

Environmental Services Standards

- 1 Introduction - what can Environmental Services do for you?
- 2 Rubbish collection and recycling
- 3 Street cleaning and fly tipping
- 4 Abandoned vehicles
- 5 Pest control
- 6 Safer Neighbourhood Wardens
- 7 Noise and other 'statutory nuisances'
- 8 Drainage problems
- 9 Gypsies and travellers
- 10 Licensing
- 11 Housing: grants, advice and enforcement
- 12 Food safety
- 13 Communicable diseases
- 14 Health and safety at work

1 What can Environmental Services do for you?

Environmental Services make sure the environment you live in allows you to enjoy the best possible health and quality of life.

We collect your rubbish, sweep the streets and empty the street drains to keep your area clean and pleasant. We remove abandoned vehicles from the streets and collect stray dogs.

We prevent pollution by checking that businesses and individuals keep to the law, and we check that the air quality is good.

We kill rats, and treat for mice, wasps and other pests when needed.

We prevent nuisance from noise, smells, dust and so on stopping you from enjoying your own property.

We make sure that all food sold is safe and wholesome, and we enforce standards of health and safety in many workplaces.

We also issue licences covering taxis and private-hire vehicles, entertainment, animal breeding and boarding, the sale of alcohol etc.

We give grants to adapt people's homes so they can cope with disabilities, and to help people who can't afford to do essential home repairs.

We offer advice and grants to improve energy efficiency.

We enforce basic standards in rented property to make sure that homes are fit to live in.

This service is provided for £2.06 a week for each household. We believe all these vital services, for so little, represents excellent value for money.

But please let us know what you think, using the comments form on our website (www.south-derbys.gov.uk) or by writing to the Head of Environmental Services at the address on the cover.

How well are we doing? Check our website, where every quarter we publish our performance against these standards. We will also publish our performance every year in the council newspaper.

2 Rubbish collection and recycling

Rubbish collection

We collect rubbish from all the households in the district, generally once a week.

We aim to empty every bin on the usual day. If we miss a collection, we aim to collect it within 24 hours of it being reported.

Collections start from 6am, so please put your bin out by this time to make sure it is emptied.

Green waste for compost collection – 'Brown Bin' Scheme

Between March and November, about half the households in the district have a fortnightly collection of compostable material from their Brown Bins. At houses where we are making these collections, we empty the ordinary rubbish bins once a fortnight, on the alternate week. The Brown Bin scheme will gradually be extended until everyone is getting the service in around 2010. The service means that around 5,000 tonnes of waste a year are turned into useful compost, instead of filling up landfill sites, which are getting harder and harder to find.

Home composting

The best place for green waste is your own garden! Putting it back into the soil as compost can nourish and improve your soil, so we strongly recommend home composting.

If you live in South Derbyshire you can buy home compost bins at discounted prices. Ranging from £4 to £15, the home composters are an easy way to turn your garden and kitchen waste into compost.

For more information on our home composter offer visit www.recyclenow.com/compost or call 0845 073 2001.

Collecting bulky household items

We will collect unwanted large household items for a small charge. We will remove up to 6 household items for £16.50. For removing fridges and freezers we charge £13.50 for each item.

Please phone our customer service team on 01283 595795 for more information, or visit our website.

Real nappies

For the sake of the environment, we recommend cloth (real) nappies.

We have a £25 cash-back scheme for families wanting to use real nappies instead of disposables. Please phone the Waste Management Team on 01283 595783 or visit our website, www.south-derbys.gov.uk/environment/rubbishwasterecycling

Recycling

Recycling centres

We have 80 recycling centres throughout the district where you can bring glass, cans, plastic bottles, cardboard, paper, textiles and books for recycling.

Please flatten all plastic bottles and cardboard to make sure they fit in our banks.

Standard: We will regularly check how full our recycling centres are and empty the banks more often if we need to.

Kerbside recycling

98% of households across the South Derbyshire District have kerbside recycling.

We provide green boxes for recycling glass bottles, cans and aluminium foil, blue bags for recycling paper and magazines, and textile bags to recycle unwanted clothes.

Recycling schemes for schools and other organisations

The Waste and Cleansing Section run a number of schemes for local schools and voluntary groups in the area. The aim of these is to promote the idea of recycling and cutting down on waste.

'Cash for Trash' and 'Rags to Riches': schools and other organisations can receive cash for recycling paper and card, or textiles.

Education packs: we have a stimulating pack of materials that can be used to educate people about recycling, street cleaning and composting.

Please phone the team on 01283 595783 for more information about these schemes.

'The Trashtown Mysteries': this production visits schools across the county educating children on reducing, reusing and recycling the rubbish produced in their homes. To book, please visit the Speak Easy Theatre Company website: www.speakeasytheatre.co.uk/schools_info_page.htm

'The Magic of Recycling': an entertaining magic show, with a message about recycling. The show is a big hit in schools. To book, phone the Waste Management Team on 01283 595783.

3 Street cleaning and fly tipping

Street cleaning

We have made it one of our most important jobs to keep streets and other public spaces clean, tidy and orderly. Our team of street cleaners aims to reach the highest possible standards. These services are guaranteed as a minimum standard:

Standards:

- **Litter bins and dog hygiene bins are emptied every week.**
- **Road channels are cleaned four times a year, main routes eleven times a year.**
- **Footways are swept twice a year.**
- **Depending on the area, we pick up litter once, three times or twelve times a year.**
- **Road drains are cleaned once a year with major routes being cleaned twice a year.**
- **Bus shelters and lay-bys are cleaned four times a year.**

In the centre of Swadlincote our cleaners keep the area maintained to a high standard. They clean the town centre and public toilets every day (except Sundays).

We work with parish councils to help keep their areas tidy and free of litter. Each parish has a budget to employ their own street sweeper.

The Clean Team will also promptly clean areas where there is a build up of litter or dog fouling.

Street cleanliness is assessed against a national standard. In 2005/06, 84% of streets surveyed passed the recommended level of cleanliness.

Fly tipping

South Derbyshire's streets and highways are kept clear of fly tipping by the Clean Team. (Fly tipping is when people just dump their rubbish or unwanted items, usually in lay-bys or by the roadside, instead of getting it collected or taking it to a recycling centre.)

Last year we cleared over 1300 cases of fly tipping within 24 hours of their being reported.

How do I report fly tipping?

Phone the Clean Team free on 0800 587 2349.

Standard: We will remove fly tipping within 24 hours of it being reported.

Enforcement

We are committed to maintaining the district to the high standards people expect. However, we can only do this with your help.

There is an anti-social minority who spoil the environment for everyone else, for example by dropping litter and even fly tipping. We will support the people who don't do this, by tackling people who behave in this way. We will take legal action against them, ranging from fixed penalty notices through to prosecution.

If you want to tell us about this type of anti-social behaviour, we will investigate it fully.

Standard: We will examine all fly-tipped rubbish for evidence, and when the evidence is good enough we will always take action in line with our enforcement policy.

4 Abandoned vehicles

We have a duty to deal with abandoned vehicles on the highways, housing land and other areas of land controlled by the council, *but not private land*.

We have to follow the law when removing abandoned vehicles. This means we cannot remove a vehicle straight away just because we think it has been abandoned. In cases where abandoned vehicles are in a dangerous condition, for example burnt out, we can speed up the process.

To tell us about a vehicle you think is abandoned, phone the Customer Contact Centre on 01283 595795.

Standard: We will respond to at least 80% of abandoned vehicles within 1 working day.

Standard: We will remove at least 70% of abandoned vehicles within 24 hours of our having the legal right to do so.

5 Pest control

We will treat and give advice about a range of pests such as rats, mice, fleas, wasps, bees, bedbugs and cockroaches.

Our people will survey your property to see what the problem is. They will then discuss the treatment with you, taking into account your needs and the safety of children and pets. We will give you written information about any poisons we use, and give you emergency contact information in case you have any health and safety concerns.

Unfortunately we do not treat ants. But we do have leaflets on how to control them within your property. Please ring us on 01283 595795 if you would like a leaflet.

Do I have to pay for this service?

In homes we treat rats, mice, human fleas, bedbugs and cockroaches **for free**.

However, we charge for treating wasps, bees and animal fleas. If you are a registered disabled person or are on an income-based benefit you pay a lower charge. Please see the list of benefits below.

For up-to-date charges please phone 01283 595795 or go to www.south-derbys.gov.uk.

When will someone call out?

When you phone the number above, we will tell you when to expect a visit. Unfortunately, so we can provide the speediest treatment for everyone, we can't give you an exact appointment. We will usually offer you the choice of a morning or an afternoon visit.

Standard: We will visit as soon as possible, and certainly within 3 working days, unless you ask us to come later than this.

How can I pay?

You can pay when you book the visit, using either a debit or credit card. Or we can send you an invoice later (after about 4 weeks).

What benefits qualify for the lower rate?

To qualify for the lower charges you have to be getting at least one of the following benefits:

- Income Support

- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Jobseeker's Allowance (income based)
- State Retirement Pension
- Widow's Pension

Commercial premises

There is an hourly charge for all treatments we carry out on commercial premises. You can also have a contract with us where we regularly monitor your premises and put down bait. For advice on this please phone the Customer Contact Centre on 01283 595795 or go to www.south-derbys.gov.uk.

6 Safer Neighbourhood Wardens

We employ a number of wardens to tackle the many forms of anti-social behaviour that annoy so many people and make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe in their own neighbourhoods.

The wardens will patrol areas where anti-social behaviour keeps happening. They will patrol during weekdays and weekends, in the daytime and in the evenings. They will confront people, when it's safe to do this, and issue fixed penalty notices for things like littering or dog fouling. They will act as professional witnesses for other more serious matters they come across. Because the police and other agencies will have our wardens' evidence, they will be able to prosecute more people for anti-social behaviour and other crimes.

Our Safer Neighbourhood Wardens have many years of experience in law enforcement, for example with the police, and have a great concern for the wellbeing of the local community. If you have an issue you would like to discuss with them you can phone them through our call centre on 01283 595795.

The Safer Neighbourhood Wardens will also cover the work the Dog Warden used to do. They will now patrol areas that keep being affected by dog fouling with a view to tackling any form of anti-social behaviour, not just fouling. Call our Customer Contact Centre on 01283 595795 to report persistent dog fouling.

What do I do if I come across a stray or dangerous dog?

Phone the Customer Contact Centre on 01283 595795.

Standard: We will investigate specific complaints about dangerous dogs on the same working day. We will also collect strays on the same working day when they are reported during working hours.

Standard: We will investigate non-urgent cases within 5 working days.

What do I do if I have lost my dog?

Straying dogs will normally be rounded up and taken to the council kennels. Call the Customer Contact Centre and they will tell you if a dog matching the description you give has been collected. You can also email us through our website at www.south-derbys.gov.uk.

Before we can let you have your dog back, you will have to pay a fee to cover kennelling, any veterinary fees and our administration costs. You must also arrange to collect the dog from the kennels.

7 Noise and other 'statutory nuisances'

For something to be a statutory nuisance it must be either:

'Prejudicial to health' – that is, something that is likely to harm your health

or

'a nuisance' – that is, an unacceptable interference with your being able to use and enjoy your land or premises.

We can serve a legal notice to put a stop to nuisances. However, this is usually a last resort for regular, continuing and obviously serious problems.

To ask for our help with a nuisance phone our Customer Contact Centre on 01283 595795.

Standard: We will respond to complaints within 5 working days.

What action will we take?

As a first step, we will send you diary sheets so you can record the details of the problem. For example, if your complaint is about noise: the dates, times, how long it lasts, how bad it is, and how the problem is affecting you. These diary sheets can form part of our evidence if we need to take legal action.

After we receive the diary sheets from you, we may arrange for someone to visit you. Our policy is to visit you on 3 occasions, at a time we are likely to witness the problem happening.

If we are satisfied that there is a statutory nuisance we will serve an Abatement Notice on the person causing the problem. If we do not have enough evidence, or if we have not been able to witness the alleged nuisance, or if we do not consider that there is a statutory nuisance then we can take no further action. However, you will normally be able to take private legal action through the Magistrate's Court.

8 Drainage problems

What should I do about problems with drains or sewers?

If you know about any problems with drains or sewers, we will be glad to help. In the interests of public health we will investigate and tell the person

responsible to fix the problem. If we need to we will serve a legal notice on them.

Phone the Customer Contact Centre on 01283 595795.

Standard: We will investigate complaints as soon as possible, and normally within 24 hours.

If the problem is clearly with a public or main sewer in the street you can report it directly to Severn Trent Water on 0800 7834444.

What if I have a problem with my septic tank or cesspit?

Septic tanks and cesspits are not part of the main sewerage network. They are the responsibility of the owners of the properties that they serve. However, we can help you with finding out what the problem is. Sometimes this is as simple as having the sludge emptied from the tank. For help or advice on a septic tank or cesspit, phone the Customer Contact Centre on 01283 595795.

9 Gypsies and travellers

Landowners are responsible for removing illegal camp sites. We will only take action to evict gypsies and travellers from council land. On private land the owner is responsible, and on highways and other County Council-owned land the County Council is responsible.

Our Toleration Policy

We will work hard to maintain the often difficult balance between the needs of the settled community and businesses, and those of travellers.

If travellers use council land irresponsibly, or cause a nuisance that we cannot allow (within approved guidelines), we will use our powers of eviction. We will consult other agencies before doing this.

However, we will not evict unauthorised camps without a good reason. We will allow them to stay if:

- we cannot offer a space at the Lullington Crossroads transit site
- the camp is not causing an unacceptable level of nuisance
- evicting the camp is likely to lead to unauthorised camping somewhere else in the area, which could cause greater nuisance.

What we expect from gypsies and travellers

We will only follow our Toleration Policy if there are no problems with:

- hygiene and rubbish
- intimidating behaviour
- damage to property or the environment
- uncontrolled animals, for example horses
- criminal activity.

Also, we will not allow a camp to stay on land that:

- has just had a camp on it
- is for a specific public use, for example a park, playing field, car park, public open space or nature conservation site
- is subject to development proposals.

Standard: We will respond to calls about illegal camping on council property within 24 hours.

10 Licensing

In the interest of public safety we have a legal duty to control the issue of many different licences. We are also responsible for enforcing any conditions that go with licences we issue.

The main types of licence are:

- vehicle – including taxi and private-hire operators, drivers and proprietors
- premises – covering public entertainment, cinemas and theatres, late-night cafes (all covered by a new law, the 2003 Licensing Act) and sex shops
- miscellaneous – covering street trading, pet shops, other activities involving animal welfare, charity collections and lotteries.

How do I make a complaint?

Phone the Customer Contact Centre on 01283 595795.

Standard: We will respond to complaints within 5 working days.

Standard: We will respond to urgent private hire complaints within 1 working day.

11 Housing: grants, advice and enforcement

The Private Sector Housing Team oversee standards of housing in the private sector. They will get involved if housing standards fall below those needed to maintain health or safety. The section may offer advice or grants to help people who can't afford essential work. Or they may order landlords, for example, to make essential improvements.

These are the main services:

Disabled facilities grants

Disabled facilities grants are for people with disabilities who need to adapt their home so they can keep living there. Before we give any help, an occupational therapist or careworker from Social Services will visit and assess the situation.

There is also a 'means test', to decide if the disabled person has to pay a share of the cost of the work.

Examples of adaptations include stairlifts, through-floor lifts, level-access showers, and ramps. To apply for a grant, phone Social Services on 01283 238070.

Once Social Services have assessed your needs they will pass your application on to the Private Sector Housing Team.

Standard: We aim to have adaptations installed and working within 42 weeks of an application being passed to the Private Sector Housing Team, in at least 90% of cases.

Home repair assistance grants

Home repair assistance grants are dealt with for us by Wallbrook Care and Repair Agency. The agency gives advice and help to older, disabled and other vulnerable people who need help with building repairs and improvements. For more information phone Care and Repair on 01332 253271.

Empty property grants

We are committed to bringing long-term empty properties back into use and have adopted an Empty Property Strategy. As part of the strategy, we may help with the cost of repairs that are needed. We may offer empty property grants to fund 50% of any work that qualifies (up to a limit of £15,000). Properties must have been empty for more than 12 months, and there are other conditions too.

First-time buyer assistance grants

These grants are for first time buyers on lower incomes, and are to help with the costs of essential repairs and improvements. There is a 'means test' and other conditions. The grant can be up to £10,000.

Landlord grants

To help provide decent, affordable rented housing, we offer landlord grants. These grants are to pay towards the cost of work that benefits the tenant: for example, installing or upgrading heating, and replacing kitchens and bathrooms. Landlords willing to let their property at an affordable rent will get a higher grant. Grant conditions apply.

Emergency renovation grant

This grant is to pay for essential repairs and improvements in exceptional cases, where there is a serious risk to the health and safety of the owner or occupier. These cases will be considered on their merits and the grant is 'means tested'.

Decent home grant

These grants are for households getting an income-based benefit, and are for repair or improvement work to bring their home up to the government's Decent Homes Standard. Work covered may include repair and renovation, replacing obsolete kitchens and bathrooms, heating upgrades and insulation.

For more information on any of these grants, phone the Private Sector Housing Team on 01283 595719

Enforcement in private sector rented housing

We enforce basic standards in rented property. Landlords have a duty to make sure that accommodation is safe for people who rent their property. If you have a problem in your home, you should talk to your landlord and try to get them to do the repair work without involving the Council. However, if your landlord doesn't act within a reasonable time, phone the Private Sector Housing Team on 01283 595719.

Standard: We will respond to reports of poor housing conditions within 5 working days.

Tenants and landlords can contact us for an informal discussion and advice about rented housing. Phone 01283 595950 or email us at enforcement@south-derbys.gov.uk

Licensing mobile home and caravan sites

Mobile home and caravan sites must have a site licence from the local council. It costs nothing to apply but you will need approval from the Planning Department first. There are conditions with every licence and we inspect sites every year.

If you live on a licensed site and have any concerns about the conditions there, phone the Private Sector Enforcement Officer on 01283 595950.

Standard: We will respond within 5 working days.

Energy efficiency

We are committed to reducing fuel consumption and tackling 'fuel poverty'.

We will help older people and people on lower incomes to insulate their homes. For example, we will help with cavity wall and loft insulation. We do this through promoting the government-funded 'Warmfront' Scheme, and we pay for at least one of our own home insulation schemes every year.

For a home energy health check, or advice and information on current schemes, phone the Energy Officer on 01283 228719.

Standard: We will respond within 5 working days.

12 Food safety

We enforce the standards that make sure food is clean and safe to eat. To do this we carry out regular checks on all food businesses, checking

premises, food handling methods, and training. Our aim is to make sure the public is protected and that high standards are maintained.

We normally visit premises without any advance warning, and we visit premises posing a higher health risk more often than we visit lower-risk ones.

Where food handling or conditions are not satisfactory, we do our best to sort things out by persuasion and education. But if conditions do not improve, or if there is a risk to public health, we may have to take formal action. This could involve serving a legal notice, prosecution or, in extreme cases, closing the business down.

To make a complaint about food safety, phone the Customer Contact Centre on 01283 595795.

Standard: For urgent food complaints, food poisoning and infectious disease complaints, we will respond within 1 working day.

Standard: We will respond to routine complaints within 5 working days.

13 Communicable Diseases

We investigate cases of certain infectious diseases (particularly food poisoning) that GPs, the public, businesses and other local authorities tell us about. Our aim is to make sure that steps are taken to prevent the spread of the disease or food poisoning.

14 Health and safety at work

We are responsible for enforcing standards of health and safety at work in a range of non-industrial premises. (The Health and Safety Executive deal with factories and other industrial operations.) We carry out regular checks on offices, shops, warehouses, places used for leisure activities and so on. This makes sure that there are safe and healthy conditions for everyone working in or visiting these premises.

We carry out inspections without advance warning and we visit high-risk premises most often.

During an inspection, officers check that the business is aware of any work-related hazards to people's health, safety or welfare and that the risks attached have been properly controlled. They will check that managers and employees have had the proper health and safety training.

Where working practices or conditions are not satisfactory we will do our best to sort out the situation informally. But if this is not possible, or if the danger could mean a risk of serious personal injury, then we will take legal action. This could involve serving a legal notice, prosecution or, in situations where serious personal injury could happen, a prohibition notice needing immediate action.

Health and safety – investigating complaints

We always investigate complaints about working conditions sensitively, and we will not say who has made the complaint. We often sort out these situations by giving advice to the employer. Nevertheless, in the most serious cases legal action will be taken.

Health and safety – investigating accidents

We investigate 'dangerous occurrences' and accidents at work. The aim is to prevent any future risk of accidents. Often the outcome is that we give advice to the employer. However, if we find that negligence is the main reason for an accident, we will take legal action. To make a complaint about health and safety at work, phone the Customer Contact Centre on 01283 595795.

Standard: For urgent health and safety complaints, such as severe accidents or dangerous occurrences, we will respond as soon as we can and certainly no later than the next day.

Standard: For routine matters we will respond to complaints within 5 working days.