



# Customer Charter

Our commitment to you

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Welcome to our first Customer Charter, which outlines the service you can expect to receive as one of our customers.

Our Improving Lives 2025 strategy outlines how we intend to do even more for our customers and communities over the next five years and beyond.

This Charter, which has been developed using feedback from our customers, features 11 commitments that we pledge to help us to deliver our 2025 strategy.

We'll keep you regularly updated about how we're performing against the Charter, but we also want to hear your feedback on what we're doing right and how we can improve the service we deliver to you.

To find out more about the Group, visit our website at [longhurst-group.org.uk](https://www.longhurst-group.org.uk), where you'll also find details of how you can give your views and get involved in help shaping the service we deliver to you.



# 1 Getting in touch with us

Providing excellent customer care is really important to us and is seen as everyone's job at Longhurst Group. Whether you contact us by phone, through our website or social media, in writing or by visiting us in person, we're always here to help.

## Our promises to you

- ▶ We'll take pride in delivering high-quality services
- ▶ We'll answer your call promptly and in a polite and courteous way
- ▶ If possible, we'll aim to resolve your query on the same day
- ▶ If we need more time, we'll let you know and reply to your enquiry within two working days. If it's going to take a little longer, we'll let you know and keep you informed of progress
- ▶ We'll listen carefully, identify your needs and requirements and clarify these with you
- ▶ We'll be clear about what we can do and when
- ▶ We'll keep the promises we make and keep you up-to-date
- ▶ We'll always be fair and respectful
- ▶ We'll give you the right information at the right time
- ▶ We'll let you know if there's a problem or any change to what we said we'd do
- ▶ We'll respect your privacy and treat your information in a sensitive manner
- ▶ We'll visit you at home if you'd like us to
- ▶ We'll offer extra support, either upon request, or where we feel this is necessary
- ▶ We'll protect your personal data and let you know how we use it.

# 2 Your voice

It's really important to us that we engage with you and act on your feedback to help us further improve the services we deliver to you.

## Our promises to you

- ▶ We'll take time to understand your needs and match services to your requirements
- ▶ We'll actively request your views and act on your feedback – whether positive or negative
- ▶ We'll let you know how your feedback has made a difference
- ▶ We'll offer support so that everyone has the opportunity to be engaged
- ▶ All of our decisions will be made after considering your needs and feedback
- ▶ We'll offer lots of different ways to get involved – such as surveys, clean and green inspectors, becoming a mystery shopper, attending a regional conference, joining our customer forum and much more
- ▶ We'll use a range of communication methods to suit your needs
- ▶ We'll continue to encourage diversity in all our engagement work to make sure we gain broader feedback and ensure we consider all viewpoints
- ▶ We'll provide regular updates of how we're performing as your landlord.



### 3 Dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB)

We do everything we can to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour and we'll always deal with these issues in a prompt and sensitive way.

#### Our promises to you

- ▶ We'll investigate all ASB reports and keep you fully informed of what's happening
- ▶ We'll take every report seriously and respond to your case within five working days, or within one working day for particularly serious cases
- ▶ We'll regularly review timescales with you and keep you up-to-date as agreed
- ▶ We'll offer a tailored approach to resolving anti-social behaviour so it meets your individual requirements
- ▶ We'll work in partnership with the police, local authorities and other partner agencies
- ▶ We'll provide support to help you to report anti-social behaviour and make reporting accessible and easy
- ▶ We'll treat everyone fairly and sensitively during our investigations and base our response on the evidence available
- ▶ We'll make sure any information provided to us is handled in a sensitive manner
- ▶ We'll use a range of remedies to resolve your case
- ▶ We'll always be open, honest and give you a realistic solution.





## 4 Repairing your home

We'll maintain your home to a good standard and aim to provide a quality repair service. Our partner contractors have agreed to these promises and will carry these out on our behalf.

### Our promises to you

- ▶ We'll make sure your home is safe and secure
- ▶ We'll make it easy for you to report your repairs
- ▶ We'll give you a choice of appointments
- ▶ We'll carry out appointed repairs within 21 days and heating repairs within 10 days
- ▶ All planned repairs will be completed within 35 days
- ▶ We'll provide an emergency repairs service (24-hours a day, 365 days a year)
- ▶ We'll carry out your gas safety checks every year (we must do this by law)
- ▶ We'll keep you up to date with any changes to your repair request
- ▶ We'll aim to complete the repair on the first visit to your home
- ▶ We'll also send you a text to confirm your appointment and a reminder the day before
- ▶ If an appointment needs to be changed for any reason, we'll let you know as soon as possible.
- ▶ After a repair, our contractors will leave the area clean and tidy and remove any rubbish.
- ▶ When carrying out a repair, contractors will follow appropriate health and safety regulations at all times
- ▶ We'll always respect you and your home
- ▶ We'll make sure all services affected by the work are left in full working order
- ▶ We'll report any repairs to newly-built homes on your behalf and keep you up-to-date
- ▶ To avoid any delays, we'll also let you know when a repair is your responsibility.

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## 5 Improving your home

Every year, we invest millions of pounds to improve our homes and make sure we provide safe, comfortable homes with modern facilities. Examples include new heating systems, kitchens, bathrooms, external doors, windows and replacement roofs. We carry out surveys to help us decide which improvements are a priority. This ensures that homes in greatest need of improvement are addressed first.

### Our promises to you

- ▶ We'll carry out improvements where needed to make sure all homes meet the decent homes standard
- ▶ We'll carry out a home survey every five years to make sure our investment plans are kept up-to-date
- ▶ When we'd like to make improvements to your home, we'll tell you three months in advance (as a minimum)
- ▶ We'll always consult with you about any improvements that we'd like to carry out to your home
- ▶ We'll provide you with an information pack containing details of the planned works
- ▶ Before any work starts, we'll contact you at least one month before, to let you know who'll be carrying out the work and when
- ▶ We'll always ask you if there are special requirements or adaptations that we need to carry out as part of the improvement work
- ▶ Our contractors will call you before the work is due to start to arrange a convenient time
- ▶ We'll always consider any requests from you to carry out your own home improvements promptly and let you know the outcome (within 10 working days of receiving your request).

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## 6 Payments to us

If you're having problems paying your rent or any other payments, then you should tell us straight away so we can work with you to resolve any difficulties.

### Our promises to you

- ▶ We'll make paying easy
- ▶ We'll help you to view your rent balance and statements any time using My Account – please let us know if you need us to send registration details.
- ▶ We'll work with you if you're facing financial difficulties
- ▶ When needed, we'll help you to agree a plan to help you repay any money you owe
- ▶ We'll contact you to advise how much you owe and the action we need to take
- ▶ We'll provide advice on the benefits available to you, or refer you to our Money Advice Team for specialist advice – please contact us if you feel you'd benefit from speaking with a member of the team
- ▶ On request, we'll provide you with access to up-to-date rent statements
- ▶ We'll clearly explain any changes to your rent and service charges.

## 7 Your tenancy

From the moment you join as one of our customers, our dedicated team will always be here to help. We'll also provide an efficient service should you decide to move home or leave.

### Becoming a Longhurst Group customer

- ▶ We'll always assess affordability and your ability to take on a tenancy with us so we can match to your individual requirements
- ▶ We'll help you prepare for starting a tenancy with us
- ▶ We'll let homes fairly and as quickly as possible
- ▶ We'll only let homes in a good state of repair and cleanliness.

### Starting your tenancy

- ▶ We'll tell you who your Housing Team is and explain their role
- ▶ Before you move in, we'll give you a copy of your tenancy agreement and explain the terms and conditions of your tenancy
- ▶ When you move in, we'll give you a welcome pack with all the information you need to know
- ▶ We'll tell you about any pre-agreed work that is due to be done to your home (after you move in) and, where possible, advise when this will be completed
- ▶ During the start of your tenancy, we'll offer to visit you to see how you're getting on.

### Throughout your tenancy

- ▶ We'll consult with you on any significant changes to your tenancy agreement and inform you in writing of any changes
- ▶ When you move in, we'll check if you have any support and additional needs to help you maintain your tenancy
- ▶ We'll work closely with any agencies that you're already engaged with to help support you throughout your tenancy
- ▶ We'll match our skills and expertise to your individual needs and requirements so that the right people are providing the extra support you need
- ▶ We'll talk to you about any tenancy changes and what needs to be done
- ▶ However, if there has been a tenancy breach, we'll investigate and respond as appropriate, which may include legal action where we have enough evidence.

### Moving on or leaving us

- ▶ If your home is no longer suitable for your needs, we'll assess your situation and support you to find another home
- ▶ We'll offer a mutual exchange service, which enables you to swap homes with another of our customers. We'll make a decision and inform you of the outcome no more than six weeks after receiving your application
- ▶ We'll talk to you about mutual exchange so that you fully understand what it means to you and your tenancy
- ▶ If you decide to buy your home under the Right to Buy, we'll give you a decision within four weeks of receiving your application.
- ▶ If you choose to leave us, we'll clearly explain the next steps with you
- ▶ If you leave us, we'll tell you about the condition we expect your home to be left in – this will help avoid recharge costs.



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## 8 If things go wrong

If there's something you're not happy with, please get in touch straight away. Letting us know helps us to put things right and improve our service in the future.

### Our promises to you

- ▶ When we've done something wrong, we'll apologise and sort it as soon as we can
- ▶ We'll make sure our complaints service is simple to use
- ▶ We'll help you if you need assistance in making a complaint
- ▶ After you make a complaint, we'll contact you within two working days to tell you who'll be handling it and keep you fully informed of the progress.
- ▶ We'll give you a full response within ten working days
- ▶ We'll tell you what we'll do to put things right and when we'll do this
- ▶ When you give us feedback, we'll always respond positively and learn from what you have told us.
- ▶ At all times, we will respect confidentiality
- ▶ We'll check that you're happy with the outcome
- ▶ If you're not happy with our response to your complaint, we'll tell you how you can appeal.

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## 9 Communal spaces and services

Making sure communal spaces are safe is one of our top priorities. We'll tell you about the communal services, such as cleaning and grounds maintenance that we offer in your area and provide specifications that show the standards our contractors will be working to. We'll also tell you what you can expect from your yearly service charge.

### Our promises to you

- ▶ Communal spaces will be regularly cleaned to a good standard
- ▶ Communal grassed areas will be regularly maintained to a good standard
- ▶ We'll give you the opportunity to help monitor our cleaning and grounds maintenance services with us
- ▶ We'll carry out regular scheme inspections to assess any risks within our communal spaces and offer you the opportunity to join us on these visits
- ▶ We'll make sure all our communal spaces have the required fire safety measures in place
- ▶ We'll carry out fire risk assessments in all internal communal areas in line with our fire safety policy
- ▶ We'll carry out the necessary fire alarm, electrical and lift testing in communal spaces
- ▶ We'll continue to be a responsible landlord, making sure we take into account – and minimise – any impact upon the environment.





## 10 Buying a new home from us

We want to make the move into your new home as enjoyable as possible. Our knowledgeable team will be with you every step of the way to provide a service that's tailored to you and your needs.

### Before you move

- ▶ Our Sales Team will provide you with support and guidance throughout the home buying process
- ▶ The reservation agreement will set out the key terms of your home purchase, including the reservation period, purchase price and other important information
- ▶ We'll go through the specification and layout of your home and details of any pre-contractual information to enable you to make an informed decision.

### When you move in and after

- ▶ On the day you move in, a member of our team will welcome you to your new home
- ▶ You'll be given a detailed homecare booklet to help you settle in
- ▶ Shortly after you move in, we'll contact you to make sure you're happy with your new surroundings
- ▶ Your new home will be covered by an NHBC or similar industry regulated 10-year insurance scheme covering its fabric and structural integrity.



## 11 Monitoring our performance

We'll be honest with you about our performance and what we're doing to improve it.

### Our promises to you

- ▶ We'll ask for your feedback and tell you how we'll use it to improve our services
- ▶ We'll work closely with our engaged customer groups, which will scrutinise and challenge our performance and ways of working
- ▶ We'll use the mystery shopping feedback you give us to improve our services
- ▶ We'll carry out regular spot checks and quality assurance checks
- ▶ We'll regularly review and scrutinise key performance information, including our service delivery, financial and customer satisfaction
- ▶ We'll compare our performance against other similar housing organisations to see how we're performing
- ▶ We'll listen back to recorded calls to develop our team's skills and expertise
- ▶ We'll tell you how we're doing by publishing the results in our annual report, our website and Our Voice – our customer magazine, which is designed with the support of our Customer Editorial Panel.

## Additional support services

Our Improving Lives 2025 strategy directs us to provide services that support customers with their economic resilience and health and wellbeing. We'll continue to ask for your views so that we understand your needs and that of the wider communities we serve.

### ▶ **Domestic abuse support**

We treat domestic abuse sensitively and seriously. We're here to support customers who are experiencing domestic abuse and have dedicated Domestic Abuse Champions who are here to help.

### ▶ **Money advice service**

This service is open to all customers, providing advice on welfare benefits, income and managing your money, including basic budgeting tips.

### ▶ **Aids and adaptations**

We can offer support if you require adaptations to your home, such as grab rails, level access showers, ramps. We'll liaise with occupational therapists to make sure your request is assessed in a fair way and we'll then let you know as soon as a decision is made.

### ▶ **Tenancy sustainment**

Our Tenancy Sustainment Officers can help you if you're experiencing difficulties in managing your tenancy. They can work with partner agencies to make sure you're getting all of the help and support that you need.

### ▶ **Care and Support services**

We provide a wide range of services to help people who are at risk of homelessness or who require additional care and support.

- ▶ This includes services for people who are younger or older, homeless, experiencing mental ill health, living with learning disabilities or on the autistic spectrum and anyone experiencing domestic violence or who are in need of domiciliary community care services. We can also signpost customers to other services that we don't deliver ourselves.

### ▶ **Homelessness services**

We'll provide you with information showing you where you can seek advice within your local area if you are homeless or at risk of losing your home. Should you be at risk, we'll inform your local authority's Housing Options Team about your circumstances.

### ▶ **Community investment**

Our Community Investment Team is key to the delivery of our Improving Lives 2025 strategy. We'll support local charities and community groups to ensure that our communities are places where people are able to thrive and are proud to call home. Our work in this area will see us provide support and guidance with employment and training, as well as opportunities for customers to undertake formal qualifications.



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