

Customer Service Charter

Introduction

Our approach is based on the belief that our customers expect our homes and services to be of the highest quality and provide excellent value for money. This Customer Service Charter sets out the basic service performance our customers can expect from us. Underpinning this charter are two pledges:

Service Pledge

We will work to ensure that:

- Our customers are treated with respect and have the same rights and ability to access the services we provide, irrespective of gender (and gender reassignment status), background (e.g. gypsies and travellers, asylum seekers), race, colour, ethnic or national origin, faith, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, age, disability, social position, politics, trade union membership or social disadvantage. We understand the individual nature of our customers through keeping up to date information and using different forms of research to identify their needs and aspirations.
- Our customers have choice in the way our services are delivered and over the look of their home within our normal business constraints.
- Our customers understand their rights and our responsibilities, the level of service they should expect from us and what to do if they are unhappy with the way we perform.
- Our customers have access to regular sources of information about how we are performing and how well our performance compares with other Housing Associations.
- All of our customers have a variety of opportunities to be actively involved in the shaping of our services and their neighbourhoods.

Accountability Pledge

We will:

- Place customers at the heart of what we do in all aspects of our work, including their needs, priorities and aspirations in our plans.
- Involve customers in the management and control of the Association by having:
 - Customers on our Board of Management.
 - Regionally based Forums that consider issues that are important to customers and Resident Associations in that area.
- Involve customers in reviews of our performance and our policies.
- Review the way customers are involved in the management and decision making at the Association and together with our customers, make changes when necessary.

Fair treatment for all

Our approach to equality and diversity is contained in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and is described in our leaflet on Equality and Diversity. We aim to ensure that everybody is treated fairly and has equal opportunity to access our homes and to receive the services and employment opportunities we offer. We will:

- Arrange interpretation and translation services if you need them.
- Arrange for signing or Minicom services if you have difficulty hearing.
- Provide our documents and leaflets in Braille, large print or other languages on request.
- Provide information in the form of pictorial formats or in other ways to meet the individual needs of customers with learning disabilities.

Access to our services

The information that follows is our approach to service delivery to our customers.

Office hours:

We will keep our main offices open during the following hours:

- 8:30am to 5:00pm – Monday to Thursday (exc Public Holidays).
- 8:30am to 4:30pm – Fridays (exc Public Holidays).

We will maintain a full telephone service during the following hours:

- 8:00am to 5:00pm – Monday to Friday (exc Public Holidays).

We will maintain an “emergency repairs only” telephone service during the following hours:

- 5:00pm to 8:00am – Monday to Friday.
- All day Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays.

When you phone us (01258 484800):

We will:

- Deal with most enquiries through the phone.
- Answer telephones within **20 seconds** during office hours.
- Greet the caller in a welcoming positive tone.

It is our intention to deal with most enquiries at the time of your first call. If we can't we may need to take a message and ask a member of staff to call you back. Messages will be dealt with as follows:

- Messages and telephone calls will be returned on a priority basis.
 - Immediate response – **same working day**.
 - Routine response – end of the next working day.
- If the caller cannot be contacted by telephone a written response will be sent within **3 working days**.

When you send us a letter, fax or an email for any enquiry or request:

We will:

- Date stamp all letters on receipt.
- Acknowledge letters and emails within **5 working days**. If we cannot give you a full reply at that time, we will let you know when we will be able to.
- Respond in your preferred way if you have expressed a preference to us.
- Write clearly and precisely in all our communications to customers.

When you visit us:

We will:

- Open our offices and have adequate staff during office hours.
- Immediately greet visitors to the office with staff who are trained in customer care and

- have knowledge about the likely range of enquiries.
- See you within **5 minutes** if you have made a prior appointment.
- See you within **10 minutes** if you have not made a prior appointment.
- Keep the reception area clean and tidy.
- Keep leaflet racks and notice boards up to date and maintained.
- Provide confidential interview facilities for all visitors.
- Have child and adult diversions available
- Allow you to be accompanied by an advocate, friend or relative when we meet.

When we visit you:

We will:

- Visit you in your home within **10 working days** of you requesting us to visit.
- Let you know at least **2 hours** in advance when exceptional circumstances requires us to cancel an appointment and offer an alternative appointment.
- Discuss things clearly with you and any advocate, friend or relative of your choice if you wish.
- Provide identification when we visit.
- Confirm any outcomes and actions to you in writing within **10 working days** of our visit.

Moving into your new home:

We will:

- When we receive a nomination from the council we will contact you within **3 working days**.
- Discuss the nomination with you.
- Advise you in writing of the tenancy start date, rent and property type.
- Arrange a sign-up appointment with you.
- Arrange for you to visit your new home before you move in.
- Give you a "Guide to your home" when you move into your home.
- Visit you in your new home **6 weeks** after you move in to check everything is OK.

Mutual exchanges

A mutual exchange is where you swap properties with another tenant. When we receive your request we will;

- Send you information about the process.
- Respond to your application for a mutual exchange within legal limits **6 weeks**.

Further information can be found on our website www.sha.co.uk .

Applications for Right to Buy or Right to Acquire

If you are a secure tenant or a transferred tenant from NDDC, you may have a Right to Buy your home. Right to Acquire is a different scheme where you can get a discount to buy the home you live in. Further details can be found in our leaflet 'Buying a Home'. When you contact us about either scheme we will;

- Provide you with helpful information on the scheme.
- Process your application within legal time limits (**between 4 and 8 weeks** depending upon your circumstances).

When we collect your rent and service charges:

We will:

- Send you a statement of your account quarterly.
- Send additionally requested statements to you within **7 days**.
- Inform you of any outstanding debt on your account within **14 days** of it occurring.
- Help you with benefit applications.
- Offer you a number of different ways of paying your rent and other charges.

Further information can be found in your “Guide to your home” or on our website www.sha.co.uk.

Inspecting your Estate

If you live on an estate, we will

- Carry out an inspection at least every quarter.
- Publish the results of the inspection quarterly as a minimum.

When you report anti-social behaviour:

Every reported case will be recorded and assessed to determine whether it constitutes anti-social behaviour. After this initial assessment, the behaviour will be given a Priority Category. This will determine the timescale for response. We will endeavour to respond as follows:

- **Priority 1** (including harassment) – respond within the **same working day**.
- **Priority 2** – respond before the end of the **next working day**.
- **Priority 3** – respond within **5 working days**.

More details of our approach to anti-social behaviour and the different priorities can be found in our detailed leaflet.

When you report a repair:

We will attend to repairs as follows:

- **Emergency** repairs are those where there is genuine danger to life and limb or the likelihood of major damage to the property. We will attend and ‘make safe’ within **24 hours**.
- **Urgent** repairs will be completed within **7 days**.
- **Routine** repairs will be completed within **28 days**.
- Offer you an appointment for urgent and routine repairs and confirm this to you in writing.

Examples of our repair responsibilities can be found in your “Guide to your home” or in our detailed leaflet on repairs.

Major repairs and improvements:

We will:

- Publish an improvement programme to customers each year.
- Consult with you about any options and choices there may be.
- Send you a survey after work has been completed to find out how satisfied you are with the work carried out.

Heating Servicing:

Gas appliance servicing is an important safety aspect of our standard service to customers. If you rent your home (i.e. are NOT a leaseholder or shared owner), we have a legal obligation to service your gas appliance every 12 months. We also have an obligation to inspect solid fuel and oil based systems once per year. We will:

- Arrange for your property to be serviced every 12 months.
- Leave a copy of the safety certificate (CP12) with you.
- Send you a survey afterwards to find out how satisfied you are with the service.

Further details can be found in your “Guide to your home” or in our detailed leaflet on repairs.

When you request an aid and/or adaptation to your home:

Before any aids or adaptations are specified, it is important to request an assessment by an Occupational Therapist. Once we have received the report we can work out where to obtain the funding for the works. We will endeavour to:

- Respond to your request within **5 working days**.
- Send you helpful information about the process.
- Send you a survey after work has been completed to find out how satisfied you are with the work carried out.

Further details of this process can be found in our Aids and Adaptations leaflet which is available on request.

Keeping you informed

We will:

- Display useful and up to date information in our offices.
- Give you a “Guide to your home” when you move into your new home.
- Provide you with information and feedback about your area.
- Help you access services from other organisations such as Local Authorities, Citizens Advice Bureau, Credit Unions
- Send you our Residents Annual Report each year describing our performance.
- Send you a newsletter four times a year.
- Provide detailed performance information for review by our Forums.

Complaining about our services

We will deal with complaints openly, quickly and confidentially. You can make your complaint any way you wish; letter, email, telephone, fax, face-to-face, etc. We will investigate your complaint in accordance with the three internal stages of our Complaints Policy.

When we receive your complaint we will:

- Record the details on our Complaints Log.
- Write to you, within **5 working days**, to acknowledge its receipt.
- Tell you who is investigating your complaint and when we will write to you with our findings.

More details can be found in our Complaints leaflet that is available on request.

Maintaining your privacy

This statement sets out our commitment to the privacy of the individual.

We take the privacy and confidentiality of our customers seriously and we adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998. To ensure your privacy, we will:

- Consider the potential breach of privacy against the necessity for any action when for example considering sharing information with third parties necessary to reduce crime.
- Keep the information we hold about you as secure as is appropriate and ensure any other person / agency we give that information to, also keeps it secure.
- Not to hold any excessive information.
- Keep the information as accurate and up-to-date as possible.
- Process your information in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

You may write to us to:

- Request details of the information that we hold about you and the purposes for which it is held. There is a charge for the provision of this information (given in our detailed leaflet on Privacy and Data Protection available on request).
- Require us to stop or not to begin processing personal information on the grounds that it is causing or is likely to cause substantial damage or distress to you or to another and that damage or distress is, or would be unwarranted.
- Require us to ensure that no decision is taken by or on behalf of us which significantly affects you based solely on the automated processing of information.

More details are in our Privacy and Data Protection leaflet that is available on request.

Disclaimer

Legal obligations are not created by this document. Almost by definition the Charter includes general statements of principle and expectations, objectives and responsibilities which are intended to complement the Association's formal rules and regulations.

Who should I contact for more information?

If you require further information please write, email or call our Helpline.

Signpost House,
Sunrise Business Park,
Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 8SA

Tel: **01258 484800**

Email: customer.services@sha.co.uk

Website: www.sha.co.uk

These standards are available in other languages, Braille or large print on request.