

# Our service standards

Providing quality services that our customers want to receive



## ➔ Introduction

The standards in this leaflet relate to all housing services provided by Penwith Housing Association (PHA), Tor Homes and Independent Futures, as part of Devon & Cornwall Housing group.

In lots of the standards, we promise to let you know more information. We will always do this through our regular Open Door newsletters to all residents, through specific leaflets, and through our website.

In October this year we will be reporting to you again on how we have measured our performance against these standards, and how well we have done.

Our website provides a wide range of up-to-date information on our services and performance, as well as offering access to services such as reporting repairs, paying rent and contacting us. We will make sure that our website is rated as good by our customers.

We will always provide easily-available information about our customer services policies, how to contact us and how our complaints procedure works. We know that not everyone has access to websites, and we are always happy to post leaflets or explain information in person.

**The standards set out how we will perform on:**

- customer services
- involving customers in how we work and making choices
- repairs, maintenance and improvements
- allocating homes
- living in your home
- paying your rent
- estate and neighbourhood services
- dealing with anti-social behaviour.

## Customer services

We will clearly set out our customer services policies, on our website and in leaflets available from our offices.

We will always deal with you professionally and:

- **listen carefully to what you tell us**
- **treat everyone fairly and with respect**
- **be sensitive to individual needs**
- **deal with your enquiry on the spot, or if we cannot do that, tell you when we will be able to help**
- **if we cannot help, we will explain fully why not**
- **ensure our staff carry out our policies on confidentiality.**

We will always write in plain English.

When you move in, we will give you the name and contact details of the member of staff who manages your home.

### Answering letters and phone calls

We will acknowledge letters, emails and texts within one working day and reply within two weeks.

When you ring us, we will answer your phone call within 20 seconds. We will try to deal with your enquiry straight away if possible, but if we can't then we will phone you back within one working day.

Our office opening hours are on the back of this leaflet. Outside our opening hours, you can ring the same numbers to report emergency repairs and other problems which cannot wait until the next working day.

### Meeting you in person

When you visit our offices:

- **you will see a receptionist within five minutes of arriving**
- **if you need to see someone else but do not have an appointment, you will have to wait no longer than a further 15 minutes**
- **all our current service leaflets and a range of other useful information will be on display**
- **toys and books for children will be available**
- **you will be seen in private if we need to talk confidentially**
- **all staff will wear name badges**
- **there will be a toilet available.**

If you ask us to visit you at home, we will contact you within a week to arrange a visit at a convenient time. After our visit, within a further week we will confirm in writing any action agreed with you.

We will always try to meet our appointments, but sometimes unforeseen circumstances will prevent this. If we cannot attend an appointment, whether it is a visit or a repair, we will let you know as soon as possible. If we don't let you know at least 24 hours beforehand, you may claim compensation of £18.

### If you have additional requirements

We will take careful note of any additional requirements you have that affect how we provide services, for example:

- **your ability to walk or get around**
- **any difficulties with hearing or sight and how we can take this into account when visiting or contacting you**
- **particular requirements of your religion or culture**
- **any mental health issues.**

Each year we will ask you if these requirements have changed.

We can easily provide leaflets and other written information in different formats – please ask if you need this. We can supply information in:

- **large print**
- **recorded audio (tape, CD or MP3)**
- **any other format which it is practicable and reasonable to provide – for example to meet the needs of people with learning difficulties.**

If English is not your first language, we can use a telephone-based interpretation service to speak with you in your own language if necessary.

We will make sure all our offices are accessible to wheelchair users and people with prams or pushchairs. We will provide assistance in our offices for people with a visual impairment. We will also do all of this when we hold public meetings and events.

We will make sure we can talk to and hear from people with a hearing impairment by:

- **having hearing loops in offices and also at meetings and events where possible**
- **communicating by text messaging if requested**
- **having a minicom phone service**
- **having a signer present when we meet with you if requested.**

### Complaints

We will clearly set out our policy on complaints on our website and in leaflets available from our offices.

We provide a formal complaints scheme for residents who are not satisfied with a service or with how they have been treated by staff. We make it easy for people to use this service by taking complaints:

- **over the phone**
- **at our offices**
- **through our websites and by email**
- **in writing.**

When you complain, we will try to put things right as quickly as possible, and tell you what we are doing. If you are not happy with our reply to your complaint, we will make it easy for you to complain to a more senior level.

There are clear timescales to make sure we respond to complaints quickly. These are set out in our complaints leaflet and on our website, together with how senior managers and board members are involved in the appeals process. These people will not have been involved in earlier stages of the complaint. If after the full appeals process you are still not happy, you will be able to complain to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service.

### How well have we done?

We will review with residents the ways in which we deliver services and deal with complaints, and how this can be improved. We will do this each year.

We will let you know about our performance on customer services and complaints each year, including details of what people complained about. We will use complaints to learn about how to do things better, and will change our services accordingly. We will let you know each year how complaints have changed the way we deliver services.

# ➔ Involving customers in how we work and making choices

## Involvement

We will clearly set out our policies on involving customers, on our website and in leaflets available from our offices.

We will:

- offer a wide range of ways for you to be involved in our work
- let you know how much of your time would be spent on these ways on getting involved
- make clear how these ways of getting involved might lead to changes in our services.

We will make sure that we take account of people who may be less able to get involved, for example, people with disabilities, and people with young children. This will include monitoring the diversity of those who get involved, and making special efforts to involve people from under-represented groups.

Where it's reasonable, we will offer you financial help to be involved, for example travel and care costs.

We will provide support for new and existing tenant and resident associations, and we will publish this in more detail in leaflets, newsletters and on our website.

We will provide choices about our services in a range of ways, including:

- appointment times for repairs
- kitchen and bathroom fittings and finishes when we replace these
- options for getting involved with making decisions.

At least every three years we will consult with you on how we involve residents in the governance and scrutiny of our services. This will include how our boards and committees are made up.

## Consulting you on changes to our services

If we are thinking of making any changes to services you receive, we will always tell you first. And, we will give you the opportunity to be involved in shaping those changes.

Where possible, we will always put forward two or more options for change, and we will tell you about the costs and benefits of each option.

When we make decisions which significantly affect large groups of residents, we will say how residents were involved and how they influenced the change.

## Asking you what you think about our services

Whenever you have received one of the following services, we will always ask you what you thought about it:

- a repair you asked for
- help from us following a report by you of anti-social behaviour
- a reply from us in response to a formal complaint about any of our services
- letting a new home
- home improvement works.

We will take account of this feedback to improve services. We will also review with residents each year which services we ask for feedback on.

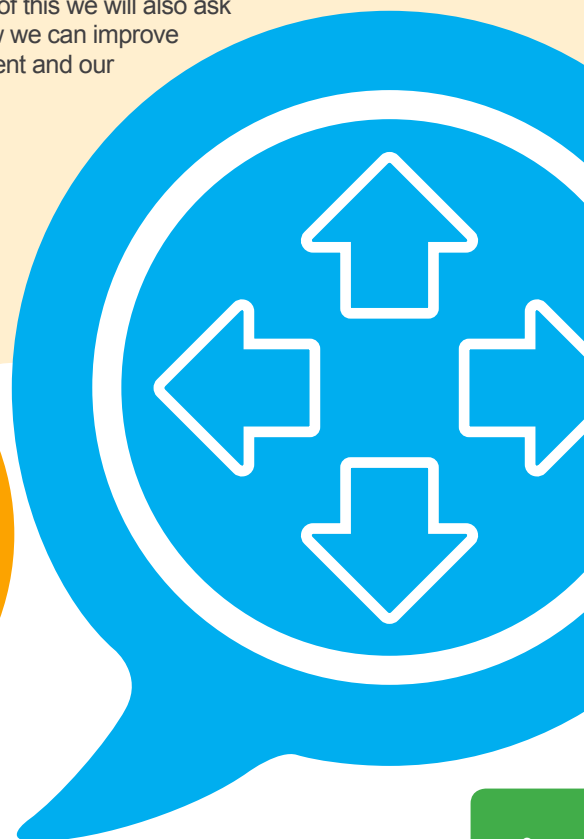
We are currently working on new ways for residents to keep a watch on how well we are performing on key issues. These new ways will enable residents to look closely at all areas of our work, including how we set our standards and how well we achieve them.

## Support in developing involvement skills

We will offer regular training to help residents build up skills and knowledge so they can be involved in our work more effectively. We will advertise these widely, and we will make these events available to everyone.

## How well have we done?

Each year we will report back to you on how we have involved residents. As part of this we will also ask your views on how we can improve resident involvement and our service standards.



# ➔ Repairs, maintenance and improvements

## Repairs services

We will clearly set out our policies on repairs, maintenance and improvements, on our website and in leaflets available from our offices.

We will provide you with a comprehensive guide to repairs that:

- ➔ tells you how to report a repair
- ➔ tells you what repairs we have to do by law and the other repairs we will also do
- ➔ helps you to identify what the problem is
- ➔ gives details of how quickly different repairs will be done
- ➔ sets out special arrangements for vulnerable residents.

We will make it easy for you to report a repair by providing a range of methods including by telephone, at the offices, through the website and by text.

Outside office hours, by ringing our normal numbers you can access our emergency repairs phone service to deal with repairs which cannot wait until the next day.

Our repairs workers, whether they are employed directly by us or by a contractor, will:

- ➔ show you their ID card when they call
- ➔ treat you as a customer and with respect
- ➔ ask if they can use electricity, water or other services
- ➔ clean up carefully after the repair is finished and put back furniture.

## Standards for our homes

We will ensure every home has an adequate level of roof insulation.

We will ensure every home has cavity wall insulation (where applicable) and homes with solid walls have their external walls insulated.

We will involve residents in developing a Devon & Cornwall Housing standard that all of our properties will meet. This will include health & safety, energy efficiency, and the standard of components such as kitchens and bathrooms.

## Repairs targets

When you report a repair, we will tell you our target for completing it.

- ➔ if the repair is an emergency, relating to health & safety or security, we will arrange to complete it or make it safe within 24 hours
- ➔ we will repair any faults to communal door entry systems within 24 hours
- ➔ we will repair most faults to communal TV aerial systems within two days
- ➔ for most other repairs, when you report the repair we will make an appointment to complete it within four weeks. In some cases we will need to inspect the problem before making an appointment to complete it.

We will offer you a choice of times for the repair appointment as follows:

- ➔ all day 8am till 4pm
- ➔ first thing in the morning 8am till 10am
- ➔ morning 8am till 12pm
- ➔ afternoon 12pm till 4pm
- ➔ 10am till 2pm (avoiding school-run times).

We will be introducing 8am to 12pm Saturday appointment slots as we renew our maintenance contracts. We will let you know when this changes.

As with all other visits, we will always try to meet our appointments. However, sometimes unforeseen circumstances will prevent this. If we cannot attend an appointment, whether it is a visit or a repair, we will let you know as soon as possible. If we don't let you know at least 24 hours beforehand, you may claim compensation of £18.

We will aim to complete the repair at the first visit where possible. If the repair is not finished at the first visit, we will let you know within two working days when we will be coming back to complete the job.

We will ensure an inspection of at least one in ten completed repairs to make sure they have been done properly.

## Major repairs and improvements

We will send a technical inspector to survey your home every five years and use their findings to plan our future maintenance and improvements plans.

We will publish a three-year programme of major repairs and improvements, so you can see what work involves your home.

We will let you know at least 12 weeks in advance of any planned work that might disturb you or affect you in any way.

Where we plan to carry out major work inside your home, we will:

- ➔ visit you at least two weeks before to explain what will happen and when
- ➔ let you know what choices are available concerning the work (such as types of kitchen finishes)
- ➔ tell you about your named liaison manager and their contact details, including out-of-hours contact details
- ➔ find out if you need any help with preparing for the work.

We will redecorate painted shared areas on estates and inside blocks of flats at least every six years, unless local conditions dictate otherwise.

We will involve residents in prioritising work, planning programmes, choosing materials and colours, and agreeing and monitoring major contracts.

We will ensure all our contracts have targets for customer satisfaction and improvements.

## Adapting homes for people with disabilities

We will make sure residents know what services we can offer to help them maintain an independent quality of life.

Where people have physical disabilities, we will ensure there is an effective service for adapting their homes if this will help them. This will include:

- ➔ arranging to do minor adaptations such as grab rails and small ramps within four weeks of being requested
- ➔ ensuring that requests for major adaptations are assessed within 13 weeks of receiving them
- ➔ ensuring that when we make major repairs and improvements to your home, we take account of your individual needs.

We will consult with residents and specialist disability organisations to make sure that we are following best practice in this area.

We will ensure all residents requesting adaptations have their needs assessed by an occupational therapist or a trained member of staff. We will keep residents fully informed during this process.

We will review our standard home specification annually to see what areas could be amended to meet our changing resident profile.

## Safety checks and servicing

We will service appliances and carry out safety checks at least as often as the legal minimum. We will publicise this to make sure residents know how important it is to allow access for these checks.

This includes:

- ▶ **gas supplies, fires and boilers**
- ▶ **smoke and fire detectors**
- ▶ **electrical systems**
- ▶ **water storage**
- ▶ **play areas**
- ▶ **passenger lifts and stairlifts.**

We will offer a wide range of appointments including Saturdays and early evenings to improve access opportunities and greater level of choice. If residents don't let us have access for these important safety checks, we may use legal action to gain entry.

We will provide guidance information for residents on all landlord-related aspects of home safety.

We will make sure residents always have an up-to-date copy of their gas safety certificate.

We will let all residents know if there is any asbestos in their home, and how to make sure that it remains safe.

## How well have we done?

After we have completed repairs or improvements, we will ask how satisfied you are, and use this feedback to improve services in future.

We will review with residents each year the ways in which we deliver repairs services, and how our standards can be improved.

We will let you know about our performance on repairs each year, including details of customer feedback and what changes we made as a result.

# ➔ Anti-social behaviour

## Responding to anti-social behaviour

We want our neighbourhoods to be free from anti-social behaviour. We know from talking to customers that most people do not suffer from anti-social behaviour. But, we also know that for the minority of people who suffer problems, this can be a major area of concern. We will work with residents, the police, councils and other agencies to address this.

We will clearly set out our policies on anti-social behaviour on our websites and in leaflets available from our offices.

We will provide an initial response to reports of serious harassment, hate crime and domestic abuse (by either men or women) within one working day, including where the victim is being harassed due to their age, disability, gender, race, religion or sexuality. We will respond to other reports in line with our published policy.

We will make it easy to report anti-social behaviour:

- ▶ **by phone or in person in office hours**
- ▶ **through our websites and by email**
- ▶ **by phone outside office hours on a special hotline**
- ▶ **on behalf of another person.**

We will take action on anti-social behaviour in a way that focuses on you as a customer, including

- ▶ **letting you know who is the member of staff dealing with your case**
- ▶ **agreeing with you what action we will take**
- ▶ **not revealing who has made a report of anti-social behaviour, unless you have authorised us to do so**
- ▶ **keeping you informed at least every two weeks of the latest developments**
- ▶ **only closing the case after discussing this with you**
- ▶ **providing a range of ways to support people suffering from anti-social behaviour, and potential witnesses.**

## Hate crime or domestic abuse

If you have suffered hate crime or domestic abuse, we will:

- ▶ **arrange to meet you in your home, in our office, or at another reasonable place within one working day of you contacting us**
- ▶ **offer you a choice of female or male member of staff to meet with you**
- ▶ **not be judgemental in any way about you or your personal situation**
- ▶ **if necessary carry out emergency repairs to make your home secure again within 24 hours, and where necessary, work with other agencies to start improving the security at your home within one working day.**

## Taking action

Our action to resolve anti-social behaviour will always be reasonable and proportionate to the problem, including legal action where this is justified.

We will help people causing anti-social behaviour to change their behaviour where this is the best approach.

We will also help tenants who cause anti-social behaviour to keep their tenancies by ways including:

- ▶ **making it clear when they are putting the tenancy at risk through their behaviour**
- ▶ **arranging extra support for a period, where this support will assist in changing the behaviour**
- ▶ **making good behaviour agreements with young people (also called Acceptable Behaviour Contracts)**
- ▶ **working with other agencies where possible to help and support parents who have difficulty in controlling their children.**

## How well have we done?

After a case of anti-social behaviour is closed, we will ask you what difference we made and what we could have done better, and use your feedback to improve services.

We will review with residents each year the ways in which we deal with anti-social behaviour, and how our standards can be improved.

We will let you know about our performance on preventing and resolving anti-social behaviour each year, including details of customer feedback and what changes we made as a result.

## ➔ Allocating homes

We will clearly set out our policies on allocating homes, on our website and in leaflets available from our offices.

### Letting homes

We will:

- ➔ **publish clear and fair policies on how we decide who we offer homes to**
- ➔ **give people help and support in applying for new homes**
- ➔ **provide choice to people wanting to be housed, by always joining local choice-based lettings schemes**
- ➔ **provide mobility to people by offering free access to a national register of tenants wanting to exchange homes**
- ➔ **set targets for allocating homes to different sections of the community**
- ➔ **publish an annual report on the diversity of new tenants and how well we did against our targets.**

We will provide people applying for housing with an easy way of appealing against any decision on allocations they disagree with. This process is set out in our complaints leaflet and on our website, together with how senior managers and board members are involved in the appeals process.

### Beginning your tenancy

We will take account of people's individual circumstances when setting the start date for a tenancy.

We will provide practical support in the early days of a new tenancy if the new tenant needs such help, for example with adaptations or with getting assistance from other agencies.

We will help and support people who have been offered one of our homes and:

- ➔ **show you around the home and answer your questions**
- ➔ **give you a copy of our property standards before you arrive**
- ➔ **provide you with all the information you require to move into your home.**

- ➔ **let you know if help is available with decorations**
- ➔ **give you three days to decide if you want the home**
- ➔ **meet with you to discuss everything you need to know, and explain your tenancy agreement in detail**
- ➔ **help you apply for Housing Benefit if appropriate, and working out approximately how much this will be before the tenancy starts.**

We will provide extra advice and support if we think it is likely a new tenant will have difficulty managing their household budget and paying rent.

After you move in, we will ask you what you thought about the way we handled the letting. We will use what you say to help improve our service.

After six weeks in your new home, we will make contact with you to ensure everything is running smoothly.

### Existing tenants moving home

If you need advice on moving home, we will offer you an appointment to discuss the options available within two weeks of you asking us. Alternatively, we will direct you to a council or other advice agency if this is a better way of helping you.

We will support you in exchanging your home both with other Devon & Cornwall Housing tenants and with social housing tenants from other landlords. If both sides of the exchange are Devon & Cornwall Housing tenants, we will visit you both within two weeks to discuss your application.

### How well have we done?

We will review with residents each year the ways in which we let homes, and how our standards can be improved.

We will let you know about our performance on lettings each year, including details of customer feedback and what changes we made as a result.

## ➔ Living in your home

### General

We will provide clear information about your tenancy, for example about pets, lodgers or working from home. We will provide this in leaflets and on our website, as well as individually in person, by phone or letter on request.

If you have any queries about your home and your tenancy, we will always confirm our position in writing to you within 10 working days.

If we ever have to refuse a request from you, we will let you know why.

If you want to pass on a tenancy to someone else, for example a son or daughter, we will answer your request within two weeks. We will let you know the reasons if we cannot agree to the request.

When a tenant dies and someone else who is living in the home asks for the tenancy, we will meet the bereaved person within one week if acceptable to them. We will deal with the situation sensitively, and write to the person with our decision within two weeks of the meeting.

### Additional support

If someone is having trouble keeping their tenancy going due to difficulties with household budgeting, drink or drug problems or other personal issues, we will arrange support wherever we can.

We will provide help for older people or people who have a disability or are vulnerable in some other way by:

- ➔ **doing additional repairs in some situations, or doing some repairs more quickly**
- ➔ **helping with decorations or gardening**
- ➔ **agreeing if you want a password for contractors to use when they call**
- ➔ **working with other agencies to address isolation.**

### How well have we done?

We will review with residents each year the ways in which we manage homes, and how our standards can be improved.

We will let you know about our performance on managing homes each year, including details of customer feedback and what changes we made as a result.

## ➔ Paying your rent

### Setting our rents and charges

We will clearly set out our policy on rents on our websites and in leaflets available from our offices.

We will publish full details on how we decide on our rent and service charges.

Each year we will increase our rents by no more than is set out in the national guidance issued by the government.

Where you have asked us to, we will respond to requests for rent references from outside agencies such as building societies within one week.

### Paying your rent

We will give you a choice of ways to pay your rent including:

- ➔ direct debit
- ➔ PayPoint terminals in shops and post offices
- ➔ online
- ➔ credit or debit card over the phone
- ➔ Housing Benefit paid direct to us.
- ➔ cash or cheque in our offices
- ➔ cheque by post.

If you fall behind with rent, we will take prompt, helpful and firm action including taking all reasonable steps to make personal contact with you as soon as possible.

We will ask you to clear your arrears straight away. If for some reason you can't, we will agree repayments that take into account your income and commitments each week.

We will confirm the agreement in writing so there is no doubt what payments are expected. As long as you keep to the agreement, we won't take any further action. Failing to keep an agreement could result in you losing your home.

Where it is helpful, we will put residents in touch with local agencies or helplines who specialise in debt advice. We will also provide advice on benefits, and other ways of increasing income or reducing outgoings.

### How well have we done?

We will review with residents each year the ways in which we deal with rents and arrears, and how our standards can be improved.

We will let you know about our performance on rents each year, including details of customer feedback and what changes we made as a result.

## ➔ Estate and neighbourhood services

### General

We will clearly set out our policies on neighbourhood services on our website and in leaflets available from our offices.

Where you pay a service charge, we will regularly clean shared areas of blocks of flats, and display the timetable for this in each lobby, according to standards agreed with residents locally.

We will regularly cut grass and look after other planted areas, according to standards agreed with residents locally.

We want our estates to be attractive places to live in, and you can help us by reporting any problems to us. If you report:

- ➔ **an abandoned vehicle on our land, we will start to take action within one week**
- ➔ **graffiti on our buildings, we will remove it within four weeks. If it is abusive, we will remove it within 24 hours**
- ➔ **rubbish on our land which is a potential danger, we will remove it within 24 hours**
- ➔ **dumped furniture and other bulk rubbish on our land, we will remove it within one week.**

If you report to us that a home may be abandoned, or that the tenant has let it to someone else, we will begin investigating within one working day.

We will assess and manage risks of fire in blocks of flats. If you live in a flat, we will give you a copy of the emergency plan. If you want, we will meet you at your home to go through any concerns on fire safety

### How well have we done?


We will review with residents each year the ways in which we deal with estate and neighbourhood services, and how our standards can be improved.


We will let you know about our performance on estate and neighbourhood services each year, including details of customer feedback and what changes we made as a result.




## Contact information



 67 Morrab Road, Penzance TR18 2QJ


 Tel: 0300 303 8030


 Kenwyn Street, Truro TR1 3BA

 Tel: 0300 303 8030

PHA offices and phone lines are open  
Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm





 Tor House, St Peters Quay,  
Totnes, Devon TQ9 5SH


 Tel: 0800 316 88 39

Our Totnes office and phone line is open Monday to  
Thursday 8am - 5pm and Friday 8am - 4.30pm

 2 Ker Street, Devonport, Plymouth PL1 4GE

 Tel: 0300 123 8080


 Paris Street, Exeter EX1 2JZ


 Tel: 0300 123 8080

Our Plymouth and Exeter offices and phone lines  
are open Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm



Our group head office is at:

 Paris Street, Exeter EX1 2JZ

 Tel: 0300 123 8080

[www.dchgroup.com](http://www.dchgroup.com)

If you would like these service standards translated, please contact 0300 123 8080

إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على معايير الخدمة هذه مترجمة، نفضل بالاتصال  
برقم 0300 123 8080

نهگهر نهتهوی نهه ستانداردانهی خدمت بو تو تهرجومه بکهینهوه، تکابه تلهفون بکه بو  
0300 123 8080 مای

如果您需要将这此服务标准翻译成其他语言，请拨打电话 0300 123 8080

Je li chcieliby Pa stwo otrzyma niniejsz ulotk standardów usług w innej wersji j zykowej, prosz  
zatelefonowa pod nr tel 0300 123 8080

Caso pretenda a tradução destes padrões de serviço, deverá ligar para o 0300 123 8080

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact 0300 123 8080