

Housing Services Customer Service Standards Our Commitment to you

The Government requires all councils and registered providers to work to key national standards and to agree local standards with tenants.

This leaflet sets out the service standards you can expect from the Council as your landlord.



Winchester
City Council

Introduction

The City Council is committed to delivering excellent landlord services, and is continuously looking to develop ways in which we can improve on them.

This leaflet sets out in detail our current range of services and the standards that you can expect from us as your landlord.

These service standards were agreed, following consultation with all tenants, and through discussions with tenant and resident groups in. Feedback from customers has been taken into account in drawing up these service standards.

You are welcome to comment further on these standards, and to become involved in setting all of our service standards for the future.

We will regularly monitor our performance against these standards and report this through the Housing pages on the Council website (www.winchester.gov.uk/housing). Also, look out for the Annual Report on the Council's Housing Services page, which is available to every tenant in October of each year. A copy of the latest report is also available through the website (www.winchester.gov.uk/tenantvoice).

For information: the Council's general Customer Service standards is available on request or can be viewed at www.winchester.gov.uk/customer-care or search customer care standards

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Tenant Involvement and Customer Care

Customer Service, Choice and Complaints

We will:

- Treat you fairly and respectfully.
- Try to get things right first time.
- Listen to your ideas and use your feedback to improve our services.
- Respond to letters and emails within 10 working days and answer telephone calls within 20 seconds.
- Respond to complaints within 10 working days and escalate it if you feel our initial response is unsatisfactory.

Involvement and Empowerment

We will support formal tenant involvement by:

- Providing financial support for recognised tenant and resident groups including an annual grant and start up grants for new groups.
- Providing access to meeting rooms, photocopying and stationery and help to set up and encourage accountable tenant and residents' groups in your area.
- Encouraging individual tenants and leaseholders to give us their views on our services through surveys and ad-hoc groups on service issues.

Understanding and Responding to Diverse Needs of Tenants

We will:

- Aim to know the needs and profile of all of our customers.
- Train officers with the skills to be able to respond to different needs.
- Provide translations, tapes and large print leaflets on request, or arrange for an interpreter to support you at meetings about your tenancy.
- Provide a portable hearing loop for meetings or interviews at your home or in our offices.

Maintaining Your Home

Quality of Accommodation

We will:

- Maintain homes to the Decent Homes Standard.
- Continue to give priority to providing wet rooms and other aids and adaptations (subject to assessment).
- Work with other organisations to improve safety and parking on estates.

Repairs and Maintenance

We will:

- Complete 95% of jobs within target times.
- Aim to achieve 98% satisfaction levels on all satisfaction survey questions for repairs, planned works and disabled adaptations.
- Arrange appointments for 100% of pre-inspections and works issued to our contractor for completion (except emergencies) and offer a morning or afternoon appointment.
- Operate an out of hours emergency service, 5pm – 8.30am Monday – Friday, weekends & bank holidays.
- Inspect external and internal communal areas of our properties every 5 years and carry out repairs and painting as necessary.
- Carry out 100% of gas servicing by appointment.
- Check annually all carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors.
- Carry out aids and adaptations work for elderly or disabled people after an assessment by an Adult Services Occupational Therapist.
- Carry out a programme of planned maintenance to homes including replacement kitchens within available resources.

Allocating Homes and Setting Rents

Allocations

The Hampshire Home Choice Lettings Scheme includes all social housing providers in the East Hampshire, Eastleigh, Havant, Test Valley and Winchester council areas.

We all allocate housing using the following rules:

- 100% of social lettings to which the Councils have nomination rights to be made through the scheme.
- Help customers make bids for properties across the Council areas.
- To meet housing need.
- To let social housing in a fair and open way.

Rents

We will:

- Offer a wide range of payment options.
- Take a firm but proactive and personal approach to managing rent arrears. Provide options and assistance for repaying your debt, taking legal action as a last resort.
- Provide basic debt advice or refer you to the Citizens Advice Bureau specialist money advisor or a support agency if you are having difficulty paying your rent.

Tenancy

We will:

- Give introductory tenancies to all new tenants.
- Give secure tenancies if you are an existing secure or assured tenant or if you have successfully held an introductory tenancy with us for a period usually of 12 months.
- Meet all new tenants at a sign up interview and arrange a home visit for all tenants in the first 4 weeks of their tenancy. Introductory tenants also receive a home visit after 9 months.
- Aim to re-let all properties within 15 days once the tenancy has been terminated.
- Publish a Tenants Handbook.

Looking After Your Neighbourhood and Communal Areas

Neighbourhood Management

We will:

- Keep your estate clean and tidy.
- Carry out inspections of all our communal areas and deal with any issues quickly and efficiently.
- Remove racist or obscene graffiti within 24 hours.
- Make improvements to neighbourhoods through the estates improvement programme.

Local Area Co-operation

We will:

- Work with other agencies to make our estates and homes safe and peaceful environments for people to live in.
- Make an active contribution to the work of the Winchester Community Safety Partnership.
- Work in partnership with other agencies to provide additional services for tenants.

Anti-Social Behaviour

We will:

- Treat all reports of nuisance, anti-social behaviour, harassment and domestic abuse seriously and confidentially.
- Contact or visit any victims of harassment or domestic abuse within 24 hours of receiving a complaint.
- Take swift legal action where appropriate.
- Support victims or witnesses to be re-housed where the situation is very serious or life threatening.
- Provide witness support, access to assessment and mediation services and supported housing services for both victims and perpetrators where appropriate.

Value for Money

The Council's current local standards in this area are:

We will:

- Aim to be in the top 25% for performance for all key performance indicators.
- Aim to keep our management costs below average for district councils.
- Report our performance to all tenants in the Annual Report and monthly on our website.
- Compare our service costs and quality against other landlords and learn from them.

Complaints

The City Council aims to provide good-quality, cost effective services, but recognises that, at times, things can go wrong. If they do, we need to know so we can put them right and learn from them.

If you are unhappy with something the Council has done, you should write or speak to the relevant manager and tell them the problem. The manager will try to sort out any mistake or misunderstanding straight away. Sometimes it may take longer, but they will respond to your complaint within 10 working days of you contacting us. All complaints are dealt with discreetly.

How to make a complaint

1. You can use the online complaints form (www.winchester.gov.uk/complaints) to send us your comments about any of our services.
2. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us and let us know what you think in writing or by telephone, e mail, fax and text message. Full contact details are available on the back page of this leaflet.

We work hard to make sure you are happy with our services and appreciate you taking the time to contact us with your feedback.

Contact

You can contact us:-

By phone on 01962 848 400

In person or in writing at our offices:

City Offices,
Colebrook Street,
Winchester, SO23 9LJ

By sending an e-mail to housing@winchester.gov.uk

On our website:

www.winchester.gov.uk/complaints

For queries about the complaints process:

Customer Service

Phone: 01962 840 222

Email: customerservice@winchester.gov.uk

Chief Executive's Office

Phone: 01962 840 222

Email: chiefexecutive@winchester.gov.uk



The Government Standard

If you have any particular needs which affect how you are able to use or be involved in our services or how you would like to receive information for example translation, interpreters, Braille, audio tape, large print, sign language - please contact the Customer Service Centre either by

telephone 01962 840 222

or by **email customerservice@winchester.gov.uk**