



Estates and Caretaker Services Review

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2007, as part of the Foundation Plan, the post of Estates and Caretaker Services Manager was established to provide a co-ordinated management approach to a newly centralised Caretaking Team. Part of the remit of the new Manager was to undertake a review of the Caretaking Service to ensure it was fit for purpose was meeting the needs of Tenants and leaseholders and was delivering an efficient value for money service.

1.1 The vision for the Estates and Caretaker Service is for

- The delivery of a seamless, co-ordinated and efficient Caretaking Service which demonstrates excellent value for money
- A Caretaking service which manifests the highest standards of quality and professionalism to demonstrate the Company's commitment to customer care and estate management. It will be a flagship service with the potential for marketing to other housing providers in the future, contributing to the Company's sustainability and record of success
- The effective management of Health and Safety
- The delivery of pro-active teamwork with Area Housing Offices and Property Services to achieve at least a two star rating in all high rise and low rise blocks
- Effectively participate in Estate Inspections with customers and partners contributing to Sustainable Communities
- Learn from and utilise effectively customer feedback
- To effectively manage performance, whilst actively developing and empowering employees
- Develop the Service to meet the diverse needs of our tenants and leaseholders

Value for money is a priority for the business. The review sets out the scope for further efficiencies and processes that can be re-modelled along with procedural and role reviews to streamline the service being provided.

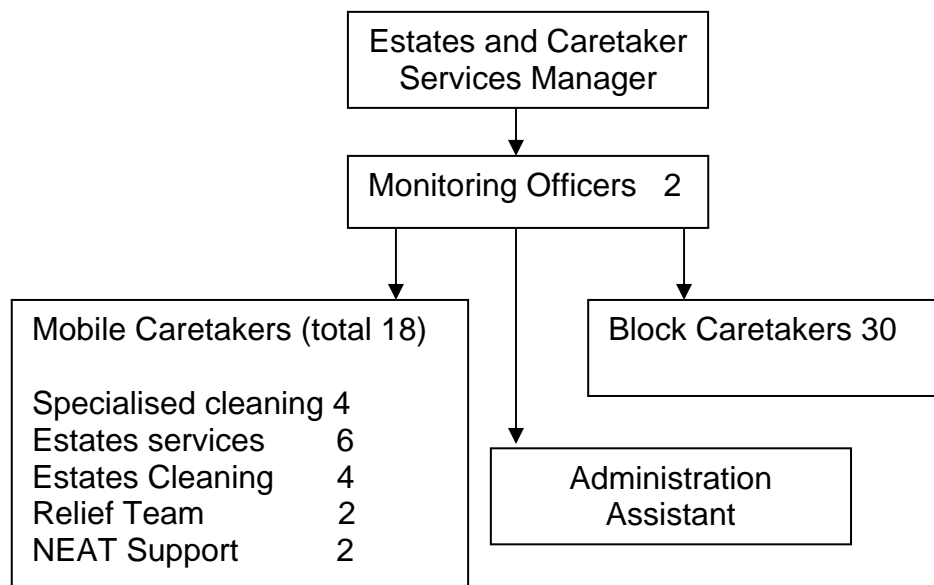
The review sets out proposals for the Estates and Caretaker Service to establish an improved organisational structure and working practices for Caretakers which:

- Will deliver an excellent Caretaking Service
- Better reflects the level of work required
- Ensures cover for absences to guarantee service delivery
- Creates the capacity to provide a service to estates currently not receiving such provision
- Introduces a performance management system to ensure work is completed to secure quality standards
- Guarantees tenant involvement in establishing and assessing the service standards for their estates and blocks
- Strengthens the working arrangement between the Caretaking Team and Tenancy & Estates Management service
- Establishes an improved organisational structure for the Mobile Caretaker service
- Offers the opportunity to increase in house provision of services currently undertaken by the City Council and pursue better value for money across the service generally.
- Establishes proper management, procurement and accounting of equipment and supplies
- Outlines proposals for the ongoing training and development of the Caretaking team
- Details how the Caretaking team will be involved in Health & Safety Issues

SECTION 2 ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 Management of service

The Caretaking Service forms part of the Tenancy and Estate Management division of Nottingham City Homes. The operational Head of Service is the Estates and Caretaker Services Manager who is supported by two Monitoring Officers and reports to the Assistant Director, Tenancy and Estates Management. The current structure



2.2 Block Caretakers

Following a review of current arrangements and having regard to comparative staffing details in other Councils and ALMOs new organisational arrangements have been introduced. These are designed to better align staffing resources with workload and create capacity to cover for absences and to tackle daily unforeseen work which is necessary to maintain the highest standards of cleanliness on estates.

The re-organisation has resulted in a reduction from 32 to 30 Block Caretakers with the resources diverted to the Mobile Caretakers. The Block Caretakers provide a Caretaking Service to 21 High Rise blocks (1055 properties), including the Victoria Centre (435 properties) and 31 Low rise sites (1424 properties). The total number of properties receiving a Caretaking Service is 3314. The allocations of workload detailed in the table below has taken account of the information above and first hand experience of working with staff on estates. Those properties currently receiving a Caretaking Service are detailed in **Appendix 1**

Team	Current Block Caretakers	Ratio of props covered by each Caretaker
North		
Bulwell	3	71
Southglade	1	175
Total	4	97
Central		
Hyson Green	7	104
Lenton	3.5	158
Total	10.5	114
South		
Clifton	2	137
Meadows	2	142
Kingsthorpe Close	2	69
Sneinton	5.5	90
Victoria Centre	4	87
Total	15.5	98
Actual Numbers	30	

The area 'teams' identified above are self covering in the absence of colleagues due to annual leave and short term sickness. However the needs of each area are reviewed at times of absences due to long term sickness absence.

Benchmarking carried out in 2006 identifies that three star organisations provide a Caretaking Service at a ratio of approximately 150 properties per Caretaker. On the current figures 22 Block Caretakers would be required to achieve a similar ratio. Work is continuing to review the current staffing ratios, looking at best practice and standards in other organisations.

2.3 Mobile Caretakers

This team is to be increased to 18 Mobile Caretakers, utilising the two posts that have been saved from within the Block Caretaker team through the re-organisation of their workload. Recruitment to these posts was completed in October. The Mobile Caretakers cover a range of duties such as removal of fly tipping to Council owned properties and Alleyways, removal of white goods for storage and disposal, working with the Area Housing offices to bring estates up to a minimum 2 star rating, removal of bulk rubbish from high and low rise blocks. One team is dedicated to the removal of graffiti from Council owned properties and housing land. This is only a brief list of the activities of this team which provides a service to all our tenants, leaseholders and Area Housing Offices across the City.

The role of each team is detailed below.

2.3.1 Specialised Cleaning Team

£250,000 has been set aside this Financial Year for a one off deep clean to be undertaken to the high and low rise blocks Nottingham City Homes currently provide a Caretaking Service to. Quotes have been received for this work from Nottingham City Council, **Appendix 2**

This deep clean work includes:

- Jet spraying of walls and ceilings in the corridors
- Jet spraying of stair wells
- Cleaning and polishing of lifts
- Lifting polish and relaying to floors

This work commenced in the Low Rise blocks in September 2008 in accordance with the schedule in **Appendix 3**

However by investing some of this money in our own Caretakers and equipment this work is also completed by our own employees who commenced work in the High Rise Blocks during October 2008. This work will be on a continual planned programme, rather than as a one off.

We anticipate that year one costs of £15,000 will provide sufficient equipment for up to three teams of two Caretakers to undertake this deep clean work.

In addition a planned programme of painting has commenced that will see all blocks painted during the next three months, which will reduce the work required as part of the deep clean schedule.

This will raise the standards within the blocks to contribute towards all blocks achieving at least a two star standard by March 2009.

This team is also responsible for the removal of graffiti on Housing land across the estates. The graffiti team aims to remove all reported graffiti on Housing land within 5 days of the report being received (24 hours for offensive graffiti). During the first six months of this financial year 124 reports of graffiti across the Estates had been received of which 113 (91%) were removed within target. These figures do not include the work that the graffiti team have been doing during dedicated weeks of action.

2.3.2 Estates Services Team

This team undertakes general duties on the Estates including removal of bulk waste, disposal of stored items in garages, disposal of white goods; cleaning the areas around Area Housing Offices, litter picking.

There are certain duties which could be "contracted out" for example the collection of confidential and recyclable waste from the Area Housing Offices and Houndsgate.

A full evaluation of this part of the service is currently underway to establish if a contractor can do this work at less cost to the Company. Discussions have commenced with the Central Procurement Team to establish the cost to the Company of contracting out this work. This will release the team of Mobile Caretakers undertaking this task to focus on caretaking duties on our Estates.

2.3.3 Estates Cleaning Team

The Block Caretakers provide a full service to those blocks detailed in **Appendix 1**. There was no provision for other areas of the City to receive any level of service.

A detailed list of some additional 2370 properties has been produced identifying those parts of the City to which a caretaking service could be extended. These properties are mainly deck access 3 storey maisonette type properties; although there are some smaller blocks that have not received any service in the past. **Appendix 4**.

A weekly sweeping and litter removal service was introduced during September to these site. No weekend service is provided. This service is provided by Mobile Caretakers with access to vehicles that are equipped to allow them to undertake a basic sweeping function and removal of bulk rubbish identified on the estates.

This service will be provided initially for a six month period, after which a full evaluation of this service will be undertaken to assess its success and to consider how the costs of this additional service can be recovered.

2.3.4 Relief Caretaking Team

This team will be trained as part of the specialised cleaning team and will provide support to this team. They will also cover absences in the Estates Services Team.

2.3.5 Nottingham Emergency Accommodation Team (NEAT)

The mobile team provides support to the Allocations and Lettings Team daily through one team (2 Caretakers). This support consists of moving furniture and clearing properties on behalf of the Nottingham Emergency Accommodation Team (NEAT). This provides an important service to vulnerable families who are moving from emergency accommodation into permanent homes.

This team is also utilised to transport equipment and furniture between offices.

2.4 Weekend Cover

A weekend service is provided across the City for four hours each Saturday and Sunday morning and for the same period on Public and Bank Holidays and is organised across 15 sites with each Caretaker covering one site **Appendix 5** The level of cover provided by Nottingham City Homes at weekends far exceeds the service provided by other organisations.

Block Caretakers are contracted to work one weekend in every five. However some of the Caretakers choose not to work any overtime, whilst others do overtime more frequently than the contracted requirements to ensure that the weekend rota is covered. Cover is provided to all those blocks that receive a service during the week. These arrangements will be standardised through the introduction of the weekend rota for 2009/10.

The rota for 2007/08 was covered by 16 Caretakers. However this number has been reduced to 15 for this financial year by amalgamating sites. Each reduction in the number of Caretakers working reduces the overtime bill by approximately £4700 per annum. It is proposed to reduce the number of Caretakers covering weekends for 2009/10 further. This will be subject to consultation with tenants and leaseholders to establish the level of service required at weekends.

Overtime is paid for Saturday work at time and a half and double time on a Sunday. Caretakers receive their normal pay rates for working Public Holidays plus time off in lieu. Where overtime exceeds a half day (3.7 hours) Caretakers are entitled to receive a full day off in lieu in return for working Public and statutory Holidays. If the hours worked is reduced to 3.5, Caretakers would only be entitled to half a day time off in lieu.

Overtime for 2007/08 cost the Company £75,256, in addition to this is the indirect staff costs of allowing Caretakers time off in lieu. For the first half of this financial year the actual spend on overtime for the Caretaking Service was £31,507 (projected £63,014 for the full year against a budget figure of £72,050).

The Estates and Caretaker Services Manager and the two Monitoring Officers each work one weekend per month (up to a maximum of four hours) to visit sites that are receiving a weekend service to monitor the work being carried out. The requirement to work outside normal office hours and to cover in an emergency is covered within the job descriptions for the Management team.

2.5 Out of hours emergency cover

The Monitoring Officers currently receive a premium of 10% on their annual salary to be the "out of hours" contact for the Estates and Caretaker Services section. This requires the monitoring officers to be available out of hours to organise any emergency cleaning work required. Contact details have been provided to Nottingham City Homes' Repairs Contact Centre, Nottingham on

Call and the Surveillance and Monitoring Centre for use in the event of an emergency.

A clear procedure and reporting structure in the event of emergency call outs is being completed by the Head of Health and Safety for Nottingham City Homes and the Estates and Caretaker Services Manager will be involved in this process.

2.6 Training and Development

A simplified Performance Appraisal proforma and procedure has now been introduced. As at 30 June 2008 all Caretakers have been through the Performance Appraisal process. These meetings were undertaken on a one to one basis.

One to ones are held quarterly with the Caretakers to review performance and identify any additional training needs and discuss training that has been attended.

A full package of training needs is being developed for all Caretakers to undertake including:

- Manual Handling
- COSHH regulations
- Dealing with Violence and Intimidation
- Lone Working
- Reporting anti-social behaviour
- Asbestos awareness
- Needles

As well as the above, a programme of "refresher" training will be developed covering Health and Safety Issues related to the Caretakers role. The Caretakers will also be required to attend joint training with Housing Office staff. Training is also being developed to help Caretakers provide support in completing fire risks assessments in blocks.

Each Caretaker will be provided with an Employee Development Handbook in November containing a schedule of training that has been delivered, together with planned training for the next six months. A full skills audit was completed with each Caretaker during their 121 s held in September and October which has identified further training needs for the Caretakers.

All Caretakers have attended stages 1 & 2 of the "Making a difference" culture change programme.

A programme of training commenced in January 2008 which is being provided by an outside training provider, Direct Training Services. This focussed on ten specific areas of the caretaking role and is a four day programme held over 4 weeks.

The programme has been running throughout 2008 and each caretaker successfully completing the programme is awarded the British Institute of Cleaning Science Cleaning Operatives Proficiency Certificate Stage 1. This is a recognised certified qualification that can be carried forward towards NVQ Training.

Once this programme has ended and been evaluated discussions will be held with Organisational Development and Learning to discuss the potential for Caretakers to move onto stage two of this programme. To date 44 Mobile and Block Caretakers and two monitoring officers have successfully completed this programme. One final programme is planned for January 2009 to ensure all Caretakers have completed the programme.

Full team meetings for the Caretaking Team are held every three months and are attended by the Director of Housing Operations. Guest speakers have attended to address the team and have covered topics including Anti-social behaviour and Communal Repairs. Separate team meetings are also held in the interim with smaller groups of Caretakers.

A full induction programme for new Caretakers has been introduced. This programme lasts for two weeks and includes visits to other sections of the Company and shadowing with other employees. There are also two separate Corporate Induction programmes that new employees go through that provides detailed guidance on the Company and its HR procedures.

These induction programmes are discussed weekly and signed off with the caretakers and their line manager.

2.7 Absence Management

Sickness absence for the Caretaking team has historically been very high in comparison to other areas of the organisation. The management of the caretaking team centrally has introduced consistent and fair adherence to the absence management procedure. During 2007/08 the average absence for the caretaking team was 25.4 days, although 90% of this absence was attributable to only 28% of the Caretakers. (13 Caretakers had an average of 80 days)

Figures are collated monthly with a full assessment of sickness absence being undertaken. This includes a breakdown of absence split between long term (20 days plus) and short term (less than 20 days) as well as details of the outcomes of any absence management interviews held.

	April- Sep 07			April-Sep 08		
	Days absence	Number of staff	Average	Days absence	Number of staff	Average
Long Term (20days)	436	8	54.5	184	4	46
Short Term (Less than 20 days)	72	14	5.14	131	16	8.18
No absence		25.5			28.5	
Total	508	47.5	10.69	315	48.5	6.49

The table highlights the overall improvement in sickness absence for the first six months of 2008/ 09 compared to the same period last year: However it does demonstrate that whilst long term sickness has improved substantially, short term sickness absence has deteriorated.

The overall improvements have been achieved by:

- Strict adherence to the absence management procedure
- Daily monitoring of absence
- Increased use of occupational health when dealing with sickness absence and for those staff that have existing conditions
- Cautions being issued where it is deemed reasonable and timely.
- One staff member currently working reduced hours following advice from Occupational Health.

Improvements in the short term sickness will be achieved through discussions with employees that have exceeded the 'trigger' levels and offering support to help improve attendance. Cautions will be issued where it is deemed reasonable which has not been the case historically.

The Estates and Caretaking Service has been utilising the services of Direct Health Solutions (D.H.S.) since June 2008. This is a service whereby any employee who is off ill, has access to a 24 hour helpline that is staffed by medically trained nurses who can provide advice and support to employees that are ill. Employees must report any absence directly to D.H.S. who then report the absence to Nottingham City Homes. During the absence regular contact is maintained with the employee by D.H.S. and regular updates provided. This scheme is currently being piloted for a six month period.

2.8 Terms and conditions

Caretakers currently receive a "bonus" of 1/3 of the weekly wage on top of their basic wage. This was historically paid as an attendance allowance but in recent years has been paid to Caretakers whether they attend work or not.

It is intended to review this clause in the Caretaker's contracts with a view to amalgamating this payment into the basic wage of the Caretakers. The full cost implications will need to be assessed as this will impact on the pension contributions and overtime rates for the Caretakers. This will be fully reviewed

in consultation with Human Resources, employees and Unions during 2009/10.

2.9 Accommodation

The Management Team is currently based at Pine View, The Woodlands in Radford. This is a converted flat that provides two offices a kitchen and toilet facilities. There is a canteen area for the Mobile Caretakers and the personal lockers that are used by the Mobile Caretakers are situated in this meeting room. There are also shower facilities available for the Mobile Caretakers.

The main stores for equipment and materials is based at Pine View although it is intended that this will be "run down" and stocks will only be ordered through the central procurement team as and when required for delivery direct to the site requiring the items.

As part of the office accommodation strategy office space has become available at the old Radford Housing Office based at Highcross Court. Plans are underway to adapt this office space to meet the needs of the Caretaking Team to allow it to be used as a base for employees.

This will allow the premises at Pine View to be converted back to flats and allocated, whilst the occupation of the Radford Housing Office will ensure there is a staff presence in the area and utilise the office accommodation that would otherwise be left empty.

A full specification of the work required will be available in early November 2008 to include timescales for completion of the work.

3 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Definition of work

A schedule of work has been developed detailing the service provided in high rise, low rise and Victoria Centre following consultation with a group of Caretakers. A summary of this schedule will be displayed in each block across the City. **(Appendix 6, 6a & 6b)**. Tenants and leaseholders can obtain a detailed schedule through their Caretaker, Local Housing Office or from the Company Website. Local key performance indicators will be developed for 2009/10 and will incorporate these tasks. Each Block Caretaker now records completion of these tasks in a log book on a daily basis. This informs tenants and leaseholders of what tasks are completed and the frequency of these tasks and to help them assess the standard of service received. This schedule reflects the details that are contained within the Quality Assurance Manual. **(Appendix 7)**

These schedules have introduced a level of consistency across the high rise and low rise blocks across the City and have introduced a level of consistency and clarity for the Caretakers on daily weekly and monthly priorities. A similar schedule is to be introduced for weekend work and will be developed for introduction from April 2009

3.2 Assessing Standards.

Monitoring sheets **(Appendix 8)** are used to assess the standard of cleanliness within the blocks that receive a Caretaking Service and are completed by the Management Team on a monthly basis. Feedback is given to the individual Caretaker after each assessment. This allows the Management Team to identify training needs for the team as well as sharing best practice across the service. If there is a regular pattern of failure to meet standards evidence is available to discuss proposed actions with the individual employees and to agree a way forward. Should the situation not improve then further action through the capability route is followed.

3.3 Tenant & Leaseholder Inspectors

A database of over 100 names of tenants and leaseholders who have expressed an interest in getting involved as quality assurance inspectors is held, each have been invited to attend a number of focus groups aimed at assessing standards and to assist in shaping the future of the Caretaking Service.

Focus groups were held during May & June 2008 at Victoria Centre, Woodthorpe Court, The Woodlands and Sneinton with approximately 30 people attending. Each have been shown how to complete the monitoring sheets and given a supply to return to the Best Value Team.

Since the initial meetings a Quality Assurance Manual (**Appendix 7**) has been developed and further meetings have been arranged for early November 2008 to launch this document. These meetings will provide further guidance and training for the tenant and leaseholders in assessing standards in the high and low rise blocks.

Feedback will be provided to customers on a quarterly basis on the findings of the assessments and service improvements that have been made as a direct result of the involvement of tenants and leaseholders. This will be provided through the Tenant Newsletter and attendance at Area Panels, Tenancy and Estate Management Forum and the Leaseholder Forum.

3.4 Key Performance Indicators

A full range of local key performance indicators will be introduced following consultation with tenants and leaseholders and will focus on the work that the Block Caretakers are completing. This will introduce a clear mechanism for reporting on the performance of the Caretaking Team and to identify areas where improvements need to be introduced. It is intended to introduce these indicators for 2009/10.

3.5 Vision Management

A suite of questions has been developed for the Caretaking Service **Appendix 9**. The questions are being rolled out across the City area by area over the course of the next three months, with the first results for Area 6 (St Anns, Sneinton and Victoria Centre) having been received during September.

Some 900 surveys were sent out generating 230 responses (25%). 58 rectification notices have been received and all have respondents have been contacted either by telephone but generally through a visit from Sheryl Fraser, Monitoring Officer and the Caretaker to discuss in detail with the customer the issues raised. The Caretakers in the area have also been included in the feedback from the results of the surveys.

3.6 Service Standards

A Service Standard has been developed in consultation with tenants and leaseholders that prescribes the minimum level of service that will be delivered by the Caretaking Team.

A pictorial guide for Caretaking Standards has been developed and will be launched during November 2008 This clearly defines the standards of service our customers can expect from our Caretakers through the use of pictures to define a range of standards from no stars up to three stars. It also defines the tasks the Caretakers undertake and also the frequency each task is completed. It provides clear guidance for our tenants and leaseholders that are involved in assessing the standards in the high and low rise blocks. (**Appendix 7**)

3.7 ISO9001:2000

Nottingham City Homes achieved ISO9001 2000 accreditation in October 2008 and the Caretaker Service is committed to ensuring the accreditation is maintained. The quality assurance manual, schedule of work and log books completed by the Block Caretakers demonstrate the commitment to consistent and transparent processes by the Caretaking Team.

3.8 Comments, compliments and complaints

Complaints are closely monitored and outcomes shared with the team. Changes in the way the service is delivered are identified with feedback provided.

An example of how feedback has shaped the service concerned the Caretaking Service provided to one of the high rise sheltered blocks. Customers had raised concerns that they were not receiving a dedicated service in the block as the Caretaker was off on long term sickness absence. The service in that block was being delivered by a number of different Caretakers. In order to improve the service provided and meet the needs of the customers in that block, a Caretaker was asked to cover this block as well as another Sheltered Block in the City. A meeting was subsequently held with the tenants and the new arrangements were discussed and agreed in full. Since this arrangement was introduced customers are providing feedback that they are pleased with the Service now being received.

Any tenant or leaseholder that has raised concerns regarding the standards of caretaking have been visited and invited to undertake site visits jointly with the Monitoring Officer dealing with the complaint. The purpose of these visits is to review the standards within specific areas and to discuss and agree action points to resolve the issues which are raised. On each occasion the tenant or leaseholder has been invited to become involved in future monitoring of the Caretaking Service.

All compliments received are shared quarterly as "good news" items with all the Caretakers at the full staff meetings held.

4. FINANCE AND BUDGET

The Budget for the Estates and Caretaker Service was pooled into one budget header for the financial year 2008/2009. Previously the budgets for the Block Caretakers had been allocated to the Area Housing Office responsible for the blocks within their areas and the Caretakers working in those sites.

The table below compares costs of the service for the two previous financial years

Costs	Actual 2006/07 £	Actual 2007/08 £	Budget 2008/09 £	Proposed following review 2008/09 £
Staff costs (£)	957060	1037631	1277254	1141654
Central Costs (£)	221100	174500	268720	156720
Deep clean costs			250000	250000
Total (£)	1178160	1212131	1795974	1548374

4.1 Financial Savings

4.1.1 Staff costs

The actual budget for 2008/09 had originally included a provision for an additional 8 Caretakers to be employed for the last eight months of this financial year. However through the re-organisation of the existing team the expansion of the Service has been achieved within the existing establishment of 48 Caretakers

The savings resulting from the recommendations within this review document are therefore:

Caretakers wages and associated costs (approx) £104,600
Monthly salary costs (approx) £ 31,000
Non salary costs (approx) £112,000

Total savings £247,600

This review has identified that the expansion of the service can be carried out within the existing resources and subsequently the figure of £247,600 has not been included in the proposed budget figures for 2008/09.

It as been agreed that £50k of these savings be invested in hand held technology for the Caretaking Team some of the benefits are detailed below;

- o Blocks have bar codes on the walls and these pick up immediately a Caretaker enters the block. This provides important information on caretaker's attendance

- If a caretaker does not arrive on site, this sends an alert through to the central system to notify the supervisor who can then investigate the absence.
- The tasks that each caretaker has to do daily, weekly monthly is programmed into the "piece of kit" and accurately records the time taken completing each task.
- The "kit" also has a built in camera and links to hard wear in the supervisors office. This allows any issues reported such as graffiti or repairs to be photographed and e mailed through to a central computer for immediate action.
- Similarly if a report is received about a particular issue, e.g. Fly tipping this can be e mailed to the caretakers hand held device notifying that the work needs to be completed. The caretaker subsequently completes the job and sends a report through that the work is completed.
- Detailed reports can be obtained of the level of work required across the blocks which will assist in measuring what resources are required in what areas and subsequently assist in an accurate assessment of service charges.

A full project brief has been submitted and the proposals are currently being pursued through our I.T. for potential introduction this financial year. Work will commence in December 2008 to establish the full cost of this development as well as a full analysis of the benefits and efficiency savings that will arise.

A further £30k of these savings has been ear marked to cover the work required at the Radford Housing Office in order to prepare that office for the Caretaking team to move to.

4.1.2 Overtime

Overtime for 2007/08 cost the Company £75,256, in addition to this is the indirect staff costs of allowing Caretakers time off in lieu. For the first half of this financial year the actual spend on overtime for the Caretaking Service was £31507 (projected £63014 for the full year against a budget figure of £72050)

4.2 Efficiency savings

4.2.1 Sickness absence

The table below highlights approximate financial saving to the Company through the improvement in absence management of the Caretaker Team.

	April- Sept 07	April-Sept 08	Improvement
Total Days	508	315	-38 %
Total Hours	3657	2268	
Cost to Company (£8.21 per hour)	£30,028	£18620	-£11408

4.2.2 Reorganisation of staff

The inclusion of an additional 2370 properties across the City has been introduced from within the existing establishment and has not impacted on the quality of the service provided by the Caretaker Service nor increased the overall cost of the Service.

There has been a sum of £250,000 set aside for a deep clean programme across the estates by Environment Regeneration. However by investing some of this money in our own Caretakers and equipment this work can be completed by our own employees and on a continual rolling programme, rather than as a one off.

We anticipate that year one costs of £15,000 will provide sufficient equipment for up to three teams of two Caretakers to undertake this deep clean work commencing September 2008.

4.2.3 Vehicles

The previous fleet for the Caretaking Team consisted of 10 vehicles, which were between 6 and 12 years old. The repair bill for these vehicles was close to £20,000 for 2007-08.

This fleet has been replaced by

- 2 dispatch vehicles
- 3 Cage vehicles
- 4 LCDs
- 1 Graffiti Vehicle

These vehicles were delivered at the end of September/early October and are fully equipped, The equipment for each vehicle is marked with the vehicle registration number to ensure that the equipment stays in the correct vehicle. The Mobile Caretakers are responsible for monthly audits of the equipment on each van.

The tender for these vehicles also includes clauses regarding "Green Issues" and carbon emissions. The vehicles will run on 30% bio-diesel which will cut CO2 emissions by some 15%

The contract for the new fleet allows for replacement vehicles to be available within two hours should a vehicle be off the road for any reason. This was not the case with the old contract and the Mobile Caretakers could have been without vehicles for up to two weeks.

Tracker devices in the new vehicles will provide detailed monitoring of vehicles locations to allow for work to be allocated speedily and efficiently across the City to the team that is closest to the location of the required work.

Petrol cards are also provided to the drivers so they can fill up at any petrol station across the City, where previously they had to travel to one point in the City to refuel. This will save time for the Mobile Caretakers.

There will also be clearer monitoring of the spend by each Caretaker on petrol which will emphasise the need to not only organise work by area, but also ensure Caretakers are aware of budgetary requirements regarding the spend on petrol thus increasing their awareness of value for money.

4.3 Benchmarking Exercise

A Project Team responsible for the review of the Caretaker Service that was undertaken in late 2006/ early 2007 obtained information from a number of three star organisations to assess the unit cost of the Caretaking Service provided by Nottingham City Homes

Sheffield Homes (3 star ALMO)			
Service tendered out in 2005			
Number of properties cleaned	Number of caretaking/cleaning staff employed	Ratio of properties per operative	Cost per property.
9,000	44	204	£122
Stockport Homes (3 star ALMO)			
Service provided by in-house team			
4100	28	146	£200
Golden Gates			
Service provided by in-house team			
1,400	9	155	£150

These figures, although historical, give an indication of the unit costs that can be achieved in delivering a value for money Caretaking Service

4.3.1 Direct Unit Costs

The table below details the forecast direct unit cost for the Caretaking Service for the financial year 2008/09. These calculations include the total salary costs for the Block Caretakers, the salary costs of four Mobile Caretakers, 50% of the non salary central costs and 70% of the Management costs of the Caretaker Service.

	Costs (£)	Properties Covered	Ratio properties	Direct Unit Cost (£)
Block Caretakers (30)	784290	3314	110	236
Mobile Caretakers (4)	63062	2370	592	27
Total (34)	847352	5684	167	149

The ratio of properties covered by the Mobile Team is greater, as the service they provide will be a basic sweeping and cleaning service on a weekly basis rather than the intense daily work carried out by the Block Caretakers.

In 2007/08 the direct unit costs for Block Caretakers was £251.00 with a ratio of 103 properties per Caretaker. By reducing the number of Block Caretakers by 2 and still cleaning the same number of properties direct unit costs have reduced by approximately £15. There are further efficiencies that can be made in this area which will be the focus of work over the coming months.

The direct unit cost for the Block Caretakers and the ratio of properties covered is higher than any of the figures obtained from the benchmarking exercise undertaken in 2006. This clearly demonstrates that the Block Caretaker Service is more expensive than that provided by three star organisations and further work is required to continue to drive down the unit costs in this area of the Service.

To help achieve this detailed consultation with customers will be undertaken to establish:

- The level of service that would be expected in the blocks
- Review of the Caretaking service charge that existing customers would be prepared to pay
- The level of service that would be expected in the area of the City where the extended service is being delivered
- The service charge that would be payable for this extended service
- Working arrangements to ensure that the 34 Caretakers detailed in the table above work together and cover each other in the event of any absences.

The work carried out by the remaining 14 Mobile Caretakers provides a service to the whole of the City through the tasks detailed in section 1.3 of this review. The cost of this area of the Service is a pooled cost as all tenants and leaseholders benefit from this service.

Further benchmarking and visits to other organisations will be carried out during 2009/10 together with consultation with Tenants and leaseholders to help develop and establish a Value for Money Service that meets the needs of our customers.

Full market testing of the Caretaking Service will also be carried out during 2009/10 to ensure the service being delivered in house is delivering a full value for money service.

4.4 Service Charges

Nottingham City Homes' tenants currently pay £4.02 per week (£201 per annum) for a Caretaking Service which is provided 365 days per year. Leaseholders are charged £230 per annum.

Those tenants living in the blocks currently covered by Nottingham City Council are charged £2.35 per week (£117.50 per annum) for a weekly only service provided through a building cleaning Service Level agreement. Leaseholders are charged £160 for the same service. This provides a weekly cleaning service only to those sites detailed in **Appendix 10**, subsequently the costs are less.

There are no proposals, at this stage, to introduce a charge to the additional properties that are now being covered by the Mobile Team. This will be reviewed after six months once the effectiveness of this Service has been assessed and tenants and leaseholders will be consulted as to whether they would wish to continue to receive the service in the future.

Joint work is ongoing with the Leaseholder Manager and Head of Finance to provide clearer details of the actual spend per block or area to ensure that tenants and leaseholders are clearly aware of the cost to them of the Caretaking Service they receive. It is clear from the figures above that the current service charges do not cover the cost of providing a service to our tenants and leaseholders.

4.5 Value for Money

A full assessment of the suppliers of cleaning materials and equipment has been undertaken to ensure that value for money is being evidenced. It has already been identified that some cleaning materials are not suitable for our needs and are more expensive than similar products currently on the market.

Advice has been provided by Direct Training Services, the company undertaking the BICS training for the caretakers, in respect of the equipment and materials we are currently using to inform future purchasing.

Each Caretaker has been set a target through their performance assessment to identify at least one idea to help them increase efficiency whilst undertaking their duties, or an idea to help the Company save money. This has given them an idea of what value for money is and to focus on how this impacts on their day to day duties.

4.6 Inventory and data control

A defined audit system was introduced during October 2008 to ensure that all Block Caretakers are aware of their own stock of items including clothing, materials and chemicals. Agreement has been reached with the Central Procurement Team to arrange for any future orders to be raised through their team. This ensures that items are purchased in accordance with Nottingham City Homes' Procurement Strategy to achieve value for money.

Processes are also in hand to keep a clear and accurate record through the use of the central I.T Database which is managed by Central Procurement Team. This allows for accurate records to be maintained of what stock is being requested by individual Caretakers ordering cleaning materials.

4.7. Equipment

A full review of equipment used by the Caretakers has been completed to establish the suitability of the current equipment and its condition. The larger electrical equipment currently used by the Caretaking Team is old and becoming obsolete. A list of new equipment has been produced and new equipment is now being ordered through the Central Procurement Team.

Focus groups have been held with Caretakers to gauge their views on what equipment would make their job more efficient and suppliers have been invited to demonstrate equipment with a number of Caretakers having the opportunity to use the equipment before it is purchased.

All portable appliances were tested for safety during October and any items that have been found to be unsafe have either been replaced or repaired.

5 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

5.1 Area Housing Offices

A protocol has been agreed to clarify the roles undertaken in the Caretaking Service. The aim is to involve the area housing offices and the Caretakers in working together to resolve issues across the estates and in blocks.

Appendix 11

Caretakers are invited to new tenancy visits to introduce themselves and to explain how they can be contacted to help with any Caretaking issues customers may have. Caretakers are also included in the estate inspection programme, especially where blocks are included.

Whilst “weeks of action” are currently ongoing across the estates high rise blocks are not usually included. It is intended to work with the area housing offices to include high rise blocks future.

5.2 Tenant responsibilities

The amended tenancy agreement includes clauses for tenants living in high and low rise blocks. However, customers are quite often unaware of these responsibilities and this does impact on the amount of additional cleaning the Block Caretakers have to do. A summary of the specific tenancy conditions has been produced and will be displayed on the notice boards in blocks to remind customers of their responsibilities. This summary will also be handed out at the welcome meeting to new tenants. Details will be included on the Company’s web site.

All new tenants moving into a flat where a Caretaking service is provided will be issued with a copy of the cleaning schedule detailing the service received in their particular block.

5.3 Environmental Regeneration

Quarterly meetings are now underway with the lead officer at Nottingham City Council to discuss and review the details of the building cleaning Service Level Agreement. The purpose of these meetings is to continue to develop the close working relationship with Nottingham City Homes and Nottingham City Council and to ensure that the Service Level Agreement is delivering a value for money service that meets the needs of our tenants and leaseholders. Six weekly joint site visits are held so that standards within the blocks can be assessed to ensure they meet the levels detailed within the Service Level Agreement.

There are currently two Service Level agreements in place one for the cleaning of 12 sites across the City which costs Nottingham City Homes £73,218.71 for the current financial year.

A second SLA is in place for the cleaning of 17 of the sheltered sites across the City at a cost of £108,511 for 2007/08. These sites include only those schemes that have corridor type layouts and a detailed cleaning schedule is provided. Detailed discussions with NCC are to be arranged to ensure this SLA meets the needs of the Service and is delivering full value for money.

The Scheme Managers undertake the work in those blocks that do not have any support from NCC, although there are four sheltered High Rise schemes that receive a full Caretaking Service provided by the Estates and Caretaker Services Team.

The total cost of these two SLAs to Nottingham City Homes is £181, 729.

It is proposed that the building cleanings SLA be cancelled and the work brought "in house". However six months notice has to be given to cancel the SLA. It is recommended that notice be given in December 2008 to bring the work in house during the next financial year. This will allow time for a full assessment of the resources required to carry out this work and also to establish the full costs, including any TUPE considerations.

5.4 CCTV Centre

Meetings are held with the CCTV Centre Manager to discuss the introduction of an agreed protocol between Nottingham City Homes and the CCTV centre. A draft document has been produced to cover the High Rise blocks. This document has been amended to include the rest of the Estates across the City. It is proposed that this document will be signed off during November.

5.5 Nottingham City Council

A series of multi- agency events are being held across the City over the next three months to launch a "How to guide". This is a document that has been developed by all agencies which gives staff and customers clear guidance on how to report various issues and concerns. There are ten events planned for each area of the City and representation from the Caretaking Management team and Caretakers will be included in these events.

5.5 Community Involvement

The Caretakers will become involved in at least one "community" project this financial year on a voluntary basis as a way of improving the profile of the Company and improving team work among the Caretaking team. Closer working with Nottingham City Council on such initiatives as the "Big Spring Clean Campaign" as well as working with tenant groups on projects. For example an initiative on the roof garden at Victoria Centre included employees

from the Caretaking Service working with Tenants and other agencies to complete some intensive cleaning and gardening work. This was publicised in the local press, on the local radio and on the local BBC news.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

6.1 Team Diversity

There is currently a mix of employees working within the Caretaking Service including:

- 9 staff from BME
- 4 Female Caretakers
- 1 Female Monitoring Officer
- 1 registered disabled

The youngest Caretaker is 22 years of age.

6.2 Staff Development

There are a number of opportunities identified within this review that will offer employees the ability to further develop their skills. All posts within the restructure will be available to all the Caretaking team by way of an "informal expression of interest" during 1-2-1s. All caretakers will be given the opportunity to develop within that role, through additional training and the use of a rota basis to develop skills within the team.

6.3 Recruitment

Different options of recruitment will be explored through working with Human Resources and our Equality and Diversity Team to ensure all interested individuals can be encouraged to respond to any vacancies that become available. Options will be pursued to improve recruitment so that the workforce reflects the diverse range of the community in Nottingham. Recently two Mobile Caretaker Posts were advertised in the local press and at a recruitment fair held by the Company. This generated 65 applications of which 13 individuals were recruited. The posts were subsequently offered to an Egyptian national and a young man aged 20.

6.4. Customer involvement

Tenants and leaseholders will be given the opportunity to become involved in shaping the future service through close working with the Tenant and Leaseholder Participation Team and the various forums and panels established across the City.

Updates on changes to the service as a result of customer involvement is provided through Area Panels and Tenants and Residents Groups

Each customer visited as a result of either a complaint or in response to a rectification notice through Vision Management Survey are provided with details of how they can become involved in shaping the services provided by Nottingham City Homes.

6.5 Access to information.

Nottingham City Homes' web site has been redesigned and includes a section on Estates and Caretaker Services. This link will detail all the appropriate information regarding the Estates and Caretaker Service, including the quality assurance manual, work schedules, service standard and provides a direct e mail link to the Estates and Caretaker Services Team.

Notice boards are to be erected in all the blocks across the City, including low rise sites, to display information such as service standards, contact details for Caretakers and Housing Patch Managers, useful contact numbers on a single poster detailed in **Appendix 12**.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 The main recommendations from this review include:

- Bench marking exercise be undertaken
- Notice be served on Flats cleaning and Sheltered Sites Service level agreement with work brought in house during 2009/10
- Full Market testing of the Caretaker Service for 2009/10
- Hand held technology be introduced for the Caretaking Team during 2008/09
- Weekend cover to be reviewed for the financial year 2009/10
- Continued development of the Tenant and Leaseholder Inspection Team
- Development of a suite of performance indicators for the Caretaker Service to be introduced in April 2009
- Expansion of the Caretaker Service to cover an additional 2370 properties for an initial period of six months with a full review after that period
- Two additional Caretakers be recruited during October 08
- Review the terms and conditions for the Caretaking Team
- Stage 2 of the BICS Training be pursued
- This review and the Estates and Caretaker Service Business Plan be reviewed and updated quarterly

7.2 Conclusion

A review of the Caretaking Service was completed by Housemark in January 2007 which made a number of recommendations in respect of the Caretaking Service. That review referred to recommendations made following a previous best value review in 2004. These recommendations are detailed in **Appendix 13**

The existing Estates and Caretaker Service does benefit from a highly committed team with a wealth of knowledge and experience, although historically the staff have not been managed and supported in a structured manner. Investment in the team has already commenced through a detailed and nationally recognised training programme.

Further Investment is underway to ensure the team have the equipment and materials to drive through the efficiencies that are necessary to the delivery of an excellent service that meets the needs of our tenants and leaseholders, whilst at the same time delivering value for money.

This review demonstrates how the unit costs have been reduced, however the Estates and Caretaker Service is still expensive when compared with three star organisations. Continued benchmarking and consultation with our tenants and leaseholders will help to develop and shape the service. There have been some huge improvements in the Estates and Caretaker Service over the last twelve months and major changes and improvements will continue.

Some examples of these improvements include:

- Monitoring of cleaning standards in the blocks has been introduced
- An expansion of the Service to more properties across the City
- A joint working protocol has been developed and agreed between the Caretaker management team, Area Housing Offices and the Caretakers.
- Regular team meetings are held with all caretakers.
- Full induction programme for new employees has been introduced and embedded
- Joint monitoring of properties covered by the cleaning standards SLA with NCC has been introduced, with quarterly review meetings in place
- Caretakers accompany Housing Patch Managers to new tenancy visits to introduce themselves to new Customers
- Improvement in sickness absence levels.
- BICS training for the Caretakers
- Additional support is being provided to the Area Housing Office teams from the mobile caretaking team to assist in achieving a two star or above rating for each of the 39 estates. To date all 39 Estates have achieved at least a two star rating.

Further work must be done to complete a full market testing exercise of the service to ensure that the Estates and Caretaker team are delivering an excellent service.

Ian Perry
Estates and Caretaker Services Manager
October 2008