



# customer service

Housing Division

South Northamptonshire Council

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## Our Mission

“The Council will through its community leadership, preserve, enhance, improve and develop the quality of life of all residents and businesses in the district.”

Staff, who manage your home, aim to provide a comprehensive service. We want to:

- Make it easy for you to contact us.
- Treat you with courtesy and respect.
- Keep you well informed.
- Offer you help and advice.
- Listen to your views.
- Help you get involved.
- Aim to get service delivery right the first time.
- Put things right quickly if they go wrong.
- Work in partnership with other agencies to make your neighbourhood a better place to live in.

We expect our staff to reflect our values, and:

- Act professionally in everything we do.
- Promote openness and honesty.
- Encourage new ideas and develop services.
- Promote equality.
- Work together to achieve our aims.
- Celebrate success and learn from our mistakes.
- Use our resources carefully.

## Equal Opportunities

We aim to provide equality of opportunity in all areas of our work. We know that certain groups and individuals in society face discrimination. We fully support all laws, which aim to ensure equality for all, regardless of race, gender, disability, ethnic origin, marital status or sexuality.

Our policies aim to ensure that all groups and individuals have equal access to our homes and services. We will not tolerate harassment or intimidation of any individual or group.

Where a group or individual has a special housing need or is disadvantaged we will aim to meet such needs or overcome the disadvantage.

We ensure that all staff, contractors and consultants we work with endorse our approach to equal opportunities.

In addition we are constantly reviewing our services to make sure they meet the requirements of new legislation and best practice in these areas.

## Service Standards

When you contact us we will always aim to:

- Answer your telephone calls promptly.
- Respond to any messages you leave promptly.

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- Provide you with a 24-hour emergency repair service every day of the year.
- Keep our offices open according to published times.
- Respond to your letters, e-mails and faxes within 10 working days.
- Offer you an appointment for all visits.
- Provide a translation or signing service if you need it.

## Repairs

For repairs that are our responsibility we aim to:

- Attend to emergency repairs within 24 hours.
- Attend to urgent repairs within 7 working days.
- Attend to routine repairs within 20 working days.
- Service all gas appliances once a year.
- Always tell you when we expect your repair order to be completed and confirm who the contractor will be.

## Managing your home

We aim to:

- Consult you if we plan to do major works to your home and when we do, take note of your comments.

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- When we carry out improvements to your home we will offer you choices of colours and fittings wherever possible.
- Deal promptly and effectively with any complaints about nuisance, anti social behaviour or harassment.
- Carry out regular inspections of our estates.
- Support community regeneration projects, which will improve quality of life on our estates.

## Involving you

We aim to:

- Publish and promote our Tenants' Forum and provide funding and training for it.
- Carry out regular customer surveys to get your views and act on the results.
- Respond positively to any suggestions to improve services.
- Treat everyone equally and let you have your say.
- Provide you with regular newsletters.
- Work in partnership with other agencies to make your neighbourhoods a better place to live.

## When things go wrong

- We will try to put things right straight away if you are not happy with our service.
- We will publicise, and ask you if you want to use our Complaints Procedure.

## In return we expect you:

- To pay your rent and other charges when they are due.
- To keep to the terms of your tenancy conditions.
- To keep your home and any garden in a clean and tidy condition.
- To keep communal areas clean and free of obstruction.
- To carry out repairs that are your responsibility.
- To allow our staff and contractors access to your home to carry out repairs and inspections
- Not to threaten or harass your neighbours, staff or contractors, and ensure that nobody in your home or any of your visitors do so.

## Our complaints procedure

We aim to provide a high quality, efficient and courteous service to our customers. We may not be able to give you the outcome you want, but we should always treat you properly.

If we fail to provide the service, we will endeavour to rectify the problem and apologise.

## How to make a complaint

There are a number of steps to take when making a complaint.

- In the first instance you should always raise your complaint with the officer you have been in contact with.
- If you are not satisfied with their response, you should then raise your concerns with the Head of Service who will investigate your complaint further.
- If the complaint is about a member of staff, it will be dealt with by the Head of Service.
- If you are still unhappy with the response you receive, your complaint will then be forwarded to a member of the Executive Team to investigate.

## How quickly will we respond to your request?

When making your initial complaint we will acknowledge receipt within 3 working days. We will provide a full response or details of the steps we are taking to investigate your complaint, within 10 working days.

## What happens if I am not satisfied with your response?

If, when our complaints procedure is completed, you are still not satisfied with the way we have investigated your complaint or the outcome, you can pursue the matter further through the Local Government Ombudsman. Please tell us and we will send you the appropriate form to enable you to do this.

Alternatively, you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman direct.

## Data Protection

Data protection legislation sets out what information can be held by organisations about individuals, and how this information is handled. This information, or data, is subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. The Council is the “data controller” and you are the “data subject” for the purposes of this legislation.

We recognise that you have a right to privacy and to expect that all personal information held about you will be handled sensitively, confidentially and in accordance with the law.

## Information we hold

We receive information about you from one or more of the following sources:

- From your application form when you apply for housing.
- From you and our records if you are a council tenant.
- If you live in sheltered or supported accommodation, we will keep records you have given us about your medical condition, your GP, next of kin and other support networks.
- From third parties such as previous landlords, banks and building societies, if we have, with your permission, taken up references about rent or mortgage payments.
- From your GP, if with your permission, we have sought confirmation of medical conditions in support of your application for housing.

## What is the information used for?

- To administer and maintain records about your tenancy.
- To ensure that the service we offer you continues to be the most appropriate for your needs.
- To respond to any query that you may have about your tenancy or rent account.
- To pass on details to contractors who provide repairs and maintenance services on our behalf.
- To update our systems so we can hopefully provide you with a better service.
- To disclose information about you to third parties under the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act.
- To disclose information about your tenancy to housing benefit.
- To enable us to consult you and keep you informed by post, telephone or email about our services.
- Use information about you for the purpose of research and statistical analysis.

We may use information, which is not of a sensitive nature, for other purposes relating to the Council's activities as a local authority. If you do not wish the Council to do this please write to the Head of Housing, South Northamptonshire Council, Springfields, Towcester, NN12 6AE.

## Caring for your Data

We promise:

- Not to hold information about you, which is excessive in relation to the purpose for which it is needed.
- To keep your information accurate and up-to-date.
- Not to keep data for any purposes longer than is necessary.
- To process your information in accordance with your rights under the Data Protection Act.

## Your Rights

You have the right to:

- Access personal data held about you.
- Request details of the information we hold about you and the purposes for which it is held.
- Inspect your file.

We are allowed to make a charge to cover costs if you want access to your personal information.

Translations to other languages and audio cassette,  
large print or braille versions are available on request.

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## South Northamptonshire Council

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Towcester  
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**DX:** 16938  
**Minicom:** 01327 322275  
**Email:** [housing@southnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:housing@southnorthants.gov.uk)  
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**Emergency:** 01327 322399

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