



Gloucester City Homes

Customer Service Standards



How to contact us

Customer Services Team
Gloucester City Homes
Atlantic Suite
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Customer Services Line: 0800 408 2000 (Freephone)
Or 01452 530626 (cheaper for mobile users)
Text: 0778 148 2656
Fax: 01452 396599
Minicom: 01452 396161
Email: customer.services@gloscityhomes.co.uk
Website www.gloscityhomes.co.uk
Digital TV: GCHTV on the Looking Local service

Information in other formats

If you would like any part of this document explained, translated or provided in another format such as large print, audio or Braille, please contact us.

Urdu

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

Gujarati

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજ બીજી ભાષા અથવા રચનામાં જોઈતો હોય, અથવા જો તમને ઇન્ટરપ્રિટરની સેવાઓ જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી અમારો સંપર્ક સાધો.

Chinese

本文件可以翻译为另一语文版本，或制作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要传译员的协助，请与我们联系。

Bengali

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান অথবা যদি আপনার একজন ইন্টারপ্রেটারের প্রয়োজন হয়, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Polish

Aby uzyskać ten dokument w innym j zycu lub formacie, albo je eli potrzebujesc uslug tlumacza, skontaktuj si z mani

(Translation reads: If you would like this document in another language or format or require the services of a translator, please contact us.)

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GLOUCESTER CITY HOMES SERVICES STANDARDS

1. Introduction

Giving an excellent customer service is the driving force behind the planning, resourcing and delivery of all our services.

One of our key objectives is to deliver services that meet our residents' needs and expectations.

We have developed these service standards from comments and suggestions made by customers. These have come from residents groups, focus groups, working groups, customer surveys, 'Your Views Count' cards and compliments, comments and complaints.

These standards will ensure that no one in our diverse multi-cultural community, including those with special needs, is excluded from any aspect of service we provide.

They also set a clear level of service for our staff to deliver and our customers to receive.

Whenever you contact us you should expect and we will try to provide consistently excellent standards of customer service.

Tim Dare
Chairman

Ashley Green
Chief Executive

2. Our Mission Statement

“To provide a better quality of life to every customer of Gloucester City Homes by delivering exceptional services and providing decent homes in successful communities ”

3. Our Values and Vision

Our Values:

Pride:

We will act responsibly and will enable our tenants & leaseholders to take pride in their homes and communities through effective service delivery. Equally, we are proud of our staff and will recognise their achievement and success. We will work in partnership with the council, our residents, staff and partners, to build strong and successful communities.

Quality:

Our aim is to be the best social housing agency in the country, delivering outstanding customer service and looking to improve continuously. We will listen, responding quickly and fairly to our tenants & leaseholders and employees needs to ensure we achieve our targets and standards.

Integrity:

We will say what we do and do what we say, publishing clear standards, monitoring performance and providing efficient, value for money services. We will be a caring and responsible housing agency, respecting every tenant & leaseholder and every employee by being honest and fair in all our decisions.

Innovation

We will be creative and dynamic in delivering our services, anticipating tenant & leaseholder needs and planning accordingly. We will strive to be a national leader of excellence through challenging existing practices, working together as a team and never accepting mediocrity.

Our Vision:

"To be a first class social housing agency, delivering modern, efficient, high quality customer-focused services so that we can provide an excellent quality of life for our tenants & leaseholders in their homes and their community."

4. General Customer Services

We aim to provide a service we can be proud of and one that you will appreciate.

Our general Customer Service Standards are:

Access to our services

Our normal working hours are 8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday.

We provide a range of ways to ensure you can access our services 24 hours a day:

- Free phone: 0800 408 2000
- Landline number: 01452 530626
- Text: 0778 148 2656
- Fax: 01452 396599
- Minicom - 01452 396161
- Email - customer.services@gloscityhomes.co.uk
- Website - www.gloscityhomes.co.uk
- GCHTV on the Looking Local Service – Sky or Virgin Media, Nintendo Wii or mobile phone
- Automated phone line to pay your rent and service charges - 0845 155 600
- Write to us or visit us at Gloucester City Homes, Atlantic Suite, Southgate House, Gloucester GL1 1UB

We will respond to any enquiry you make outside our normal working hours on the next working day, unless it is an emergency repair.

- We will visit you at home if you ask us to during our normal working hours of Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm
- You can visit us at Matson One Stop Plus, 79a Matson Avenue, Gloucester Monday – Friday 9am – 12.30pm
- You can pay your rent and other charges at post offices and pay point outlets nationwide during their normal opening times

Access to Information

Our service commitments

We will:

- be regularly trained on and know about the laws covering access to information
- regularly review and update all the information we provide on our services
- offer you access to a range of information from organisations providing complementary services to our own. This will be in our offices and via links on our website and GCHTV.

Our service standards

We will

- show you the personal information we hold about you, normally within 20 working days of you asking for it (unless we can't due to legal reasons or we need a third party's permission).
- show you general information about our services and performance within 20 working days of you asking for it.
- Reserve the right to make a charge for copies of personal information of up to £10

General standards

These standards apply to all our services.

We will:

- train our staff in customer care and require them to achieve Institute of Customer Service qualifications
- resolve 90% of your enquires at the first point of contact
- deal with all your enquiries within target
- be courteous and friendly whenever we speak to you
- be neatly dressed
- carry and show you our ID badges at all times
- give our name whenever we communicate with you
- treat your enquiry strictly in confidence, unless

- you agree we can pass it to others eg to help provide you with a service
- the law requires us to give information, for example for the protection of vulnerable adults and children or crime detection.

When you phone us

We will:

- aim to answer your call within 5 rings
- confirm you are through to Gloucester City Homes
- give you our name and ask you if we can help you
- call within one working day if you ask us to call you back.

When you write to us

We will:

- reply within 5 working days

When you send us an email or fax

We will:

- reply within 1 working day.

When you visit us at our office

We will:

- see you within 5 minutes of your arrival
- see you on time if you have made an appointment
- offer to see you in a private area if your enquiry is confidential

On the outside of the office

We will:

- show our normal office opening hours
- show clear information on how to contact us in other ways
- normally advertise any change to our normal opening hours eg bank holidays, at least 5 working days ahead

When we contact you

We will:

- give our name, job and reason for contacting you
- use plain language in a format you choose
- give you clear contact information for you to reply to us.

When we visit you

We will:

- make and keep an appointment with you
- tell you in good time if we can't keep the appointment
- show you our identity card and encourage you to check that it's valid if you're not sure
- leave a calling card with our name and contact number if you're out.

In return we ask

That you:

- are polite when you speak to us
- don't use foul or abusive language
- are patient with us at very busy times
- give us information to speed up your enquiry when we ask for it,
- attend appointments on time, to avoid delaying other customers.

Thank you for your help and co-operation.

Equality and Diversity

Our service commitments

We will:

- always treat you fairly and impartially
- give you the same consistent high standard of service regardless of where you live in the city, your age, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, or sexuality
- regularly monitor our services to ensure we treat everyone fairly and without discrimination
- ensure that we consult all sections of the community so that all customers can give their views and take part in shaping our services
- have regular training and updates on relevant laws.

Meeting your needs

We will:

- value all our customers and recognise their diversity
- communicate with you in the way that you prefer.

Our offices

All our offices will be:

- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant
- fully accessible by people with mobility problems, including those using wheelchairs
- equipped with hearing loops. We will also take hearing aids with us to customer meetings
- family friendly
- open at times that suit you.

Letters, leaflets and other publications

Our information will be:

- available in a range of formats, including in writing, on the internet and on notice boards and screens.
- written in plain language
- available on request, in different languages and other formats such as large print, audiotape/CD/MP3 and Braille within the following time:
 - letters, within 5 working days
 - leaflets, within 5 working days
 - handbooks and larger documents may take longer and we will agree a time with you when you ask.

Speaking to you

When we speak to you:

- we will be able to do so in a variety of languages, including sign language, with

the help of professional translating services.

We will not tolerate:

- harassment of any kind, including hate crime based on age, gender, race, disability, sexuality or religion
- child abuse, vulnerable adult abuse, or any form of domestic abuse.

We will investigate any such incidents in full. We will take suitable action against people who carry them out and support those affected by them.

You can help us by telling us:

- if you have any special needs, such as for us to communicate with you in a particular way
- about any incidents of harassment or domestic violence
- if we are providing services to you in a way that meets your needs.

7. Giving Value for Money

We will continually review our services to improve service quality and value for money.

This will include:

- Giving you information on service quality and costs
- Comparing service quality and costs with other organisations
- Working in partnership with others to get better value for money
- Re-investing savings to improve services and reduce costs
- Regularly invite others to independently inspect our services and recommend improvements.

8. Repairs, maintenance and improvements

Repairing your home

In partnership with Lovell Respond, we aim to provide you with an efficient repairs service.

We will:

- Make it easy for you to report repairs 24 hours a day
- Offer you a convenient appointment.
- Confirm your appointment on the working after you report the repair
- Tell you straight away if we have to change your appointment
- Send you a reminder text message the night before the visit
- Call you shortly before the engineer arrives
- Leave a card if you are out
- Respond to emergency repairs within 2 hours and do any temporary work within 4 hours.
- Do urgent work within 5 working days (7 calendar days).
- Do routine work within 20 working days (28 calendar days).
- Do any “Right to Repair” work you ask for within the time limits and tell you how long this will be.
- Do repairs when we promise.

Anyone working in your home will:

- Treat you with respect and always behave in a professional manner
- Introduce themselves and show you photo identification before entering
- Explain what they are going to do and how this will affect you
- Keep you informed about how the work is progressing
- Protect your belongings from damage dust and paint
- Make sure materials and tools do not cause danger to anyone
- Clear rubbish from your home at the end of each working day
- Take reasonable steps to keep your home safe, and
- Make sure electricity, water and gas are connected at the end of the day.

Repair engineers are not allowed to:

- Smoke, or play a radio or CD player in or around the home
- Use bad language or behave inappropriately
- Use mobile phones during their work to make or receive private calls
- Use your gas or electricity supply
- Use any equipment belonging to you, including your phone
- Be in your home with children under 16 without a responsible adult being present
- Receive gifts or payments from tenants
- Keep keys to tenants' homes, or
- Do private work for tenants.

Also they must ask permission to:

- Take their lunch break in your home
- Use your toilet, or
- Go to other rooms in your home.

After the work is done we will:

- Give you a 'Your Views Count' card so you can tell us what you thought of our service.
- Do quality checks on around 10% of jobs selected at random
- Contact you if you're unhappy with our service
- Learn from your comments and review our service to ensure it continually improves.

Maintaining your home

We need to maintain some things in your home regularly. These include servicing your heating system and painting outside woodwork.

We also have to maintain communal fire or smoke systems yearly in common areas of flats and maisonettes.

Gas servicing

We will remind you how important it is to have your Home Safety Check in Tenant Times and Leaseholder News twice a year.

When your safety check is due, we will give you at least 1 week's notice of the appointment.

If you are out at the agreed time, the engineer will leave a card with a new appointment.

If you can't keep the second appointment you must phone and rearrange it.

If you don't keep the second appointment, the engineer will leave another card and a **warning label** across your front door.

If you don't get in touch with us, we will start legal action to get into your home. We will do this within 12 months of the date we last checked and serviced the appliance(s).

If we smell gas or have concern for your welfare, we reserve the right to force entry to your home to take emergency action. This is to protect your health and safety and that of your neighbours.

We may charge you for all the costs of taking legal action, coming out to your home, forcing entry, and doing repairs. If you keep refusing us entry you may lose your home.

We do this because if your gas appliance isn't serviced it cause death by carbon monoxide poisoning or explosion. We won't put your safety or that of your neighbours at risk in this way.

Electrical servicing

Our electrical servicing partner will inspect all communal:

- Lighting and power every two months
- CCTV systems quarterly
- Portable electrical appliances yearly. This includes appliances in communal sheltered scheme kitchens like kettles.

Improving your home

One of our key aims is to bring all our homes up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

Our staff and those working for our home improvement partners will:

- Train tenant representatives on looking after property and give enough information for them to allow make informed decisions
- Develop 5 year improvement plans in partnership with tenant representatives
- Review the menu of improvement choices yearly
- Publish an annual programme every April, showing the work, how much it will cost and which streets are included.

If we are planning to improve your home, we will:

- Invite you to a local Open Day to discuss our plans for your area
- Invite you to join a project team, to oversee and monitor progress
- Arrange for a Resident Liaison Officer to visit you about your home-improvement choices, including any adaptations you need
- Contact you around 6 weeks and again 8 days before the work starts
- Give you a choice of colours or fittings including:
 - heating type
 - layout and colour of kitchen units
 - colour of outside doors, rendering and cladding
 - colour and layout of bathroom suite
 - outside doors type
 - colour schemes for communal stairways
 - optional extras (if available)
 -

When improving your home we will:

- Give you a daytime and out-of-hours contact phone number
- Provide proof of identity before entering your home
- Wear uniforms that display our name
- Drive vehicles that clearly show the home-improvement partner's name and that they are working in partnership with us
- Help you to move heavy furniture if you can't do it
- Help you to lift carpets if you can't do it
- Keep you warm and comfortable while we do the work

- Do the work to a good standard
- Use good-quality materials
- Do the work while you stay in your home
- Give you extra help if you have special needs
- Ensure you are not left overnight without electricity and essential facilities
- Leave your home clean and tidy
- Decorate your kitchen and bathroom
- Pay an allowance towards redecoration of other parts of your home we disturb
- Do a survey when we've finished to ensure work is of a good standard and you're happy with our service.

Aids and adaptations

We will acknowledge your request within 1 working day. If there is no need for an assessment we normally do the work within 7 calendar days.

If you need an assessment, we ask the Primary Care Trust to do it within 6 calendar months or, sooner if it's urgent. (This is the County Council's service standard)

After the assessment, we normally:

- supply any aids you need within 7 calendar days (this is the County Council's service standard)
- do minor work within 7 calendar days
- do standard work within 28 calendar days
- do major work that doesn't need planning permission within 42 calendar days
- do major work that needs planning permission within a time we agree with you and the occupational therapist. This takes into account your needs, the amount of work and the time it takes to get any planning permission and building regulation approval.

Decorating services for elderly and disabled tenants

If you ask us for help with decorating we will:

- visit you to find out what you need, and how and when we can help, within 5 working days
- if we can help, either give you decorating vouchers or add your name to a work programme and tell you when we will do the work, within 1 working day of the visit
- decorate within the time set out in the work programme.

9. Rent and charges, collecting arrears and providing debt counselling

Setting your rent and other charges

We aim to ensure that we clearly explain how we set your rent and other service charges.

We will:

- explain in any rent and service charge change letter how we set rents and service charges and why any changes are needed
- give you a leaflet that explains how rent and charges are being restructured in line with government guidelines
- tell you when the rent-free weeks are each year in the leaflet we send you when we tell you of any changes in your rent or other charges
- put the rent-free week dates on our website
- give you at least four weeks' notice of any change to your rent or other charges.
- explain that if you disagree with the change in rent, you have the right to give us four weeks' notice if you intend to leave your home
Please note this is not because we want you to leave. We have to tell you of your legal right to give notice in this situation.
- We will give you a copy of the rent-free week calendar in 1 working day if you ask us for another copy.

Paying your rent and other charges

To make it easy to pay your rent we have set up a range of easy payment methods including:

- By Direct Debit once a month from your bank account.
- By cash, cheque or card at any Post Office nationwide during normal opening hours.
- By credit or debit card either by telephone 0845 155 600 24 hours a day or on-line via our website www.gloscityhomes.co.uk 24 hours a day.

[Please note that we do not encourage the use of credit cards as this can lead to interest charges if not paid off within a month]

- Cash or cheque at either the Gloucester City Council offices, Herbert Warehouse, The Docks, Gloucester or Gloucester City Homes office,

Southgate House, Southgate, Gloucester, both located near to city centre car parking and only a short walk from the bus station.

Paying by Direct Debit

We will:

- try, with your bank's help, to set up direct debits in the same calendar month
- collect your direct debit on Friday each week (for weekly DDs) or the last day of the month (for monthly DDs)
- ensure you are covered by the Direct Debit Guarantee. This guarantees that if the payment amount or the payment dates change, we will normally notify you at least 10 days before your account is debited or as otherwise agreed. If your bank, building society or we make an error, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch.

To keep you well informed about your rent account, we will normally:

- send you a statement every 3 months, showing your payable rent, your payments, benefit payments, other adjustments and your account balance
- send you a copy of your rent account when you ask, within 1 working day
- give you your account balance over the phone, having confirmed your identity.

If you ask for a refund we will:

- Tell you within 1 working day of you asking for a refund if there is any problem with your request
- make any refund within 15 working days.
- We will give you at least four weeks notice of any increase or decrease in the amount of rent and charges being collected.
- We will amend rent accounts within 5 working days of any notification of a change.

Recovering rent and other charges

To help you make the most of your money and avoid debt, we will:

- give you easy-to-understand information on:
 - what to do if you get into arrears
 - what help we can offer

- what action we may take, and
- where you can get independent advice
- manage rent accounts well and tell you about any arrears quickly
- agree realistic re-payment plans
- send you a statement every 3 months, showing:
 - your payable rent,
 - your payments,
 - benefit payments
 - other adjustments and
 - your account balance
- send you a copy of your rent account when you ask, within 1 working day
- give you your account balance over the phone, having confirmed your identity.
- advise you about claiming welfare benefits and tax credits
- help you apply for housing and council tax benefit
- provide a link on our website to a housing and council tax benefits calculator and help you use it if you don't have internet access
- give you help and advice on managing your money
- refer you to an independent advice agency such as a Citizens Advice Bureau, Legal Advice Centre or GL Communities, before taking legal action
- respond to urgent enquiries about legal action we are taking, within 1 working day.
- Make an appointment with you before your tenancy starts to explain the range of payment options; the arrears recovery process; and to give you an estimate of your Housing Benefit entitlement.
- Help you complete a Housing Benefit form and with the evidence you need to provide (all of our Rent Officers and Customer Services Officers are trained on Housing Benefit Evidence Verification).

10. Resident involvement

We are committed to consulting and involving our customers in all aspects of our service.

Supporting resident groups

We will:

- Help develop and support existing groups and guide them to work and grow at their own pace
- Work in partnership to meet the needs of each group
- Encourage under-represented groups to get involved
- Provide learning, training and support to individuals and groups
- Pay necessary travel expenses, childcare costs and other reasonable expenses
- Work in partnership to ensure groups can work together and support local neighbourhood partnerships and other local organisations
- Work with the police and other agencies to support groups to help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhoods
- Support groups to become Neighbourhood Watch organisations if they want to
- Work with groups to develop local service standards

Support at meetings and keeping groups up to date

We will:

- Contact the group at least 14 days before the meeting to identify the group's issues
- Get relevant partners to attend where needed to answer any questions
- Contact the group 2-3 days before the meeting to identify any pressing issues so that we can respond fully at the meeting
- Attend the group's meetings
- Respond within 5 working days to issues raised at the meeting
- Tell the group about any current service improvements or any local improvements or initiatives
- Tell the group about changes of staff or contact details at GCH
- Update our records to reflect changes to groups.

Resources to support groups

We will:

- Provide resources to support each group in the ways and at the pace they want
- Agree and arrange events and Community Pride days with each group's committee
- Support local community events
- Support access to a PC and provide funding to buy, maintain and replace computer equipment
- Provide relevant training to develop each group on the use of computer software and the internet
- Provide places where possible on relevant seminars and conferences to assist in group development

- Provide information about groups on our website
- Ensure each group has a suitable website of their own (if they want one)
- Ensure each group has community premises to support their work.

Developing new groups

We will:

- Identify communities without a tenant groups and target our support in those areas
- Develop new residents groups so that residents can discuss local services and community issues
- Provide a named Resident Involvement Officer to provide tailored support through each stage of the group's development
- Support all groups by paying an initial grant of £500 and a £150 start-up grant (subject to the partnership agreement rules)
- Provide a base grant of £500 to each group for core activities and ensure extra funding is available each year to support more activities
- Make a decision on any request for premises from a new group within 12 weeks
- Make a decision on any request for a change of premises from an existing group within 12 weeks.

11. Tenancy and estate management

Managing tenancies

New tenants

- We will give all new tenants a tenants' handbook and a tenancy agreement.
- We will explain the handbook and tenancy agreement to you and ensure that you understand them.

Successions, assignments and transfers

- If you apply to take over a tenancy or pass your tenancy to someone else we will tell you our decision within 28 calendar days.

Homeswapper (mutual exchanges)

- If you apply to do a mutual exchange with another tenant we will tell you our decision within 42 calendar days.

Changes to the Tenancy Agreement or other changes to the service we deliver to you

- We will consult with you about any planned changes which will affect the service you receive from us.
- We will take account of your views before taking a final decision.

Home alterations or improvements

- If you apply to alter or improve your home, we will tell you our decision within 28 calendar days.
- We will not unreasonably refuse permission.

Managing estates

We know that your local environment is important to you and your quality of life.

Our grounds maintenance partner maintains grassed areas in our neighbourhoods. They do cutting and strimming. They remove all litter before starting work and anything growing through footpaths.

Our grounds maintenance partner will:

- Make sure the grass doesn't grow more than 40mm in general areas
- Make sure the grass doesn't grow more than 20mm around sheltered housing schemes and remove grass cuttings

- properly prune shrubs and roses
- keep shrub and rose beds free of weeds
- properly prune all hedges (this could be 1 – 3 times a year depending on the weather)
- weedspray all footpaths and communal areas to kill all weed growth, and remove dead weeds
- remove all fallen leaves in the winter
- edge all identified footpaths and remove all cuttings once a year
- maintain individual trees as needed during the year.

Cleaning common areas

We know that it's important to keep clean the common areas leading up to your home.

Every day our cleaning partners will clean:

- internal bin chutes and bin stores

Every week they will clean:

- bin store areas including walls and ceilings, outside bin areas, walls and ceilings, light fixtures, balconies, steps, stairs and landings, inside glazing up to the first floor (about 2.5m high), inside and outside doors, electrical fittings, signs and notices, passenger lifts, other painted and varnished surfaces, WCs, laundries, kitchens, lounges, bathrooms, guest rooms, carpets, handrails, mirrors and pictures, window blinds, outside glazing up to the first floor (about 2.5m high), raised half landings.

Every 6 months they will clean:

- outside windows above the first floor and soft furnishings e.g. curtains.

Every year they will:

- shampoo and dry all carpets.

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Estate Improvements

We will:

- do estate walkabouts for each patch each month.
- hold a Have your Say Day in each area yearly and send you a personal invitation to the one in your area.

- invite representatives from the Police, County Council and City Council and our partners to attend the Have your Say Days
- do at least 10 Community Pride days a year to improve local areas.
- make at least £50,000 per year available for estate improvements tenants identify. Customer Forum will decide which schemes will go ahead in March each year.
- normally complete work within 3-6 months of its approval depending on its scale.

Anti Social Behaviour

We will investigate all complaints of anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and hate crime thoroughly. We will do this by:

- Encouraging residents whether they are tenants of Gloucester City Homes or they own their property to report incidents of anti-social behaviour to us.
- Taking appropriate and proportionate action against perpetrators of anti-social behaviour, hate crime and domestic abuse, whether it is being caused by them, visitors to their property and/or their family. (A perpetrator is the person causing the anti-social behaviour.)
- Providing support to complainants and/or witnesses of anti-social behaviour. We will also offer support to any vulnerable perpetrator, we recognise that it is possible to improve poor behaviour to the point where it becomes acceptable.
- Working with our multi-agency partners to prevent incidents of anti-social behaviour, recognising that prevention is better than cure. We will do this by referring residents to mediation, Family Intervention Project, and support services where appropriate. We aim to resolve the majority of complaints of anti-social behaviour through non-legal means.
- Monitoring the quality of our service by setting service standards with our customers and completing customer satisfaction survey's when cases are closed.

When you make a complaint of anti-social behaviour we will:

- Contact you within 1 working day for serious cases of anti-social behaviour and 1 working days for minor anti-social behaviour.
- Agree an action plan with you within 1 working day for serious cases of anti-social behaviour and 5 working days for minor anti-social behaviour.

- Arrange an interview with you within 1 working day for serious cases of anti-social behaviour and 5 working days for minor anti-social behaviour.
- If you report an incident to our out of hours Anti-Social Behaviour Respect Line, the details will be passed to the Anti-Social Behaviour Team who will endeavour to contact you the next working day.

Letting homes

We aim to re-let homes efficiently. We will work with the person moving out to ensure we can relet the home quickly through Gloucestershire Homeseeker. We work with our repairs partner, to complete essential repairs and make sure homes are safe for the new tenant to move into.

We will:

- Identify quickly, homes that are empty or likely to become empty
- Relet them promptly to avoid losing rent and help people who need rehousing.
- inspect empty homes within 1 working day of getting the keys
- order repairs within 1 working day of inspection
- cut the average time we take to re-let empty homes to the minimum needed to make them safe and fit to live in; and
- take photographs of the home so that we have a record of how it looked when we let it.

Empty homes – our Ready to Relet Standard

Gloucester City Homes' welcomes you to your new home. We aim to achieve the highest level of satisfaction when you move into a new home and below are the minimum standards you can expect.

Asbestos

- We will give you health and safety advice on any materials containing asbestos in or around your home.
- If it is damaged, we will either remove it or make it safe and monitor its condition.
- If it is in good condition, we will ensure it is safe and monitor its condition.

Outside your home

In communal areas

- All windows will be in good condition
- Any intercom system e.g. at entrances to blocks of flats, will be in full working order.
- Lighting will be bright enough to light the required area
- All steps, paths, walls etc will be in good condition.

- There will be no graffiti. We will remove non –offensive graffiti within 5 working days and offensive graffiti within 24 hours.
- All walls and doors will be reasonably decorated. We normally paint them about every 5 years, but may do them more often if we think it's needed.
- All car hard standings, parking areas and car park barriers will be safe to use.

Gardens and sheds

We will:

- Clear any rubbish from gardens
- Trim grass and hedges to a manageable height
- Clear all contents from sheds and outhouses
- Normally remove any ponds and other garden improvements the previous tenant left, unless you want to take responsibility for them. This includes things like raised planters, BBQ areas etc.,
- Ensure boundary fences, walls etc clearly show the boundary and are in good condition.

Outside walls

We will ensure:

- Outside walls are structurally sound and in good condition
- Painted walls are reasonably decorated. We normally paint these around every 5 years (more often if we think it's needed) We will tell you when we will do the work and agree the colour with you.

Outside doors

We will ensure:

- All outside doors:
 - close and secure properly
 - are well decorated
 - comply with the Police recommended “**Secure by Design**” specification
 - have a 5 lever mortice insurance lock
 - have a night latch if required
- The front door has a number and a letterbox; and
- You have at least two sets of keys for each outside door.

Roofs

We will ensure

- Roofs are watertight, and in good condition
- Gutters and drain pipes work properly, are free flowing and take rainwater to drains and/or a water butt, if there is one
- All wood and plastic to which gutters are fixed are secure and in good condition
- Chimneys and flashings are in good condition.

Inside your home:

Electrical safety

We will:

- Test all the electrics to ensure they meet the latest electrical regulations
- Give you a copy of the electrical safety certificate
- Normally switch the electricity supply off when a home is empty
- Tell you how to switch the mains electricity on and off, read the meters and re-set any tripped switches
- Replace any cracked or broken sockets, switches or light fittings.

Fire safety

We will:

- Fit mains operated smoke alarms to every level of the property
- Test them to ensure they work properly.

Gas safety

We will:

- Test all gas supply connections and appliances to ensure they meet the latest gas regulations
- Show you how to turn the gas supply off in an emergency
- Give you a copy of the gas safety certificate.

Water safety

We will:

- Test the mains water stop tap and other water pipes to make sure they work properly and don't leak
- Show you how to switch the mains water off in an emergency
- Provide water immersion heaters that safely stop the water from overheating
- Tell you what to do if water becomes too hot
- Check large water tanks serving more than one home for Legionella
- Tell you what to do to reduce the risk of Legionella in your home.

Energy efficiency and heating

We will:

- Provide loft Insulation that meets the latest building regulations
- Give you an Energy Performance Certificate and energy saving advice
- Supply and fit energy efficient bulbs in at least 4 rooms
- Provide all rooms with efficient and effective space heating
- Ensure all new windows are double-glazed
- Ensure all new outside doors are insulated
- Tell you if we are going to replace your central heating, when we will do the work and agree the design of it with you.

Floors

We will ensure floors:

- Have no damp
- Have no carpet gripper or loose tiles
- Are in good condition, safe and level
- Have suitable floor coverings in the kitchen and bathroom.

Walls

We will ensure walls have:

- A flat, smooth finish, without major cracks or loose plaster. However you are responsible for minor indentations, scratches and hairline cracks
- No damp and mould
- Curtain battens above all windows

- Securely fixed architrave around doors and skirting along floors with no exposed screws or nails.

Ceilings

We will ensure ceilings have:

- A flat, smooth finish, with no major cracks or loose plaster. (You are responsible for small indentations, scratches and hairline cracks)
- No damp and mould
- No polystyrene tiles.

Doors

We will ensure doors will:

- Be in good working order, open and close easily and secure properly
- Be in good repair
- Have enough space under them to fit carpets
- Have a privacy lock on the inside in toilets and bathrooms.

Woodwork and Stairs

We will ensure:

- Woodwork is good repair.
- All parts of the staircase are in good repair.

Windows

We will:

- Replace all broken and cracked panes of glass
- Lubricate windows to ensure they open and close easily
- Ensure all ground floor windows have security catches
- Ensure all first floor windows have child locks
- Give you at least one key for each window lock
- Show you how to release window catches/locks if there's a fire.

Kitchens

We will:

- Ensure all work surfaces are clean and safe for preparing food.
- Ensure all work top joints are sealed.

- Ensure the cooker point has worktops on either side, making it easier to move cooking equipment to and from the cooker.
- Ensure the cooker space has a safety bracket to fix your cooker to the wall. Please make sure your cooker is connected to it when it is installed.
- Provide connections for both gas and electric cookers if there is a gas supply.
- Design the layout of your kitchen to reduce the chance of accidents.
- Leave a space for a washing machine if possible, and provide a water supply to connect it.
- Provide enough kitchen units to suit the size of your home. As a minimum, in the smallest homes, the kitchen will have at least 1 base unit, 1 sink unit and 1 wall unit.
- Provide an automatic extractor fan to reduce condensation.
- Provide enough electrical sockets to suit the kitchen size. As a minimum in the smallest homes, the kitchen will have at least two sets of double sockets.
- Ensure all wall tiling and grouting is in good condition.
- Normally provide a single piece of non-slip vinyl floor covering. If there is more than one piece we will seal all joints.
- Tell you if we intend to replace the kitchen and if so agree with you the design and when we will do the work.

Bathrooms

We will:

- Ensure the toilet and seat, bath and wash hand basin work properly and are in good condition
- Supply plugs and chains for baths and wash hand basins
- Ensure all wall tiling and grouting is in good condition and sealed to bathroom fittings
- Provide at least two rows of splash back tiles around the bath and wash basin
- Where there is a shower, provide wall tiling from the top of the shower tray to the ceiling, a shower rail and curtain
- Provide an automatic extractor fan to reduce condensation
- Normally provide a single piece of non-slip vinyl floor covering. If there is more than one piece we will seal all joints

- Tell you if we plan to replace the bathroom and if so agree with you the design and when we will do the work.

Cleaning

We will ensure your new home is:

- Clean and fresh smelling throughout
- Clear of any stains, limescale, dust, mould, pests, infestations and previous tenants belongings
- Provided with a courtesy welcome bucket with cleaning materials to help you keep your new home clean.

Decoration

- The bathroom, kitchen and living room will be well decorated. If not we will decorate them using magnolia emulsion on the walls. If required we will use blown vinyl wallpaper and emulsion. If skirting boards are painted in a dark colour e.g. black, we will repaint them with white gloss.
- If the rest of the home is poorly decorated we will either:
 - ✓ Offer you a voucher towards the cost of buying decorating materials of your choice. (This is not intended to cover the whole cost) or
 - ✓ Do the decorating for you
 - If you are vulnerable and have no one to help you do it
 - If the home is so poorly decorated it would be unreasonable to expect you to move in.

The Ready to Re-let standard always applies. However, if we plan to do more extensive improvements to your new home we may, if you agree, let it to you at a lower standard. We will add you home to the list of those being improved and agree with you when we will do the work.

Introductory tenancies

If we intend to evict you as an introductory tenant we will:

- tell you in writing that we're going to go to court to evict you.
- allow you to ask for a review of the case, but you must do this within 14 days.

If you ask for a review of our decision to evict you, we will

- tell you the date, time and place of the review at least 5 days in advance.
- send you the final decision within two weeks of the review.

- **Carrying out a pre- tenancy termination home visits**
 - When we receive your Notice to Quit we will check to ensure it is legally valid and fully completed and advise you within 1 working day of any additions you need to make.
 - When we receive your valid Notice to Quit we will carry out a home visit within 5 working days at a date and time agreed with you.
 - During this visit we will inspect your property to see if you have carried out any alterations without approval. If such an alteration has not been carried out in a satisfactory way e.g. removing a wall may have weakened the structural stability of the home or the alteration may involve Gloucester City Homes in additional expense to maintain e.g. a wooden conservatory in need of repair and maintenance; you may be required to re-instate your home to its original condition before you leave the property.
 - We will advise you of any repairs that are your responsibility and which you will either need to repair yourself or pay for Gloucester City Homes to repair before leaving the property.
 - We will take a note of any repairs which Gloucester City Homes is responsible for and arrange for our repairs partner, to carry these out within the normal repair target times.
 - We will provide you with good practice advice on what to do prior to leaving your property, for example, making arrangements for all your key suppliers e.g. gas, electricity, telephone; post etc. to know of your move and of your forwarding address.
 - We will also provide you with good practice advice on how to dispose of any unwanted belongings or rubbish before you leave the property and of the need for you to leave the property in a clean and tidy condition.
 - Finally we will also arrange, during our visit, a date and time for you to return the keys to Gloucester City Homes.

- **Pre-transfer home visits**
 - On receipt on your transfer application we will carry out a home visit within 28 calendar days. At this home visit we will establish what your

requirements are ie type of property, location etc. We will also carry out an inspection of your property to ensure that the property is in a reasonable condition and that there are no breaches of your tenancy. Any breaches of your tenancy will be advised at the time of the visit and an agreement will be made on how you can resolve the breach. If there is a breach of your tenancy your application will be set to pending until this breach is resolved.

When we offer you a tenancy we will:

- give you information on the local area
- explain our range of customer services
- give you our contact details
- tell you what your weekly rent (and any other charges) are, and how to pay them.

When we sign you up for the tenancy we will:

- explain our tenancy agreement and tenants handbook to you – what we will expect from you and what you can expect from us
- give you a personal tour of your new home, (unless did this before the previous tenants moved out or while the home was empty, if there is no health and safety risk)
- explain how your heating system works
- show you where the water stop tap is and where the electric or gas meters are and how to turn the supplies off in an emergency
- Give you health and safety advice on any materials containing asbestos in or around the home.
 - Give you a copies of the gas and electrical safety certificates
 - Give you water safety advice including what to do if water becomes too hot and how to reduce the risk of Legionella in your home.
 - Tell you if you are eligible for decorating vouchers. If so, we will agree the amount with you and give you the voucher(s) within 1 working day of the visit
 - tell you if there is still any minor work to do and when we will do it,
 - tell you if we are planning any maintenance or improvements for your new home
 - check that you are happy we have met our Ready to Relet Standard
 - make sure you know how to arrange to take over all services such as gas, electricity, water and sewerage, and how to pay your council tax
 - remind you to tell all your key contacts and relevant agencies you are moving in to your new home and advise you on easy ways to do this.

We will also ask you to tell us how the whole process worked for you from when you first applied to what you think of your new home. Please take five minutes to fill in our 'Your Views Count' card and share your thoughts with us. We use this feedback to improve our services.

We will visit you at home within the first 4 weeks of your tenancy. This is to ensure that:

- you are happy in your new home
 - you know how any fitted appliances work
 - all the repairs are done
 - there are no problems with your rent payments or benefits
 - you fully understand your tenancy agreement, and
 - you know how you can getinvolved@GCH
-
- **Periodic Home Visits**
 - When we carry out a periodic home visit to your property we will check to see if the property is in a reasonable condition, that we have the correct information about the people living in your home and that you have not broken your tenancy agreement.
-
- **Garages**
 - We will record your request to go onto the garage waiting list within 1 working day.
 - When we receive a Notice to Quit from a tenant of a garage we shall contact you with 1 working day to arrange for you to view the garage.
 - When the garage is available for re-occupation we will contact you within 1 working day and arrange for you to attend the office to sign the tenancy agreement within the next 5 working days.
 - We will ensure that the garage is let to you free of rubbish and in full working order. Any outstanding non-urgent repairs will be carried out within normal repair target times.

12. Support to help you live independently at home.

Meeting the needs of our older residents and those who have special needs

We aim to ensure that our tenants can live independently in their own homes, by supporting them and helping them get the services they need.

We have Community Scheme Managers in all our sheltered schemes do this

Role of Community Scheme Managers

Our Community Scheme Managers have received extensive training and work within clearly defined procedures to ensure we provide a service, which is not intrusive, but one based on a sense of security for the residents, knowing that support is available if required.

In sheltered housing schemes our Community Scheme Manager will:

- Welcome you, introduce you to the scheme and explain how to use any communal facilities
- Normally be available between 9am & 5pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).
- Contact you daily or however often you prefer, to check on your well being and arrange any support you need to stay independent
- Agree a support plan with you that meets your needs, and then pass your name to other agencies that can offer help
- Liaise with your family and other agencies to provide more support after illness
- Ensure you live in a safe environment
- Assess and respond to an emergency as soon as possible
- Check and monitor health and safety issues around the scheme daily and sort out any problems as soon as possible
- Test intercoms, pull cords and pendants every three months
- Check your personal contact details with you every three months to ensure they are up to date
- Help and encourage you to arrange and take part in social activities and take part in the management of your scheme.

Emergency Control Centre

We work in partnership with the Hereford Control Centre which provides:

- Emergency help 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, linking up with Duty, Out-of-Hours Community Scheme Manager and Emergency Services.

We encourage all tenants to use this service appropriately for emergency situations only.

Referrals and support

We provide a valuable link between vulnerable tenants who need support and the various organisations that can provide such support.

We know that some tenants need a support / advice service to help them live an independent life, free from debt and to keep to their tenancy conditions.

We will:

- Interview potential tenants before they accept a tenancy to find out how much support they need
- Complete a Household Assessment Form at various stages of a tenancy to assess how much support is needed
- With permission, refer to external agencies to provide help and support where needed
- Liaise closely with support providers in both long and short-term cases
- Hold regular meetings with support agencies to maintain excellent links and working partnerships
- When a tenancy is failing (i.e. due to rent arrears) make a compulsory referral to a relevant advice agency to become involved to help maintain the tenancy

Homeless temporary accommodation

We provide temporary accommodation for homeless households and the Local Authority has a duty to provide somewhere to live while they complete their investigation.

Caridas House is a hostel that provides temporary accommodation. A manager is responsible for its day-to-day running.

It can be used for both families and single households who share facilities including bathrooms and kitchens.

We will ensure that:

GlosCityS76/ALMO Project / Improving Services /
Improving Access, Customer Care & User Focus /
Customer Service Standards

CONTROLLED DOCUMENT

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- The accommodation is clean and safe
- Each room is cleaned and health and safety inspected before each new agreement is signed
- Basic furniture is provided
- External support is available and referrals are made within 1 working day
- The Scheme Manager helps residents settle into new surroundings and advise of any health & safety / fire matters upon arrival
- The Scheme Manager helps all residents to complete a Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit form and aims to submit them to the council's Benefit Services on the same working day.
- The scheme office is normally open between the hours of 10am and 4pm

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13. Services for people buying their homes, shared owners and leaseholders

Services for people wanting to buy their own home

- We will accept or deny all valid RTB1 Applications within 4 weeks
- We will provide an accurate valuation of your property and accept your right to have this determined by the District Valuer.
- We provide an offer notice within 8 weeks if you are purchasing a house or 12 weeks if you are buying a flat.

Service for Shared Owners

- We will provide you with the same service standards as we would any other resident of Gloucester City Homes.

Service for Leaseholders

We will in addition to our General Customer Service standards:

- Provide a comprehensive range of advice and services through our Leasehold team as set out in the Leaseholders Handbook.
- Consult leaseholders generally on the range and cost of services through surveys and quarterly Leaseholder Forum.
- Consult leaseholders specifically prior to carrying out major works or improvements to your blocks of flats.
- Maintain the common parts of your block, itemise the work and clearly set out the charges in your service charges statements.
- Carry out repairs to common areas to the same timescales and standards as if you were a council tenant.

You can help us by:

- Paying your Service Charge when asked and if you dispute any part of your account continue to pay the amount due until it is resolved.
- Where you dispute the Service Charge please put your concerns in writing to this and us immediately will help us resolve your inquiry quickly.
- Not carrying out any structural alterations without consulting us first.
- Advising us of any transfer of the lease to another person.