



**Gloucestershire
Housing Association**

A MEMBER OF THE GUINNESS PARTNERSHIP

Service Standards

This leaflet tells you about the service standards that you can expect from us



**APPROVED
BY GHA RESIDENTS**



RESPECT Give respect Get respect

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- Large print
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- Face to face

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Introduction

We are committed to delivering excellent customer services. In this leaflet you can find the standards of service you can expect to receive in the following areas:

- Customer service
- Resident involvement
- Relet homes standard
- Repairs
- Grounds maintenance
- Cleaning of common areas
- Income management
- Anti-social behaviour
- Aids and adaptations

We will provide training and guidelines for staff on these standards and manage staff performance where appropriate. We will make sure we regularly review our staffing levels so that we have enough staff to achieve these minimum standards of service.

You can give feedback on our standards by calling us on **01452 529 255** or **08456 044 529** (local rate), or by emailing us at **customerservice@gloscha.co.uk**. If you prefer, you can give your views in person or in writing at our offices:

Gloucestershire Housing Association
 2 St Michael's Court
 Brunswick Road
 Gloucester
 GL1 1JB

Section 1

Customer care

We aim to provide the best possible service to you when you contact us or we contact you. The main standards of customer care you can expect to receive are:

If you telephone us:

- We will provide you with the opportunity to speak to someone or leave a voicemail message within 20 seconds.
- Our staff and contractors will always give you their name.
- If you leave a message we aim to get back to you by the next working day.
- When the offices are closed we will inform you of our out of hours service, together with when the offices will next be open.
- We will answer your call with a greeting, the name of the organisation, and the name of the person who you are speaking to.
- If you are not able to speak to the person you need, we will make sure that another member of staff offers to help you, or that a message is taken for the person you wish to speak to.
- If we transfer your call we will make sure that your call is announced.
- We will give you direct line phone numbers if required or requested.

If you write or send us an email:

- We will acknowledge all written enquiries within 3 working days and offer a timescale for a full response.
- We aim to provide a full response within 10 working days.
- If we cannot provide a full response within 10 days we will apologise and explain the delay, and let you know who is dealing with your letter/email and when you can expect a reply.
- We will answer your enquiry in a way that is understandable to you.
- We will be consistent in our written responses, in terms of language, font type and size.
- We will regularly review all written information produced by us.
- We will send out forms and literature on request, within 3 working days if in stock.

If you visit us at our main business premises:

- We will publish our opening hours on all offices, including our out of hours emergency numbers.
- We will keep our reception areas clean, tidy and welcoming.
- We will provide up to date information. If we cannot provide you with a particular form on the day that you visit, we will make sure that one is posted to your home within 10 working days.
- We aim to see our customers within 10 minutes of them arriving.
- If you have made an appointment we will make sure that you are seen on time.
- We will provide private interview facilities.
- We will publicise in advance any changes to our opening hours.
- We will provide seating and toys for children while you wait.

If we or our contractors visit your home:

- Our staff and contractors will always give their name and show you their identity badges.
- When you ask for a home visit we will offer you an appointment.
- We will leave a card with details of who called and a contact telephone number if you are not in.
- We aim to contact you on the day before if we are unable to make our appointment.
- If we need to visit you without an appointment we will respect that it may not be convenient, and offer an alternative time and date.
- We will dress appropriately, make sure we have all of the relevant paperwork and information with us, and respect your home environment.
- Before a home visit we will check with you if a translator is needed and arrange this.

Equality and Diversity

- We will treat all of our customers courteously, fairly and with respect.
- We will make our business premises accessible.
- We will provide assistance for those who need it, including interpretation, Braille, audio tape/CD etc.
- You have the right to see personal information that we hold about you.

If we get anything wrong:

- We welcome spoken and written complaints.
- We will apologise and aim to put it right.
- We will keep you informed of how we are going to put things right.

- We aim to learn from our mistakes and use information gathered to improve our services.
- We will publish a clear and concise complaints procedure and make this available in all of our offices. It will be sent to you by post on request.
- If we are unable to resolve your complaint through our complaints procedure, we will tell you how you can take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.
- We will publish information on our complaints performance.

In addition, we will:

- Show patience, understanding and sensitivity, and act in a professional manner at all times.
- Make sure we act within the requirements of the law at all times.
- Respect your right to confidentiality and the disclosure of information relating to you.
- Pass all positive comments to the right person.

How we will measure our performance:

- We will use our phone technology to monitor how long it takes for your calls to be answered.
- We will monitor a selection of customer calls to make sure that our staff deal with your enquiries in a courteous and efficient manner.
- We will carry out customer satisfaction surveys. This may be when you call, visit us or when we visit you at home. We may also call you to ask if you were happy with the last service you received from us.
- We will conduct regular mystery shopping exercises to seek customer feedback.

- For mail that requires a response, we will record the incoming and outgoing details and monitor response times.
- We will carry out spot checks on correspondence sent out by staff to monitor the quality of the written responses.
- We will carry out regular inspections of our offices.
- We will make use of reception exit polls to gather your feedback, comments, compliments or complaints about your visit to our office.
- We will record the time of visitors' arrival and the time they are seen to monitor our performance against the standard.
- We will make sure that a selection of customer home visits are monitored by an accompanying manager.
- We will regularly monitor all complaints through our complaints procedure to check our performance against our promise.

Our Performance Targets

95%

of calls answered within 20 seconds.

95%

of all letters are responded to within 10 working days.

95%

of all letters are acknowledged within 3 working days if a full response will take longer than 3 working days.

95%

of all customers are seen on time when an appointment has been made.

95%

of all customers are seen within 10 minutes when no appointment has been made.

95%

of all complaints are responded to within the agreed complaints procedure targets.

Section 2

Resident involvement

We are committed to involving you in all that we do, and the standards below, agreed with residents, reflect the priority we give to this.

We will:

- Provide a variety of ways for you to get involved with us.
- Provide funding and administrative support for recognised residents' groups, if required.
- Keep you informed about the things that affect you.
- Involve you in reviewing our services and policies right from the start of the process – residents will be part of our service review meetings.
- Keep in touch with you at least once a year.

How we will measure our performance:

- We will agree a structure for resident involvement with you and advertise this to residents in Viewpoint and on the website at least once a year.
- We will review our resident involvement leaflets with you and make them available to all. These leaflets will be advertised in Viewpoint at least once a year and will be available on the website.
- We will provide you with opportunities for training to help you carry out your role with us. The number of training courses held, and the number of residents who attended, are included in our annual impact assessment and reported to residents through Viewpoint and the website.

- We will provide a separate budget to fund recognised residents' associations, the details of which will be published at least once a year in Viewpoint and on the website.
- We will provide a minute-taker for meetings and prepare agendas when required. We will advertise the role of the minute-taker at least once a year in Viewpoint and on the website.
- We will provide the quarterly Viewpoint newsletter, which is reviewed by a residents' panel.
- We will provide relevant information to residents' groups, in local newsletters, through resident involvement updates and in the residents' annual report.
- We will make direct contact with you when you are due for a repair or improvement project.
- We will carry out customer satisfaction surveys to measure how satisfied you are with how we keep you informed.
- A list of service review group members will be published in Viewpoint and on the website, for each service review.
- We will advertise opportunities to review policies and services in Viewpoint and on the website at least once a year.
- We will make regular contact with our resident representatives.
- We will carry out regular estate inspections and surgeries, and advertise them in Viewpoint and on the website.
- We will provide local newsletters, and carry out personal visits where required.
- A record of contact with residents will be included in our annual impact assessment and reported to residents through Viewpoint and on the website.

Section 3

Relet homes standard

In all newly let homes you can expect:

- All standard services including water, drainage, gas where available and electricity.
- A heating and hot water system for the whole house that is in working order.
- A mains operated smoke alarm.
- Changed locks to front and back doors with a five lever mortice lock where applicable.
- Two sets of keys to mortice locks and Yale locks.
- Two keys or fobs to communal door entry system and sheds.
- Windows in working order with keys provided where necessary.
- Doors which are operating effectively.
- A clearly visible house or flat number fitted to the exterior.
- Vinyl flooring in good condition in the kitchen and bathroom.
- Floors, stairs and banisters which are in sound condition.
- Roof and gutters which are fit for purpose.
- Any fencing provided to be in a sound state of repair.
- An interior and exterior (including loft space) that is clear of all items other than those that have been agreed to be given to you. You will need to sign a disclaimer to confirm that you understand that you are responsible for the maintenance and replacement of any items left by the previous resident that are given to you.
- A garden or other external space tidied to a reasonable level.

- A safe main path to the front door and a path leading to a rear access.
- No graffiti on the interior or exterior of the property.
- An Energy Performance Certificate provided at the sign up.
- A functional kitchen which has (when space allows) a minimum of:
 - A sink, sink base unit, double wall unit, cooker space and fridge space, in a bed-sit, one, or two bedroom property.
 - A sink, sink base unit, double base unit, two double wall units, cooker, fridge and washing machine space in a three bedroom property or bigger.
- Where there is a space in the kitchen, supplies and a drain for a washing machine are to be provided, with wastes and supplies capped off where required.
- A functional bathroom which includes a bath or shower, wash basin and toilet.
- An enclosed bathroom light fitting.
- Plastic toilet seat.
- A thoroughly clean interior ready for you to move in, including all surfaces – floors, walls, skirting, windows, doors, frames, kitchen surfaces and cupboards.
- Limescale removed from bathroom fittings.
- Gas and electric installations tested and certified as safe. Where power is available in the empty home a full test will be completed and a copy of the certificate given to you at the sign up. If power is not available, a visual electric test will be completed before you move in. At the sign up you will be asked to contact the supplier to arrange for the power to come back on, and to contact

the Repairs Call Centre on **0800 318522** once the electricity is on to arrange for a full test to be carried out within one working day of your call.

In the case of gas where no supply is available, a test for leaks will have been carried out, and the meter capped, before you move in. You will be asked at the sign up to contact the supplier to arrange for the gas to come back on, and to contact the Repairs Call Centre on **0800 318522** once the gas is on to arrange for a full safety test to be carried out within one working day of your call.

Any built-in appliances left in place will be included in the safety tests.

- A decorating allowance to be given if the decoration is considered to be in a poor condition.

Up to £30 will be granted for each room that, in the view of the Maintenance Surveyor, requires decoration.

The total amount will be given to you at the sign up in the form of a Homebase credited card. This can be used at any Homebase Superstore for the purchase of:

- Wallpaper and paste
- Paints, varnishes and woodcare products
- Sandpaper, filler, sealant and masking tape
- Paste table
- Turpentine and paint thinners
- Scraper, brushes, roller and paint trays
- Dust sheets

How we will measure our performance:

- We will carry out post inspections of the work carried out by our contractors prior to letting the property.
- We will involve a resident panel in the monitoring of standards.
- We will make sure we obtain feedback from residents who have just moved into their home in respect of our standard.
- We will obtain feedback in our post sign up satisfaction surveys within six weeks of our residents moving in.



Section 4

Repairs

Responsibility for repairs is shared between us and you. As part of your tenancy agreement, we carry out most repairs to your home, but some repairs are your responsibility. For further information, please refer to our Repairs and Maintenance Manual. At all times we will try to put our customers first.

When you call, we will discuss the repair with you and tell you what response time category we have placed your repair in. Response times are measured from the date you report the problem to us. Emergency repairs are responded to within 24 hours, urgent repairs are responded to within 7 calendar days and routine repairs are responded to within 31 days.

We will:

- Answer telephone calls and letters promptly.
- Be polite, honest and helpful.
- Seek to recover the cost from you of repair work that we have organised in your home which you are responsible for.

Our staff and contractors who work in your home will:

- Make an appointment with you if they need access to your home.
- (Except in an emergency) carry out repair and inspection work between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday, unless a different arrangement has been made with you.
- Introduce themselves and show you identification before coming into your home.

- Let you know before starting work on the outside of your home.
- Explain what work they are going to do and how it will affect you.
- Be polite and respect your cultural beliefs and personal circumstances.
- Use dust sheets to protect your belongings from damage, dust and paint.
- Keep all materials and equipment safe, so as not to cause danger to anyone.
- Tell you how the work is progressing.
- Take reasonable steps to keep your home secure.
- Try not to damage your garden plants and let you know if this is unavoidable.
- Make sure you have water, electricity, heating and cooking facilities before they leave at the end of the day.
- Take away repairs and maintenance rubbish from your home and garden.

How we will measure our performance:

- We will ask for feedback through satisfaction surveys once our contractors have carried out the work required.
- We ask our contractors to tell us when they have completed the work and we check this information against our survey results.

Section 5

Grounds maintenance

Gardeners will visit schemes fortnightly, where residents pay a service charge for landscape maintenance work. Weather conditions can affect the type of work that can be done, therefore the day of the week on which gardeners attend may vary by up to 7 days. However, they must catch up lost time so that, on average, attendance is fortnightly. We use a colour-coded site plan, showing the areas to be attended and the different treatments/surfaces; these will be displayed on notice boards where we have them.

Where there is a local resident monitor, gardeners will call on them to report their arrival, and on completion of their work. They will also be given colour-coded plans.

On our behalf, our contractors will:

- Remove litter from all external areas of the scheme on each visit and before grass is mown.
- During the summer season (starting 1 April and ending 31 October), cut the grass fortnightly to approximately 20mm height and remove cuttings from site. Grass cutting work will be completed within 3 days of it starting.
- During the winter season, cut the grass once a month if required.
- During very dry periods, when the grass is not growing, suspend mowing for a period and water the grass instead, if instructed to do so by us. During very wet periods, suspend mowing in order to prevent damage to the lawns.

- Move any benches and other portable items to allow grass cutting of the whole area, replacing them later.
- Trim grass at lawn edges every month in the summer.
- Sweep the paths and paved areas clear of cuttings on the same day.
- Straighten and tidy lawn edges with an edging tool once a year, and remove trimmings from the site.
- Control weeds growing at the base of walls, buildings, fences, furniture, lamp posts and on other areas of the landscaping, twice a year, in March and September, using herbicide, in order to make sure a tidy appearance is maintained.
- Hoe, dead head and hand weed shrub and flower beds that have open soil each month, sufficient to keep them tidy and weed free.
- Dig over all shrub and flower beds at least once a year in the winter.
- Report dead and diseased shrubs or other planting and, if instructed by us, replace them.
- Prune all shrubs, roses, trees etc in February or March and at other times to make sure that paths and roadways are kept clear and that they do not interfere with grassed areas and buildings.
- Trim hedges in order to maintain the original height with vertical sides and horizontal tops (this will not be done between the months of March and June).
- Clear cuttings, litter, brambles and nettles from the hedges and surroundings at the time that trimming takes place, and remove the same day.
- Check trees every two months and attend to failed stakes, ties and other defects. Trees will be pruned as required during the winter.
- Maintain a 500mm wide grass-free area around trees on grassed areas.

How we will measure our performance:

- We will ask for feedback from the local monitor using monthly feedback forms.
- We will ask our contractors to tell us when they have completed the work and we will ask our staff to check the quality of the work.
- We will record and review all the reports we receive from residents about the quality of the work and will pass them to our contractor by the end of the next working day.
- We will carry out occasional surveys of residents' views.

Section 6**Cleaning of common areas**

For schemes where residents pay a service charge for cleaning of communal areas, our contractors will carry out the following activities either weekly or fortnightly, depending on the scheme:

- Sweep and litter pick all internal surfaces.
- Sweep and litter pick all external grounds areas where internal cleaning is undertaken but where there are no external landscaping works.
- Vacuum clean all carpeted areas.
- Dust and spot clean wall surfaces.
- Dust and wipe clean handrails, notice boards, skirtings, architraves, ledges, radiators, pipes, trunking, fire extinguishers and accessible horizontal surfaces.

- Dust and wipe clean handrails, notice boards, skirtings, architraves, ledges, radiators, pipes, trunking, fire extinguishers and accessible horizontal surfaces.
- Mop wash and disinfect hard surfaces to internal communal areas, making sure there is adequate signage visible to notify residents of wet and slippery floors.
- Damp wipe and polish communal doors, frames, finger/kick plates, furniture, glass screens/vision panels, ironmongery, balustrades, hand rails, entry control panels, skirtings, light fittings, sills, ledges and remove any marks on the lower walls.
- Remove all cobwebs and hanging dust at high and low level to landings, corridors and stairwells.
- Check internal and external refuse areas/bins for rotation at each visit and move as required. Refuse containers/sacks to be replaced and any loose bags bagged up and the bin areas left tidy on completion.
- Check and report missing, damaged and/or broken or defective light bulbs in communal areas.

Contractors will also carry out the following:

- Clean all communal windows and doors/frames/screens every 3 months externally and every month internally.
- Report to us immediately any items of bulk refuse on the estate, removing it from site within 5 working days if instructed.
- Clean communal light fittings annually.
- Remove any racist, sexist, homophobic or offensive graffiti which can be removed with standard cleaning materials and report back to us within 24 hours. For all other graffiti, or if special materials are needed, removal will be undertaken within 10 working days of our placing an order with the contractor.

- Machine-clean internal landings and stairs as appropriate for the material, annually, subject to our instruction to proceed. For example, carpets to be shampooed, vinyl to be stripped, polished and sealed, concrete to be scrubbed and sealed with appropriate dressing.

How we will measure our performance:

- We will ask for feedback from the local monitor using monthly feedback forms.
- We will ask our contractors to tell us when they have completed the work and we will ask our staff to check the quality of the work.
- We will record and review all the reports we receive from residents about the quality of the work and will pass them to our contractor by the end of the next working day.
- We will carry out occasional surveys of residents' views.

Section 7

Income management

Your rent is used to pay for the services which we give to you, including carrying out repairs to your home, and improvement to your home and the surrounding environment.

If your rent is not paid to us on time, it means that we have to cut back on the services which we deliver to you and your community, or charge higher rents.

Under the terms of your tenancy agreement you are responsible for paying your rent weekly and in advance.

We will make every effort to assist you to make sure that you are able to pay your rent and clear any rent arrears that may have built up.

We will:

- Provide access to free, confidential debt counselling and assistance with the Citizens' Advice Bureau within 15 working days of your request.
- Provide free, confidential welfare rights advice within 10 working days of your request.
- Send you a rent statement every three months.
- Send you a rent statement on request within one working day.
- Agree realistic payment plans, based upon full disclosure of your circumstances, if you are unable to clear your rent arrears in full.
- Use eviction as a last resort.

In addition, we will:

- Take prompt action to notify you of your arrears and seek to make personal contact wherever possible at an early stage of the debt arising.
- Offer free confidential advice at our offices, surgeries, a home visit or a meeting at a venue local to you, over the phone or by email.
- Offer lunch time appointments or evening appointments with your Housing Officer between 5pm and 7pm.
- Provide help with completing any benefit forms or dealing with any benefit queries.
- Provide a free benefits check to see if you can claim any more assistance.
- Provide a number of convenient ways of paying your rent.

How we will measure our performance:

- Monitor through customer satisfaction surveys.
- Through the financial inclusion monitoring framework and reports to Board.

Section 8**Anti-social behaviour**

We believe that all residents have the right to live peacefully in their home. We are committed to providing a positive response to any complaint of anti-social behaviour.

If you are suffering from anti-social behaviour, please report this to your Housing Officer in the first instance.

We will:

- Interview you within 24 hours for emergency cases or five days for non urgent cases.
- Agree an action plan for resolving the issue to include what we will do and what you will be asked to do to help resolve the issue.
- Keep you informed of the progress of a case at agreed intervals.
- Provide you with access to our policy, on request, within 24 hours.
- Contact you before confirming in writing that the case has been closed.
- Send you a satisfaction survey once your case has been closed, and contact you if you tell us that you are dissatisfied with the service.

In addition, we will:

- Provide interpretation if you need it.
- Consider providing additional security measures.
- Work with other agencies, such as the Police, to help resolve the problem. This will only be done with your permission.

Where appropriate, consider legal action against those who continue to act in an anti-social manner. This can include injunctions, anti-social behaviour orders or possession proceedings. We will also support any criminal prosecutions recommended by the Police.

How we will measure our performance:

- Monitor through customer satisfaction surveys.
- Through the anti-social behaviour monitoring framework and reports to Board.



Section 9

Aids and adaptations

We will arrange aids and adaptations for you if you need your home altered to help you live more independently. Mobility problems can often be overcome by carrying out alterations, and other changes can be made to improve accessibility, remove hazards or increase safety and security in your home.

Our agency will:

- Carry out home visits and assessments within 14 days after receiving an assessment request from us.
- Undertake minor adaptations to your home within 28 days after receiving an assessment request from us.
- Give advice and information on what is available with regard to equipment and aids.
- Keep you and your representatives informed at all times.
- Provide clear information regarding decisions and the progress of your request for adaptations.

In addition, we will:

Accept ownership of all adaptations which have been approved for installation, providing repairs and servicing as necessary. The only exception to this will be any portable appliances supplied and owned by agencies such as Social Services, for example, hoists or bath seats.

How we will measure our performance:

- We will inspect a sample of works carried out either during or after completion to make sure that quality and health and safety requirements are met.
- We will ask you to complete a satisfaction survey after work has been done and use your feedback to improve the service.



Equality and Diversity

We are committed to eliminating discrimination and to promoting good relations and equality of opportunity in all aspects of our business. We will treat all service users, fairly and equally, regardless of their sex, trans-gender status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital status, civil partnership status, age, race, colour, nationality, national origins, ethnic origin or disability.



Gloucestershire Housing Association

A MEMBER OF THE GUINNESS PARTNERSHIP

Leaflet updated March 2010

2 St Michael's Court
Brunswick Road
Gloucester
GL1 1JB

T. 01452 529 255 / 08456 044 529 (local rate)
F. 01452 310 520
E. info@glosa.co.uk
W. www.glosa.co.uk