



The Keeping House Programme & Social Enterprises

What Keeping House is

Keeping House creates new ways of developing and supporting local organisations to provide domestic services in Leeds that can help older people and disabled people to maintain their independence in their own home for as long as possible.

The central idea is that these services are run as social enterprises, charging for work done but putting any profit back into the business for the benefit of the community and those using the service. They are run by local people who know what is needed in their area.

Some of the services are already set up and will continue to develop. They offer domestic support and help with things like cleaning, shopping and gardening.

Keeping House (KH) is a partnership programme sponsored by Leeds City Council Adult Social Care, which has committed to contributing £900,000 over 3 years. This has now been stretched to 4 years and runs from 2005/06 to 2008/09.

The programme sits within the framework of Older Better, the Leeds strategy to promote a healthy and active life for older people. The Older Better vision states that “a life worth living for older people in Leeds is one where...they are enabled to remain as independent...as possible”.

The background

In 2004/05 Leeds City Council began planning how to improve access to domestic services for older people and disabled people. The old system of providing a ‘one size fits all’ homecare service on a means-tested basis was collapsing at the seams for a number of reasons:

- The well-documented increase in the number of older people, who are living longer and needing more complex support in their later years to remain living independently.
- The escalating cost to the local authority, combined with the difficulty of finding and retaining staff.
- The growing mismatch between the standard tasks provided by the local authority homecare service, and the more flexible approach needed and expected by older people and disabled people.

These pressures were leading to long waiting lists for homecare services and little was known about the quality or geographical cover of independent domestic service providers.

Keeping House Values

Person-centred
Reliable
Flexible
Affordable

Easily accessed by anyone who
wants them

Culturally appropriate

Keeping House is committed to working with social enterprises to provide fair pay and conditions for their employees.

This led to Leeds City Council implementing a strategy in April 2005 which included:

- restructuring its services to focus on those people with 'substantial and critical needs' through a streamlined Community Support Service and commissioning from the independent sector, as required by national policies,
- reaffirming its commitment to partnership working with the older people's voluntary sector,
- creating Keeping House to support the development of good quality domestic services through social enterprises.

There are a number of understandings and definitions of social enterprise, the simplest definition is '*an organisation that trades in the market for a social purpose*' (Social Enterprise Coalition, 2003).

Keeping House encourages innovation and a creative approach to reach sustainable, self-reliant models for delivering domestic services, and it is not precious about these definitions. It is in the very nature of the programme to adapt, grow and develop based on consultations, marketing intelligence, successes and failures.

For further details, see the Keeping House information sheets [What is a Social Enterprise?](#) and [Social Enterprise - Legal Structures](#). You can find these on www.keepinghouse.org.uk.

How Keeping House works

- The programme is overseen by a partnership board chaired by Leeds City Council's Adult Social Care and includes members representing older people and the social enterprise and voluntary sectors.
- It is project-managed by Adult Social Care.
- The management team includes social enterprise advisers, voluntary sector and social care staff.
- It has commissioned social enterprise consultants on a 3-year contract.
- A Keeping House investments panel, chaired by a KH partnership board member from West Yorkshire Social Enterprise, meets quarterly to consider applications for grants.

What Keeping House does

Keeping House works on many fronts, each as necessary as the other in achieving its overall aim. It:

- runs an investment programme which provides direct investment for new and existing domestic service social enterprises as well as funding for feasibility studies, business planning and marketing,
- manages the context within which the services are developing: the culture change for customers, providers and commissioners,
- provides advice, facilitates debate, workshops, research and reports,
- promotes and publicises the new services,
- looks at ways to improve and develop the quality assurance and availability of services at affordable rates across the city,
- develops and maintains a list of domestic services,
- focuses in detail on different aspects of domestic services, such as shopping or gardening, to develop sustainable models and build useful cross-sector partnerships,
- consults with older people and disabled people about their domestic needs,
- acts as an information portal – telephone, website, printed material,
- signposts older people and disabled people to suitable domestic services, and to welfare benefits advice.

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