting times to a minimum.

What we expect of you...

We ask that you apply the same standards of behaviour towards our staff and other customers as you expect from us. If you use abusive behaviour towards our staff or other customers we will ask you to leave the building or end your telephone call.

Consultation, Compliments, Complaints and Suggestions...

We regularly consult customers to find out how satisfied they are with the level of service we provide and how we can improve. We also ask organizations we work with to tell us how we can improve our service. We welcome comments and suggestions you may have about our service and you will find a suggestion box in our second floor waiting area. If we are doing something wrong please tell us. This will then give us a chance to put things right.

What to do if something goes wrong...

- If you want to make a complaint about something we have done or failed to do, please tell us straight away through our Corporate Complaints Procedure; forms are available at all reception points and on our website.
- Please speak to a member of staff about the problem. If you are still not satisfied you can complain to the manager.
- A formal complaint can be made in person, by telephone, in writing or by email.
- More information is available in our customer comments and complaints leaflet and on our website.

Our Performance Targets...

As well as the standards of service we aim to meet, there are targets for the work we do. These include:

- The number of days taken to decide if the council owes a duty to a homeless household. In most cases that decision will be made within 33 days.
- The number of days that a homeless family stays in bed & breakfast accommodation.
- The number of empty properties that are brought back into use.
- The number of affordable homes delivered.
- We regularly measure our performance against these targets and compare our results with those from other councils.

In 2007/2008 we...

- Carried out a private sector stock condition and energy efficiency survey.
- Worked with our partner organisations to complete a housing needs survey of the Gypsy and Traveller communities.
- Spent £567,000 on supporting adaptations to help disabled people to continue to live in their homes.
- Helped the owners 59 homes occupied by vulnerable households, to have out essential repairs carried out and to be brought up to the decent homes standard.
- Assisted 90 disabled people to live independently in their home by providing grants for adaptations.
- Enabled the delivery of 42 new affordable homes.
- Brought 15 previously empty properties back into use.
- Held a landlord forum, further developing relationships with private landlords.
- Improved or stayed the same in the majority of our performance indicators.
- Worked with partners to deliver insulation and energy efficiency measures to over 600 homes.

For 2008/2009 our key priorities are to...

- Develop a strategy to bring empty properties back into use.
- Reduce the average length of time that homeless families spend in bed and breakfast accommodation from 2.3 weeks to 2 weeks.
- Work in partnership to improve the delivery mechanism for disabled adaptations
- Work with Stafford and Rural Homes to implement a Choice Based Lettings Scheme in the Borough.
- Commission research into rural homeless and affordability.

How to contact us...

Go online...

Visit the council's website: www.staffordbc.gov.uk

Or please write to or visit us at ...

The Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford, ST16 3AQ

Our opening Hours are:

Monday –Thursday 8.30 am – 5pm

Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm

Telephone/e-mail/fax...

Telephone: 01785 619 000

Fax 01785 619 319

E-mail: ehadmin@staffordbc.gov.uk

Emergency Contact Centre details...

Outside normal working hours telephone 01785 619170

Mac McCoig FCIH

Housing Group Manager