



## Report to Safer and Stronger Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018

---

**Report of:** Bev Mullooly, Head of Neighbourhood Services

---

**Subject:** Update on Housing+

---

**Author of Report:** Peter Brown, Project Manager (tel. 29 30241)

---

**Summary:**

This paper provides an update on the Housing+ service provided to council housing tenants across the City. It explains how the service has developed over the past year and again invites comments from Members on their experiences along with suggestions and recommendations from the Committee for future development.

---

**Type of item:** The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	X
Other	

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

Consider the update provided, discuss the impact of Housing+ and provide any comments, suggestions or recommendations from the Committee on the future development of Housing+.

---

**Background Papers:**

None

**Category of Report:** OPEN

## **Report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services – Update on Housing+**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on progress in implementing Housing+ in Sheffield. Housing+ was introduced in October 2016 as part of a restructure of the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service. The offer to council housing tenants in the City is a more proactive approach to housing management and support to sustain their tenancy, with a named Neighbourhood Officer responsible for their property and the offer of an annual home.
- 1.2 Members of the Safer and Stronger Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee were provided with an early update on progress in April 2017. This paper explains how the service has developed over the past year and again invites comments from Members on their experiences along with suggestions and recommendations from the Committee for future development.

### **2. How has Housing+ developed?**

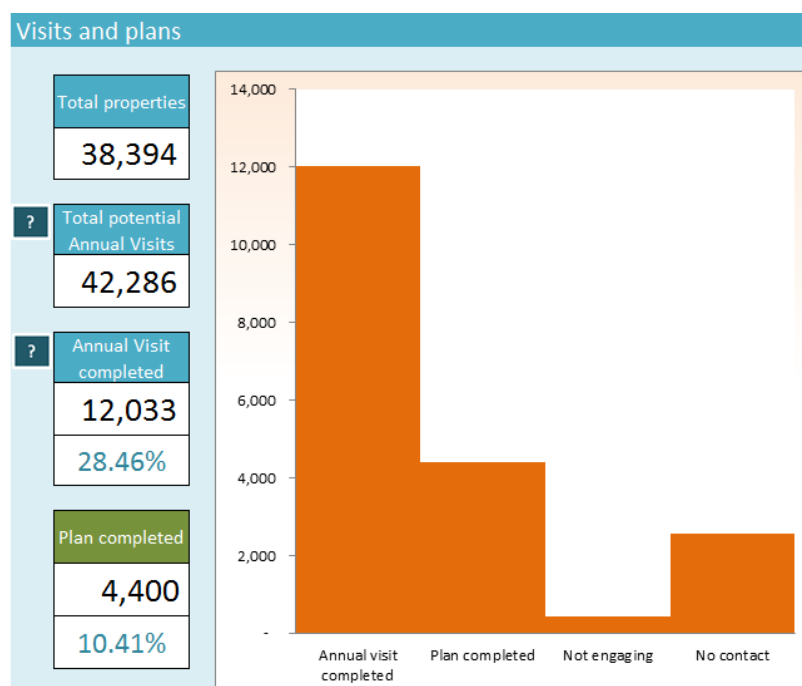
- 2.1 Housing+ was introduced in October 2016 as part of a restructure of the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service. The aim of Housing+ is to work more proactively with council housing tenants across the City to support them in managing their tenancies and increasing the sustainability of neighbourhoods and communities. The City was divided into 170 'patches' of between 200 and 400 council housing properties, with each patch having a named Neighbourhood Officer responsible for working with their tenants on a range of housing and non-housing issues.
- 2.2 This was a new approach for the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service and one that has developed over the past 15 months. There were some initial teething problems, common with any major service transformation, particularly around staff training and ICT. We are working with staff to resolve these issues, although there is still some further work to do around developing fit for purpose ICT systems.
- 2.3 Neighbourhood Officers themselves have developed into their roles using their range of skills and experience to support their tenants. The aim of Housing+ was to provide a more tailored service to tenants, based on local needs. The service has therefore developed in different ways across the City reflecting the local neighbourhoods where council tenancies are located.
- 2.4 The housing management performance of the service during this period of transformational change has remained good. Overall customer satisfaction is strong and rent arrears performance in particular is above target. Performance on reletting empty properties once the repairs have been complete is good. Accompanied viewings are completed within 2

days on average and tenancies signed up promptly afterwards. Satisfaction on ASB case management has dropped below target. An action plan is in place for this and a range of quality measures are being instigated. The performance chart at the end of this report shows the performance for key indicators between October and December 2017.

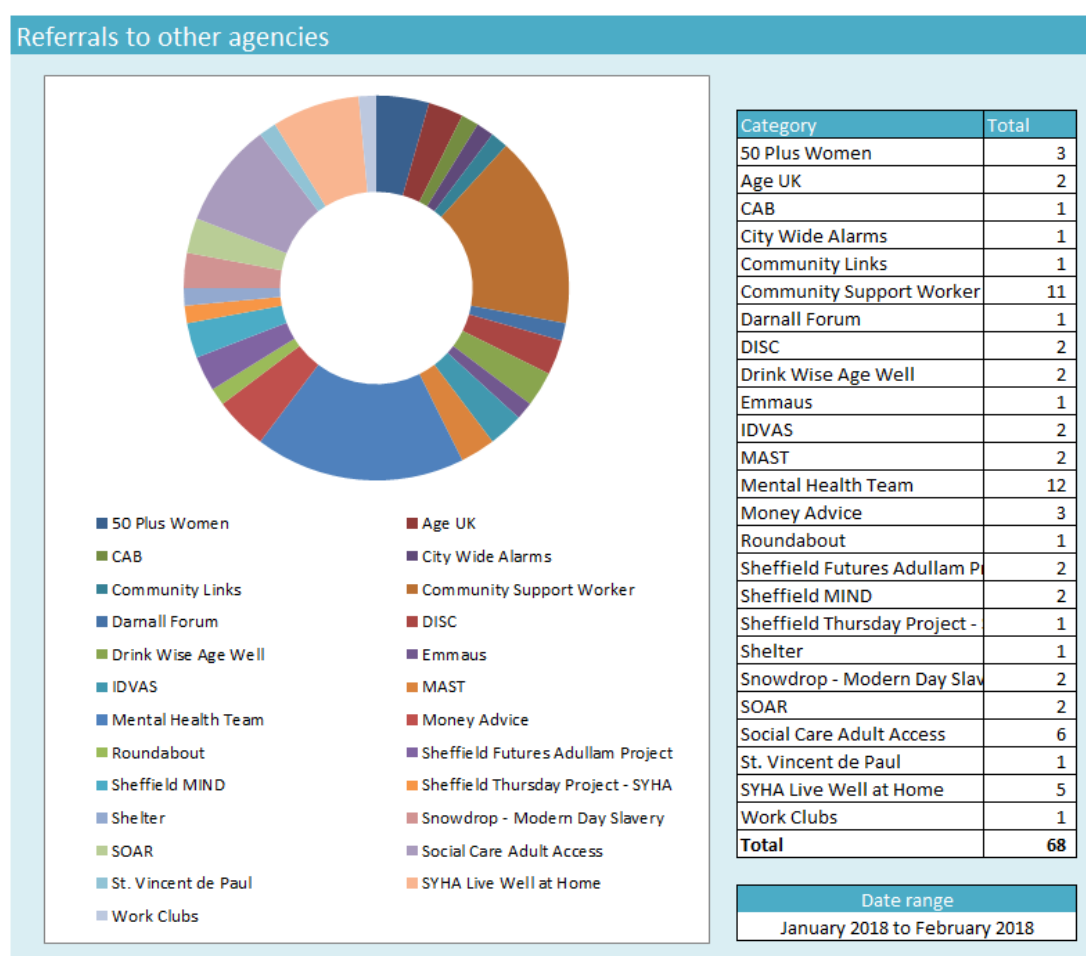
### 3. How do we know if it's working?

3.1 While the established measures of housing management performance show an overall positive picture, the Housing+ approach has meant that the service has had to change its way of looking at how we are doing. Closely linked to Housing+ has been the development of a new information and performance system for the service. This will allow us to look at data more creatively and understand more about the issues and challenges that the service faces in the future. Crucially it should allow us to deliver a better service to tenants through more informed Neighbourhood Officers understanding the issues of their 'patch'. This report provides Members with a small selection of the data available within 'Infohub'. All this data is presented at the citywide level, but can easily be viewed at a Neighbourhood Team, Ward or 'patch' level.

3.2 The central part of Housing+ is the offer of an annual visit to each tenant. This visit offers the opportunity to discuss with the tenant any concerns with their tenancy, but also any other issues that the tenant may have being part of their local community. Many tenants are self-sustaining and do not either require a visit or have anything to discuss. Some tenants have welcomed the opportunity to meet with the Neighbourhood Officer and get support with their housing or wider needs. Between April 2017 and January 2018, 42% of tenants were offered a Housing+ visit. 6,000 chose not to take up that option. The graphic below shows more details of the 12,000 who did decide to they did not need a visit by the Neighbourhood Officer. We are improving our monitoring of visits through Infohub so will be able to provide even more details in future.



- 3.3 About one third of tenants who have been visited (4,400) did require support with their tenancy. The level of support required has varied, although in some cases significant previously hidden need has been identified and required significant intervention. Working with these tenants, Neighbourhood Officers have drafted a Household Plan setting out actions that both the tenant and the Neighbourhood Officer need to take to deal with whatever issues have presented. Direct tenancy-related issues will be picked up by the Neighbourhood Officer. Other issues may require signposting to another SCC service, partner or agency/organisation. The graphic below shows for January 2018 the referrals made by Neighbourhood Officers to other agencies. This should give Members an idea of the wide range of issues that Neighbourhood Officers are supporting tenants with on a regular basis.



- 3.4 A recent Stakeholder focus group held as part of the Housing+ Health & Wellbeing Study showed that other partner services and organisations have seen some improvements in joint working and information sharing. Although levels of contact have varied across services, there has been an increase in referrals to Community Support Workers and Drug & Alcohol Support.
- 3.5 Neighbourhood Officers are also out and about addressing key concerns of tenants and the service – Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) and rent arrears. The graphic below shows a snapshot of the activities being undertaken by Neighbourhood Officers along with their colleagues in the

specialist Rent Collection and ASB and Community Safety teams. Both of these are key areas that the service needs to develop over the next 12 months, working more closely with the Police on Community Safety issues and tackling the challenges of Universal Credit which rolls out in Sheffield in November this year.

### ASB Activity

Contact with Subject	Contact with reporter
3,005	7,106
Contact with other agencies	Case review / meetings /
2,677	1,823
Non-legal interventions	ASB Team court actions
408	11
Legal actions	All other actions
27	3,763

### Rents Activity\*

\*IMFIT is the rent collection specialist team, City is the Neighbourhood Teams

Activity	IMFIT	City
Tenant Phoned	58,351	23,840
Phoned No Contact	44,453	35,496
Phoned Contact	27,128	37,516
Text Contact	16,966	2,103
Housing Benefit Check Done	34,776	46,117
DHP Requested	2,397	1,976
Visited Contact	2,154	8,767
Visited No Contact	7,180	12,226
Hardship Fund requested	480	270
Housing Plus Visit Completed	909	5,637
Eviction Actions	588	27
Other		
Totals	195,382	173,975

3.5 The service has also been working with the University of Sheffield to get a tenant perspective on the impact of Housing+. The study will primarily explore the health impacts of the Housing+ approach, and look at the potential benefits of a more holistic way of working linking and signposting tenants to services wider than just housing management. The two-year study concludes in March 2018 and the initial findings will be shared with tenants at the annual citywide meeting in May. There is already some learning from the first year of the study which spoke to over 1000 tenants about their housing experiences.

- Tenants felt it was important to build a relationship with their Neighbourhood Officer to give the tenant confidence in talking to them and not have to deal with a lot of different people.
- Some tenants were unsure about the new arrangements of home visits, preferring only to contact a Neighbourhood Officer when they needed advice.
- Other tenants felt that they would like to be visited more than once a year, or said that talking to a Neighbourhood Officer in their own home would make them feel more at ease.
- All tenants who discussed the issue were entirely willing to make contact with their Neighbourhood Officer if they needed to speak to them.
- Some tenants said that their willingness to discuss sensitive issues with a Neighbourhood Officer would depend upon their

opinion of the individual person, whether they found them approachable, if they felt they could trust them and whether they were able to build a relationship.

- 3.6 The study also talked to Neighbourhood Officers about their early experiences of Housing+. There were some negative experiences of the change process, particularly around training and ICT as described in 2.2. Neighbourhood Officers were able to highlight examples of positive impacts from the introduction of the new service such as;

- Unearthing invisible problems and identifying issues early,
- Reaching vulnerable tenants who have not previously engaged with the service,
- Strengthened relationships with tenants and professionals such as the Police and health service,
- Increased team working
- Decreased property turnover in some areas, and dealing with problems quicker and more efficiently so that tenants are not 'passed from pillar to post'.

- 3.7 Housing+ is also about developing wider community sustainability and having an impact on the neighbourhood as well as the individual. Again the focus is on working with tenants and tenant groups to link them into local networks, both voluntary and statutory, to ensure that everyone benefits from the support which is available. This recent event in Burngreave was a successful collaboration between the Locality Management Team, Housing and Neighbourhood Service, Voluntary Action Sheffield and South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau and we hope to be part of more events like this in the future.



#### **4 What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?**

- 4.1 The Housing and Neighbourhoods Service manages around 40,000 council housing tenancies in the City. The aim is to provide tenants with the best possible housing management service that takes advantage of the Council's position as a major service provider in the City, ensuring that service delivery is joined-up to the benefit of tenants.

#### **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 Consider the update provided, discuss the impact of Housing+ and provide any comments, suggestions or recommendations from the Committee on the future development of Housing+



# These are our Service Promises

October to  
December 2017

Here is a snapshot of how we have performed across the city

## Keeping your local area clean and tidy



We'll remove dumped rubbish and fly-tipping when you tell us about it or when we spot it on our inspections.

**100%** of fly-tipping was removed **within one working day**. Our target is **99%**.



## Relet properties as quickly as possible and support new tenants



We'll relet empty properties as quickly as we can.

It took an average of 68.3 days to relet properties. Our target is 49 days.

The move of the repairs service back to the Council has created some delays in making empty properties ready to be re-let.



## Good quality information and communications



We'll respond promptly to complaints and keep you informed as we deal with them.

**81%** of complaints were responded to within 3 working days. Our target is **75%**.



## A variety of ways to get involved



We'll provide you with good quality information.

**7.2** out of 10 customers are satisfied that it is easy to find out about Council Housing services.



## Clear communication about what you need to pay and when



We'll offer new tenants additional support in the early weeks of their tenancy.

**84%** of customers across the city were satisfied with the information they were given about their rent when they signed for their new tenancies.



## Keeping your home safe, weatherproof and in good working order, and keeping communal areas safe and well maintained



We aim to ensure all repairs are completed to a satisfactory standard.

**87%** of customers across the city are satisfied with the repairs service we provide. Our target is **95%**.



## Satisfied Customers

8.3 out of 10 people said that they were treated fairly by staff  
7.7 out of 10 people said that shared green areas are well maintained  
8.4 out of 10 people said they would recommend Sheffield Housing Service to family and friends



This symbol shows we are reporting on our performance against a promise we have made to our customers.

Tell us what you think at [www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing) by calling 0114 293 0000 or 0114 205 3333 or email [councilhousing@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:councilhousing@sheffield.gov.uk)



This page is intentionally left blank