



Council Housing Annual Report

What Did We Do for our Tenants and Leaseholders

between April 2013 and
March 2014

Contents

- 1 Introduction - 3**
.....
- 2 How did we spend your money? - 4**
.....
- 3 Complaints, compliments and comments - 5**
.....
- 4 How our performance ranked nationally - 9**
.....
- 5 How we made things better for tenants and leaseholders - 10**
.....
- 6 Our plans for improving services in the next 12 months - 26**

1 Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Report 2013 to 2014.

This report to Council tenants and leaseholders provides details of our service, it's performance and costs, and describes how we have worked with our customers to improve the services we deliver.

We want to be the country's best landlord and during 2013 to 2014, we think we have made further progress to realise this ambition.

During 2013/14, the repairs and maintenance service witnessed the highest levels of satisfaction since the start of the partner contracts in 2010, and a continuing upward trend in meeting repairs' targets. These positive results were reflected nationally, with a good performance within repairs when compared against similar organisations, and through Wilmott Dixon being awarded Contractor of the Year for the second year running.

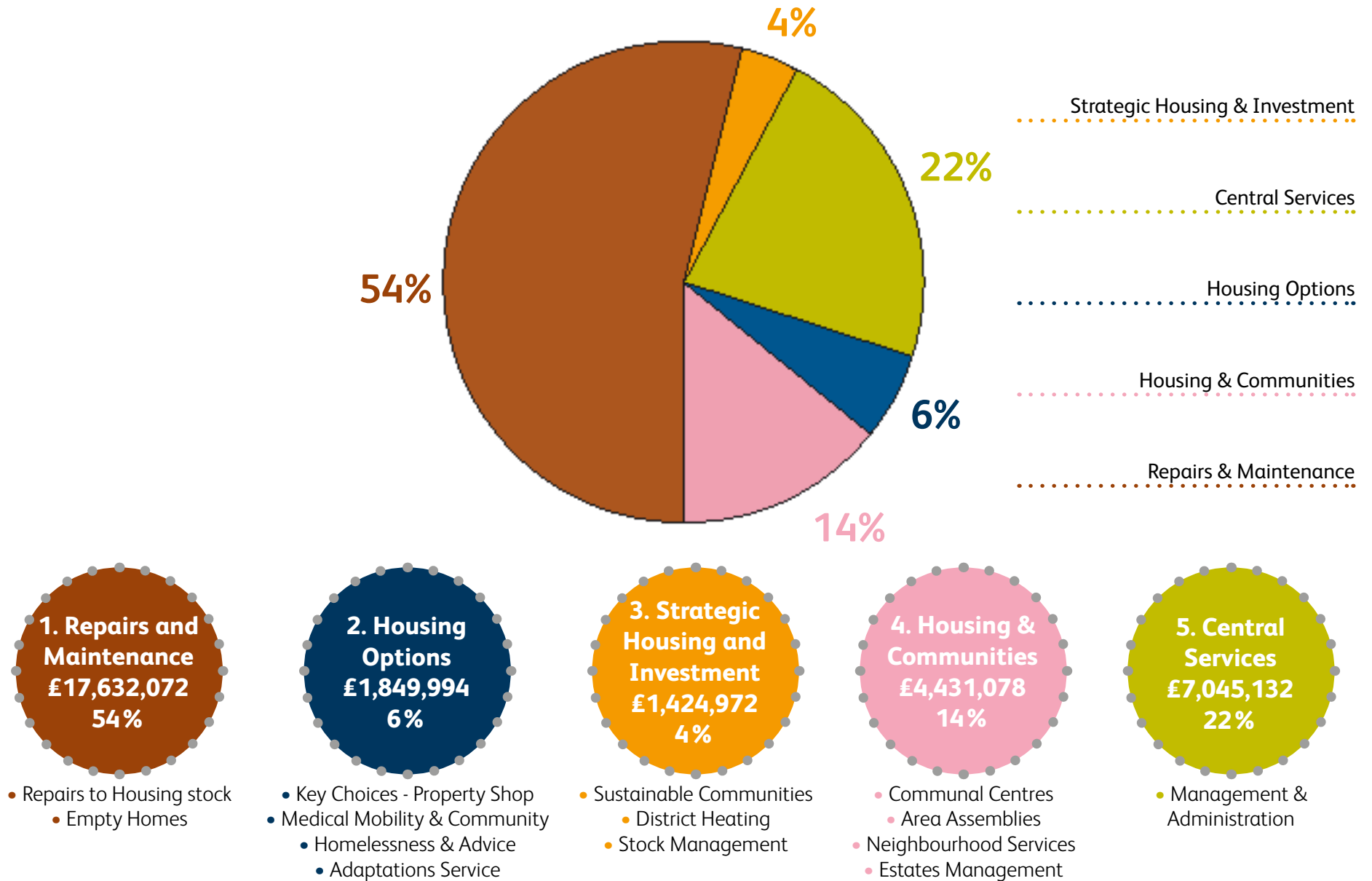
This year also saw new mobile bidding technology being introduced across the borough; used by an average of **2700** customers each month. We saw re-let-times being reduced dramatically whilst we supported around **1200** customers move into their new homes. The number of empty homes was also reduced, enabling us to collect an additional £3.9m of income during the year.

Meanwhile, the Housing Contact Centre was integrated into the Corporate Contact Centre, which saw fewer calls being abandoned, and we welcomed around 90 tenants to another successful annual Tenant Conference at the New York Stadium.

It's been a difficult year for some customers who have been struggling with the introduction of welfare reforms, but we managed to help residents deal with hardship by utilising the full allocated Discretionary Housing Fund. We also supported over **2,000** people to deal with debt, whilst our homeless service prevented over **400** families from becoming homeless.

As we look to next year, we will continue to investigate ways in which we can improve our performance and work to become more efficient, whilst supporting those most in need.

2 How did we spend your money?



3 Complaints, Compliments and Comments

- Over the last 12 months, the total number of complaints received for Housing and Neighbourhood Services was **341**, slightly up from **325** in 2012/13. This equated to a **5%** increase, although **35%** fewer of these were fully upheld than last year.
- Only one case progressed to stage three of the complaints procedure and no full investigations were conducted by either the Local Government Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- **100%** of all complaints were responded to within the statutory timescales.

Top complaint issues

Complaints by Service Area

Repairs and maintenance contractors Willmott Dixon Partnership and Mears saw a **12%** reduction in complaints received during 2013/14, which was part of an improving trend with a year-on-year reduction in the number of complaints received. The positive results were partly attributed to the use of tool box talks to promote service improvements to the workforce. A notable figure was the dramatic reduction in the number of complaints received about missed appointments.

Similarly, complaints about the Housing and Communities department were down **19%** with a noticeable reduction regarding complaints about the actions of staff. With the department dealing with issues such as breaches of the Council's tenancy agreement and anti-social behaviour, the reduction may reflect lessons learned about conflict management.

Complaints about Housing Income (Finance) were up from a low number in 2012-13. The complaints do not appear to reflect a deterioration of service; issues raised include rent arrears and service charges and in all probability reflect the difficult financial times customers are facing. The service will monitor complaints to identify any trend and service improvements.

Complaints about the Strategic Housing Investment Team have increased, again from a small number. There is no immediate identifiable trend, although the most common complaint was a result of contractor's actions/damage.

The service has treated every complaint as a learning opportunity and has sought to improve the service and customer experience by again targeting improvements in those areas of highest volume of complaints.



Examples of Learning from Complaints

It's Your Move

A customer complained they had come top in the bidding for a property which was then let to another applicant after they failed to attend an 'It's Your Move' interview. The interviewing officer was adamant messages were left on the customer's phone and the customer claimed not to have received them. In response to their concerns, the 'It's Your Move' and bidding process made changes to provide a written auditable trail to ensure there is adequate written, auditable notice of the 'It's Your Move' process and consequence of failure to attend. This will mean customers do not miss out on the home of their choice and the Council is protected from any liability and reputational damage.

Garage Rent Increase Letters

Several customers complained about distress caused by the annual rent increase letter for garages, which includes a Notice to Quit on the rear. The wording of the annual garage rent increase letter has not changed for many years; the letter in effect says in a very formal way if the customer does not wish to pay the new rent the garage licence can be brought to an end. In response to their concerns the Council removed the Notice to Quit from the following year's letter.

Notification of Asbestos in New Lettings

A new tenant complained about an asbestos garage. The garage should have been removed prior to letting. The complaint raised the issue of new lettings and the notification of asbestos.

In response to this problem;

- A report was designed to extract information from the Council's computer system and put it into a standard easy-to-read letter for new tenants, identifying the type, location and level of risk of asbestos in each room.
- An easy-to-read advice leaflet was designed to reassure customers
- The allocation process was amended and training given to allocation officers to advise prospective tenants of the presence of asbestos.

Missed Appointments

A number of complaints were made about missed appointments at the start of the year. The issue affected those jobs where no appointment dates had been made, such as variation orders where the contractor was reasonably awaiting materials and could not make an appointment until they arrived.

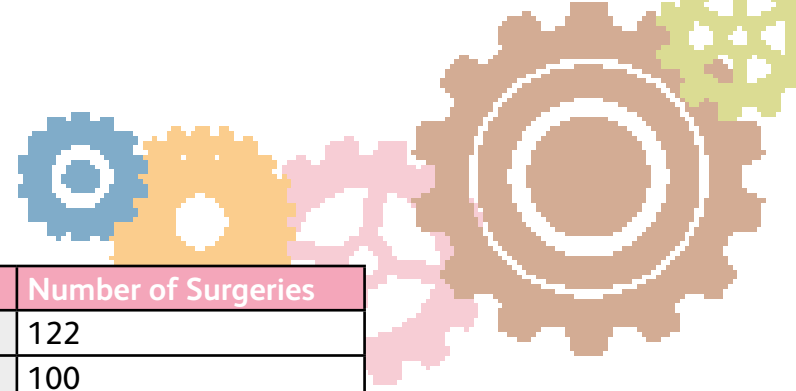
In response, the team investigated and identified the last date of the contractor's planning period was translating as the appointment date on the IT system, resulting in the tenants being given false appointment dates by call handlers when they have looked on the system. The cause was identified by examining how the two IT systems used by the Council and the contractor interface. The system was changed to ensure the end of the planning period cannot now appear as an appointment.

Council Garages

A complaint was received regarding the poor standard of advice and information on the location, availability and applications for Council garages.

In response to the concerns the Council:

- Placed plans and support information on the intranet to help call centre staff more adequately respond to service requests
- Updated the internet with a list of sites, plans, frequently asked questions information and application forms to allow greater self-help and reduce avoidable contact.



Councillor Surgeries

324 Councillor enquiries were received via the Council's e-case surgery system in 2013-14, a rise of a quarter from the 246 reported in 2012-13. Approximately 90% of these related to services received by existing or perspective council tenants. Repair issues comprised almost half (152) of all enquiries, the most common issues being damp, leaks, perceived repair delays, and gates and fencing. The next highest number of enquiries received regarded neighbourhood management issues (85), the dominant issues being tenancy management (38) ASB/nuisance (26) and grounds maintenance/estate services related issues such as trees and hedges (21).

The Housing Options service received the third highest number of enquires (51) with almost all relating to customers' requests for re-housing.

It should be noted the figures are based on enquiries received through the e-case surgery system and do not include any enquiries sent direct to members.

Service Area	Number of Surgeries
Contract & Service Development	122
Housing & Communities	100
Housing Options	58
Safer Neighbourhoods	28
Strategic Housing Services	10
Housing Finance	3
Business regulation	2
Repairs connect	1
Total	324

Case Studies: compliments

250 compliments were received regarding Housing and Neighbourhood Services.

Compliment for Nicola Bratley, Furniture Solutions Team: "Big thank you to you and your team. Many thanks and I will spread the word about your amazing service. The men were brilliant, polite and helpful. Nothing was too much trouble for them."

Compliment for Steph Lowrie, Rotherham South: "Both the new tenant and her mum praised how thorough you had been during the meeting and how knowledgeable you were when answering their questions. They were very pleased with the meeting and spoke very highly of you."

“

Compliment for Morrison: “Stewart and Dan and all the work lads who have helped - thank you so much, you have given me freedom in my house.”

”

“

Compliment for Willmott Dixon: “Very friendly, efficient and very clean workers... from my experience all your workmen have been absolutely brilliant... and are welcome in for a cuppa anytime.”

”

“

Compliment for Linda Hopkins, Community Protection Unit: “I would like to thank you for your prompt attention you have given to the problem we had with dog fouling in our street. As promised the signs were put up and they seem to have done the trick. Please pass on my thanks to the team responsible - full marks.”

”

4 How our performance ranked nationally

- The service is: Ranked amongst the best for repairs completed right first time – 25 against 162 other organisations
- Ranked amongst the best for the percentage of all repairs completed within target – 51 against a sample of 227 in Housemark
- Ranked amongst the best for the percentage of repairs appointments made and kept - 49 against a sample of 140 organisations in Housemark

Awards

Rotherham's housing repairs and maintenance contract partner Wilmott Dixon was awarded the best Repairs and Maintenance Contractor of the Year for the last 2 years 2012 and 2013 at the annual Housing Excellence Awards – recognised nationally for the highest customer satisfaction, keeping appointments and completing repairs on time.

Wilmott Dixon
was awarded the
best Repairs and
Maintenance
Contractor of the
Year for the
last 2 years



How we made things better for Council tenants and leaseholders

Empowering Tenants and Leaseholders

Involving Tenants and Leaseholders, Customer Choice and Service, Providing Support, and Responding to the Diverse Needs of Tenants

How did we do?

During 2013/14, the Council:

- Held 12 Area Housing Panel meetings in the north and south of the borough
- Held six Area Housing Panel Chairs' meetings over the course of the year
- Supported a Miners' Strike (Orgreave) anniversary event at Mowbray Library
- Provided continued support for community vegetable gardening projects at Canklow, Shaftesbury House, Mowbray Library, and Rosehill Surgery, with growing activities at these sites expanding
- Brought fantastical retail shop Grimm & Co in to local schools to encourage creativity and improve literacy
- Held a short story competition to promote greater customer involvement
- Promoted the annual Gardening Competition, encouraging Tenants and Leaseholders to take pride in their gardens
- Held Trade Taster sessions with Full Circle Learning/Mears Morrison to teach basic household repairs and woodworking skills. All participants made chairs to take home.
- Supported RotherFed's application for charitable status, which included away days and members' workshops
- Acted as an honest broker for neighbourhood groups at odds with each other
- Supported a Bright Sparks home safety event which promoted household electrical and gas safety and better energy deals
- Publicised and encouraged attendance at partner events such as the River Don Improvement Project, and events on forced marriages and tackling extremism
- Arranged seed planting demonstrations with Rotherham in Root to increase the amount of home grown food consumed, especially in poorer households, to build community relations, increase levels of exercise taken and reduce food miles and bills
- Provided references for Tenant volunteers to help them apply for jobs/gain work
- Helped Tenants complete surveys/questionnaires (for example, the budget consultation)
- Supported Halloween and Christmas events for local children via community groups to promote greater involvement



Acted as an honest broker for neighbourhood groups at odds with each other

- Ongoing support for community groups to prevent collapse, providing one to one support for groups who are struggling, such as by helping recruit new members.
- Supported groups to settle into the community through involvement, helping them to increase confidence and self worth
- Supported contractors in identifying vulnerable people who may be prone to isolation and loneliness
- Assisted groups with funding bids, such as Awards for All, Environment Grant, and Community First Funding, to obtain support for local events and projects
- Utilised the full allocated £497k of the Discretionary Housing Fund to help Rotherham people with hardship caused by Welfare Reform measures
- Supported over 2,000 people to deal with debt
- Integrated the Housing Contact Centre with the Corporate Contact Centre. During the inspection in July 2004 an average of **7.5%** calls were abandoned. By July 2014, less than **5%** were abandoned

- Sent out two newsletters to Leaseholders. The December newsletter incorporated a 'checking our records' questionnaire
- Held a series of Leaseholder workshops

Assisted groups with funding bids, such as Awards for All, Environment Grant, and Community First Funding



Customer Inspection Group

The Customer Inspection Group was tasked with looking at services linked to the Local Offers (the promises made to customers). They carried out reality checks against chosen services to determine if a consistent approach is delivered to customers across Rotherham.

As part of this, the following changes were made:

- Introducing AM and PM appointments for repairs and maintenance
- Improving the cleaning standard on properties ready to let
- Introducing scripting for call centre staff to allow generic working to give customers advice 'right first time'



From April 2013 to March 2014, a number of Mystery Shopping exercises were carried out by the customer volunteer inspectors.

Areas mystery shopped by the Customer Inspectors and Council officers included:

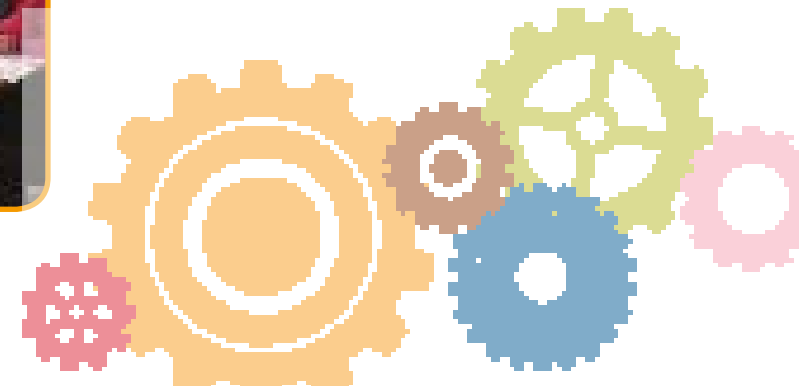
- Estate walkabouts
- Lettable standard
- Repairs 'right first time'
- Open and closed anti-social behaviour cases
- New tenancy lettings
- Garage site inspections
- Gas servicing



The inspections were carried out using telephone enquiries, face-to-face surveys, visits to tenants and visits to empty properties. Findings from some of the scenarios included:

- Lettable standard: All properties were ready to let and of excellent quality
- Telephone mystery shopping: The following scores were made in terms of:
 - Access to services: **6** scored 'excellent', 1 call scored 'good'
 - Achieving the right result: **4** scored 'excellent', **2** scored 'good', **1** scored 'poor'

Customer comments included *"most helpful, was good"*, *"very informative, felt I was valued as a customer"* and *"answered my query"*.



Customer Service – Car Parking at York Gardens

Many tenants on the York Gardens scheme have mobility issues so having their cars close by to their properties is essential. There was an issue with other people using the allocated parking which meant a lack of parking spaces for the York Garden tenants. A York Garden tenant regularly visits her sister, to take her out, but often couldn't park close enough to her sister's bungalow which meant her sister struggled to walk to the car.

On reporting this issue to the Council, Trevor Wilson tried to help the residents of York Gardens by putting up signs on all the car parks. Since these signs have been erected, there have been improvements.

“York Garden tenant, said: *“Trevor went out of his way to do what he could to improve the parking situation for the residents of York Gardens, and we would like to thank him for trying to resolve this.”*”

Rotherham partner organisations make their promises

Rotherham Borough Council, local NHS services, South Yorkshire Police, Voluntary Action Rotherham and Healthwatch Rotherham signed up to a single set of customer standards providing a Rotherham-partnership-wide commitment to delivering high quality services against their promises.

The promises include:

- Making it easier for customers to find out what services are available
- Aiming to be flexible if you need to meet with us
- Actively listening and treating people with dignity and respect
- Being honest about what we can do to help
- Ensuring the services we provide are timely

The promises were launched at Fayre's Fair at Rotherham's Magna, where members of the public were given information about the project and asked to get involved in a customer survey.

The first annual survey went live in November and early submissions provided a baseline of how we are performing against our customer promises.

Exceptions against the standards will be used for customer service improvement with good practice shared, and areas of poor performance learnt from; by putting things right and improving services for future customers.

Findings will also help to inform future work plans and customer service improvement.

The Health and Wellbeing Board Chairman, Councillor John Doyle, said: “Over 100 surveys were filled out at Fair's Fayre, proving that there is a real passion out there from members of the public to engage with these promises. The partner agencies involved have all spoken about how these promises are vital to making sure the public are comfortable with dealing with them as a whole. Indeed, from the Council perspective, these clear promises reflect what our community have told us is important to them and I am delighted that we have agreed a shared customer focused culture.”

Rotherham resident Betty Brookes said: “It's good to get this started, it's got to be a good thing, it's really needed. It means, as customers, we know that we are going to be treated well whichever organisation we go to.”

Tenant Conference 2014

The annual Tenant Conference took place at the New York Stadium, just over ninety tenants came and took part in workshops.

The aim of the conference was to share information with tenants on housing services and to give them the chance to have their say on how services can be improved.



Direct feedback in the five workshops included:

1 Getting Involved:

Tenants were given information on Area Housing Panels and the role they play in improving estates. Those who took part said they enjoyed discussing the barriers to community involvement. Three people registered an interest in joining a panel.



2 Key Choices:

The workshop gave information on downsizing, home-swapper and medical assessments/adaptations. Those who attended were surprised by some of the statistics; especially about how many people had registered for home-swapper. There were lots of questions on who is eligible to use the schemes.

In addition, there were 19 stalls offering advice on everything from growing your own vegetables to switching your energy supplier. All the stallholders felt it was a really good way to engage with tenants who may not be aware of the help available.

Four 'green-fingered' tenants also registered for the 2014 Garden Competition and enjoyed meeting 'Percy' the new mascot!

3 Welfare Reform:

The workshop concentrated on vulnerable tenants and the elderly. Suggestions included a 'directory' of professionals – this would give information on who to contact for those in difficulty. Some people felt there should be a free decorating scheme for less able tenants.

4 Budget Matters:

Tenants were asked to comment on the online forum used recently by the Council to attract comments on the future budget constraints. Many tenants said there should be a forum just for Council tenants. A few agreed that better access to free Wifi and better publicity would encourage more people to join the online forums.

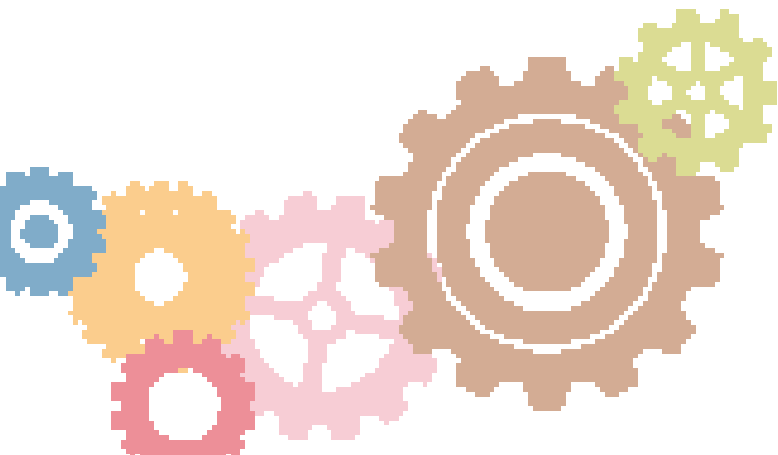
5 Digital Inclusion:

Children from High Greave Junior School came along to demonstrate how easy it is to access Council services online. This was the most popular workshop with over 30 tenants registering to take part. Many of them felt this was a really useful session and had no idea just how much could be done online. The council is providing Wi-fi in some of our neighbourhood centres.

Customer Service:

Mrs Day was happily living in a three bedroom property close to family, however, when her husband died and with the introduction of the bedroom tax, she found she was struggling to manage the bills and upkeep of the property/ garden. Mrs Day successfully bid on a smaller property which was still near to her family. To help get Mrs Day ready for the move, Gillian and the team helped her by providing packing boxes and crates. Mrs Day said:

“*The team couldn't have helped more and were really polite as well. Thank you Gillian and the team for making the move much easier.*”



Your Home

Quality of Accommodation, Repairs and Housing Maintenance

How did we do?

- **97.73%** of repairs were completed right first time, compared to **94.73%** in 2011
- **99.21%** repairs appointments were made and kept, compared to **80.88%** in 2010/11
- **99.86%** repairs customer satisfaction, compared to **78%** in 2007
- **99.97%** Gas Safety compliance; this equates to six properties with a gas safety certificate outstanding at the end of March 2014
- The average re-let time was 48.84 days in 2011, reduced to **29** days by the end March 2014
- **99.29%** of all repairs were completed within target, compared to **99.01%** in March 2013
- **99.21%** or repairs appointments were made and kept, compared to **98.52%** in 2012/13

- Performance at the end of the year saw satisfaction levels with the repairs and maintenance service rise to **99.86%**. This is the highest satisfaction level since the start of the contract in 2010. The previous year's performance was **99.75%**.

Case Studies:

Gas Safety Certificates

99.97% Gas Safety compliance - or six properties with a gas safety certificate outstanding at the end of March 2014; this equated to the best ever performance in this area. In March 2013, **19** properties had certificates outstanding. Over the last three years, performance has shown significant improvement; at the beginning of 2011 there were **472** properties without a valid certificate.

Gas Technical Officer Steve Morley said: "A lot of effort was put in by Rotherham Borough Council and Willmott Dixon create a robust procedure to identify where a property had not received a safety test. Other work included reviewing customer access letters which resulted in a reduction in the costs of taking legal enforcement."

The robust procedure included:

- Housing officers assisting in visiting tenants and making appointments for difficult to reach tenants
- Offering weekend appointments
- Carrying out a 'legal day' once a month to properties where access is difficult.
- Weekly reports to cross check that no services are missed
- Officers liaising with the housing income team to check benefit claims and ensure tenants are living at the property

Technical Repairs Training

To improve the number of repairs completed right first time, contact centre staff received technical repairs training to increase their skills in diagnostic of repairs at first point of contact. To support this work, quality assurance checks were carried out with partners to help reduce the number of minor defects.



Text Message Notification

The high number of appointments being made and kept is achieved by adopting text messaging notification of repairs and increasing take up of mutually agreed appointments. In addition, operatives phone customers direct out of hours to arrange a convenient appointment time.

Adaptations Good News Story

Mrs Cook loves her home and has lived there for over 50 years but was experiencing difficulty managing the stairs independently and was sleeping downstairs on her sofa for some time. Mrs Cook also suffers from panic attacks and was having trouble getting in and out the bath. Mrs Cook’s son contacted Assessment Direct as he felt his mum was not coping and would benefit from a stair lift and possibly other aids and adaptations to the property. She receives home care daily and has a RotherCare pendant in case she falls as she is unsteady on her feet.

The Community Occupational Therapy Team decided that a stair lift would benefit Mrs Cook and a level access shower would suit her needs and enable her to regain her independence whilst remaining in her own

home. Mrs Cook also received a hand rail and shower seat to complement her level access shower. Mrs Cook was over the moon with the work carried out and even more impressed that she can enjoy her own home again.



Mrs Cook said: *“They let me know beforehand when they were coming out to my home. All the work was done really quickly and they kept me informed. I am happy with the work men and the job.”* Mrs Cook is now able to get up and down stairs, sleep in her own bed again and get a shower with ease without feeling panicked.



She added: *“I couldn’t be better treated if I was the Queen. I am highly delighted. I used to have to sleep downstairs. It has increased my independence and made life easier for me. They even taught me how to use my shower. Thank you so much.”*



Right First Time

Mr Oldfield had Decent Homes works done on his property. He was extremely impressed with the contractors, particularly how little he was disrupted:

“What they did was brilliant; when I was left with no heating they fetched blowers and every night they re-fixed the cooker so I could use it.”

Following the works, there was an issue with a leak in the ceiling where a pipe had not been clicked in properly. Mr Oldfield contacted the repairs team and they went straight out and fixed it.



“Joe, Kevin and all the team have been great, good timekeeping, hardworking and nothing too much trouble. The house was always left safe and tidy.”



Working in Partnership

Rotherham Borough Council works in close partnership with Willmott Dixon and Mears/Morrison who carry out repairs and maintenance on the Council's behalf.

David Coldwell
Rotherham Branch Manager
Willmott Dixon

“Willmott Dixon remains proud to serve both the Council and its tenants and leaseholders, via our property repair and maintenance operation based in the town. Through close partnership working with the Council, we have managed to sustain and improve our performance – which is characterised by high levels of resident satisfaction and low levels of complaints.

“With our operation performing well, we have been able to put even greater focus on the social responsibility which comes with being a major partner to the Council. Our ‘Opening Doors’ programme continues to allow us to give work experience and practical skills training to increasing numbers of young people, the long-term unemployed, and those with conditions that limit access to employment. This scheme has been

shortlisted for the ‘Excellence in Equality & Diversity Award’ at the Northern TPAS Awards which will take place in Manchester in April 2015.

“Also, through our growing calendar of Community Engagement events we have continued to invest time and resources into good causes across the borough – including Rotherham Hospice, The Rotherham Food bank, The Rotherham Hospital Charity, Fareshare and the Christmas toy appeal run by Rotherham Council’s Children and Young People’s Service.

“We remain committed to improving the service we deliver day to day and have recently established a Customer Empowerment Forum, designed to allow our customers to share their experiences with us and help us shape the service we deliver in future. We are keen to hear the views of as many customers as we can, from a diverse range of areas, backgrounds and social groups, in order to help us play our part in making Rotherham a better place to live, work and learn - so if you are interested in taking part we would love to hear from you.

Contact us at Comments.Rotherham@willmottdixon.co.uk.”

We remain committed to improving the service we deliver day to day



**Managing Tenancies
Allocations, Rents and Tenure
How did we do?**

The Key Choices property service supports 1200 customers a year move into their new homes

The homeless service prevented over 400 families from becoming homeless by early intervention, negotiating with family and friends, and finding accommodation in supported housing or private rented properties

Nationally, Rotherham Borough Council ranked 43 against 102 other organisations for the average time it took to re-let a property

New mobile bidding technology available across the borough is being used by an average of 2700 customers per month.

The average re-let time was similar to last year although there was a 30% increase in the number of empty properties becoming available

The average re-let time for 2013/14 was 29.85 days

The number of empty homes had reduced to less than 190 by March 2014 compared to 300 empty properties at the end of December 2013

Case studies:

The Self-Service station at the property shop

Over 300 customers call into the Key Choices Property Shop each day for advice regarding rehousing. By transforming the delivery of the service Key Choices are now able to assist all of these customers, either through self-service or provision of more support to those customers with complex problems.

To assist with self-service, six Interactive Bidding Kiosks were installed in the Key Choices Property Shop. This innovative facility has a range of benefits such as a self-service property search system, access to our self-service mutual exchange database, up-to-date information on available properties, virtual adverts, tours of local areas and internal virtual property tours. The kiosks are clearly labelled as 'Property Request Points', and have an image of a person welcoming them to make requests.

The kiosks are set up to accept bids on the welcome page, customers simply enter their application number and the properties that they are eligible to bid for appear on screen. Information about the property and area is displayed so applicants can make informed

choices before they make a request. Before the customers actually make their request the system also shows the customer their queue position, which indicates their likelihood of attaining that property. This has reduced speculative bidding as those customers who are informed that they are way down the queue are not likely to make a request. Feedback from applicants has also been that knowing their queue position has reduced anxiety as previously they were not informed until the letting results were published.

In addition, to help with Self Service Options, Rotherham Council tenants can register for a swap on Home Swapper Mutual exchange website. This allows customers to find their own move, subject to the Council's permission. Customers register their own personal advert and the system matches prospective tenants to the right size property and areas of choice. Once a suitable swap is identified, both tenants must ask the Council for permission before they move.



Neighbourhood and Community

Taking Care of Your Neighbourhood, and Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour through Partnership Working

How did we do?

90.85% of anti-social behaviour cases were resolved in time in 2011, increased to 98.50% of cases completed in time by March 2014. This was better than 2012/13 when 95.45% of cases were completed on time. Nationally, Rotherham Council is amongst the best in the country

The Council worked in partnership with South Yorkshire Police to achieve a 4% reduction in overall crime across the borough.

The percentage of ASB cases closed as resolved at 98.5% putting the Council in the Housemark Upper Quartile national performance for housing providers

The Safer Homes scheme delivered target hardening measures to individual homes and localities, including security lighting, additional locks, and intruder alarms

Case Study:

The Council implemented a communal annual deep clean to remove ground in dirt, dust, and paint which resulted in a significantly improvement to communal areas associated with flats

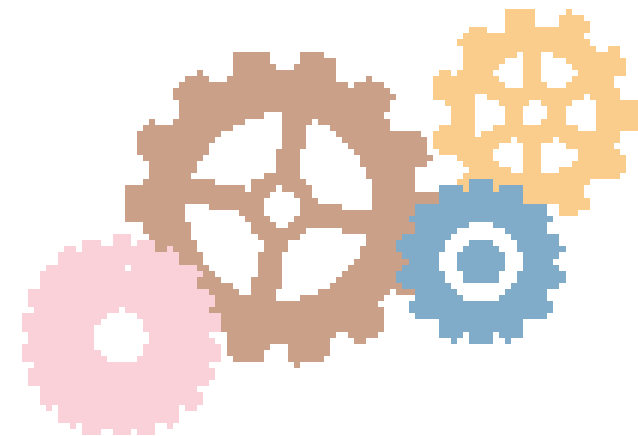


Ascension Close handrails

Some Tenants on Ascension Close were having difficulties walking to their bungalows, especially in wet or icy weather due to the gradient in the access path. Wentworth Valley Area Housing Panel became aware of this and approved a project to install handrails on the path. Tenants are very pleased with the result and are much more confident in using the access path safely.

Caperns Road fencing

Tenants on Caperns Road bungalow complex told Rother Valley South Area Housing Panel there was a stretch of fencing that was in need of upgrade. The Panel considered this project favourably and approved a project to replace the fencing, improving the look of the environment.



Customer Comments:

The Council received several calls and kind emails from tenants living in 70 bungalow complexes who had works done to say they were delighted with the appearance of the complexes. The Council is hopeful that this will mean far fewer customer contacts relating to grass cutting and hopefully an improved customer satisfaction throughout the grass cutting season.



"Mrs Brownnett of Mekyll Close has just called to thank the gardeners who have been out and trimmed the grass outside her bungalow. She states that it is the best that it has ever looked. She would like to thank the gardeners, who she thinks were Streetpride."



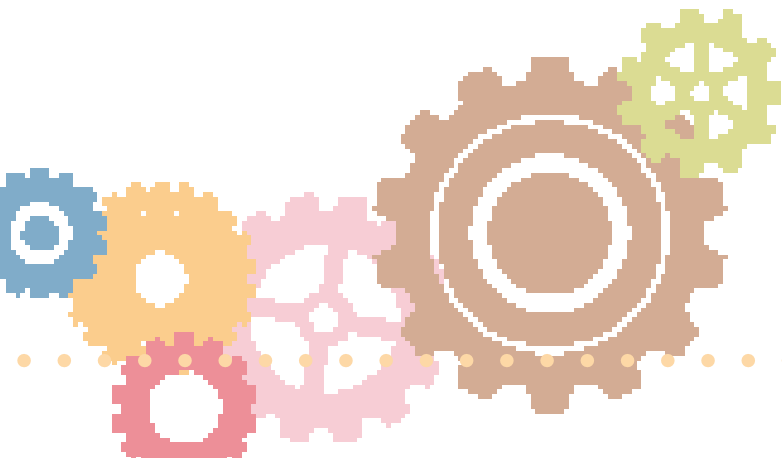
"I have just received a telephone from Liz Booth, resident of Hawley Street, Rawmarsh. Streetpride staff have been on Hawley Street for the past few days cutting back shrubs and tidying up the area – she has said they have made a really good job and would like her thanks to be passed on to them."



"Mrs Ported called to compliment the work carried out (at Friars Croft, Wentworth) by the team cutting the lawns, hedges and having a general tidy up. She wanted to congratulate them on doing a lovely job."



"Dear Sir, May I take this opportunity to thank you and your workforce for the maintenance work recently undertaken in and around Herringthorpe Valley Road. Your men came on Tuesday of this week and not only cut the grass to the rear of the properties but also removed all the debris from between the pathway flags - this has never been done before in eleven years of living here. This is the earliest time of year the grass has ever been cut here, (records kept since 2004). The team is back again this morning tidying verges to the front and cutting the grass. My wife and I really appreciate the work done by your team and wish to pass this gratitude on to you and your team. Yours sincerely, Eddie & Ann Garlick, East Dene."



Case Studies:

Area Housing Panel project: Bollards in Town Lane, Rockingham

To prevent cars parking on the grass verge bollards were placed on a section of Town Lane, Rockingham. Damage to the grass was unsightly and this action has now improved the look of the area.

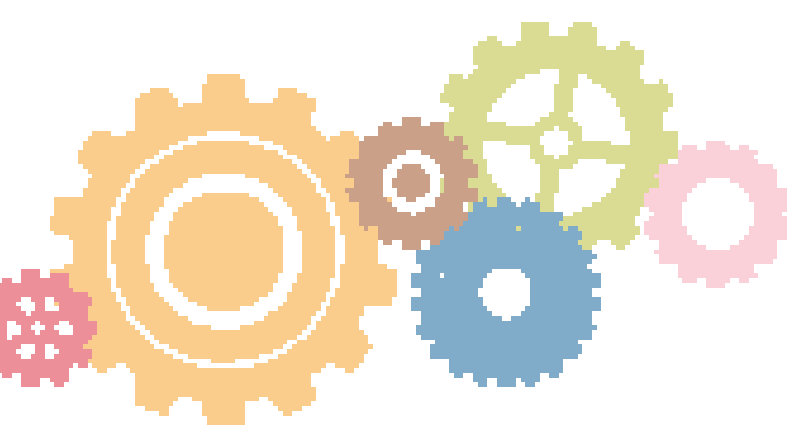
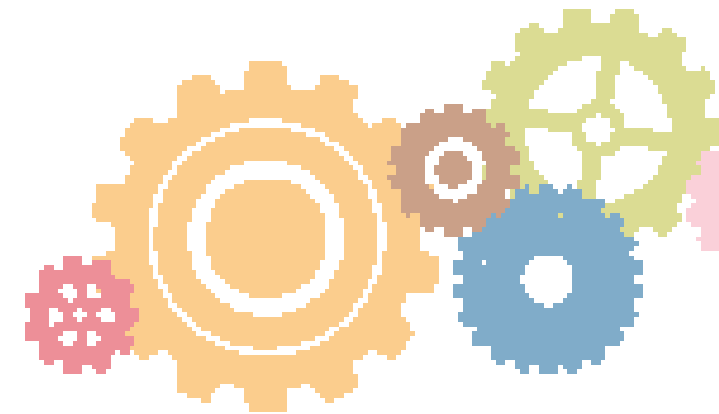


Area Housing Panel Project: Fencing off Drying Area at Whitehall Way

This area was fenced off following reports from local residents that this unused drying area was being used by youths to drink and cause a nuisance with bikes.

Community Clean up days

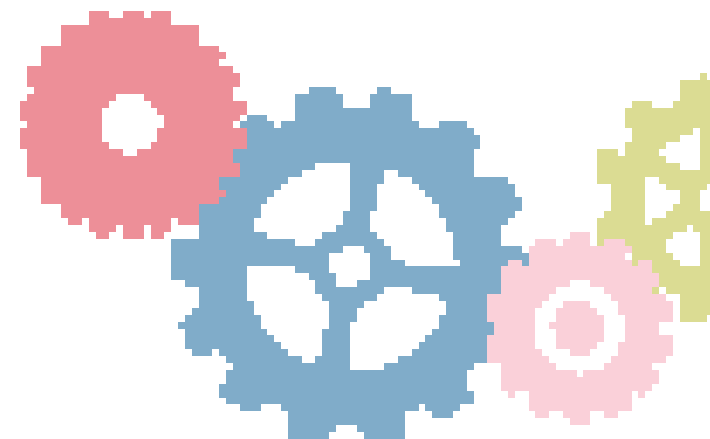
A number of Clean Up days were organised throughout the year to improve local estates. Residents and staff worked together to improve the local environment at Leicester Road in April, The Crescent in June and Scarsdale Street in February.



Providing a Value for Money Service

How did we do?

- **96.95%** of rent was collected in 2011, which had improved to **99.77%** by March 2014
 - The income service collected an additional £3.9m of income in 2013/14 by reducing the number of empty properties to fewer than 190
 - **2.18%** of total rent was in arrears during 2013/14. There was more arrears than in previous years (**0.59%** in March 2013), due the spare room subsidy for Housing Benefit claimants being removed. Nationally, Rotherham Council performed above average in this area.
- A range of measures continue to be employed to help increase collection rates and support customers in dealing with their debt, including:
 - Affordability checks prior to new tenancy sign-ups
 - Closer working with Children and Young People's Services and the Homeless team, including the development of joint-working protocols
 - Referrals to the Tenancy Support Officer, Money Advice and other agencies where possible prior to instigation of court proceedings
 - Independent case reviews conducted prior to all court applications where there are children in the household and/or the tenant requires multi-agency support.



6 Our plans for improving services in the next 12 months

We will reduce anti-social behaviour and crime to ensure people feel safe where they live

- Working with Safer Rotherham Partnership, we will continue to strengthen our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and crime
- Through tenancy and estate management we will strengthen our service offer and target resources to our most deprived neighbourhoods
- We will improve anti social behaviour related call handling within the customer contact centre
- We will improve online access channels and promote channel shift by encouraging customers to self-help
- We will manage community relations and maintain community cohesion

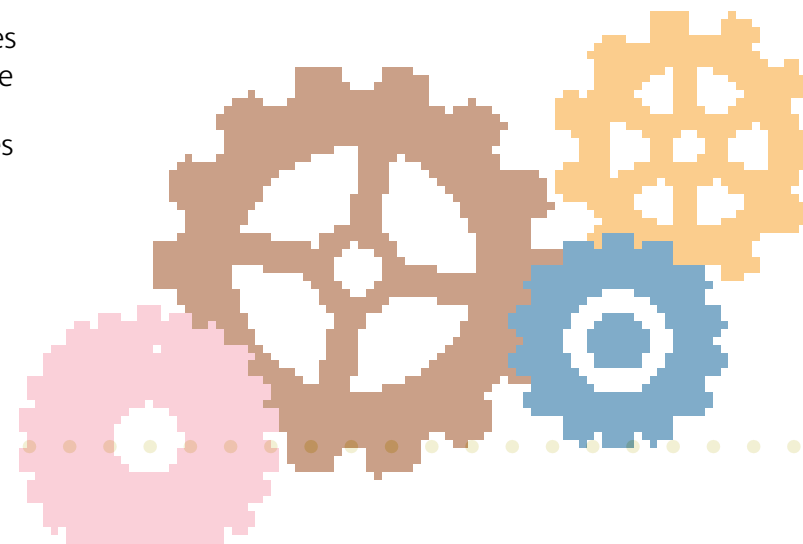
We will help people to improve their health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities within the Borough

- We will identify areas with poorer air quality and implement actions to safeguard health impact

We will respond quickly to people's needs, mitigating the effects of poverty and helping them thrive

- We will co-ordinate action in Rotherham's most deprived neighbourhoods and focus resources to improve housing and neighbourhood standards in these areas
- We will deliver local economic outcomes through the Housing Investment Programme
- We will ensure no community is left behind, helping them to help themselves and strengthening community resilience
- We will help customers to make changes due to the implementation of Welfare Reform

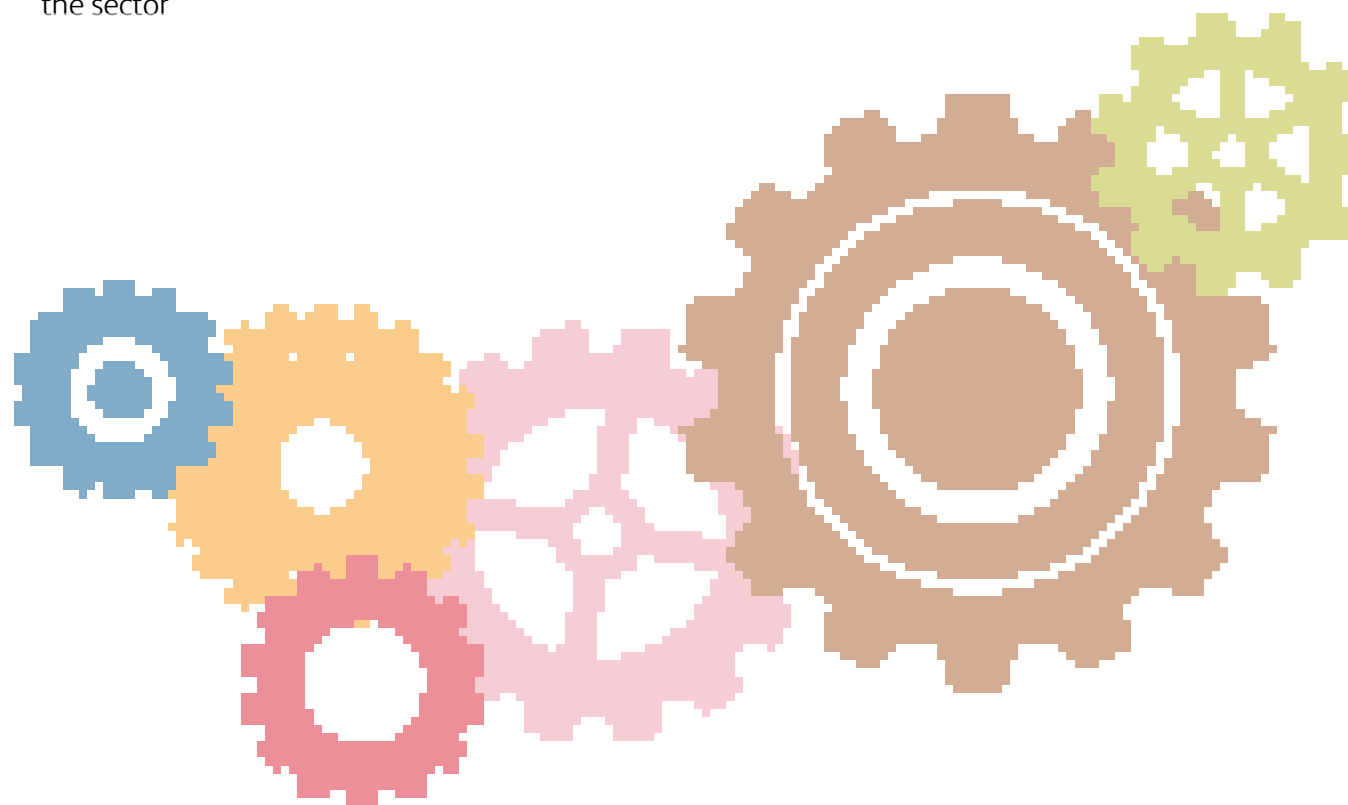
- We will implement a new homelessness prevention strategy
- We will alleviate fuel poverty through the development of the Green Deal Partnership
- We will renegotiate the asylum cluster and dispersal policy to ensure parity with the regional average



We will ensure that people are able to live in decent affordable homes

- We will continue to improve the quality and responsiveness of the Council's housing Repairs and Maintenance service and involve customers in discussions regarding where funds should be reinvested for environmental and home improvements
- We will implement a new Housing Allocations Policy and assess individuals against an eligibility criteria
- We will implement an Integrated Housing Management System and revise processes to ensure more services are available to customers online
- We will commence implementation of the Housing Growth Agenda and refresh the 30 year business plan for the Housing Revenue Account
- We will improve the turnaround times for void properties to release efficiencies

- We will seek to increase the number of new homes built and improve the quality of our homes through the Council's Housing and Neighbourhood Investment Strategy, Green Deal and enforcement activity
- We will support and ensure private sector housing landlords meet their responsibilities in improving standards in the sector



Have your say – we would like to encourage you to contact us about our performance and plans and you can do this in any of the following ways:

Email:

ServiceQuality@rotherham.gov.uk

Telephone contact:

Performance and Quality Team
01709 822661/822328

Letter:

Performance and Quality Team
2nd Floor, Wing C
Riverside House
Main Street
Rotherham
S60 1AE

Other useful links and telephone numbers, if you wish to contact the Council regarding either Council Housing or other services:

- **Council Housing (general enquiries):**
01709 336040
- **Council Housing Repairs:** 01709 336009
- **Key Choices:** 01709 336005
- **Streetpride:** 01709 336003
- **Website:**
www.rotherham.gov.uk/contactus
- **Council General Enquiries:**
01709 382121 minicom 01709 823256
- **Council Tax and Benefits:**
01709 336006

Request a non-urgent repair online:

- www.rotherham.gov.uk/forms
- **By email:**
councilhomes@rotherham.gov.uk

Contact your local Housing Officer

Housing Officers across the borough are responsible for looking after you and your home. We can put you in touch with your local Housing Officer.

