



Shropshire
Towns and Rural Housing

Service Standards

As part of our commitment to tell you about our services, we have set standards for your services. These tell you how and when a service should be carried out.

- Sampling of the work undertaken
- Monitoring of complaints
- Satisfaction surveys
- Mystery shopping.

The results of our monitoring and standards will be reported to tenants through the Policy and Performance Panel, Area Panels and to Tenant Board Members. We will also publish the results, along with tenant's comments on our performance in newsletters, on our website and in our offices in Bridgnorth and Oswestry

Customer Access

Our customers are at the centre of everything we do. It is essential that we make sure that contacting us is a simple, easy and convenient experience.

As our commitment to you we will:

- Provide an out-of-hours telephone number so that you can contact us to report any relevant emergency
- Acknowledge written correspondence within 3 working days, giving details of who is dealing with your enquiry. We will also provide a full response within 10 working days of receipt

- Acknowledge email contact within 3 working days and include full contact details. Where a staff member is away for more than 1 day an out of office reply will be sent stating who can be contacted in their absence
- Acknowledge complaints within 2 working days and provide a full response within 10 working days
- Arrange a personal visit on request within 3 working days
- Display information about our services in the Bridgnorth and Oswestry Area Headquarters reception areas
- Tell you about how you and others rate our services through our newsletter, on our website and in our offices
- Customers who visit our offices will find them welcoming and accessible to all.

Managing your area

We are committed to ensuring that residents enjoy living in their communities and surroundings and receive a prompt, courteous and efficient housing service. We will do this by working in partnership with residents to identify and resolve any issues that arise. We will consult with you before we make any significant changes to the way in which we manage your area.

As our commitment to you we will:

- Tell you about any cleaning schedules in the communal areas of flats so you know what should be done and when
- Monitor the cleaning and report the results of inspections through a variety of means
- Publish a programme of area walkabouts in our newsletter, on our website and in our offices for the following 3 months
- An area walkabout will be done at least once every 3 months. Local Councillors, Tenants, West Mercia Police and other partners will be encouraged to accompany us on the walkabout
- Draw up an action plan to deal with any issues identified on the walkabout and publish details within 1 month of the walkabout around your area, on our website and in our offices
- Respond to all written comments/ complaints about your area within 10 working days
- Report abandoned vehicles to the relevant agency within 3 working days of becoming aware of them

- Remove offensive graffiti within 1 working day and other graffiti within 10 working days to improve the appearance of your area
- Respond to reports of fly tipping and make arrangements for it to be removed within 5 working days
- Ensure that our area team visits the area on a regular basis
- Consult with you and develop an annual plan about how we can improve our area management services based on local priorities.
- Managing your home
- We are committed to providing housing management services that are focused on the needs of tenants and others in the community. We will consult with you before we make any significant changes to the way we manage your home.

As our commitment to you we will:

- Issue all new tenants with a Tenant Information Pack and a Tenancy Agreement. We will explain our mutual responsibilities
- Investigate any reports that the rules written in the Tenancy Agreement have been broken within 5 working days. We will work to resolve problems about the rules being broken before tenancies are placed at risk
- Respond within 5 working days to reports of abandoned properties or illegal occupation
- Maintain communal areas and inspect them at least once every 3 months.
- Reply with a decision within 28 days, to all requests to carry out alterations and improvements to your home. We will not unreasonably refuse permission
- Reply with a decision within 28 days if you apply to do a mutual exchange (a property swap) with another tenant
- Reply with a decision within 28 days if you apply to succeed a tenancy or if you wish to assign your tenancy to someone else or tell you why we cannot make a decision in this timescale
- Make referrals to help support you in your tenancy within 3 working days of your request
- Respond to requests to end your tenancy within 1 working day
- Consult with you and develop an annual plan about how we can improve our tenancy management services.

Anti-social Behaviour

We are committed to ensuring tenants and others in our communities have a good quality of life. We will work in partnership with residents and other agencies to help to achieve this.

We will take any action necessary to ensure that issues of nuisance and anti-social behaviour are addressed. We encourage people to discuss problems and agree solutions between themselves, and in some circumstances we may use restorative justice solutions or mediation. We will take legal action in more serious cases.

What is Anti-social Behaviour?

- Behaviour which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm and distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the perpetrator
- Examples include, but are not limited to; abusive and insulting words or behaviour, hate crime incidents, domestic abuse, drug related crime or activity
- Our anti-social behaviour performance is monitored closely and we have specific targets to meet.

As our commitment to you we will:

- Investigate serious cases within 1 working day
- Investigate all other cases within 5 working days
- Agree an action plan with you within 5 working days, which will clearly set out what will be done and by whom
- If you are vulnerable or need support we will visit you in your own home to discuss any extra support you may need
- Harassment based in disability, gender, sexuality and race, shall be determined as a serious case and therefore be responded to in 1 working day
- Discuss it with you and advise what we can do to help
- Investigate all reports of anti-social behaviour and keep you informed of any progress at least every 10 working days
- Provide support and protection as far as possible to victims and witnesses
- Work with other agencies such as the Police to tackle the problem
- Consider legal action if appropriate against anyone if they fail to change their behaviour after all other avenues have failed
- Inform you if a decision has been made to close the case and explain the reasons why
- Ask you how satisfied you are with the way your case has been dealt with. We will ask both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator
- Monitor all satisfaction surveys and use them to improve our service

Dealing with Hate Crime incidents

We know that hate crime related incidents are offensive, humiliating and unacceptable and that the experience of a hate crime related incident can have a devastating effect. We are committed to tackling all types of hate crime

Our anti-social behaviour performance is monitored closely and we have specific targets to meet.

What is a hate related incident?

Any incident which may or may not constitute a criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by hate.

Examples include, but are not limited to, verbal abuse, damaging property, graffiti, threats or physical attacks.

As our commitment to you we will:

- Treat any hate crime incident as a serious complaint and will respond to you within 1 working day
- Agree an action plan with you within 5 working days, which will clearly set out what will be done and by whom
- Discuss and agree a time for the provision of additional security to your home where there is a risk to you or members of your household
- Consider re-housing for those who have suffered a hate related incident and need another home
- Remove any offensive graffiti within 1 working day
- Provide support and protection as far as possible to victims and witnesses. If you are vulnerable or need extra support we will visit you in your own home to discuss any extra support you may need
- Report the incident to the Police, if you agree or if we feel your safety is in danger
- Discuss and agree additional security for you and your home in appropriate cases
- Take action against those who are committing hate crime
- Report all incidents of hate crime to a Shropshire Council Hate Crime Co-ordinator
- Keep you informed of any progress at least every 10 working days
- Inform you if a decision has been made to close the case and explain the reasons why
- Ask you how satisfied you are with the way your case has been dealt with. We ask both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator.
- Monitor all satisfaction surveys and use them to improve our service.

Domestic Abuse

We are committed to tackling all forms of domestic abuse. We take all reports of domestic abuse seriously. In dealing with domestic abuse your safety is the most important consideration and we will work closely with you to find a way for you to stay safe. We will not judge you or put you under pressure to do something you do not want to do and we will support you in considering your options.

What is domestic abuse?

Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

As our commitment to you we will:

- Treat any domestic abuse reported to us as a serious complaint and talk to you on the same day you report the incident about what you would like to do
- Offer a private interview room with a member of staff (of the same sex if you prefer) and will treat everything you say to us as confidential, unless we are concerned about a child or a vulnerable adults welfare or to prevent a crime
- Remove any rubbish and repair any damage to your property within 1 working day
- Discuss and agree the provision of additional security to your home where there is a risk of further abuse and provide targeted timescales for the provision of any additional security
- We will agree an action plan with you within 5 working days, which will clearly set out what will be done and by whom
- Investigate all reports and keep you informed of any progress at least every 10 working days, making sure you are safe at all times
- Provide support and protection as far as possible to victims and witnesses and refer you, with your agreement, to support agencies that specialise in dealing with domestic abuse
- Consider re –housing for those suffering from abuse who need another home. We will also give you advice about what to do if you have a joint tenancy with the person abusing you
- Consider legal action if appropriate against anyone after other avenues have failed
- Inform you if a decision has been made to close the case and explain the reasons why
- Ask you how satisfied you are with the way your case has been dealt with. We ask both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator
- Monitor all satisfaction surveys and use then to improve our service.

Equality and Diversity

We recognise that different communities and neighbourhoods have different needs and our aim is to treat everyone fairly. We will treat individual needs with sensitivity, tact and diplomacy.

What is equality and diversity?

'equality'

This means we will make sure we treat everybody fairly and do not discriminate against them (treat them unfairly). We will treat people according to their needs taking into account their sex, age, sexuality, race, gender, religion or faith, disability marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or caring responsibilities.

'diversity'

This means we will respect and value our customer's and our employees differences (for example their culture and family circumstances).

As our commitment to you we will

- Make sure that our reception areas and offices are easy for you to access and move about in and that hearing loops are available
- Ask you about your needs so that we can provide our services in the way that best meet your needs
- Arrange for an interpreter if your first language is not English or for a sign language interpreter should you need one
- Provide information in alternative formats on request, including large print, audio and Braille
- Treat any hate related incident or domestic abuse incident reported to us as a serious complaint and talk to you on the same day that you report the incident about what you would like to do
- Make our website accessible by giving you the option of being able to read it in large print, in a text only format, or with a different contrast
- Monitor the services that we provide to make sure that they are fair and publish the results

Moving into your new home

We will ensure that our homes are clean and essential repairs are carried out to a high standard before you move in.

As our commitment to you we will:

- Ensure that all our empty properties are advertised through Shropshire HomePoint. Where special conditions apply it will be clearly identified on the advertisement
- Aim to let our empty properties as soon as possible, keeping periods of empty homes to a minimum
- Ensure that each property meets the standard set out in our 'Lettable Standard' policy
- Ensure as part of our 'Lettable Standard' that we fit new locks to all external doors, clean kitchens and bathrooms, ensure the rest of the property is clean and tidy and remove any rubbish from the garden
- Tell you whether you are entitled to a decoration allowance before you sign for your tenancy
- Offer you an appointment to sign your tenancy agreement at a suitable location within 1 working day of you accepting your new home
- Issue all new tenants with a Tenant Information Pack and a Tenancy Agreement. We will explain our mutual responsibilities
- Make a home visit within 6 weeks of the start of your tenancy if you are a new tenant, to make sure that you are settling in and to identify any potential support needs that you may have
- Ask you how satisfied you are with the way your application and move was dealt with. We will tell you how you and others who have been housed with us have responded in our newsletter, on our website and in our offices.
- Monitor the work of our contractors to ensure that we only work with contractors and other agencies that share our commitment to be fair and publish the results in our newsletter, on our website and in our offices.

Repairs and Maintenance

We will provide a fast and responsive repairs service to ensure that your home is maintained to a good standard. As our commitment to you we will:

- Provide an appointment for inspections and repair work
- Provide information for all reported repairs, advising the date by which the repair should be carried out
- Tell you what priority category your repair request falls into and the target date for completion
- Make safe emergency work within 24 hours
- Complete urgent repairs within 5 working days
- Complete non-urgent routine work within 20 working days. If the repair is one we have planned to do when we next visit your local area to do other similar work, it may take a little longer. We will tell you of this when you report the repair
- Clean up and remove any rubbish following a repair
- Ask you what you thought of the service you received and publish it in our newsletter, on the website and provide it in our offices
- Carry out an annual safety check. We send you written confirmation of your safety check appointment
- Ask you about the service you have received each time a repair has been completed. We will tell you how you and others have responded via our newsletter, on our website and in our offices.

Planned Improvement work

We want to ensure that your home is comfortable and maintained to the highest standards. To help us do this we have a programme of planned improvement work, such as upgrading central heating, electrical wiring, replacing kitchens, replacing bathrooms, doors and windows. We are committed to tailoring the improvements to the preferences you have expressed wherever possible. As our commitment to you we will:

- Send confirmation that you are included in a programme of improvement works at least 4 weeks before the programme commences
- Send a confirmation letter outlining the type of works that are to take place and how they will be carried out
- Ask you if there are any issues that need to be taken into account or support required (when we tell you about programmes of improvement). We will develop a plan with you about how the works are to be carried out including any support required

- Give you at least 1 weeks' notice of the date that the works are to commence
- Ensure our workers/contractors introduce themselves and show proof of their identity
- Protect your possessions from dust and paint etc. and clean up afterwards
- Ensure that you are not left without a water supply or flushing toilet overnight and maintain services throughout
- Ask you about the service you have received when the works have been completed. We will tell you how you and others have responded in our newsletter, on our website and in our offices.

Housing Support Service – Service Standards

- We will aim to undertake an assessment of needs and begin to develop a support plan with tenants and clients within 5 days of being referred to the Housing Support Service.
- We will aim to undertake a community alarm assessment or to have an alarm installed within 5 days of being referred
- We aim to undertake an annual review of tenants or clients support plan, or where a significant change has occurred
- We will store all tenants/clients information in a safe and secure manner
- We will keep you up to date with information and news relating to you
- We will promote safety and wellbeing to help improve tenants' quality of life
- Staff will undertake regular health and safety and environmental checks of Sheltered Schemes, to ensure are well maintained and safe environment in which to live
- We will check the suitability of contractors before they enter the sheltered schemes to ensure they are providing an effective service and pose no threat to tenants or tenant's visitors.
- We aim to provide innovative and flexible services to help meet the needs of tenants and clients
- We will train and support our staff in order that they provide the best possible service our tenants and clients
- Our aim is for all of our tenants and clients to be positive about the services they receive we will conduct surveys of tenants and clients to monitor levels of satisfaction and happiness
- Staff will at all times present of positive and professional image, which promotes equality and diversity and treats people/customers fairly and with respect.

Helping you to live in your home

If you have a disability or mobility problem we will explore ways in which we can adapt your home to ensure that you can remain independent wherever possible. As our commitment to you we will:

- Respond to your requests for major adaptations by discussing your request with you and making any necessary referral to the Occupational Therapist within 5 working days
- Respond to requests for minor works (such as installing hand rails or a concrete ramp) within 20 working days of the initial requests
- Complete major adaptations within 3 months of receiving the assessment of the works required from the Occupational Therapist
- Ask you about the service you have received when the works have been completed. We will tell you how you and others have responded via our newsletter, on our website and in our offices.

Income Collection

We aim to collect rent and other charges due promptly. We believe it is not fair to those who do pay on time to allow a minority not to do so. However, if there are debts of rent and other charges we will contact residents promptly and work with residents to reduce any debts. We will also ensure that residents receive any support and guidance necessary to manage their rent accounts, deal with any debts and ensure that residents are maximising their income. As our commitment to you we will:

- Give you 28 days notice of your annual rent and service charge increase, advising you what your new rent will be and from when it is payable
- Provide a rent account statement 4 times a year and when requested
- Tell you at tenancy start-up how much rent and other charges you need to pay and we will assist you with completing Housing Benefit or other welfare forms if applicable
- Offer you a range of different methods by which you can pay your rent
- Provide advice and assistance in a way to suit you. This includes over
- the phone, by arranging an appointment
- in your own home or at one of
- our offices
- Confirm agreements of all debt repayment arrangements in writing within 5 working days

- Ensure that you are provided with Welfare Benefits help and advice within 5 working days of a request being received
- Make a direct referral to refer you to other support agencies for independent specialist advice where appropriate
- Proactively work with our tenants to reduce financial exclusion, including the provision of effective advice and training
- If your tenancy is due to end we will tell you about any debt or credit in writing within 5 working days. If there is a credit, we will send you a refund within 28 days of the tenancy ending
- Include details of any former tenant debt outstanding in references given to other housing providers.

Resident Involvement and Empowerment

We recognise the vital role that resident involvement plays in the services we provide and the way we deliver them. This is achieved by giving tenants the opportunity to contribute to the decision making process to ensure that we focus on residents priorities leading to a better place to live for all.

As our commitment to you we will:

- Tell you about our services by publishing a newsletter at least 3 times per year which will be delivered to the home of each tenant, and it will be available on the website
- Make available service information in our offices at Bridgnorth and Oswestry and on our website
- Publicise all tenants meetings through a variety of means and make available contact details of tenant representatives
- Have in place a range of ways tenants can be involved on their terms and proactively encourage tenants to become involved
- Provide a dedicated budget to support and train tenants to be involved in formal and informal ways in Bridgnorth, Oswestry and across Shropshire
- Organise regular community and consultation events including annual showcases
- Ensure a resident involvement information leaflet is given to all new tenants
- Monitor the impact of customer involvement activities on a quarterly basis through impact assessments and publish the results annually
- Analyse complaints and provide feedback via a variety of means to tenants about changes made as a result of complaints
- Provide accessible information and feedback on how involvement has brought about change for customers.