

## **Your Local Offer for Resident Involvement and Customer Services**

### **Introduction**

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) regulates social housing providers in England. It requires landlords to involve tenants in developing 'local offers' for the delivery of certain services including resident involvement and customer services.

This leaflet explains how North Lincolnshire Homes will deliver this service to customers so that you know what to expect from the service. It also sets out the service standards that we must meet, explains how these are monitored and what happens if we don't meet the standards.

### **Customer service and choice**

We are committed to providing a good quality housing service that offers choice and to treating you as an individual. We apply these customer care principles to everything we do:

- Get the job done quickly and right first time
- Listen to you and take your views into account
- Treat you with respect and understand your individual needs
- Treat you fairly and follow our policies
- Keep you informed of progress
- Respect your privacy
- Give you value for money

There are many ways for you to contact us to report a problem or ask for advice. You can contact us by telephone, email, via our website, through digital t.v., or in person at our Customer Centre. We also hold advice sessions at the Council's local link offices in Barton, Winterton, Epworth, Crowle and Brigg.

When you contact us by telephone, we will answer your call quickly and, if we cannot deal with your query straight away, we will let you know who will be dealing with it and when they will contact you. When you visit our Customer Centre, we will make sure we see you at your appointment time or within 15 minutes if you don't have an appointment. We will also offer you a private interview. When you contact us in writing (by letter or email), we will send you an acknowledgement within 48 hours telling you who will deal with your enquiry and when they will respond to you.

If we need to visit your home, we will arrange to call at a time that is convenient to you and will visit out of office hours if needed. All of our staff and contractors carry proof of identity and will show this to you before entering your home.

We send you the Key News newsletter 4 times a year to keep you informed about services and progress and an Annual Report once a year to tell you how we have performed. We also publish leaflets about our policies and services, and newsletters about your area and our performance against the service standards. We also provide lots of information on our website, in our Customer Centre and on our digital tv channel.

It is necessary for NLH to keep some personal information about customers and we make sure that we follow legal requirements in keeping information confidential and using it

properly. You can ask to see the personal information that we hold about you and we will provide this to you within 40 days for a small charge. Please contact us for more information.

### Compliments, comments and complaints

We use praise and criticism from customers to improve services by learning from our mistakes and building on our successes. If you contact us to praise or comment on a service, we will thank you in writing and tell you how we will use the information that you have given us to further improve that service.

If you are not happy with any aspect of a service you have received from us, please tell us so that we can try to put things right. You can make a formal complaint about a service by telephoning us, writing to us, via our website or digital tv, or in person at our Customer Centre. We will investigate your initial complaint and provide you with a response within 10 days. If we have made a mistake, we will apologise and try to put things right straight away. If we cannot deal with your complaint within the set timescale e.g. where we need to carry out technical tests, we will explain the reasons, agree a timescale with you and keep you informed of progress. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can progress your complaint to further stages:

Complaint stage	What happens	timescale
informal	You tell a member of staff what you are not happy about and they try to resolve the problem with you.	14 days
Stage 1	You make a formal complaint and a service manager investigates, tries to resolve the problem with you and provides you with a response.	14 days
Stage 2	Your complaint is investigated by a Director who tries to resolve the problem with you and provides you with a response.	21 days
Stage 3	You will be invited to present your complaint to a panel of Board members and senior managers. The Panel will review the complaint, decide whether previous resolutions were appropriate and try to resolve the problem.	1 month

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint after stage 3, you can progress your complaint with the Housing Ombudsman Service.

We look at every complaint we get to see if we have made a mistake or could have done things better. We use this information to change our policies and procedures to try to prevent similar problems happening in the future.

### Involvement and empowerment

We are committed to providing a variety of ways for residents to get involved in shaping services and influencing how we manage their homes.

Residents have helped us to develop a 'Menu of Options' which provides a range of different involvement options and explains the time commitment involved in each. Involvement opportunities include being an Ordinary Member of the company, helping with a service

review, attending a focus group, filling in a survey, being a tenant inspector, joining or setting up a Residents' Association and sitting on a service panel.

North Lincolnshire Homes is overseen by a Board of Directors that monitors performance and progress and makes decisions about policies and the future direction of the business. Five of the fifteen Board members are tenants. Each year, at least one of tenant Board members steps down to give other tenants a chance to become a Board member. Tenants who are Ordinary Members of the company can apply to become a Board member. If there are more applications than places available, a ballot is held and the Ordinary Members of the company vote to elect a candidate onto the Board.

Earlier this year, we set up a Resident Scrutiny Panel that has the power to scrutinise any area of service including resident involvement. All tenants except for serving Board Members are eligible to apply to become a Scrutiny Panel Member. After conducting a scrutiny investigation, the Panel make recommendations for improvements directly to the Board.

### Treating you as an individual

We aim to tailor our services and provide choices to suit the diverse needs and preferences of our customers. To help us do this, we ask tenants to fill in a 'getting to know you' survey telling us about their family circumstances and any special requirements they have.

We make sure that our offices are accessible to a wide range of people including those who use a wheelchair or have mobility difficulties. We hold meetings and events on different days of the week and at different times of the day to try to accommodate the different preferences of people attending. We can provide information in different formats including large print, audio and Braille. We can also provide written information in a range of different languages and can provide translators and signers to help customers during interviews and home visits, and provide hearing loop systems to help people with hearing difficulties.

We carry out 'Equality Impact Assessments' on all our policies and services to make sure that they are as fair as possible and do not disadvantage any particular groups of people. These assessments are carried out by staff and tenant volunteers to make sure that a wide range of views are considered.

### How residents have been involved in developing the service.

Many residents and stakeholders have been involved in developing resident involvement and customer services, including setting the service standards that we work to. Delegates at the tenant conference gave feedback on how well they thought that NLH performed against the TSA's regulatory requirements and suggested ways of improving the service. A resident led working group helped us to achieve accreditation from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service by carrying out a thorough review of the resident involvement service. Customers were involved in carrying out a review of customer access that resulted in us opening the Customer Centre in Scunthorpe town centre and extending our opening hours. We have also looked at information gathered through satisfaction surveys, complaints and other feedback, and consulted with tenant groups including Community Voice.

## Service Standards – we will:

- Respond to requests for personal information within 40 days
- Answer telephone calls within 20 seconds
- Acknowledge letters and emails within 48 hours
- Respond to stage 1 complaints within 14 days
- Respond to stage 2 complaints within 21 days
- Respond to stage 3 complaints within 1 month

## How the service standards are monitored, reported on and scrutinised by tenants

We monitor our progress in meeting the service standards by checking our records of correspondence and resident involvement. We also ask our Tenant Inspectors to carry out reality checks and mystery shopping, and look complaints and feedback we receive from customers.

Every 3 months we publish a newsletter that tells you how we are performing against each service standard. We also provide reports to the Board, the Resident Scrutiny Panel and Community Voice. These reports are published on our website and printed copies are available on request.

The Resident Scrutiny Panel can decide to carry out an investigation into any service area and will provide their findings and recommendations directly to the Board.

## What happens if the standards are not met?

If we do not meet our service standards, the Board will make sure that an action plan is implemented to improve performance and will closely oversee progress. If you think that we have not met our service standards in your case, please tell us so that we can put things right.

## How the service will be reviewed in future

We are due to carry out a further review of customer service and access to services in 2013 and customers will be involved in these reviews. We may make changes to resident involvement and customer services earlier if it is necessary due to changes in legislation, because of instruction from the Tenant Services Authority or to implement recommendations made following a Resident Scrutiny investigation.

## Jargon buster/key terms

Tenant Services Authority	The organisation that regulates social housing providers in England on behalf of the Government
Local Offer	An explanation of the service that customers can expect to receive
Service Standard	A measurable target that the service must meet
Ordinary Member	All tenants can apply to become an Ordinary Member of NLH and this gives them the right to attend the Annual General Meeting and vote on constitutional matters such as Board membership.
Equality Impact Assessment	A check on a policy or service to make sure that it is fair to everyone and does not disadvantage any particular groups

	of people.
Tenant Participation Advisory Service	The leading national tenant participation organisation that works to promote tenant empowerment.

Further information

You can find further information about this service by contacting us, looking on our website or reading the following leaflets:

- Comments and Customer Feedback
- Working Together
- Resident Involvement Strategy
- Resident Involvement Statement
- Equality and Diversity

Contact information

North Lincolnshire Homes Limited

Meridian House, Normanby Road, Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire, DN15 8QZ

Customer Centre

15 – 19 Cole Street, Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire, DN15 6QY

Opening hours: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday – 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., Wednesday – 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., Friday 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and Saturday 9.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Contact Centre

Telephone 01724 279900

Freephone 0800 0326363

Opening hours Monday to Friday - 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.

**Or call into to one of our Housing Advice Sessions:**

**Barton Local Link:** every Monday (09.30am to 12.00pm, 1.00pm to 4.00pm)

**Winterton Local Link:** every Tuesday (2.00pm to 5.00pm)

**Epworth Local Link:** every Wednesday (09.30am to 12.30pm) and Friday (2.00pm to 4.00pm)

**Crowle Local Link:** every Wednesday (2.00pm to 3.30pm) and Friday (09.30am to 12.30pm)

**Brigg Local Link:** every Thursday (09.30am to 12.00pm, 1.00pm to 4.00pm)