



# **YOUR TENANCY SERVICE STANDARDS**

April 2018



**THE COMMUNITY  
HOUSING GROUP**

This service standard provides information about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant of The Community Housing Group (the Group) and it sets out the standards of service you can expect from us and some of your responsibilities as a tenant.

If you have any queries or comments about your tenancy, please contact the Customer Service Centre on 0800 169 5454 or email [information@communityhg.com](mailto:information@communityhg.com). If they are unable to help you they will pass you onto your Neighbourhood Officer

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<b>HOW TO CONTACT US</b>	
<b>Telephone (24 hours)</b>	0800 169 5454
<b>Online through MYaccount</b>	<a href="http://www.communityhg.com">www.communityhg.com</a> - then select the MYaccount icon
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:information@communityhg.com">information@communityhg.com</a>
<b>Facebook</b>	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/TCHGHousing">www.facebook.com/TCHGHousing</a>
<b>Twitter</b>	<a href="http://www.twitter.com/tchgroup">www.twitter.com/tchgroup</a>
<b>Postal address, customer reception and digital kiosk</b>	Community House, Stourport Road, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY11 7QE  Office opening hours (Monday – Friday) 8.45am - 5.00pm

## WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

- We will follow our responsibilities clearly set out in the conditions of tenancy and our procedures.
- We will tell you what your rights and responsibilities are as a tenant.
- We will make decisions on requests for changes to your tenancy within 10 days of receiving all the information.
- We will take prompt and appropriate action against anyone who breaks their tenancy conditions.
- We will only take legal action if the tenancy conditions are broken persistently or in a serious way.
- We will provide a written explanation of any action we have taken.

## WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

We expect you to follow your responsibilities clearly set out in your tenancy agreement. These include:

- Paying rent and service charges.
- Telling us about any changes in your circumstances that may affect your tenancy, including changes in occupancy.
- Telling us if you will be away from your home for any extended period of time.
- Asking for permission before you undertake any improvements to your home.
- Not damaging or neglecting your home.
- Not harassing or causing a nuisance to your neighbours.
- Not running a business from your home without our permission.
- Not keeping a pet without our permission.

## MOVING IN

### Insurance

The Group insures the structure of your home (buildings insurance) but you are responsible for insuring the contents of your home. If you would like information on cost-effective contents insurance, please contact the Customer Service Centre who can send you a leaflet.

Remember that contents insurance will help you to replace essential items in the event of a burglary, fire or flood, but it is your responsibility to arrange this insurance cover.

### Keys

We always change the locks when a new tenancy starts, unless you are doing a mutual exchange. When you sign your tenancy agreement we give you two sets of keys for your new home. We do not retain a spare set, so you must look after them. If you lose them you will be recharged for the full cost of replacing the locks. Spare keys/fobs to communal areas can be purchased from our Community House office.

### Lettable Standard

We will make sure that your new home is to an agreed lettable standard. The works we complete if necessary include:

- Ensuring the property is clean and tidy throughout.
- Removing all rubbish and furniture and clearing the garden (once you have started your tenancy).
- Walls will be checked as far as possible without stripping existing wall coverings to ensure the plaster is sound.
- A gas, electrical and heating safety check will have been undertaken.
- All doors/drawers (external, internal and cupboards) will open and close correctly.
- Locks will be changed on all external doors and window keys will be provided.
- Floors, stair treads and hand rails will have been checked to ensure that they are safe.

- Kitchen and bathroom vinyl floors will have been checked to ensure that they are waterproof.
- The bath, hand basin and toilet will have been checked for cracks and stains and the condition of tiles, sealant around the bath and hand basin will have been checked.
- The smoke alarm and any heat detector will be checked and if necessary a new battery installed/hard-wired system installed.

### **Decoration**

When viewing your property you will be told if any decorating vouchers will be provided. The amount offered is intended to be a contribution towards the cost of redecorating – it will not cover the whole cost of decorating your property.

Vouchers will be issued after you've signed your tenancy agreement and it must be spent on decorating materials and tools. It covers paint and some decorating equipment.

### **Property improvements**

If you wish to make alterations or improvements to your property, you should put the request in writing to the Customer Service Centre providing as much details as possible. You must not start any works until after permission is given.

### **Utility bills**

You will be responsible for setting up utility accounts in your name for your new home.

## **PAYING YOUR RENT**

### **Direct Debit**

Direct Debit is our preferred method of payment, and you can download a form to set one up in the rent area of MYaccount or by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 0800 1695454.

Payments are normally collected on the first working day of each calendar month or at the beginning of each fortnight your rent is due. When we receive your signed form, we'll set everything up and you will receive written confirmation of your payments and the dates they will be taken.

### **Debit card**

Call our payment line on 01562 733007 to speak to one of our Finance Team (available Monday – Friday, 9.00 am to 4.30 pm). You will then be transferred to a secure automated line to complete your payment. You will need your rent reference number to complete the payment.

### **Post Office, and PayPoint outlets**

You will need your allpay payment card to pay at these locations. The Post Office accepts cash, cheques and debit card payments (cheques made payable to Post Office Counters). PayPoint outlets accept cash. Please keep your receipt as proof of payment.

### **Online**

Register with MYaccount (by going to [www.communityhg.com](http://www.communityhg.com) and using the MYaccount button) to give you access to a range of services and facilities including paying your rent. You will need your debit card, rent reference number and allpay payment card to make a payment.

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO PAY YOUR RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES

### “allpay” payment app

The allpay app can be downloaded via the Apple App store, Windows Phone store or Google Play, enabling you to pay your rent from your phone or tablet.

### Automated 24 hour phonenumber

Call 0844 557 8321 to make a debit card payment. You will also need an allpay payment card.

### Text payments

You can pay your rent via text message at any time of the day. Just log on to [www.allpayments.net/textpay](http://www.allpayments.net/textpay) to register.

### Standing Order, BACS or Electronic Home Banking

Instruct your bank to make payments directly to The Community Housing Group or transfer funds to our bank account, using the following details:

#### BARCLAYS BANK

Account name = The Community Housing Group Rent.

Sort code = 20-46-14.

Account number = 30124222.

Description = (Your Property Rent Reference number.xxxxxxxxxxxxxx)\*

*\*It is essential to include your rent reference number in the description field otherwise we will not know who has made the payment.*

### Housing Benefit payments direct

If your rent is paid by Housing Benefit Direct, you can ask your local council to pay your rent to us directly.

Paying rent in advance is your responsibility and your rent account should never be in arrears.

If you are eligible for Housing Benefit you must move into your home as soon as your tenancy starts.

If you receive Universal Credit, your payment may include assistance toward your rent. It is your responsibility to pay your rent to The Community Housing Group. The preferred payment method is by Direct Debit. To pay by this method please use the MYaccount online service (at [www.communityhg.com](http://www.communityhg.com) and select the MYaccount button) or contact the Customer Service Centre on 0800 169 5454.

If you want to check your balance at any time you can sign up to MYaccount to do this.

If you fall into rent arrears, we will contact you to let you know so you can make up any shortfall. If you are unable to do this you must work with us so we can come to an arrangement with you to start making repayments to clear your arrears.

As long as you keep to the arrangement and your arrears reduce, we will not take any further action against you.

### How we can help

If you are in financial difficulties and struggle to pay your rent, it is important that you get in touch with the Customer Service Centre straight away. They will take your details and arrange for a specialist Welfare and Financial Inclusion Officer to contact you so they can give you advice about applying for benefits that you might be eligible for. They can also give you basic advice on organising your debts and refer you to the different agencies that can help you to resolve your debt problems.

## Rent arrears

If your account falls into more than four weeks rent arrears and you are not working with us to sort out any benefits or make arrangements to clear the arrears, we will issue a Notice of Seeking Possession.

This is the first legal step to take possession of your home. If your rent arrears continue to increase, we may then apply to the County Court for a Possession Order. If your case comes to court, you could face being evicted from your home.

If you leave your home and still have rent arrears, you are still responsible and we will expect you to come to an arrangement to pay this debt. If you do not clear this debt, we will refer your case to an external collection agency.

## YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT

As a tenant of The Community Housing Group, you will have: an assured tenancy, an assured shorthold tenancy or; a starter tenancy. This is the legal agreement for you to occupy your home - a document we have to give you by law and which all tenants sign at the start of their tenancy.

The differences in the types of tenancy we will be explained to you when you sign your agreement.

The tenancy agreement outlines your rights and responsibilities and those of the Group.

When you sign the agreement you accept these rights and agree to abide by your responsibilities.

## We will:

- Give you four weeks written notice to change your rent or service charge.
- Consult over any proposed change to your tenancy agreement or changes in the services we provide.
- Complete necessary repairs to the structure of your home and maintain any communal areas.
- Respond to enquiries about your tenancy and rights within 10 days.
- Make decisions on requests for changes to your tenancy within 10 days of receiving all the information.

## You need to:

- Tell us about any changes in your circumstances that may affect your tenancy.
- Pay your rent in advance.
- Notify us of any repairs that are needed.
- Occupy your property as your principle home.
- Give four weeks written notice if you are moving out.
- Maintain the internal decoration and not cause any damage to the property.
- Not harass or cause nuisance to your neighbours through your behaviour or that of your visitors or pets.
- Not damage or neglect your home or the block if you live in a flat.
- Not run a business from your home without our permission.

## Pets

You will need written permission from The Community Housing Group before you can keep a pet at your home. Please refer to your tenancy agreement for more information.

We will, where appropriate, give written permission to keep a pet if the property is suitable. Where the property is unsuitable (for example a block of flats), we will not grant permission. If your pet is found to be causing nuisance then permission may be withdrawn. Permission will not be withheld in respect to tenants or prospective tenants with disabilities who depend on pets, regardless of their property type, ie. Guide Dogs.

## YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICER

All tenants of The Community Housing Group are allocated a Neighbourhood Officer. You can contact your Neighbourhood Officer through the Customer Service Centre who will put your call through if they are unable to answer your query first time.

You can discuss any issues you have with your tenancy or your home. The Neighbourhood Officers work closely with local communities to involve you in monitoring local services and to deal with anti-social behaviour.

When you move in, your Neighbourhood Officer will contact you within the first four weeks to check you have settled in and outstanding repairs have been completed.

If you are a new tenant with a starter tenancy, we will visit you regularly to ensure you are looking after your home and keeping to the terms of your tenancy.

Your starter tenancy will be reviewed in the ninth month to decide if it will convert to assured status on the one year anniversary. If your tenancy is not converted the probationary period may be extended for a further six months. (You will have the opportunity to request a review of this decision.)

Your Neighbourhood Officer can also give advice on health and safety, dealing with neighbourhood issues or anti-social behaviour, looking after communal areas and to answer any questions you have about us.

## YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN

Where your tenancy includes a service charge for a Neighbourhood Warden, they will work closely with you and your Neighbourhood Officer to support you in your tenancy. Neighbourhood Wardens provide a uniformed presence on your estate, identifying environmental issues, repairs and community safety issues.

## MOVING HOME

### Transfers

Sometimes tenants need to move house as their circumstances change. While it is not possible to transfer all of our tenants who wish to move, we can help by giving you information on the different housing options available to you.

We prioritise transfers on the basis of need; including people suffering from domestic abuse, racial, disability and homophobic harassment, people who are over-crowded, or under occupying and people who are unable to cope in their own home, as a result of a disability or poor health.

Before we agree to a move, you will need to respond promptly to any requests we make about paying arrears of rent or carrying out repairs which we make as a condition of the exchange.

More information is available on our website, in a separate leaflet or by calling the Customer Service Centre.

### Mutual exchanges

A mutual exchange is where you arrange to swap homes with someone else. Most of our tenants have the right to apply to swap their home with another council or housing association tenant within the Wyre Forest District or across the country. If you can find someone to swap homes with, it can often be much quicker than waiting for a transfer.

- As a tenant of The Community Housing Group, you will be eligible to join the online "Homeswapper" service free of charge. This is a national exchange register that will allow you to advertise your own property to other tenants who may be interested in exchanging homes with you. It will also give you details of tenants from all over the country who are looking to exchange their homes.
- We won't allow you to exchange your home if you hold a Starter Tenancy.

- We will deal with applications to exchange within six weeks.
- If you or the other tenant are in rent arrears or there are other breaches of tenancy, the exchange could be refused unless the breaches are rectified.
- We will give you a written response to all applications for exchange, giving reasons for those that are refused.
- We will sign you up for your new tenancy within 10 days of our visit if we agree to your exchange.

## ENDING YOUR TENANCY

If you wish to end your tenancy, you must give us four weeks' notice. If you want a form to do this please contact us by phone, email or visit our office at Community House.

### Pre-termination inspections

If you are the next of kin for a tenant who has died and are handing the tenancy back to the Group, we will accept two weeks' notice.

If there are any outstanding rent arrears or debt that you owe the Group, we expect you to make arrangements for it to be repaid. If no arrangement is agreed upon, we may send the outstanding debt to a debt collection agency.

If there is rubbish left at the property or it is left in poor condition due to tenant neglect or deliberate damage, we will seek to recover the cost of repairing the property.

### Golden Handshake

You may be entitled to a payment of £100 if you leave your home in good repair and free of all goods and rubbish.

### Abandonment

If you do not give notice but move out of your home, we may consider that you have abandoned the tenancy and will start action that may result in repossession of your home. It is important that you contact us if you are going to be away from home for some time, for example going into hospital or on an extended holiday, and ensure rent is paid.

You will continue to be responsible for the rent until we receive valid notice from you, or the court grants us legal possession and we will take steps to collect this rent from you, including passing the outstanding debt to a debt collection agency.

## DEALING WITH ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

This sets out the standards you can expect from The Community Housing Group when dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB) allegedly carried out by our tenants:

- We will respond to all reports of serious anti-social behaviour (hate crime or domestic abuse) within 24 hours.
- All other reports of ASB will be responded to within three working days of the incident being reported.
- We will take positive action to resolve complaints by using a variety of methods including injunctions or mediation.
- We will agree a plan of action with you, including how and when we keep you informed of the action we are taking.
- Offensive graffiti on our property will be removed within 24 hours and other graffiti within seven working days.
- We will monitor the quality of our service by asking for feedback when the case is closed.

### When to contact us

Most cases of ASB are due to the behaviour of neighbours. But sometimes, they may not be aware that they are causing a nuisance. Whenever possible, try to resolve the problem by talking to your neighbour first.



If you are experiencing ASB, you do not have to suffer in silence. Contact us on 0800 169 5454 or speak to your Neighbourhood Officer or Warden, who will be able to give you advice about what action can be taken. There is also an ASB Hotline (answerphone message) where messages can be left 24hrs a day, 365 days a year.

Always try to keep a record of when the incidents are happening, but if you feel at risk at any time, dial the police on 101 or in an emergency 999

Safeguarding means reducing the risk and preventing harm occurring to children and adults in vulnerable situations. If you have concerns about a child or vulnerable adult or you have witnessed an incident which has concerned you, please report it. It is better to be wrong than to leave them in a dangerous situation. You can use the confidential Person or Property at Risk reporting line (answerphone message) on 01562 732383 or speak to your Neighbourhood Officer on 0800 169 5454.

You can help us prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour by:

- Being aware of, and keeping to the conditions of your Tenancy Agreement.
- Not causing, or letting your family or visitors cause anti-social behaviour.
- Reporting any anti-social behaviour to us.
- Reporting crimes to the police or allowing us to report them on your behalf.
- Taking responsibility for minor disagreements with your neighbours by trying to sort out problems in a reasonable way.
- Respecting other people's right to their chosen lifestyle as long as this does not spoil the quality of life of others.
- Helping us gather evidence if we need to take formal action and, if necessary, acting as a witness in court.

## PROPERTY EQUIPMENT AND ADAPTATIONS

When there has been a change in the mobility or health of the tenant or a member of their family, we will consider adapting their property so they can continue to live there.

Larger aids and adaptations are funded by a Disabled Facilities Grant which is, administered by Wyre Forest District Council. The Community Housing Group has a small budget for minor works such as a handrails, grab rails, taps and ramps.

Where a stair lift or hoist is fitted in a property belonging to The Community Housing Group, you will be charged a service charge for repairs and maintenance. It is however, the responsibility of the tenant to ensure that they have an Individual Emergency Evacuation Plan in place.

Should you require an adaptation to your property, you should contact our Equipment and Adaptations officer on 0800 169 5454.

### **Independent Living for Older and Vulnerable People**

We offer a variety of safe, secure and independent accommodation for older and vulnerable people in our Independent Living Schemes, Extra Care Schemes and other sheltered accommodation including flats or bungalows. These are suitable for single people or couples. Many of these homes have been built with access for wheelchair users in mind and have facilities and adaptations to meet the needs of tenants with health and mobility difficulties.

They are all fitted with a lifeline alarm connected to Worcestershire Telecare, so that help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at the touch of a button.

In addition to accommodation, we offer a range of services to maintain people's independence, whether they require short term (such your carer being away) help in an emergency or on-going long term support. These services include:-

- Personal care – assistance with washing, dressing, eating or taking medication. We will give you a timed appointment for the visits and will always try to be on time (however, we ask you to allow a 15 minute tolerance due to factors outside our control such as traffic).
- Support services – to assist people to maintain a presence and participate in their community and to help them with activities of daily living.
- Out of hours Emergency Response Service – linked to Worcestershire Telecare, we are able to send trained staff out in an emergency, including falls. We aim to reach all call outs within 20 minutes.
- Respite Care – based in one of our Extra Care Schemes a fully furnished apartment offers short term stays with onsite carers, catering and activities.

### Quality

We are committed to providing excellent quality services. Our Personal Care and Extra Care services are regulated and inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Their inspection reports are published on the CQC website, and on our own website.

### Contact details:

For further details on any of the Care and Support services we offer visit our website: [www.careandsupport24.co.uk](http://www.careandsupport24.co.uk) or contact us at:

Care and Support24  
3 Foley Grove, Foley Business Park  
Kidderminster  
Worcestershire  
DY11 7PT

Email: [care24@communityhg.com](mailto:care24@communityhg.com)  
Tel: 01562 733226

## HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF WE HAVE MET THESE SERVICE STANDARDS?

We will collect and report on the levels of customer satisfaction for different service areas. These reports will be issued to our Group Board, the Customer Voices and Assurance Group and published on our website.

The Customer Voice and Assurance Group and Group Board will receive regular reports on performance against our Customer Engagement Strategy.

We will also involve tenants in reviewing our performance, reviewing standards and identifying ways to improve the service.

If you would like to be involved please email [information@communityhg.com](mailto:information@communityhg.com) or call 0800 169 5454.

This information will be reviewed each year and we welcome your comments on how it can be improved.

We are committed to involving customers in the running of the Group.

**If you or someone you know would like this booklet in another format or language, please contact us on 01562 733032**

আপনি যদি এর একটি প্রতিলিপি আপনার ভাষায় পেতে ইচ্ছা করেন, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে (স্ট্যাটেজি এবং মার্কেটিং টিম) কে যোগাযোগ করুন এই নম্বরে 01562 733032

Aby otrzymać kopię tego dokumentu w swoim języku, należy skontaktować się z zespołem ds pod numerem telefonu 01562 733032.



**THE COMMUNITY  
HOUSING GROUP**

The Community Housing Group Limited  
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