



Report to Safer and Stronger Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

12 March 2020

Report of: Bev Mullooly, Head of Neighbourhood Services

Subject: Update on Housing+

Author of Report: Claire Lane, Neighbourhood Manager

Summary:

This paper provides an update on the Housing+ service. It outlines how the service has developed since the last update in March 2018 and 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 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. Neighbourhood Officers are responsible for a patch of properties and are a named point of contact for the housing service. Each tenant/household is offered an annual visit so we better understand our customers and how we can support them and household members to sustain their tenancy and ultimately help build resilient and sustainable neighbourhoods.
- 1.2 Neighbourhood Officers are responsible for delivering range of functions in the neighbourhood alongside the annual visits, including anti-social behaviour (ASB), tenancy management, rehousing advice/assessment and community engagement. They will also provide support and advice on health and wellbeing, employment, training and volunteering. Where households need more specialist support officers will offer advice and signposting to appropriate services.
- 1.3 Members of the Safer and Stronger Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee were last provided with an update in March 2018. This paper explains how the service has developed since the last update and invites comments from Members on their experiences along with suggestions and recommendations from the Committee for future development.

2. Housing+ Update

- 2.1 Performance data demonstrates that Housing+ has had a positive impact on sustaining tenancies and enabling tenants and their household members to access support where this is required. This will be covered in more detail in the following section.
- 2.2 In November 2018 the management of the early stages of rent recovery was transferred to the Income Management and Financial Inclusion team. This decision was taken due to the roll out of Universal Credit and the significant concern around the impact on tenants. A large number of staff in the Neighbourhood Teams would have required training in preparation for this.

Neighbourhood Officers continue to have a positive impact on the amount of rent collected. They play a key role in setting clear expectations for new and existing tenants and increasing the numbers of tenants who pay their rent by direct debit. The number of tenants paying by direct debit has risen from 8,761 in 2016/17 to 12,114 in 2018/19.

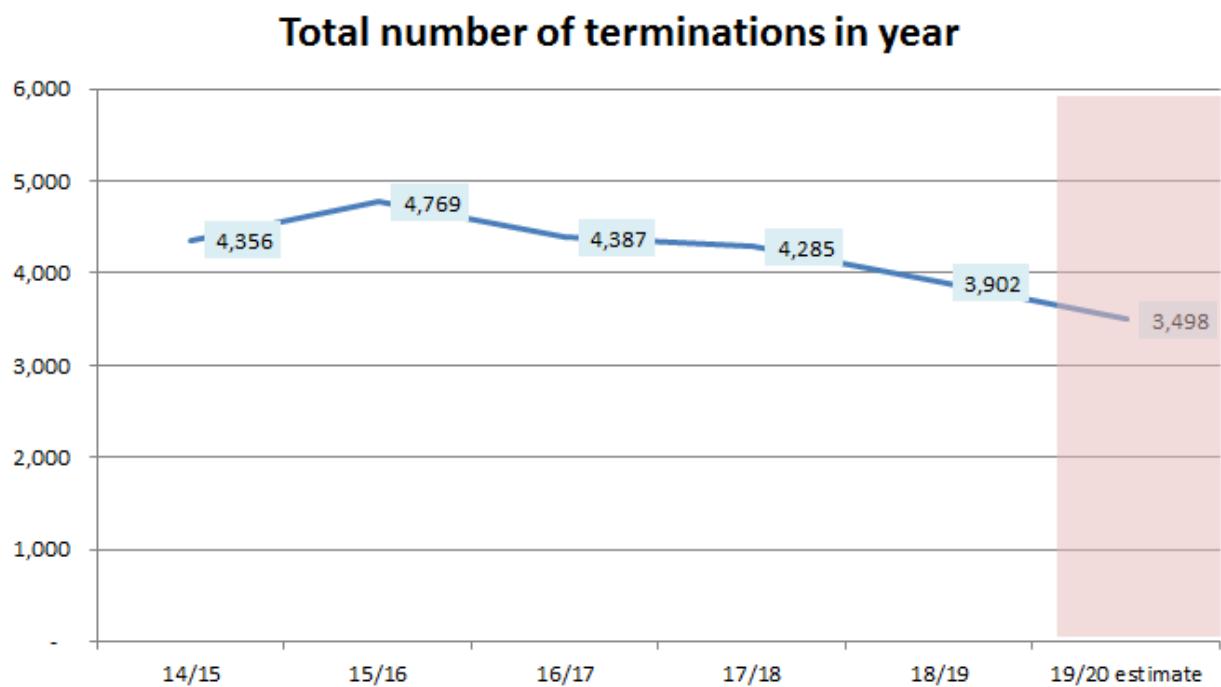
2.3 Neighbourhood Officers have provided improved access to services by working with tenants in their own homes. They have provided access to more than just council housing services by developing a greater understanding of the needs of their tenants and the services available to them. They are visible within the local community and have built links and partnerships with a range of local community services in order to support tenants to live independently, sustain their tenancies and to help develop the community asset. A key focus was to deliver services to tenant's homes this has been achieved and has contributed to a reduction in tenants accessing services via customer access points and the call centre.

3. Performance

3.1 Tenancy Terminations/Sustainability

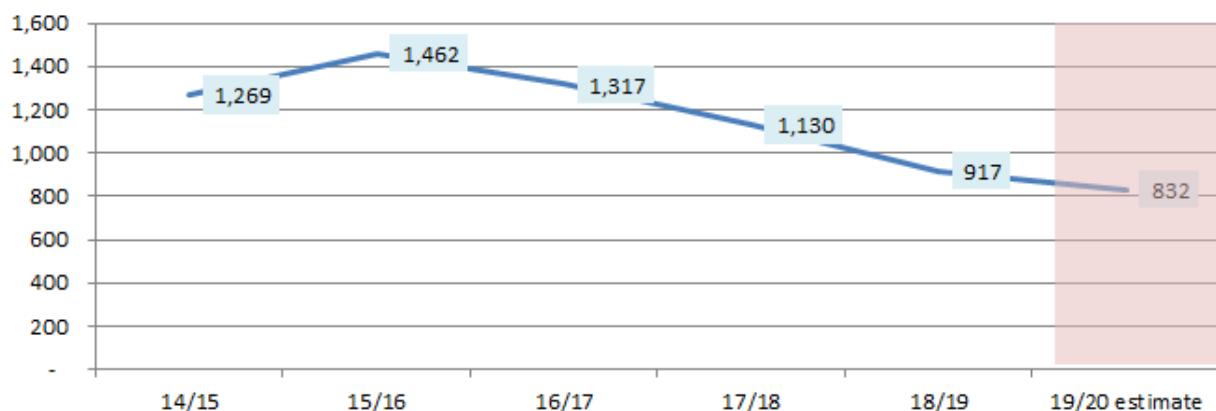
The Housing+ service has contributed to increased sustainability of tenancies. Since the introduction of the service in October 2016 tenancy terminations have reduced:

- 4,769 terminations in 2016/17
- 3,902 terminations in 2018/19 and
- 3,498 terminated in 2019/20 (estimated figure)



Tenancies terminating within 2 years have reduced from 1,269 in 2014/15 to 917 in 2018/19, with a further estimated reduction to 832 at year end in 2019/20. Tenancies terminating within 1 year have also reduced from 675 in 2014/15 to 436 in 2018/19.

Terminations in year (tenancy length 2 years or less)



A contributing factor for the reduction in tenancy terminations is the support that is identified and provided to tenants. Staff are working together across council services, partners and the voluntary sector to support tenants/household members. This is driving more streamlined, better integrated and individually tailored support.

We are now analysing the data from our visits/referrals to understand more about our tenants and the support they need to sustain tenancies. This will help to shape the future service and highlight areas to strengthen.

3.2 Anti-Social Behaviour

The number of anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases for council housing tenants have decreased from approximately 5,000 in 2016/17, when Housing+ was implemented, to under 3,000 in 2019/20.

Housing+ has contributed to this decrease by increasing contact with customers and making clear the expectations of managing and conducting a tenancy. It has also allowed officers to detect issues earlier and they have built effective relationships with the local policing teams.

We have positive examples of neighbourhood officers working closely with our safer neighbourhoods team and local policing teams. Working in partnership, and engaging with the local community, we have responded to ASB issues and taken positive actions. An example of this is tackling ASB within the Foxhill area, which resulted in arrests and successfully obtaining a criminal behaviour order which had a significant impact and reduced reporting of ASB in the area. The neighbourhood officer played a key role in gathering information and reassuring the local community in partnership with the local Policing and safer neighbourhood teams.

3.3 Annual Visits

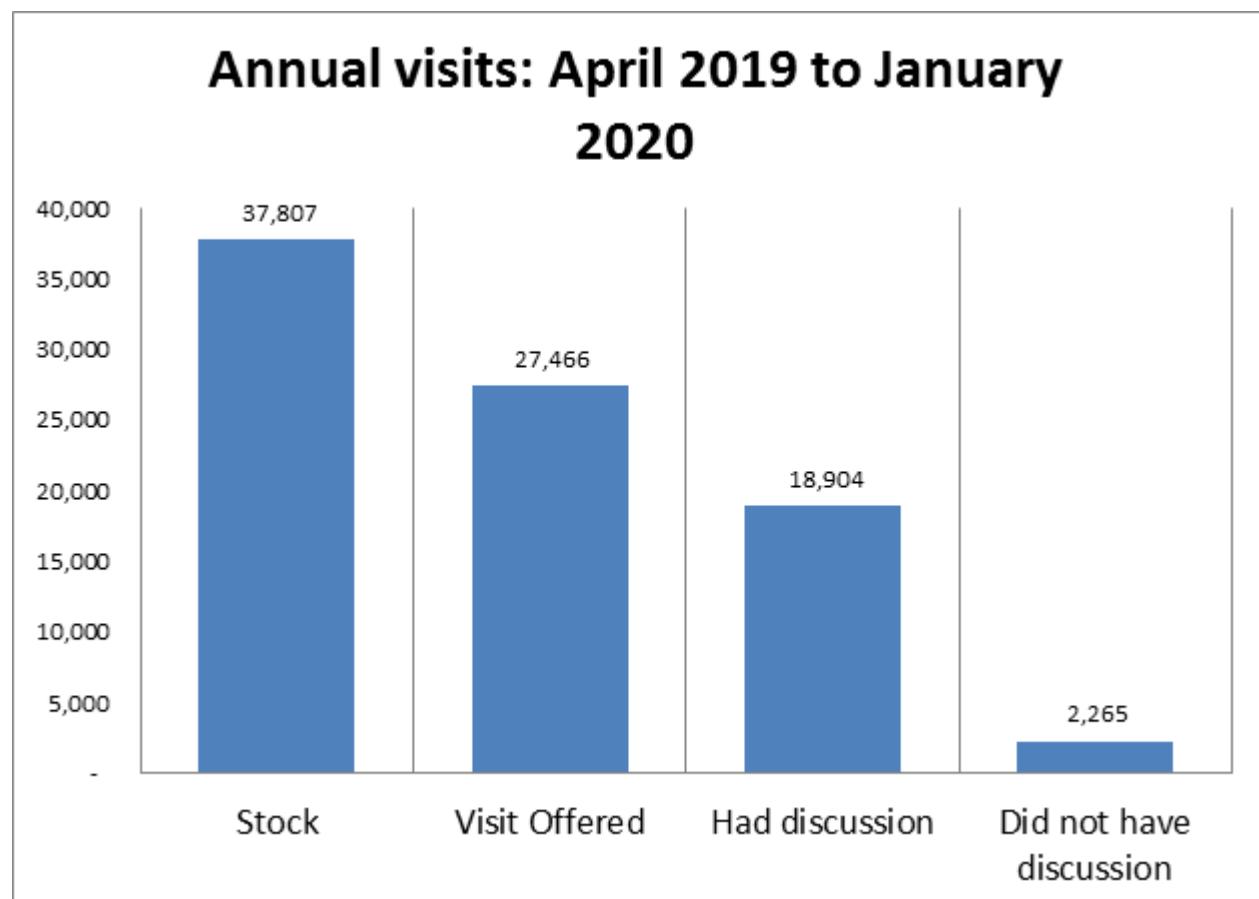
A key priority of the Housing+ service is to support tenants and households to be resilient, independent and well. The offer of an annual visit has provided all tenants with an opportunity to discuss tenancy concerns and access support to sustain and enjoy their home. The preventative nature of the Housing+ approach has allowed for issues to be identified earlier and mitigating actions to be taken.

In 2018/19 32,551 tenants were offered an annual visit, which is 83% of our stock. 16,058 tenants welcomed the opportunity to have a discussion with their Neighbourhood Officer.

So far this year, from April 2019 to the end of January 2020:

- 27,466 annual visits (73% of our stock) have been offered to council tenants.
- 18,904 (69%) of these tenants have welcomed a discussion with their Neighbourhood Officer.
- 2,265 tenants (8%) have chosen not to access this part of our service and therefore no discussion has taken place.

Please note for those tenants who we are currently supporting, as a result of the annual visit, or those currently being offered a visit; these numbers are not included in the table below.



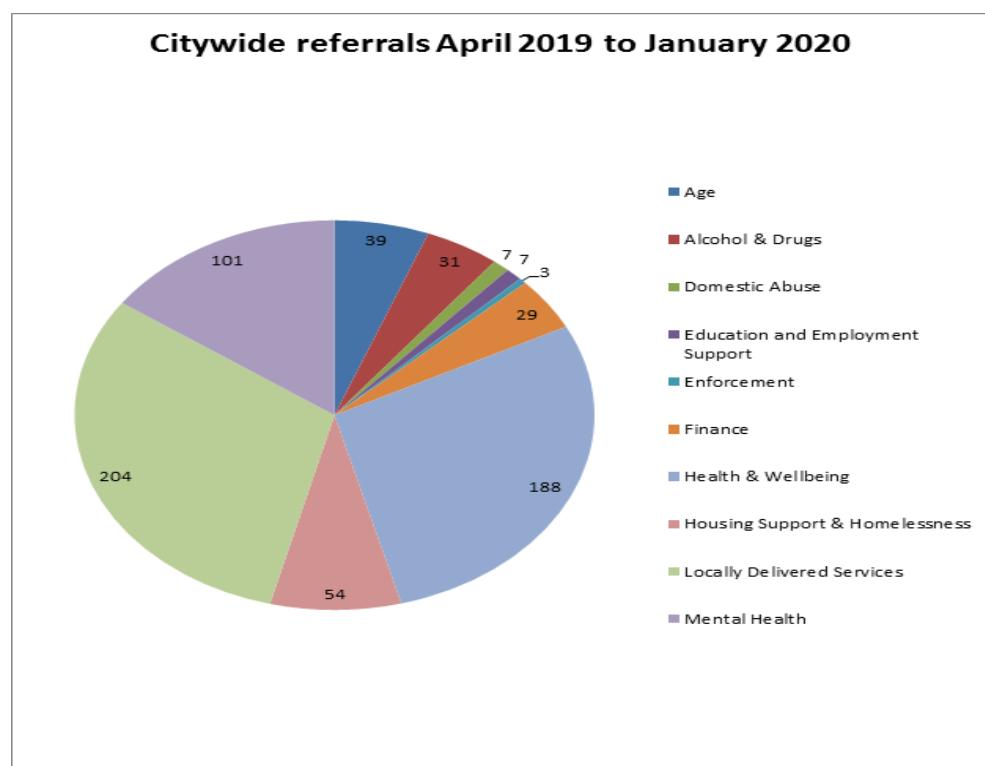
3.4 Support referrals

The Housing+ service has addressed tenancy related issues through the annual visit process and these issues have been detected and resolved earlier. The annual visit offer has also improved access to support for tenants/household members which has helped to increase individual/household resilience.

As a result of the 18,904 discussions held with tenants, in 2019/20, we have made 663 referrals into services to provide support and specialist advice. Discussions with our tenants, as part of the annual visit offer, have enabled us to access support early and in some cases prevent further interventions/escalation.

The highest referrals were:

- 204 into locally delivered services (e.g. social cafes, luncheon clubs, local sports centre), linking tenants into their local community which contributes to increasing community resilience and reducing social isolation.
- 188 to health and wellbeing services
- 101 to mental health services



We are identifying some 'unmet' need/demand, however to be confident of what this is telling us we need to gather more data and carry out further analysis.

4 Partnership working

The Housing Plus approach has a focus on increasing preventative intervention with tenants and their families. Strengthening partnership working in local communities has contributed to this objective. An example of this is our joint work with our partners within the wider council, NHS, clinical commissioning group, the Police; and a range of services and local organisations to jointly commission a locality based neighbourhood hub. This is within the South East of the City and is intended to develop supportive and resilient communities.

The hub supports the shift to preventive measures rather than responding to crisis. Using restorative practice to give individuals the power to know how to keep themselves healthy, resilient and live well.

The Neighbourhood hub will:

- Take an innovative and problem solving approach
- Have co-production at the heart of service delivery
- Work in partnership with other services to mainstream resources.
- connect practice to ensure quality services are delivered to the right person at the right time

Neighbourhood Officers are co-located with services (as above) which enables daily partnership working and regular attendance at TAP (Team around the Person) meetings. These meetings involve multiple agencies, as well as the individual, to agree a care package to support the individual's needs. The TAP is a preventative model to help individuals receive the right support at the right time.

The screenshot shows the Winter update 2020 newsletter. It features a large 'WELCOME' header and a 'THE SOUTH EAST NEIGHBOURHOOD HUB NEWSLETTER' section. Below this, there's a photo of three people shaking hands. A text box says: 'Firstly a big thank you for all who came to our Launch on the 4th November, we were delighted to see so many of you drop into the hub and join us for a cup of tea and a tour.' Another box discusses 'What is the hub and why...'. The 'CONNECTING PRACTICES' section includes a list of benefits like reduced hospital admissions and improved individual wellbeing. A 'TAP WHAT ARE THEY???' section explains the Team around the Person model, showing a diagram where various services (Social Care, Housing, Community Teams, Care Practice, GP Practice, and Crime) converge on a central 'Person'. The 'FACILITIES' section lists spacious meeting rooms, medical consulting rooms, and computer workspaces. A 'WHAT'S ON IN HUB' section links to training and events. The 'OUR DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN' section provides opening times (Monday-Friday, 08:00-16:45). The 'CONTACT US' section gives the address (Shorthook Site, Westfield Northway, Sheffield, S20 8FB), telephone number (0114 2735444), email (seneighbourhoodhub@sheffield.gov.uk), and webpage (www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/social-care/tap-neighbourhood-hubs.html).

5 Tenant Feedback

We conduct a customer satisfaction survey for the annual visit. The survey results for this year, in the table below, show that tenants who have received an annual visit are very satisfied with the service provided.

Housing+ Visit Survey	Year so far	Q1 Av	Q2 Av	Q3 Av	Q4 Av	Total responses
The neighbourhood officer fully explained to me what the purpose of the Housing+ (annual) visit was about	9.3		9.5	9.2		221
The officer was professional and polite	9.5		9.8	9.4		224
It was helpful to talk to the Neighbourhood Officer	9.3		9.6	9.1		222
The advice I was given was helpful and that I was able to be directed to other appropriate services	9.2		9.3	9.1		192
I felt comfortable having a conversation with my Neighbourhood Officer about a variety of issues	9.4		9.7	9.3		225
I was satisfied with what was agreed from the visit	9.2		9.5	9.1		218
Any support needs I have were identified and addressed	9.0		9.3	8.9		160
I feel happier (less anxious/less stressed) in my tenancy as a result of the visit	9.0		9.0	9.0		206

6 Housing+ Review

- 6.1 The Housing+ service is currently under review to determine if it is operating effectively and to consider any improvements that will create more efficiencies and provide the best outcomes for tenants.
- 6.2 Data obtained has demonstrated that the service is having a positive impact on sustaining tenancies and supporting tenants. Feedback from customers also supports this.
- 6.3 We are conducting a detailed analysis of the information that we have gained about our tenants, and their households, and what their needs are from our service and wider. We will use this to shape our future service. We are also currently reviewing our internal processes and procedures with a view to streamlining and focusing on customer outcomes. We will also explore best practices of other local authorities and housing associations through our newly established tenancy sustainability benchmarking group.

6.4 We have conducted a staff survey across all 7 neighbourhood teams. We are currently collating this feedback and will use this to focus on areas to improve and to ensure our staff have the tools and knowledge to carry out their role effectively. Headline results from 102 responses are:

- 88% understood what was expected in their role
- 75% felt empowered to use their own judgement and initiative
- 63% felt they had the appropriate training and tools to carry out their role.
- Over 65% felt that our relationship with mental health services requires improvement

7 Recommendation

7.1 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+

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