

# Getting involved

## How YOU can influence our services

County Palatine takes the views of its customers very seriously—it is for this reason that we offer a wide range of options for you to tell us what you think about our services.

The plans to improve our services that are set out in this leaflet are the direct result of talking and listening to our customers.

If YOU want to influence future reviews of our services here is what you can do: -

**Write or contact us by telephone if you have a good idea to improve our services**

**Complete questionnaires we send you about our services—we will pay for the postage!**

**Join our Customer Panel—we will contact you by telephone to hear your views on new ideas to improve our services**

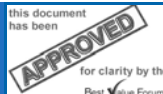
**Join our Best Value Forum to discuss our services in detail—meetings are held most months at 6pm**



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county  
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## Making our services better

Best Value

January 2001

## Rent / service charge collection and recovery

Number 1 in a series of leaflets setting out our plans to improve our services

### What is this leaflet?

This leaflet contains County Palatine's Service Statement and improvement timetable for our rent / service charge collection and recovery services. It sets out the type of service we aim to provide our customers and contains a plan for improving the service over a three year period.

This document is the result of a Best Value Comprehensive Service Review which took place between July and October 2000.

### What is Best Value?

The government requires all organisations that receive money from it to regularly review how they do things and to try to make continuous improvements to their services. They call this requirement "Best Value".

The aim is to provide value for money services that learn from the good ideas and practices of other companies and listen to the demands of the people who receive them—our customers.



Our offices are open seven days a week to deal with your enquiries

### Want to know more?

This leaflet summarises the outcome of a detailed review of our service—for more information contact our Policy & Research Manager ☎ (01942) 608715.

## Contents

**Page 2** Service statement—the type of service we aim to provide

**Page 3** Improvement timetable—our plans to get better

**Page 4** Getting involved—how you can influence our services

# Service statement

## The type of service we aim to provide

### Background

Rents and service charges are County Palatine's main form of income - they are vital to our operations. Without rent and service charges, we would be unable to pay our staff, our contractors or our funders and we would fail to meet our obligations to repair and maintain the homes of our residents.



### Aim

Our aim therefore is to maximise the collection of rent and service charges due and to minimise any arrears.

### Our services

To achieve this aim we will:

- work closely with local authority Housing Benefit staff;
- provide residents with help to complete Housing Benefit forms;
- provide a link to debt advice agencies for people in debt;
- provide tenants with swipe cards so that they can pay rent at any Post Office;
- encourage the payment of rent and service charges by standing order;
- offer a range of other payment methods and publicise them;
- Whenever possible agree a timetable to clear arrears with residents;
- operate efficient working procedures;
- regularly audit our procedures;
- use debt recovery agencies where necessary;
- Set targets for this service and report on our performance every year in our annual report; and
- regularly review our entire approach to delivering this service

### Our targets

#### National targets set by our Regulator<sup>1</sup>

1. Rent arrears for current and former residents together should be less than 5% of the total rent we charge.
2. Rent collected in any one year should be more than 97% of the rent charged in that year.

#### Local targets set by County Palatine

1. We will aim to achieve performance against the national targets listed above that places us within the top half of the league table of Northwest Registered Social Landlords.
2. We will measure resident satisfaction through regular surveys and aim to achieve at least:
  - 85% of residents reporting that they find it easy to contact the right person to talk about their payment account; and
  - 80% of residents reporting that they find it easy to understand their statement of account.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that national targets are subject to revision by our Regulator.

# Improvement timetable

## Our plans to get better

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
1. Introduce new "best practice" procedures & arrears letters	_____			
2. Introduce simplified management reports	_____			
3. Introduce semi-automated production of arrears letters	_____			
4. Introduce new statements		_____		
5. Consult further on proposal to introduce rent free weeks	_____			
6. Introduce option to pay via debit card		_____		
7. Make efforts to encourage internal competition amongst staff	_____			
8. Introduce early evening work focused on making contact with arrears cases	_____			
9. Test the use of new external tracing agencies	_____		_____	
10. Produce, each year, a newsletter article to explain format of statement	_____			
11. Further investigate options for more efficient payment of benefits from Council (housing benefit on disc)	_____			
12. Introduce referral mechanism for welfare advice	_____			
13. Introduce computerised system to remind staff of need to re-serve legal notices		_____		
14. Introduce fully automated arrears letters				_____
15. Commence new Comprehensive Service Review				_____