



# CUSTOMER CHARTER

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Our commitments to you

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Welcome to our Customer Charter, which outlines the service you can expect to receive from us.

This charter, which has been developed using feedback from our customers, features 12 commitments that we've made to our customers.

We want to hear your feedback on what we're doing right and how we can improve the service we deliver to you.

Visit our website at [longhurst-group.org.uk](https://longhurst-group.org.uk), to find details on how you can give your views and get involved in shaping the services we provide.

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## 1

## Getting in touch with us

Whether you contact us by phone, through our website, our social media channels, by letter or by visiting us in person, we're always here to help.



### When you contact us

- We'll answer you promptly and in a polite and courteous manner
- We'll listen carefully, identify your needs and requirements and clarify these with you
- We'll take pride in delivering a high-quality service
- We'll always be fair and respectful
- We'll offer extra support, either upon request, or when we feel this is necessary.



### Dealing with your query

- We'll aim to resolve your query on the same day, where possible
- We'll be clear about what we can do and when
- We'll give you the right information at the right time
- If we need more time, we'll let you know and keep you informed on progress
- We'll let you know if there's a problem or any change to what we said we'd do
- If you'd like us to, we'll visit you at home.



### Your data and privacy

- We'll protect your personal data and let you know how we use it
- We'll respect your privacy and treat your information in a sensitive manner.

## 2

## Your voice

Your feedback is really important to us as it helps us to further improve the services we deliver to you.



### Listening to our customers

- We'll actively request your views and act on your feedback
- We'll offer lots of different ways to get involved
- We'll offer support so that everyone has the opportunity to be engaged
- We'll continue to encourage diversity to make sure we gather wide feedback and consider all viewpoints.



### Learning from your feedback

- We'll take time to understand your needs and match services to your requirements
- All our decisions will be made after considering your views, suggestions and feedback
- We'll let you know how your feedback has made a difference
- We'll use a range of communication methods to suit your needs
- We'll provide regular updates about how we're performing.

## 3

## Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

We do all we can to prevent and tackle ASB. We'll deal with these issues in a prompt and sensitive way.



### Reporting ASB

- We'll support you to report ASB and make reporting accessible and easy
- We'll investigate all ASB reports and keep you fully informed of what's happening
- We'll make sure any information provided to us is handled in a sensitive manner
- We'll take every report seriously and investigate your case within five working days, or particularly serious cases within one working day.



### Investigating the case

- We'll treat everyone fairly and sensitively during our investigations and only base our response on available evidence
- We will risk assess all cases to determine the severity and responses required
- We'll work with partner agencies including the police and local authorities
- We'll regularly review timescales with you and keep you updated.



### Resolving the situation

- We'll offer a tailored approach to resolving ASB so it meets your individual requirements
- We'll use a range of remedies to resolve your case
- We'll always be open, honest and give you a realistic solution.

## 4

## Payments to us

As a not-for-profit organisation, every penny we receive from you is spent on services we provide. We're committed to using the money we receive in the best possible way and work hard to deliver value for money by spending efficiently. If you're having difficulty making your payments to us, we'll support you in any way we can.



### Clear, accessible information

- We'll make paying easy
- We'll help you to view rent and service charge balances and statements at any time using My Account—please let us know if you need help accessing this platform
- We'll provide access to up-to-date rent statements on request
- Where applicable, we'll send end of year accounts and ground rent notices to our leasehold customers
- We'll clearly explain any changes to rent and service charges.



### Support when you need it

- We'll work with you if you're facing financial difficulties
- When needed, we'll help you to agree a plan to help you repay any money you owe
- We'll contact you to advise how much you owe and the action we need to take
- We'll provide advice on the benefits available to you, or refer you to our Money Advice Team for specialist support. Please get in touch if you feel you'd benefit from speaking with a member of the team

## 5

## Improving your home

Every year, we invest millions into our homes. When we make improvements to your home, we ensure that the materials and technologies we use are selected to improve your home's efficiency. We carry out surveys to help us prioritise improvements, ensuring that homes in greatest need are addressed first.



### Improvement programme for rented customers

- Where needed we'll carry out improvements to make sure all homes meet the Decent Homes Standard
- We'll conduct home surveys every five years to ensure our investment plans are up-to-date
- We'll always consider any requests from you to make your own home improvements and let you know the outcome within 10 working days of receiving your request.



### Improvement programme for homeowners

- Where it's our responsibility under the terms of your lease to carry out planned and cyclical works, we'll provide you with a quality service
- We'll always consult you about any planned works that total £250 or over per leaseholder or long term agreements that are over £100 per customer annually
- Where required we'll serve you with the appropriate Section 20 Notice under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Before any work starts, we'll contact you to let you know who'll be carrying out the work and when.





## Planning improvements

- We'll always consult with you about any improvements that we'd like to carry out to your home
- When we'd like to make improvements to your home, we'll tell you three months in advance (as a minimum)
- We'll always ask you if there are special requirements or adaptations that we need to consider as part of any improvement work
- We'll provide you with an information pack with details of the planned works
- Before any work starts, we'll contact you at least one month before to confirm who'll be carrying out the work and when
- Our contractors will call you beforehand to arrange a convenient time to start work.

## 6

## Repairing your home

Our aim is to maintain your home to a good standard and provide a quality repairs service. Our partner contractors have agreed to these promises and will carry these out on our behalf.



### Our repairs service

- We'll make it easy for you to report your repairs
- To avoid any delays, we'll also let you know when a repair is your responsibility
- We'll give you a choice of appointments
- We'll carry out appointed repairs within 28 calendar days and heating repairs within 14
- We'll provide an emergency repairs service (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)
- We'll carry out your gas safety checks every year (we must do this by law)
- We'll report any repairs to newly-built homes on your behalf and keep you updated.



### Your repairs appointment

- We'll keep you up to date with any changes to your repair job
- We'll also send you a text to confirm your appointment and a reminder the day before
- If an appointment needs to be changed for any reason, we'll let you know as soon as possible.



## Visiting your home

- We'll always respect you and your home
- We'll aim to complete the repair on the first visit
- When carrying out a repair, contractors will follow appropriate health and safety regulations at all times
- We'll make sure all services affected by the work are left in full working order
- Following their visit, our contractors will leave the area clean and tidy and remove any rubbish.

## 7

## Managing tenancies

As one of our rental customers, our dedicated team is always here to help you manage your tenancy. We'll also provide an efficient service should you decide to move home or end your tenancy with us.



### Becoming a rental customer

- Before taking on a tenancy with us, we'll always assess how affordable it is for you so we can cater to your individual requirements
- We'll help you prepare for starting a tenancy with us
- We'll let homes fairly and as quickly as possible
- We'll only let homes in a good state of repair and cleanliness.



### Starting your tenancy

- When you move in, we'll check if you require any support or additional services to help you maintain your tenancy
- We'll tell you who your Housing Team is and explain their role
- Before you move in, we'll give you a welcome pack with all the information you need
- Before you move in, we'll give you a copy of your tenancy agreement and explain the terms and conditions of your tenancy
- We'll tell you about any pre-agreed work scheduled to be undertaken after you move in and, where possible, advise when this will be completed
- During the start of your tenancy, we'll offer to visit you to see how you're getting on.



### Throughout your tenancy

- We'll consult with you on any significant changes to your tenancy agreement and inform you in writing of any changes
- We'll work closely with any agencies that you're already engaged with to help support you throughout your tenancy
- We'll match our skills and expertise to your individual requirements so the right people can provide any extra support you need
- We'll talk to you about any changes to your tenancy and what needs to be done
- If there has been a tenancy breach, we'll investigate and respond as appropriate. This may include legal action where we have enough evidence.

## 7

## Managing tenancies (continued)

As one of our rental customers, our dedicated team is always here to help you manage your tenancy. We'll also provide an efficient service should you decide to move home or end your tenancy with us.



### Moving on

- If your home is no longer suitable for your needs, we'll assess your situation and support you to find another home
- We'll support you to access the mutual exchange service, which enables you to swap homes with other customers. We'll make a decision and inform you of the outcome no more than six weeks after receiving your application
- We'll talk to you about mutual exchange so that you fully understand what it means to you and your tenancy
- If you apply to buy your home under the Right to Buy scheme, we'll give you a decision within four weeks of receiving your application
- If you choose to leave us, we'll clearly explain the next steps
- If you leave us, we'll explain the condition we expect your home to be left in—helping you to avoid any additional costs.



## Monitoring our performance

We'll be honest with you about our performance and what we're doing to improve it.



### Gathering key information

- We'll carry out regular spot checks and quality assurance visits
- We'll regularly review and scrutinise key performance information, including our service delivery, financial data and customer satisfaction
- We'll check our performance against similar housing organisations to see how we compare
- We'll listen back to recorded calls with customers to develop our colleagues' skills and expertise



### Working with our customers

- We'll ask for your feedback and share how we've used it to improve our services
- We'll work closely with our engaged customer groups, which scrutinise our performance and ways of working
- We'll use the mystery shopping feedback you provide to improve our services.



### Keeping you updated

- We'll tell you how we're doing by publishing the results in our annual report, on our website and through our various customer communications.

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## Communal spaces and services

Making sure communal spaces are safe is one of our top priorities. We'll keep you informed about the communal services that we provide in your area—such as cleaning and grounds maintenance—and provide the specifications that our contractors are working to. We'll also tell you what you can expect from your yearly service charge.



### Cleaning and maintenance

- Communal spaces will be regularly cleaned to a good standard
- Communal grassed areas will be maintained to a good standard
- You'll have the opportunity to monitor our communal services with us.



### Health and safety

- We'll carry out regular scheme inspections to assess any risks within our communal spaces and invite you to join us on these visits
- We'll make sure all our communal spaces have the required fire safety measures in place
- We'll carry out fire risk assessments in all internal communal areas, in line with our fire safety policy
- We'll carry out the necessary fire alarm, electrical and lift testing in communal spaces
- We'll continue to be a responsible landlord, making sure we take into account—and minimise—our impact on the environment.





## Repairs for homeowners

- Where it's our responsibility under the terms of your lease to carry out communal repairs, we'll provide you with a quality repair service
- We'll make it easy for you to report communal repairs
- We'll provide an emergency repairs service (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)
- We'll attend emergency repairs and make safe within four hours and complete repair in 24 hours
- As far as possible, we'll carry out routine repairs within 28 days. If the repairs required are particularly complex, this may take longer, but we'll ensure you're advised and updated throughout the process
- We'll aim to complete the repair on the first visit
- After a repair, our contractors will leave the area clean and tidy and remove any rubbish.
- When carrying out a repair, contractors will follow appropriate health and safety regulations at all times
- We'll make sure all services affected by the repairs are left in full working order.

## 10

## Buying a new home from us

We want to make the move to your new home as enjoyable as possible. Our team will support every step of the way, providing a service that's tailored to you and your needs.



### Before you move

- Our Sales Team will provide you with support and guidance throughout the homebuying process
- The reservation agreement will set out the key terms of your home purchase, including the reservation period, purchase price and other important information
- We'll go through the specification and layout of your home and details of any pre-contractual information to help you make an informed decision.



### Moving in and after

- On the day you move in, a Longhurst Group representative will welcome you to your new home
- You'll be given a detailed homecare booklet to help you settle in
- Shortly after you move in, we'll contact you to make sure you're happy with your new surroundings
- The fabric and structural integrity of your new home will be covered by a National House Building Council (NHBC) ten-year insurance scheme (or similar industry-regulated scheme).

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## Selling your home

We'll provide help every step of the way to our leasehold or shared ownership customers who decide to sell their home. We'll provide guidance, useful information and will liaise with your estate agent, buyer and solicitor to ensure the process runs smoothly.



### Getting ready to sell

- We'll provide you with guidance notes and selling information to help you put your property on the market
- We'll liaise with your estate agent to ensure they have the necessary information to market your property correctly, including:
  - application forms and eligibility requirements
  - the share available for sale (if applicable)
  - the lease term
  - ongoing rent/service charge costs.



### Progressing and completing

- Once you've found a buyer, we'll provide them with all relevant information including:
  - our responsibilities as the landlord
  - important information regarding their ongoing responsibilities as a shared owner or within the terms of the lease.
- Our dedicated Sales Team and appointed solicitor will work closely with your solicitor to ensure the sale progresses smoothly.



**Please note you'll be required to appoint a solicitor to act on your behalf, and you'll be responsible for your own costs and payments upon resale, as stipulated within your lease.**

## 12

## If things go wrong

If there's something you're not happy about, please get in touch straight away. This helps us to put things right and improve our service.



### Making a complaint

- We'll make sure our complaints service is simple for you to access and use
- We'll help you if you need assistance in making a complaint
- When you give us feedback, we'll always respond positively and look to learn from what you have told us.



### Dealing with your complaint

- After you make a complaint, we'll contact you within five working days to tell you who'll be handling it and keep you fully informed on progress
- We'll then aim to give you a full response within ten working days. If we require more time, we'll discuss this with you
- We'll be transparent in the handling of your complaint, keeping you informed of progress and being open and honest about the lessons we've learnt.



## Resolving your complaint

- When we've done something wrong, we'll apologise and put things right as soon as possible
- We'll tell you what we're going to do and when we'll do it
- We'll learn lessons from your complaint and make changes where required
- We'll respect confidentiality at all times
- We'll check that you're happy with the outcome
- If you're not happy with our response, we'll tell you how you can appeal.



## Additional support services

We provide a range of additional services that support our customers with their health and wellbeing, and economic resilience. We'll continue to ask for your views so that we understand your needs and those of the wider communities we serve.



### Domestic abuse support

- We're here to support customers who are experiencing domestic abuse and have a dedicated team of colleagues ready to help.



### Money advice service

- This service provides advice on managing your money, basic budgeting tips and guidance on accessing benefits and other financial support. Although this service is open to all customers, we'll prioritise those who are behind on their rent or at risk of becoming so.



### Aids and adaptations

- We can help our rental customers if adaptations are required for their home. These include grab rails, level access showers or ramps. We'll liaise with occupational therapists to make sure any request is properly assessed, and we'll let you know as soon as a decision is made.



### Tenancy sustainment

- Our Tenancy Sustainment Officers can help rental customers who are experiencing difficulties in managing their tenancy. They can work with partner agencies to make sure you're getting all the help and support you need.



### Specialist housing services

- We provide a wide range of services to help people who are at risk of homelessness or who require additional support. This includes services for people with a range of support needs. We can also signpost customers to other services that we don't deliver ourselves.



### Homelessness services

- We'll provide you with information showing you where you can seek advice within your local area if you are homeless or at risk of losing your home. Should you be at risk, we'll inform your local authority's Housing Options Team about your circumstances.





### Community investment

- Our Community Investment Team supports local charities and community groups to ensure that our communities are places where people are able to thrive and are proud to call home. Our work in this area sees us provide support and guidance with employment and training, and offer opportunities for customers to undertake formal qualifications.



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