



Our Local Offer to you

Since April 2010 we have been working within a new regulatory framework set by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). The TSA have asked that we work with our residents to develop local standards that show how we are delivering services that meet their needs.

We had already identified what matters most to our customers through the work we did reviewing our services in 2009. Last year we held four consultation events to check back with you that we had got this right. We have revised our existing service standards using the information you gave us and these now form our local offer to you.

Contacting Erimus Housing

Erimus Housing receives almost 100,000 contacts every year. This includes repairs reported to us. The top three ways you contact us are: by phone, visiting our offices and by letter or email. You told us that you wanted to be able to contact us in a way that is most convenient to you. You want us to treat you fairly and take account of any special requirements you may have. When you contact us by phone you don't want to be passed on to different people to deal with your call.

Our service standards

- You can contact us by phone, email, in writing, visit one of our offices, via our website or we can visit you in your home at your request.
- We will ask for information about you that we will use to help us improve the way we deliver services to you.
- We will always give you the opportunity to tell us how satisfied you were with the service you received.



Contacting us by phone

- All calls to our 08000 461 600 number from a landline are free. However if you are using a mobile phone you can contact us on 01642 233780 which is charged at local rates from a mobile.
- We will always try to deal with your enquiries there and then without the need to pass you on to someone else.
- If we are unable to deal with your enquiry at that point we will get the appropriate person to ring you the next working day.

Contacting us in writing

- When you contact us by letter or send an email we will reply to you within seven working days.
- We will make sure that we provide you with a name and telephone number of who to contact in all correspondence we send to you.
- We will give you a response in a larger print, a different language or a different format if you let us know that you need this.

Our Local Offer to you

Visiting one of our offices

- Our receptionists will see all customers who visit us in person within five minutes.
- We will provide you with a private interview room if you ask.
- If English is not your first language we will make a translation service available to you.

If you are not happy with the service we provide

- All feedback you give us will be used to improve the way we deliver services.
- We will try and resolve your complaint at the point of contact. Where we are unable to do this we will pass your complaint to a manager to investigate.
- We will publish details of what we have changed based on your feedback in our newsletters.

How will we monitor these standards?

- By checking the number of calls dealt with at the first point of contact.
- By asking customers if they were happy with the way we dealt with their enquiry.
- By checking that we respond to letters and emails in timescales.
- By asking customers if they are happy with the way we dealt with their complaint.
- We will report changes made to our service as a result of feedback to customers in our newsletter and via our website.



Repairs

Every year you report over 45,000 repairs to us. You told us that you want us to make an appointment with you for the work to be done at a time that suits you. Whenever possible you want the repair completed right first time, in one visit and, if we do need to come back, you want us to let you know when that will be.

Our service standards

- When you report your repair you can make an appointment for a time that suits you.
- We will telephone you on the day of your appointment to provide a better indication of when we will arrive and to confirm the details of your repair.
- We will, wherever possible, carry out your repairs on our first visit.
- We will carry the most commonly used materials in our vans to reduce the need to return to your home.
- If we can't complete your repair in one visit we will let you know when we expect to be able to complete it and keep you informed of any changes.
- If we can't do your repair when we said we would, for example in severe weather conditions, we will let you know when we expect to be able to do the work.
- Where we do not need access to your home to complete your repairs we will leave a card telling you what work we have carried out.

‘We will carry out the following repairs and treat them as urgent for elderly or disabled tenants: blocked sink; tenant has heating but no hot water; external dusk till dawn lights not working’

- All fixed gas heating appliances will be serviced every 12 months.

How will we monitor these standards?

- By asking customers if we gave them an appointment at a time that suited them.
- Checking the number of repairs we have to go back to because we did not get it right first time.
- If we were not able to complete repairs in one visit we will ask customers if they were kept informed about what was happening.

Major Improvements to your Home

We recognise that when we carry out major work to improve your home this can be very stressful. You told us what we can do to improve this experience for you. Whenever possible you want one surveyor to assess what work will be carried out to your home. All products and workmanship, including that of contractors, should be of a high quality. You want to be able to choose which fittings you will have. It is important that you are kept informed of what work will be carried out, when the work will start and how long it will take.

‘For those customers who cannot remain in their homes while the work is being carried out, due to severe illness or disability, we will help organise day care.’

Our service standards

- We will keep residents informed about the work that is to be done in their homes.
- Wherever possible we will use one surveyor to establish what work will be done in your home.
- We will consult with you before the work begins and give you choices on the products where appropriate.
- We will visit you before the work begins to explain in detail what work will be carried out in your home.

‘If you have a disability we will assess whether we can install any suitable adaptations to your home at the same time.’

- We will keep you informed of the progress of your improvement work.
- We will keep disruption to a minimum whilst carrying out the work.
- We will try and complete all major work whilst you remain in your property.
- We will inspect completed work, rectify any issues and ensure that you are satisfied.
- We will offer you an allowance towards the cost of redecoration once work is complete.

How will we monitor these standards?

- By asking customers if we gave them enough information before the work started and throughout the process.
- We will check how many surveyors visited your property to assess the work needed.
- By asking customers if they were happy with the quality of the products and the workmanship.
- By asking customers if they are happy with the improvements made to their home.

Moving Home

Our properties are advertised through Compass, our choice based lettings system. When you have registered with us you can search for a home of your own choice and do not have to wait for an offer of accommodation that somebody else thinks might be suitable for you.

You said that when you apply to us for a property or to transfer you want to know how long you are likely to wait for a property of your choice. Before you bid for a property you want more information about the costs of living in that property to help you decide if you can afford it. You want to move in at a time that suits you so that you can get benefits and services sorted out.

Our Local Offer to you



Our service standards

- We will tell you how long you are likely to have to wait for a property of your choice.
- We will provide with you as much information about the running costs of your new home to help you decide if it is affordable for you.
- We will agree with you, during the viewing, the date you will move into your new home and a timescale to complete any outstanding repairs.
- We will always try to get back to you at the time agreed with you and keep our promises.

‘Our Disabled Persons Housing Service will give help and advice on accessing more suitable housing if you are not managing in your home due to a disability or medical needs.’

How will we monitor these standards?

- By asking customers if they were happy with the information we gave them about their property.
- By asking customers if we kept them informed throughout the process.
- By asking customers if they are happy with the appearance of the property when they moved in.
- By asking customers if they moved into their new home on a date that suited them.

Tenancy and Estate Management

We want residents to feel safe in and be proud of their homes and the community they live in. You want estates that are well managed, clean and safe. It is important to you that we will take action against tenants who do not look after their properties or gardens. You want to know who your estate/housing officer is and to see them out on the estate regularly. When decisions are made about your homes, environment and the services we provide you want to have a say in those decisions.

‘We will work with you to identify any extra support you may need to help you to make your tenancy work e.g. by providing you with a suitable floating support package.’

Our service standards

- On your request we will visit you at home and discuss any matters that concern you.
- You may report any concerns you have about your property or the area in which you live in to any Erimus Housing employee who visits your home.
- We will visit all areas of your estate at least every eight weeks to undertake an estate inspection, checking for such things as acts of vandalism, repairs, fly tipping, overgrown gardens and open spaces and to identify future environmental improvements.
- We will publish a schedule of grounds maintenance for all estates and cleaning of communal areas so that you know when to expect these services.

‘We have developed, in partnership, a Learn and Let Live project for 16 -25 year olds to teach them the skills they need to sustain a tenancy.’

- We will check communal areas and grounds frequently to monitor the quality and frequency of services you pay for.
- We will notify you in advance of any of formal estate visits to give you the opportunity to take part.
- We will remove all fly tipping within 24 hours of it being reported to us.
- We will remove any graffiti within 24 hours of it being reported to us.
- If you report a breach of tenancy to us, for example, inconsiderate parking, we will investigate it within three working days.
- Where we believe a property to be abandoned, we will start action to regain possession within one day.
- We will make a decision on your request to make alterations to your home within 20 working days.

‘We have worked with communities to agree discretionary allocations to young people who would otherwise not be eligible for our properties and would have to leave the area and support of their families.’

How will we monitor these standards?

- We will check how many home visits we made at your request.
- We will check that our officers visit all estates at least every eight weeks.
- We will ask customers if they think their estates and communal areas are clean and tidy.
- We will check that graffiti and fly tipping is dealt with within 24 hours of it being reported.
- We will check that reports of tenancy breach are dealt with in the appropriate timescales.
- We will check that we respond to requests for alterations within 20 working days.

‘We have worked with communities to ensure that a proportion of our newly built properties go to those with local connections or are offered to our existing excellent tenants.’

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

We are committed to ensuring that all our residents enjoy their right to peace, quiet and security in and around their homes without disturbance or interference from others. You told us that if you are suffering anti-social behaviour you want us to treat your complaint seriously and deal with it quickly, keeping you informed of what is happening. You don't want to speak to different people about this and have to tell your story over again and that anything you do tell us is confidential. You want us to work with you to resolve the anti-social behaviour in a way that suits you.

Our service standards

- We will contact you within one working day following a report of ASB.
- You will have a dedicated named officer who will deal with your report of ASB.

‘Working with customers, other registered social landlords and community safety partners we have created a Stockton anti-social behaviour standard that covers 95% of the social housing stock in the borough. This ensures that all residents of these landlords receive the same high standards when reporting ASB.’

- We will work with you to put together an action plan on how we will deal with your report of ASB and provide you with a copy of this.

Our Local Offer to you

- We will always get back to you at the time agreed with you in your action plan and keep our promises.

‘Where ASB is identified as a particular problem we will use a range of measures including installing CCTV, officers will make more regular visits to areas, we will use an external security company for out of hours monitoring.’

How will we monitor these standards?

- By checking that we contacted customers who reported ASB within one working day of the report.
- By checking how long it takes us to deal with each case.
- By asking customers if they were happy with the advice we gave them and the options to resolve the problem.

Rent and other Income Collection

The rent we charge is calculated in line with government guidelines to make sure that we are charging you a fair amount for your property.

We are aware that some people suffer financial hardship and we are working to reduce this through providing alternatives to high cost doorstep lenders and making sure our customers are claiming all of the benefits they are entitled to. You told us that you want to feel that the rent you pay is affordable and value for money. You would like a range of ways to pay your rent and service charges. When we send you letters and statements they should be easy to understand.

If your account falls into arrears you want us to contact you as early as possible and offer specialist debt and welfare benefit advice to help you pay off your arrears.

Our service standards

- We will provide you with a variety of different payment options, such as direct debits, Paypoint, Post Office, telephone, online, debit/credit card, bank, standing order, cheque, housing office.

‘We have involved customers in developing our new rent letters and statements.’

- We will send a welcome letter to all our new customers advising them of the rent due after any housing benefit or Supporting People grant due.
- We will send you statements that clearly show the amount you have been charged, payments you have made, any housing benefit or Supporting People grant received and the balance on your account.

‘Northern Money provides low cost credit so customers don’t have to resort to loan sharks and doorstep lenders.’

- We will provide you with any debt or welfare benefit advice and assistance through the Tandem team.

How will we monitor these standards?

- By asking customers if they are satisfied with the choice of ways to pay their rent.
- By asking customers if they think our letters and statements are easy to understand.

‘Between April 2010 and December 2010 our Tandem team has helped a total of 247 customers claim £131,229 of benefits they didn’t know they were entitled to.’

- By checking how many customers are referred to our Tandem team.
- By asking customers if they are satisfied with the advice available on rent or on debt.

Service Charges

As well as the rent you are charged for your property, you may also have to pay service charges for cleaning to any communal areas or towards heating communal areas, lift maintenance etc. You told us you want a full breakdown of the costs of the services you are paying for, the frequency of these services, who is supplying the service and the individual costs of each service. You want to feel that the services you receive are value for money and that you can have a say when it comes to choosing services and contractors/suppliers.

Our service standards

- We will provide you with a full breakdown of charges for the services we deliver to you at least once a year.
- We will keep you regularly informed and consult you about any changes to the services you currently receive or the introduction of any new ones.
- We will only charge you for the services you are receiving.
- We will work with you to provide a quality service for minimum cost.
- Where practical we will provide you with a choice about which services you wish to receive.

How will we monitor these standards?

- We will check that the services you are charged for are delivered to the agreed standard.
 - By asking customers if they are happy with the information they have been given.
 - By asking customers if they are happy that we have taken their views into consideration when choosing contractors.
 - We will check that the amount you are charged for services is reasonable when compared with similar housing associations.
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Resident Involvement

We believe that tenants and leaseholders should be at the heart of the decision making process and that their views are important.

You told us that you want to have a say in the decisions that are made about services we provide but that not everyone wants to go to meetings. When we do consult with you we should tell you what we have done as a result of this.

Our service standards

- We will always make it easy for you to get involved with us at a level that suits you.
- We will promote the ways that you can become involved with us.
- We will clearly explain what we have done as a result of your involvement.
- We will fully support the formation of tenants'/ residents' groups and provide resources.
- We will provide and promote regular training opportunities for residents on subjects that interest them.
- We will ensure that all services are committed to involving residents and use your feedback to improve services.
- We will consult with you before we make changes to services that directly affect you.

How will we monitor these standards?

- By asking customers if they are happy with the ways they can get involved.
 - By asking customers if they think we take their views into account when we are making decisions about services that will affect them.
 - Telling you what we have changed as a result of your feedback
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Our Local Offer to you



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