

thirteen

Service Standards

The Thirteen Group's Service Standards are our promise to customers.

They demonstrate the way we will work and how we offer service in a range of areas including:

- customer services
- rent and service charges
- independent living (adaptations)
- neighbourhood services
- anti-social behaviour
- customer involvement
- money advice
- empty property management
- choice-based lettings
- leaseholds
- older person's service.

We have developed this range of service standards together with customers Thirteen Group staff and board members.

Delivering services on behalf of

thirteen
Care and Support

 **Erimus
Housing**

 **Housing
Hartlepool**

 **Tees Valley
Housing**

 **Tristar
Homes**

Service Standards

Customer Service Excellence

Our customer service experience is based on the following principles:

We will:

- ensure that we are easy to do business with
- ensure that our staff are trained and kept up to date of service changes
- deliver a `right first time` approach in all that we do
- listen to you, show empathy and be honest and trustworthy
- treat you with courtesy and respect
- provide quality services
- let you know when things go wrong, keep you updated and learn from it.

Customer Service

- Our Contact Team aims to answer your telephone enquiries within 30 seconds - if you leave a voice message we will respond within 3 hours.
- We will deal with 80% of your enquiries at first point of contact, without the need to pass you to another member of staff or another team. If the Contact Team cannot deal with your enquiry at the first point, you will be contacted by the appropriate member of staff within 1 working day.
- We will respond to enquiries received via email*, text and Facebook posts within 1 working day (*customer service email address.) Where we are unable to deal with your request at first point of contact, we will let you know who is dealing with your enquiry.
- our Emergency Out of Hours Service will be available at all times when our offices are closed

Rent and Service Charges

- We will send you statements on request that clearly show the amount you have been charged, payments you have made, and the balance on your account. Statements will be included with any arrears recovery letters that we send out. They will also be available via our on line self-service portal. An annual statement of account will be sent each April to all our customers who express a desire for this service.
- We will ensure that customer payments we receive are credited to accounts within two working days of us receiving payment.
- If your rent account goes into arrears, we will always attempt to make personal contact utilising your preferred method of contact prior to sending you any arrears letters.

- If you have difficulty paying the rent, we will work with you offering advice to get any help you need to get up to date with your payments.
- We will process and action account overpayment refund requests within ten working days of a completed refund request.

Independent Living Service (adaptations)

- When you approach the independent living team we will work with you to ensure that we understand your needs and identify a suitable solution first time.
- We will provide a named contact who will give practical help and advice before, during and after the works have been completed.
- We will make sure that you are kept informed of what work is to be carried out and what this involves.
- We will work with you to ensure that disruption is kept to a minimum and your needs are taken into consideration
- Complete minor adaptations with 20 working days
- Complete major adaptations within 80 working days of plans being agreed

Neighbourhood

- We will contact new tenants within 5 working days and visit within the first four weeks of their tenancy commencing.
- We will monitor all terminations with a strong focus on those received in the first 12 months of the tenancy commencing and reduce avoidable terminations by supporting customers to remain in our property whenever possible.
- We will visit all areas of your estate at least every twelve weeks to undertake an estate inspection with residents who wish to join us.

Anti-Social Behaviour

- All reported incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour acknowledged within one working day.
- Following a complaint being received, a dedicated officer will make contact with you to agree a course of action, including how often you want to be kept updated and how.

Customer Involvement

We will empower you to get involved, to help your community take ownership of local issues and involve you in the decisions made about the services your landlord provides. We will do this by:

- Involving you in ways that suit your needs such as online communication, meetings, events and offering bespoke support to your local community groups and partnerships such as help to apply for funding.
- Involving you in shaping and improving our services and helping to set the direction of the organisation.
- Providing relevant training that develops your skills for getting involved.
- Using innovative approaches to involve our diverse customer audience and contacting every new tenant within 6 months of moving in.

Money Advice

- We will provide you with free, non-judgmental, high quality money advice and guidance.
- Offer to call you straight back when you telephone the money advice and employability team, to save on your phone bill
- We will give priority to customers who are at risk of losing their home (starter tenant or who has received a Notice Seeking Possession), by offering a telephone or face to face appointment within 5 working days.
- We will offer a money advice appointment within the first 4 weeks of a new tenancy to ensure our tenants are claiming all what they are entitled to, understand what they are expected to pay and ensure they are getting the best deal on household bills.
- Customers who are transferring onto Universal Credit will be offered a telephone or face to face appointment within 10 days.

Empty Property Management

- Empty properties will be secured on the same day the keys are handed in, providing it is practical to prevent it being vandalised. The type of security will be considered to ensure it does not adversely impact on the neighbourhood.
- We will aim to complete property inspections within 24 hours of notification that the keys have been handed in.
- Properties will be checked regularly for fly tipping and to ensure the external areas are maintained.
- All viewings will be accompanied by an officer at a mutually convenient time. The officer will have knowledge of the neighbourhood, property attributes, including location of utility supplies, fixtures and fittings and where the stop tap is located.
- You will be provided with a named officer who will explain what works have been ordered and you will be kept informed in the event of any delays.

Choice Based Lettings

- We will register your application and make this active immediately if you bring all the required documents and information to your appointment.
- Contact you or your advocate within five working days to tell you what information you must provide if you have not supplied it with your application form.
- We will contact you using your preferred method, ie by letter, email or telephone.
- Progress on line applications contacting to request any additional information within three working days.
- Provide marketing details for properties and the local area including internal photos when available.

Leasehold

- Provide an annual itemised service charge bill in a clear appropriate format.
- Consult with the leaseholder prior to major works/refurbishments and any area that may have a financial impact on the leasehold service
- Listen to and respond to all enquiries fairly, consistently and confidentially.
- Offer an appointment to all potential/new leaseholders to discuss the implications of owning a lease.
- Provide a clear, comprehensive and informative welcome pack and handbook to all new/potential leaseholders.

Older Persons Service

- To answer emergency calls within 60 seconds.
- To keep in regular contact with you in line with your support plan, reviewing your needs as they change.
- Have adequately trained staff and robust safeguarding procedures to protect you and others from abuse.
- Gather customer's views and attend meetings, respond appropriately to requests made at meetings and feedback in a timely manner.
- Ensure that customer dignity and privacy is maintained at all times including when responding to emergencies.

More information

For more details about Thirteen's Customer Service Standards, please call tel: 0300 111 1000 or email: customerservices@thirteengroup.co.uk