



IPSWICH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

LOCAL STANDARDS

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The Regulator for Social Housing has updated the expectations of how Social Housing Landlords, like Ipswich Borough Council, deliver services to tenants, how they engage with, listen and learn from tenants and ensure they provide high quality homes in safe communities.

These Local Standards are a result of a collaboration between tenants and the Council to set out in practical terms what tenants can expect and how the Council will be held to account.

An annual report will be used to provide feedback to all tenants on whether these standards have been met. We will be working with tenant representatives to look at how we can improve our services and meet these standards.

THESE STANDARDS ARE:

- Transparency, Influence and Accountability
- Safety and Quality
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and community



TRANSPARENCY, INFLUENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARD

WE WILL TREAT ALL TENANTS WITH FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.

We will be polite, professional, listen and respond appropriately.
We will clearly explain what we are doing/proposing to do and why.

We will take action to deliver fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services for all tenants.

We aim to provide Council tenants with services that are accessible, efficiently and effectively managed and show tenants they are at heart of what we do.

We will:

- Provide a Customer Contact Centre for your telephone calls 8:30am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays)
- We aim to answer at least 85% of housing calls received into our Customer Contact Centre
- We will provide access to public computers and telephones at Grafton House, Monday to Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm (excluding Bank Holidays)
- There are appointments available for customers who are unable to self-serve and may need assistance i.e., scanning documents etc. To book one of these please ring [01473 432000](tel:01473432000).
- Provide a website giving 24/7 access to making payments online for your rent and Council Tax, complete forms or report a problem. Access our website at www.ipswich.gov.uk/housing
- We will keep information notice boards relevant and up to date.



- Tell you what we will do to resolve a problem when you report it and how soon we will do it.
- Provide feedback if you request it for a problem that is ongoing.
- Train our staff in customer service.
- Ensure a Housing Officer is available in normal working hours.
- Wear identification and tell you our name when we call or visit you.
- Aim to contact you at least one hour before an appointment if we are unable to make it on time or need to cancel and rearrange.
- Leave a contact card with our details if you are not at home when we visit.
- Write to you using language that is clear and easy to understand.

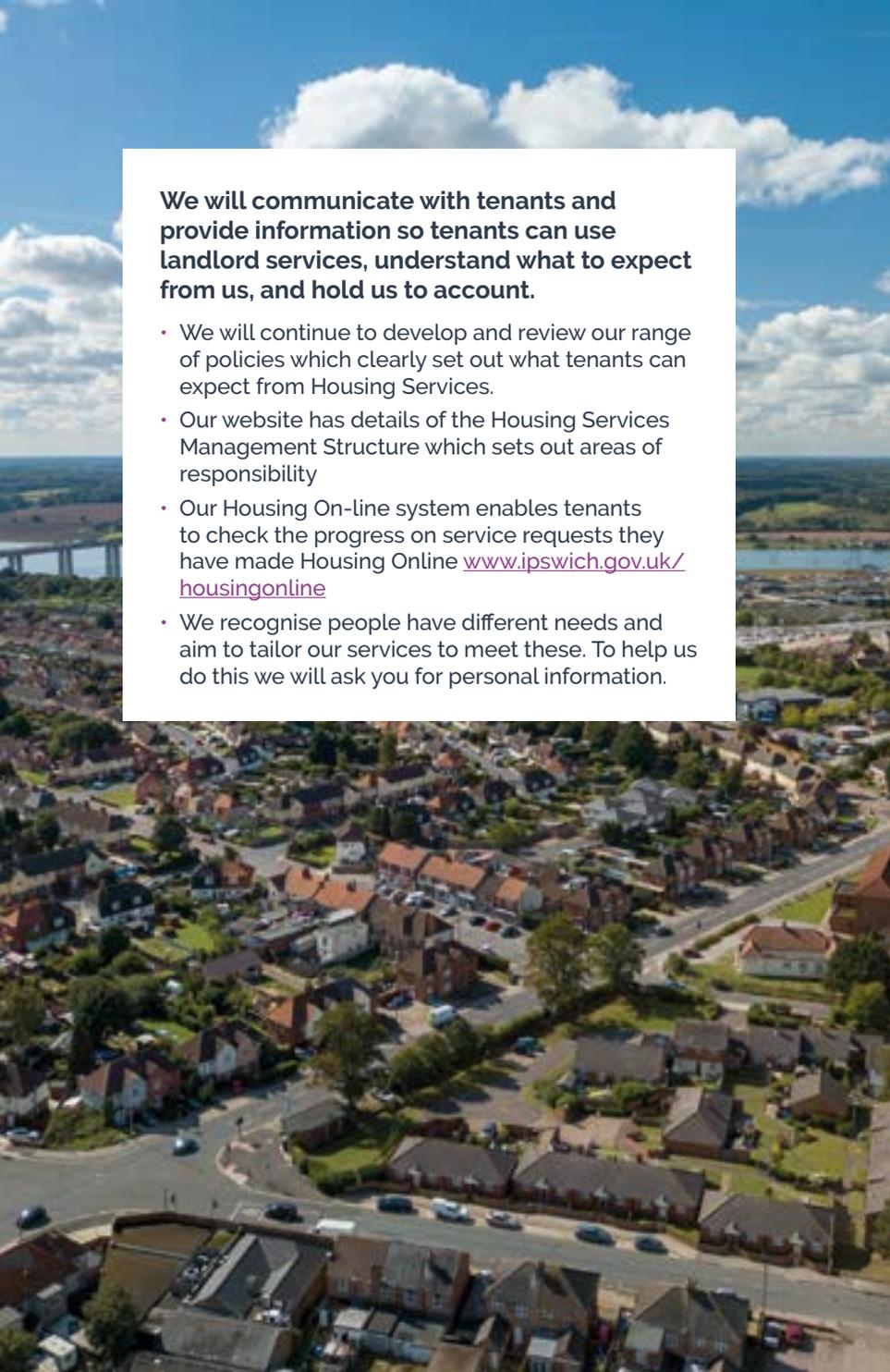
We will take tenants' views into account in our decision-making about how landlord services are delivered.

There are different ways for tenants to be involved and have their say for which training and support is available. The Council's Tenant Engagement

Strategy sets out the Council's overall approach to tenant engagement and defines the vision and priorities. It supports our commitment to involving tenants in shaping and scrutinising services.

We will:

- Ensure all Ipswich Borough Council tenants have access to tenant groups.
- Offer different levels of involvement and flexible ways of becoming involved, as per our Tenant Engagement Model, in order to:
 - Provide a choice appropriate for each individual tenant.
 - Offer support and training to those tenants who get involved as Tenant Representatives with us.
 - Respond to your feedback and suggestions.
 - Provide a response to enquiries to all tenant representatives within five working days.
 - Provide support to established tenant and residents groups.
 - Provide support for independent tenant scrutiny of our services.



We will communicate with tenants and provide information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from us, and hold us to account.

- We will continue to develop and review our range of policies which clearly set out what tenants can expect from Housing Services.
- Our website has details of the Housing Services Management Structure which sets out areas of responsibility
- Our Housing On-line system enables tenants to check the progress on service requests they have made Housing Online www.ipswich.gov.uk/housingonline
- We recognise people have different needs and aim to tailor our services to meet these. To help us do this we will ask you for personal information.

We will:

- Think about accessibility, provision of public transport in the area, timings and the number of people assisting when organising events and/or meetings.
- Use translation and interpretation services when necessary.
- Use a holistic approach to support people to address the needs in their Communities.
- Ensure our communication with tenants is accessible and appropriate to their needs.
- Ensure tenants' individual needs are considered when planning works and services.
- Keep you informed on housing related matters through Tenants' Times and our website.
- We aim to give a choice to tenants in how we contact them by:
 - Providing larger print correspondence when requested.
 - Or on specifically coloured paper
 - Giving different options for preferred contact (where it is not something we must legally provide in printed form).
 - Give options for appointment times wherever possible.

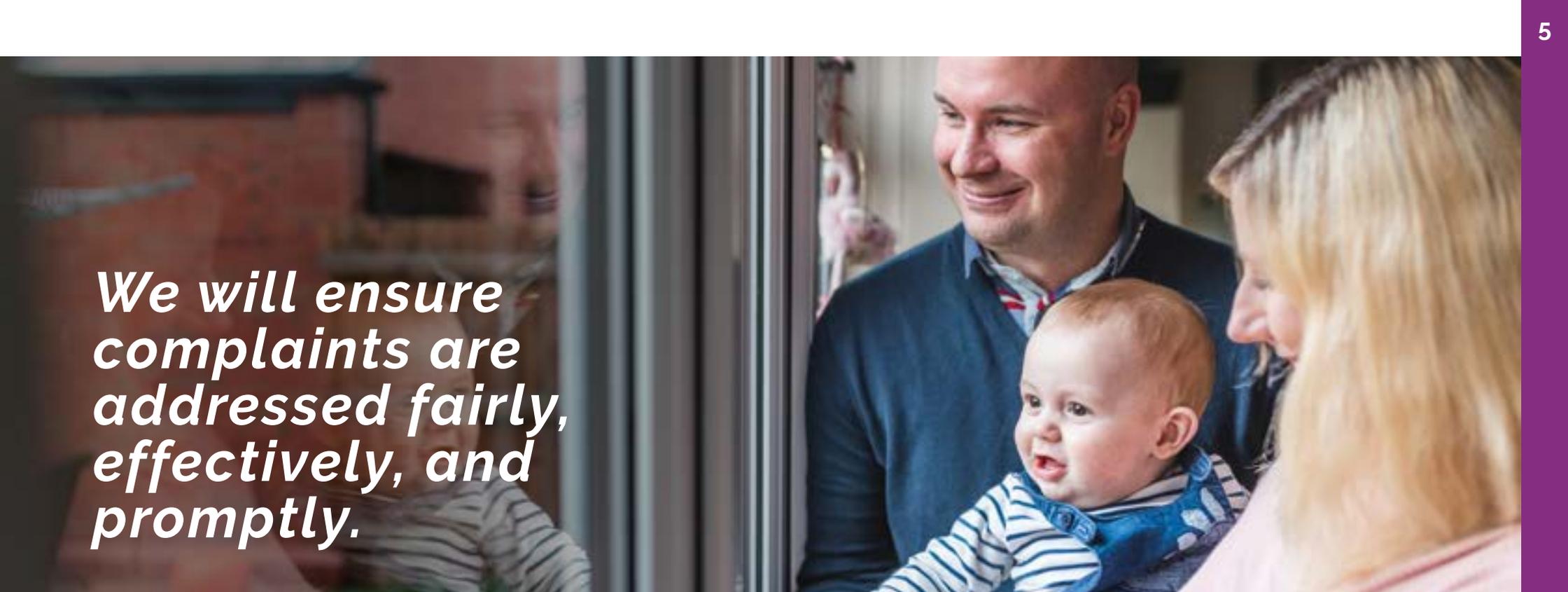
We will collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of our performance in delivering Landlord services.

We publish Tenant Satisfaction Measures feedback on our website. Tenant Satisfaction Measures are intended to:

- Enable tenants to scrutinise their landlord and hold them to account.
- Give landlords insights on where they might look to improve their services.
- Allow the Regulator for Social Housing to see whether landlords are meeting required standards.

The results from all Social Housing Landlords are published annually enabling tenants to compare our performance with other social landlords across the country.

The Customer Engagement Panel is empowered to review this information and scrutinise the Councils performance.



We will ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly.

If you are not satisfied with part of our service and have not been able to resolve your issue informally you may want to put in a complaint.

We will:

- acknowledge your complaint within three working days.
- provide you with a reference number for the complaint.
- provide a full response within 10 working days which will tell you:
 - whether the complaint is upheld;
 - what we will do to address your complaint;
 - and by when
- you will be contacted in writing by the officer dealing with your complaint to provide you with reasons should the investigation take longer to carry out; and
- if your complaint is not upheld because the responsibility is not ours, we will try to inform you which agency or service deals with the issue and direct you to their complaint process.

To put in a complaint to us either:

- Fill out an online complaint form at www.ipswich.gov.uk
- Telephone the Customer Contact Centre on [01473 432000](tel:01473432000) and tell them what your complaint is about.
- Visit the Customer Service Centre at Grafton House and tell them what your complaint is about.
- Write a letter to Housing Services, Ipswich Borough Council, Grafton House, 15-17 Russell Road Ipswich IP1 2DE.

SAFETY AND QUALITY STANDARD

We will understand the condition of our properties to inform the provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants.

We aim to provide all tenants with a decent home that is in a good condition, safe, dry and warm.

We will:

- ensure all our homes meet the Ipswich Standard which we will review regularly;
- complete a property condition survey of at least 10% of all our homes each year;
- inspect electrical wiring at least every five years;
- redecorate the outside of your home and any shared areas at least every seven years where needed;
- ensure by 2030 the average energy efficiency of our properties overall is Band C or higher; and
- that all Sheltered Accommodation has an emergency service every day of the year through the warden call system.



We will take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.

TENANCY VISITS

Tenancy visits provide an opportunity to assess the condition of our properties, including any gardens and outbuildings.

The tenant will be involved in the inspection and it could be the Housing Officer will make some suggestions and give advice on how to improve how the property is used. We appreciate that this can be seen by some as being an unnecessary intrusion and there will only be formal follow-up action if it is believed that there is a risk to the property and/or the tenant.

We will tell you what you need to do if your property is considered 'fair' or 'poor' and at the next visit the Housing Officer will be checking to see if changes have been made to improve the standard.

FIRE SAFETY

As part of post-Grenfell recommendations to the Government, there have been major changes to the Fire Safety Act that came into effect on the 23rd of January 2023, meaning that as a Council we have reviewed how fire safety is managed.

As part of the changes, those tenants who live in flats or properties who open out to a communal space, managed by the Council, have been sent a leaflet outlining four main areas:

- what to do in the event of a fire.
- what the Council does to help keep you safe
- what tenants can do to improve their safety
- some fire prevention advice.

For more information visit:

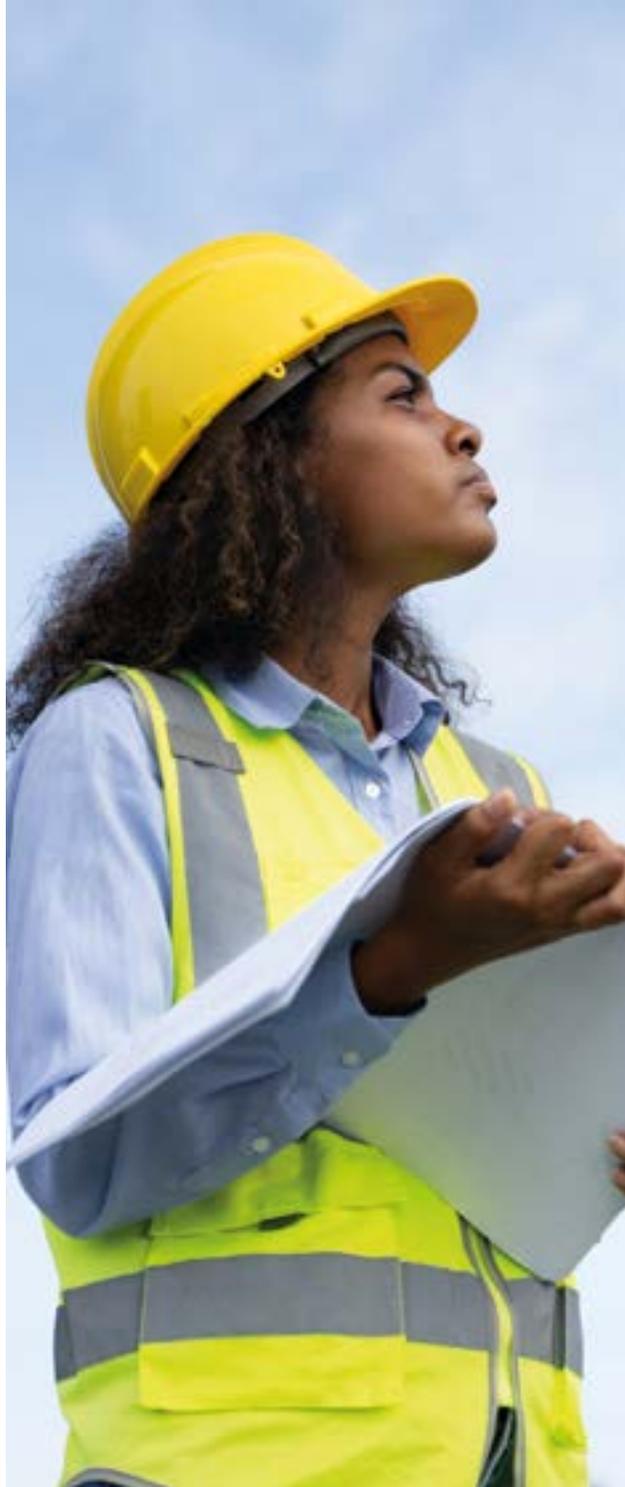
www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/grenfell-tower-fire-safety-council-and-you

We will provide an effective, efficient and timely Repairs, Maintenance and Planned improvements service for the homes and Communal Areas for which we are responsible.

Tenants can request a repair using their Housing Online account at www.ipswich.gov.uk/housingonline

Urgent repair requests should be made by telephone, call 01473 432000. The Housing Repairs Team is available Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 5.00pm.

An Emergencies only repair service operates outside these hours on **01473 433444**



RESPONSIVE REPAIRS

We will:

- offer a choice of appointment for all non-emergency repairs and complete them within agreed timescales;
- publish the priorities and timescales for repairs in the Tenants Handbook, online or by request;
- offer a text notification reminder before and on the day of your appointment if you provide us with a mobile telephone number;
- respect your home, making sure we clean up after the works have finished;
- aim to get the job right first time at least 90% of the time. If we cannot do this we will agree a new appointment with you to complete the work and provide information about what further work is required and when it will be completed;
- let you know at least an hour before if an appointment cannot be kept and arrange an alternative;
- ensure all contractors working on our behalf follow our standards; and
- make sure there is an opportunity to give feedback on work carried out by us and/or our contractors.

PLANNED MAINTENANCE

We aim to give tenants the choice about where they live and the general look of their home.

We will:

- offer choice of style and colour of new front doors under the Planned Maintenance scheme;
- offer choice of colour of render under the Planned Maintenance scheme, except where properties are being externally insulated;
- offer choice of colour and style of kitchens under the Kitchen and Bathroom programme;
- offer choice of colour of walls and floor tiles in their bathroom under the Kitchen and Bathroom programme.

EMPTY PROPERTY STANDARD

We will ensure all properties meet the our Empty Property Standard and are in a good condition when new tenants move in.

We will:

- provide a hygienic, safe, secure property;
- where the property has its own garden, ensure that it is maintainable before occupation;
- make sure there is no damage to the fabric of the property;
- remove any sub-standard alterations carried out by the previous tenants;
- remove and renew or repair fitted units in a property;
- complete any necessary works that will cause major disruption before the new tenant moves in.

GAS SERVICING

We have a statutory duty to carry out an annual inspection and safety check on gas installations including pipework.

We will:

- carry out smoke alarm battery check and check hot water and heating control
- carry out carbon monoxide detector battery check
- complete a visual check on gas appliances you own;
- ask our contractor to make an appointment directly with you;
- if inconvenient, you can contact them to change the date (sometimes we need to specify an end date when this inspection must be carried out by);
- take enforcement action through the Court when necessary if tenants do not provide access to our contractor;
- update our records and provide you with a copy of the inspection certificate within 28 days; and
- we will ask for feedback about our contractor. We aim for 99% satisfaction.

GAS MAINTENANCE

We undertake repairs and maintenance of boilers and associated pipework.

We will:

- provide tenants with telephone numbers to report faults/leaks to our contractor directly;
- check that our contractor is prioritising/scheduling any necessary works;
- ensure parts are ordered/sourced locally as soon as reasonably practicable;
- offer temporary heating via electric fan heaters to any household if the heating system cannot be fixed; and
- ensure our contractor leaves information on what work is required if the repair cannot be completed at the first visit.

CENTRAL HEATING INSTALLATION

New and replacement installations are prioritised depending on a criteria of tenant circumstances.

New or replacement installations are installed within timescales based on category;

- Category 1: within seven working days;
- Category 2: within 28 working days; and
- Category 3: within three months

We will assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services

We can help with installing aids and facilities in council homes for people with disabilities.

The types of work we can do include:

- Over bath showers
- Ramps
- Flat floor showers
- Hand rails
- Grab rails.

www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/adapting-your-home



TENANCY STANDARD

We will allocate and let our homes in a fair and transparent way that takes the needs of tenants and prospective tenants into account

Customers have choice about where they live through Gateway to Homechoice;

ALLOCATIONS

We aim to:

- process all applications for housing within 28 days;
- take up references in order to establish if there is a history of anti-social behaviour or rent arrears;
- advise you on your priority band, your bedroom allocation and property type once you are registered and verified;
- advise on how to bid on available properties;
- advise you of your right to appeal decisions contained within the Allocations Policy at www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk
- contact shortlisted applicants within 24 hours of the advertisement closing in order to arrange a viewing of the property; and
- give the successful shortlisted applicants 24 hours to accept the property.

We will support tenants to maintain their tenancy. If we end a tenancy we will offer affected tenants advice and assistance.



RENTS

We want to provide tenants with a fair and supportive rents service so they are able to maintain rent payments and rental income is maximised. we will:

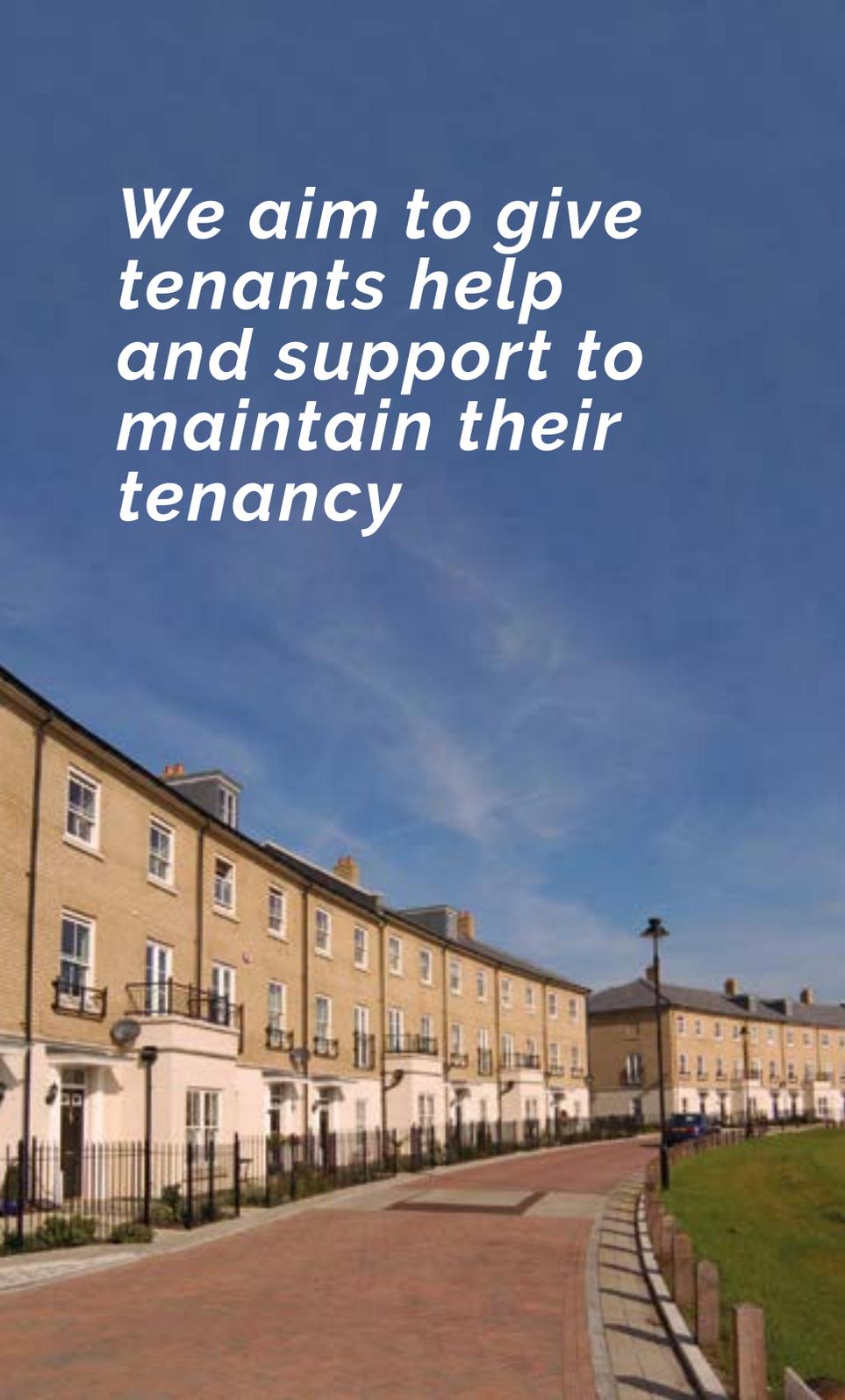
- set rents having regard to the Government's guidance;
- give you at least 28 days' notice of any change in rent;
- offer you a choice of ways to pay your rent; and
- provide you with the ability to view your rent balance online.

RENT ARREARS

We aim to:

- contact you within two weeks should your rent account fall into arrears;

- take prompt action in line with our procedure against tenants who do not pay their rent;
- make sure repayment arrangements made with you are fair and affordable;
- signpost you to other agencies if you need money, debt or budgeting advice;
- serve a Notice of Seeking Possession/Notice of Possession Proceedings personally on the property and discuss how this could affect you;
- follow the pre court protocol before applying to the Court for possession of your home; and
- use evictions as a last resort and give opportunity to speak to Housing Options and Tenancy Services managers to review your case before applying for a warrant to evict you.



We aim to give tenants help and support to maintain their tenancy

TENANCY VISITS

Are also helpful to check on the welfare of the tenant. If the Housing Officer believes that some help is needed they can make a referral to the Tenancy Support Officers or another agency. Where a property has been identified as a cluttered home or in poor condition, the aim will be to provide support through the same routes depending on what the need is.

TENURE

We will offer tenancies on terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock & They shall meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements or terms of occupation.

We will fully explain the Tenancy Agreement when a tenant signs up for the property. We aim to give tenants help and support to maintain their tenancy and will only repossess a property as a last resort.

We will:

- offer a secure tenancy to tenants
- visit new tenants within six weeks of them moving into the property, to check that they understand their rights and responsibilities and make sure they are settling into their new home;
- provide support to tenants or refer them to specialist agencies to help them sustain their tenancy;
- only take action to repossess your home or demote your tenancy if you do not adhere to your tenancy conditions. This would mean taking court action and will be as a last resort; and
- offer advice to any remaining tenant or persons in the property following the death of the tenant.

We will support relevant tenants living in eligible housing to mutually exchange their homes.

Clear guidance on how to arrange a Mutual Exchange is on our website:

www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/mutual-exchanges

Housing Officers and Tenancy Support Officers are available to help advise tenants about the process.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY STANDARD

We will work co-operatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to contribute to the upkeep and safety of shared spaces associated with our homes.



NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT

We aim to continuously improve and manage your local area, gardens, communal areas and open spaces.

We will:

- arrange for offensive graffiti to be removed within one working day;
- ensure communal areas are clean and tidy by:
 - litter picking as appropriate for the area;
 - stopping the use of communal areas for storage;
 - cutting grass regularly, keeping it to an even tidy length;
 - trimming hedges regularly, keeping them tidy; and
 - cleaning ground floor windows in communal areas.

COMMUNITY CARETAKERS

Community Caretakers work on our estates to ensure they are safe and clean. The aim is to:

- complete 95% of minor repairs in communal areas within target time depending on the nature of the repair;
- achieve 95% tenant feedback satisfaction following pledge visits;
- investigate all reports of fly-tipping on housing land;

- provide regular planned visits to ensure communal areas are clean and safe;
- ensure communal bin stores are maintained, clean, accessible and kept clear;
- work with tenant panels on identifying and providing area improvements; and
- assist with environmental and improvement projects.

We will co-operate with relevant partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where we provide social housing.

Tenants have the opportunity to participate in estate walkabouts with housing staff/councillors. Dates of these will be published in advance. We work with other local partners in the community to resolve problems we cannot deal with ourselves and attend the neighbourhood Partnership Group meetings to make sure we focus on priority community issues/activities.

We will work in partnership with appropriate local authority departments, the police and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the neighbourhoods where we provide social housing.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Anti-social behaviour takes many forms, all reports are taken seriously. We aim to work with victims and perpetrators to resolve problems quickly.

We will:

- provide you with the ability to report any anti-social behaviour via our website;
- investigate all reported cases of anti-social behaviour;
- advise you of the steps we can take and what you can expect to happen next; and agree with you how often we update you. This will be at least fortnightly at key stages of the process. We will:
 - use a variety of methods to tackle anti-social behaviour, including enforcement through the Court when appropriate; and
 - work with Environmental Health, Suffolk County Council and the Police, as well as any other relevant agencies available to help resolve cases.

We will work co-operatively with other agencies tackling domestic abuse and enable tenants to access appropriate support and advice.

Our Domestic Abuse policy sets out how we work with other agencies and the support and advice we can offer tenants who experience domestic abuse.