

Service Standards

Tenancy and Estate Management

Our promise to you



JANUARY 2014

South Kesteven District Council
Your council working for you

Index

Section	Page
1 Introduction	3
2 Monitoring Our Service Standards	3
3 Housing Advice Service Standard	4
4 Tenancy Management Service standard	4 - 5
5 Anti-Social Behaviour service Standard	5 - 6 - 7
5.1 Reporting Anti-Social behaviour	7
6 Estates Management Service Standard	8 - 9
7 Racial Harassment Service Standard	9 - 10
8 Domestic Abuse Service Standard	11 - 12
9 What if we don't meet your expectations	12
10 Contact us	13
10.1 Other useful numbers	14

1. Introduction

At South Kesteven District Council we aim to provide clear, cost effective, customer focused quality services for all of our customers.

These service standards tell you exactly what you can expect from us and this will ensure that everyone using our services receives the same treatment. This way we eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations and communications between our customers, external agencies and other groups within our diverse community.

Service standards allow us to monitor our performance and enable us to keep improving the services we deliver to you.

We have developed these with the help of our customers and staff. They explain what services we will provide and how we will respond when you contact us about them. This is so that you will know what to expect from us.

When we write to you we will make sure that our letters are easy to read and understand.

2. Monitoring Our Service Standards

We will keep a close watch on our service standards to ensure that we keep delivering a quality service. We will publish our results at the end of each year in our resident's magazine 'Skyline'. Our estate management working group which is made up of service users and officers will review our service standards each year.

You can also have your say by:

- Speaking to a member of staff.
- Email: tenancy@southkesteven.gov.uk
- By completing a customer satisfaction questionnaire.
- Contacting Housing Management (see useful contact numbers).

We will treat all customers fairly regardless of their gender, age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, responsibility for dependants, religious or other beliefs, or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

3. Housing advice service standard

We offer free and confidential housing advice to everyone and it is available through all our offices.

We will:

- Provide you with housing advice and information about your housing choices. The information will be easy to understand, and will be available in different formats.
- Keep everything you say confidential at all times.
- Offer fair treatment to all service users in line with our equality and diversity policy. Language line, induction loops are available and we will provide an interpreter or translation service if required.
- Provide you with details of other landlords in the area and how you can contact them.

If you would like to talk to someone regarding housing advice you can contact a member of staff at either your area housing office, or by speaking to the housing solutions team on 01476 406080, Mon – Thurs, 8.45am – 5.15pm. Friday 8.45am – 4.45pm. Or send an email to housingsolutions@southkesteven.gov.uk

Out of hours number for **urgent** housing advice is 01476 590044

4. Tenancy management service standard

Our aim:

To ensure that any issues or support relating to the management of tenancies is identified quickly and to make sure that prompt action is taken to resolve them so that residents can have quiet enjoyment of their home and surroundings.

We will:

- Have dedicated estate officers for each area, who are able to deal with tenancy management issues and offer support and assistance when required.
- Issue all new tenants with a tenants' handbook and a tenancy agreement, which will be explained to you when you collect the keys for your new property.
- Explain clearly your rights and responsibilities to you when you become a tenant, including how we deal with breaches of the conditions of the tenancy agreement.
- Visit all new tenants after 6 weeks, 6 months and 9 months before granting a secure tenancy. This is to ensure that the tenancy has been maintained satisfactorily.
- Expect all new tenants to sign a good neighbour agreement which sets out the council's responsibilities

as well as the behaviour we expect from our tenants.

- Involve you in decision making about any changes to your tenancy agreement, or the services you receive from us.
- Grant 12 month introductory tenancies for first time tenants.
- Complete periodic audits of every tenancy.
- Process applications within 42 days for a mutual exchange and process applications as quickly as possible to succeed to a tenancy or if you wish to assign your tenancy to someone else who has lived with you for more than 12 months prior to application.
- Ensure all applicants on the housing register who are suffering domestic abuse are given advice and assistance.

5. Anti-social behaviour service standard

Anti-social behaviour is defined in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as: "Acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as oneself"

Our aim:

To ensure that people living on and around our estates have and respect, the right to quiet enjoyment of their homes, feel safe and secure, and live in a community where clear standards of behaviour are understood.

We will:

- Investigate all breaches of the tenancy agreement that are reported to us.
- Aim to interview you within 3 working days of making a complaint about anti-social behaviour. This will depend on the severity of the complaint.
- Interview you within 24 hours if it involves a hate crime or serious anti-social behaviour.
- Give impartial advice and support if you become involved in a dispute with a neighbour.
- Visit you to discuss matters in the privacy of your home, or if you prefer you can call into any of our area offices.
- Advise you what we can and cannot do to deal with your complaint.
- Work with you to create an action plan that will clearly set out what will be done and by whom.

- Treat information/complaints as confidential when requested to do so.
- Work with you to try and resolve your problems and explain clearly to you what is happening at each stage of the case.
- Interview the people responsible for the anti-social behaviour where they have been named within 10 working days of interviewing the person who has made the complaint.
- Offer mediation if all parties agree.
- Offer support for the person who has complained and the person causing the anti-social behaviour.
- Help witnesses to understand the procedure if cases need to go to court.
- Ask you to keep diary sheets if necessary of any incident you experience. Or we will provide you with the means to log and record all incidents of anti-social behaviour e.g. a Dictaphone. We will use this information to help us to decide on a course of action. It may also be required as evidence if cases progress to the courts.
- Contact and work with other agencies and organisations that may be able to provide information and help you and us to tackle the problem.

- Consider taking legal action, if required, to stop people causing anti-social behaviour on our estates where all other attempts to stop them doing so has failed.
- Work closely with our housing solutions team to give advice on emergency accommodation.

5.1 How to report anti-social behaviour

If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour there are various ways you can report it. You can visit, telephone, email or write to your local office.

You can report any problems you are having anonymously but please remember we may not be able to investigate the complaint fully if we have limited information and we would not be able to keep you informed of any progress made.

You can help us by:

- Not retaliating to any incident of anti-social behaviour.
- Keeping an accurate record of the date, time and nature and consequences of any incident (including the names of witnesses).
- Reporting crimes, serious anti-social behaviour or vandalism to the Police

at the time it is occurring or discovered or as soon as possible afterwards. Please ask for an incident or crime number when you report the incident as this will help us in our investigations.

- Following the advice that we give you.
- Acting as a witness in any legal proceedings that we take.

6. Estates management service standard

Our aim:

Is to provide decent homes on estates in a clean, safe and secure environment.

We will:

- Investigate all cases of illegal occupation of our properties and take the appropriate action swiftly to ensure trespassers are removed.
- Respond within 2 working days to any report of an abandoned property.
- Carry out estate inspections throughout the district at least twice each year. Each area will be walked around and an action plan drawn up to deal with any issues that arise.
- Advertise a programme of inspections and invite residents, councillors and other agencies to

join us on the walks around the district (the dates and times are published in Skyline magazine). Please contact us if you would like to join an estate inspection in your area.

- Respond to all written comments/complaints about your estate within 10 working days of receipt. An officer will visit the area in question and dependant on the severity of the comment/complaint will address the problem with the appropriate tenant or team.
- Remove any offensive or abusive graffiti on our properties or around our estates within 2 working days of the report being received. Any other graffiti will be removed as soon as possible to improve the appearance of your area.
- Ensure that our estate supervisors visit your local estate on a regular basis.
- Consult you about any improvements you might like to see carried out in your area when funds are available.
- Consult you about how our estate management services are provided.
- Remove abandoned vehicles as quickly as possible, if we are legally allowed to remove them.

- Act quickly to reports of pests in the communal areas of our flats and on our land and work to eradicate them as quickly as possible or put a monthly baiting programme in place where pests are unavoidable (close to streams/rivers, food outlets, large green areas).
- Provide information to our residents on how to deal with pests (rats, mice, wasps) in their own homes.
- Inspect all garage sites owned by us and carry out reviews to continually assess their future sustainability.
- Inspect and co-ordinate the removal of rubbish that has been dumped on our land. We will try and find out who has dumped the rubbish and they may be prosecuted.
- Monitor grounds maintenance contracts and where necessary arrange with our partners for work to be done to bring the site up to an acceptable standard.

7. Racial harassment service standard

Our aim:

We are committed to doing everything possible to fight racial harassment and support its victims.

Definition of Racial harassment is 'A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person'.

Source: Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report

We will:

- Treat any complaint of racial harassment as a serious complaint, and an area housing officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint.
- Remove any offensive graffiti from your property within 2 working days and repair any damage to your property as a priority.
- Work with Lincolnshire Police to provide advice on additional security to your home where there is a risk of further harassment.
- Work with Lincolnshire Police and our supported housing team to provide panic alarms. We can also install a portable emergency system to an existing phone line. These can be monitored 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week.

- Give extra housing management points to victims of harassment that need to move to another home. If you feel you cannot remain in your home. We will work with our colleagues in the housing solutions team to help you to find emergency accommodation.
- Take action against those who are committing racial harassment. This action could include:
 - ♦ Injunction proceedings
 - ♦ Possession proceedings
 - ♦ Criminal action in partnership with the Police
 - ♦ Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
 - ♦ Demotion of tenancy
- Ask you to provide us with any evidence you have regarding the harassment.
- Report all incidents of racial harassment to the Community Safety Manager and to the Corporate Manager for Human Resources and Organisational Development. If you consent, the police and the Equality and Human Rights Commission will also be notified.
- Involve all relevant agencies to make sure victims receive the appropriate support, and that those who commit racial harassment are dealt with quickly and effectively.

8. Domestic abuse service standard

Our aim:

We are committed to doing everything possible to tackle domestic abuse and to support its victims and work with perpetrators who want to change their behaviour by directing them to the appropriate agencies.

We will:

- Offer you a private interview with a named member of staff or we can interview you in your own home. No appointment is required, although we may have to wait for an officer or interview room to become available.
- Offer you an interview with an officer of the same sex to give advice.
- Keep everything you say confidential at all times. The exception to this is where we have a duty to share the information by law, or in cases of child protection.
- Treat you with understanding and respect.
- Support you in considering your options.
- Keep in regular contact with you, and provide you with advice and support on how you might be able to help yourself.

- Offer advice on seeking medical help, if required.
- Put you in touch with other organisations that specialise in dealing with domestic abuse and we will provide you with their telephone numbers.
- Give extra housing management points to any applicant on the housing register who is suffering domestic abuse that need to move to another home.
- Take legal action for breach of tenancy, where appropriate.
- Repair any damage to your home which affects your security or safety, within 2 working days.
- Provide details of how to end your tenancy if you decide to leave your home.
- If appropriate, offer/provide additional security through the sanctuary scheme.
- Work with our colleagues in the housing solutions team if emergency accommodation is required.

9. What if we don't meet your expectations?

We are committed to providing the best quality service to our customers. However, we accept that sometimes this may not happen.

We need you to tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected so that we can improve our service.

You can report your concerns to a member of staff who will try to resolve the problem.

If you are not satisfied with the response given, you have the right to make a formal complaint using our complaints and compliments procedure. Please ask any member of staff for more details or contact us in any of the ways listed.

10. Contact Us

For all enquiries you can contact us the following ways:

 **By telephoning a housing assistant on 01476 406373 or 406084**

 **Email - tenancy@southkesteven.gov.uk**

Or you can call into one of our offices at South Kesteven District Council

Grantham

Customer service centre
St Peters Hill
Grantham NG31 6PZ

Mon, Tues, Thurs: 8.45 - 17.15
Weds: 8.45 – 16.00
Fri: 8.45 – 16.45

Bourne

Town Hall
North Street
Bourne PE10 9EA

Mon, Weds, Fri 9.00 – 17.00
Tues, Thurs: 9.00 – 18.00
Saturday 9.00 – 13.00

Market Deeping

Deeping's community centre
Douglas Road
Market Deeping PE6 8PA

Mon – Fri: 9.30 – 14.00

Stamford

1 Maiden Lane
Stamford PE9 2AZ

Mon – Weds: 9.00 – 17.00
Thurs: 9.00 – 15.30
Fri: 9.00 – 16.30

The free phone number for reporting anti social behaviour out of hours to the council is: - [0800 183 0279](tel:08001830279)

Other useful numbers:

Lincolnshire County Council	01522 552 222
Lincolnshire County Council highways	01522 782 070
Lincolnshire Social Services	01522 552 222
Women's Aid	0800 2000 247
The Grantham Women's Centre	01476 561 131
Equality Advisory & Support Service	0808 800 0082
Police (non emergency)	101
Police, Fire, Ambulance (emergency)	999
Crime stoppers	0800 555 111
Child line	0800 1111
Parentlineplus	0808 800 2222
Age UK	0800 169 6565
NHS Direct	0845 46 47
Anglian Water emergency	08457 145 145
Gas emergency	0800 111 999
Electricity emergency (power loss in area)	08457 331 331
Citizens advice bureau	08444 111 444
Lincoln credit union	01522 845 100
RSPCA	0300 1234 999
Call Connect – bus service	0845 234 3344