DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Housingplus
Service

Mayor's Parlour
The Oak Room
Leader of the Opposition
The Sycamore Room

Introduction

We want all our tenants to live in their homes and communities safely, but we recognise that some tenants require additional help to achieve this.

To help our tenants we have a dedicated, specialist team of Housing Plus Officers that can work with our tenants for as long as required to help them live safely in their homes and be valued members of their community.

Aims of the Housing Plus team

Our Housing Plus team are here to help you successfully maintain and manage your home by giving advice and direction on your tenancy agreement. We are here to help you stay in your home, help you understand your responsibilities as a tenant and prevent eviction or homelessness.

We play a key role in helping you to look after your home and ensure the best possible outcome for you. We will offer guidance if you are struggling in your home with rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, the condition and outstanding repairs.

The aim of the service is to prevent tenancy failure and homelessness.

What can Housing Plus help me with?

The team have an extensive tenancy management knowledge and can help you with:

- Maintaining and managing your rent payments, setting up repayment plans and reducing any arrears you have
- Advise and guide you on how to look after your property to keep it clean, heating and airing it, disposing of rubbish and recycling correctly.
- Identify and helping you to gain support to deal with any hoarding issues.
- Help you make and keep repair appointments and compliance checks so your property is safe and free from hazards.
- Help you maintain good relationships with your neighbours
- Set you achievable goals and targets to put you on track to maintain your tenancy
- Signpost you to agencies that can help with debt management, mental health, your well-being and housing support.

Housing Plus can help you at any point in your tenancy whether it is your first home, you have just moved home or you have been a tenant for years.

What is a Housing Plus Officer?

Housing Plus Officers are specialist Housing Officers who work more closely with you. They work with a small caseload of tenants, giving them more time to spend with you, resolving and assisting you to solve any issues which could put your home at risk.

Housing Plus Officers are not support workers and will take enforcement action if they need to, but their aim is to work with you, set achievable actions and timelines to help you in your home and community.

How do I access the service?

You can request an assessment for Housing Plus by:

- Completing a self referral (online referral form available) – Darlington BC - Help with your tenancy
- Through a direct referral from a Housing Tenancy Management Officer
- Your Housing Income Management or Tenancy Sustainment Officer
- A support worker
- A social worker

Is there a charge for the service?

Yes there is a weekly charge for the Housing Plus service, you can pay this along with your rent charges. However, if you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit you could be eligible for the charge to be fully covered by these. Our Housing Plus team and Tenancy Sustainment can provide you with more advice.

What happens after a referral is made?

A member of the Housing Plus team will contact you and arrange to visit you at your home to complete an assessment. The assessment is an opportunity for you, and the Officer, to identify what you need guidance with and we will identify any breaches of tenancy of your Tenancy Agreement.

We will help you make a Housing Benefit claim to cover the cost of the service and confirm a start date of when we will work with you.

At our first initial visit the officer will make a detailed personal action plan with you and set you targets that are achievable and that you can maintain. This action plan will remain in place until it is complete but will be reviewed throughout the time working with you to help you hit your goals.

How long will it take for me to hear back after a referral?

During busy periods, we operate a waiting list and your referral will be categorised as moderate, significant or urgent. We will aim to respond to your referral within 20 working days and if we exceed this timescale an officer will contact you to see if your Housing Tenancy Management officer can help with anything in the meantime.

What could happen if I do not follow the action plan?

The Housing Plus team are there to help you keep and manage your tenancy. If you work together with us to keep to your action plan you will be able to stay in your home and have a safe and secure home.

However, sometimes tenants do not engage with our service. Whilst we do not want to take legal action against tenants sometimes we have to choose this route if everything has failed. Housing Plus are the team to help stop legal action but only if you fully engage with them.

Dinsdale Court

How do I contact the team?

You can find out more information, including contact details for specialist debt agencies on our webpage https://www.darlington.gov.uk/housing/your-home/your-tenancy/keeping-your-tenancy/.

Or you can contact us:

By accessing your Darlington Home Online account

By emailing us at housing@darlington.gov.uk

By phoning us on 01325 405333 to make a home or office appointment.