

## Customer service charter

# Anti-social behaviour

Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) manages tenanted and leasehold properties for Brent Council. We are committed to improving the quality of life for all our customers. The anti-social behaviour team is working to deal with anti-social behaviour that takes place in and around the council's properties.

Anti-social behaviour may be:

- using the council's property for unlawful purposes
- racial harassment
- noise nuisance
- graffiti
- using aggressive or threatening language and behaviour
- dumping rubbish

## Preventing anti-social behaviour

BHP has a clear policy and system for dealing with anti-social behaviour.

**We will:**

1. make it clear to tenants and leaseholders that anti-social behaviour is not acceptable
2. demonstrate by our actions that we will not tolerate anti-social behaviour
3. encourage people to respect the needs of others

## Dealing with anti-social behaviour

**If it should become necessary for you to report a problem, we will:**

1. acknowledge every reported incident within 5 working days
2. acknowledge racial harassment and serious cases involving violence within 24 hours
3. allocate your complaint to a case worker within 3 working days
4. aim to quickly identify and interview both parties within 10 working days
5. offer advice, mediation and support to resolve the nuisance
6. discuss difficult cases at the nuisance intervention panel
7. if necessary, take legal action against the offending party

It may be that the offending resident is vulnerable, for example the person may have mental health problems. We will still investigate the complaint and take action to stop the anti-social behaviour. The vulnerable person may be referred to other agencies for support.

If the offending resident is vulnerable or where the offending person admits fault, we will try to provide support to change the person's behaviour. We may use an Acceptable Behaviour Contract.

## Legal action

It may be that after the complaint has been investigated and mediation and support have been provided, that the anti-social behaviour continues. In cases such as this BHP will have no option but to take legal action

### If necessary we may:

1. obtain an injunction with power of arrest
2. obtain a dispersal order or crack house closure
3. serve an Anti-Social Behaviour Order
4. look at eviction or enforcing the terms of the lease

## Working in partnership

To enable us to continue providing quality services, BHP encourages customers to provide comments, complaints and feedback about services. Service improvement is important to BHP. Together we can find ways to improve the quality of life for our customers by preventing and taking action to prevent anti-social behaviour.

### We will:

- publicise the anti-social behaviour procedure to encourage victims to make complaints
- work with residents to resolve nuisance
- provide an annual report on nuisance and harassment to the Area Housing Boards
- give the results of consultation in our publications
- display this information in our public offices

## How to contact us

### If you are concerned about anti-social behaviour, please contact the anti-social behaviour team:

- |                          |                       |           |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| • telephone              | 020 8937 2951         | 9am – 5pm |
| • confidential hotline   | 020 8451 5050         | 3pm – 3am |
| • out-of-hours emergency | 020 8937 1234         | 3am – 8am |
| • email                  | info@bhphousing.co.uk |           |

Customer service charter

## Estate management

Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) is committed to providing a quality service to all our customers living on estates with communal areas. These are some of the services provided by the estate management team:

- estate cleaning
- grounds maintenance (including playgrounds and trees)
- removal of graffiti
- communal health and safety inspections
- parking and abandoned vehicles
- environmental improvements

All the work is carried out by contractors that work for BHP. The quality of the work is set in a contract and measured by BHP. To ensure that you receive the best possible service, the standard of work is inspected by BHP officers. The quality of the cleaning is judged using the standards set by the Environmental Protection Act.

We hold a monitoring meeting with our contractors every month.

### Estate cleaning

We will:

1. publish details of our cleaning schedules for each location where a service is provided, so you know what will be done and how often
2. carry out litter picking, sweep hard surfaces, wash floors, stairs and entrances
3. sweep lifts twice a day
4. remove Bulk rubbish and fly tipped rubbish (up to 4 cubic metres) within 24 hours
5. remove offensive graffiti within 4 hours of it being reported
6. other graffiti will be removed within 24 hours
7. carry out an inspection once a month for each location where a service is provided
8. have 80% of our sites completed to Grade A standard
9. expect 90% of our customers to express satisfaction

## Grounds maintenance

We will:

1. cut the grass, carry out hedge maintenance, leaf clearance and weed killing
2. carry out an inspection once a month for each location where a service is provided
3. monitor the condition and any work needed to playgrounds and the trees on the estates
4. have 98% of sites completed to our Grade A
5. expect 90% of our customers to express satisfaction

## Safe environment

We will:

1. carry out bi-monthly health and safety inspections of communal areas
2. raise communal repairs orders
3. assist residents with concerns about parking and abandoned vehicles in communal areas
4. consider environmental improvements as part of a 5 year programme subject to finance and consultation with residents
5. carry out yearly walkabouts on estates with resident / tenant associations

## How to contact us

If you need to contact us:

- telephone 020 8937 2400
- email [estate.services.team@bhphousing.co.uk](mailto:estate.services.team@bhphousing.co.uk)
- call into the One Stop Service
- or write to Brent Housing Partnership, PO Box 720, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 8ZQ

## Housing support services

Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) is committed to taking care of its vulnerable tenants and leaseholders. The housing support service aims to provide customers with help to remain independent. This is a time limited service, usually for up to two years. There is a high demand for this service.

We work closely in partnership with the Health Authority, Probation Service and the housing and social care teams at Brent Council.

We maintain a vulnerable register. A vulnerable person may be but is not limited to:

- a care leaver or young person
- someone with mental health issues
- a person over the age of 85
- a person over the age of 70 with a disability / vulnerability and living alone
- a person over the age of 60 with a form of disability. Includes those living alone with spouses who are elderly with a disability
- a person with drug or alcohol issues

You can find help by making a self referral or by being referred by your social worker, advocate or family member.

We can provide you with a structured support system to help with:

- claiming welfare benefits
- safety and security
- family and social contacts
- developing life skills
- maintaining a tenancy
- community safety alarms

The three stages of housing support services are referral, assessment and review processes.

### Referral

We will:

1. acknowledge your referral within 7 days
2. allocate a support officer to your case and make first contact within 4 weeks
3. if no support officers are available, the person who made the referral will be informed

## Assessment

We will:

1. arrange and carry out a joint visit
2. carry out a risk assessment
3. with your help, write a support plan with clear objectives
4. give you a copy of the support plan
5. monitor your case to ensure the support plan is carried out

## Review process

We will:

1. carry out a formal review at 6 months
2. decide when to carry out the next review
3. consider if changes are necessary to the support plan
4. discuss if you are now able to live independently

## Working in partnership

To enable us to continue providing quality services, housing support team encourages customers to provide comments, complaints and feedback about our service. Service improvement is important to us and can be achieved by working in partnership with other agencies and our customers.

We will:

- have a yearly customer forum
- arrange client based forums, four times a year
- carry out a yearly customer survey
- publish the results of consultation in our publications
- display this information in our public offices

# Repairs

## Our responsibilities

- keep in good repair the structure and exterior of homes
- maintain installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity, sanitation and space and water heating including: -
- basins, sinks, baths, toilets, cisterns and waste pipes
- electric wiring, gas and water pipes, taps
- water and space heaters, fireplaces and fitted fires
- sockets and light fittings
- external repainting (including minor repairs carried out before repainting)
- servicing lifts, district heating, & door entry systems & gas appliances
- major repairs to walls and roofs
- renewal of kitchens and bathrooms, electrical wiring and central heating

### You can report a repair by:

- phoning the repairs contact centre on 020 8937 2750 between 8am and 8pm Monday to Thursday and 8am to 5pm on Fridays
- Calling the out-of-office hours emergency number on 020 8937 1234
- On line via the BHP website at [www.bhphousing.co.uk](http://www.bhphousing.co.uk)

## When you call to report a repair

You will receive a receipt that shows what repair has been ordered and how long it will take to complete. Different times are set for different types of repairs:

- CATEGORY "0" & "1" EMERGENCIES within 4 hours
- CATEGORY "2" URGENT REPAIRS within 24 hours
- CATEGORY "3" ROUTINE REPAIRS within 21 working days

### We will:

- treat you with courtesy and show respect for you and your property
- make sure people working on our behalf always show their identity card
- consult you on priorities for improving our stock
- give priority to elderly and vulnerable customers
- take additional measures to ensure the repair is completed without too much disruption if you are disabled, elderly or vulnerable or move furniture
- consult you on priorities for improving our stock

### If we need to work in or around your home we will:

- tell you what we are going to do and how we will do it
- tell you how long it will take
- tell you any disruption it may cause
- keep you informed of progress and when the work will be completed
- protect your belongings
- use dustsheets if necessary
- tidy up before leaving your home

## Appointments

We will offer an appointment, except when it is an emergency and we will give you a choice of morning, afternoon or early evening. We will keep appointments wherever possible and notify the customer at least the day before if there are any delays. Customers will be reminded of an appointment a day in advance. If we fail to meet an appointment we will send a written apology and you can claim compensation of £10.

## How we will keep to these standards

If we do not meet these standards please tell us and we will do something about it.

- If our contractor fails to finish the work within 25 working days of the order being issued the customer has the right to ask for another contractor. This excludes:
- orders over £1000
- repairs to communal areas
- works that are part of major works or a planned maintenance programme
- works involving removing asbestos

We will monitor our performance against these standards by

- checking work in progress and inspecting a percentage of work when it is completed
- asking what you think about the service
- involving you and your representatives in assessing if standards are being met

To let you know if we are keeping to these standards we will

- publish the results in our publications
- display this information in our public offices

## New tenancies

Brent Council's housing is managed by Brent Housing Partnership (BHP). When you have been pre-allocated a property and have signed the pre-allocation form, we will give you support and advice. The void management team is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers.

We will:

- carry out repairs to the decent homes standard and ensure the property is ready to let
- arrange an appointment to view the property within 24 hours of notification by the council of your allocation
- meet you at the property on the day of the viewing
- contact you within 24 hours of the property being ready for occupation to sign the tenancy agreement

### Repairs to empty homes

When the property is empty, it is inspected by our technical officers. We arrange for our repair contractor to carry out repairs. Before you start your new tenancy, we will;

- complete all designated repairs to the empty property
- ensure the property is let to the decent home standard
- give you a clean, tidy, unfurnished property
- carry out a 100% gas and electric safety checks
- tidy the garden within the first week of your tenancy, if it's considerably overgrown

### Sign up

You will be told when the property is ready for occupation and we will make arrangements for you to sign a new tenancy agreement.

We will:

1. contact you within 24 hours of the completion of the works to sign up the new tenancy
2. issue decoration vouchers where necessary
3. give you a copy of your Tenancy Agreement and the Tenancy Terms and Conditions
4. provide assistance in completing benefit forms
5. give you a copy of the gas and electric safety certificates
6. provide a new tenant's information pack
7. advise you on getting help with furniture



# Rents

## Service standards

### We will:

- listen and respond to all enquires fairly and consistently
- send a rent change notice every time there is a change in your rent
- send any rent increases with the statutory 28 days notice
- send a rent statement to all current tenants every 13 weeks
- refund credits on accounts within 28 days of receiving the request in writing-subject to a housing benefit audit.
- visit your home if you ask us to
- provide information in different languages, braille, large print and on audio tape if required.
- ensure you are getting the correct benefits and try to maximise you income.
- give you a choice of how you pay your rent, including Direct Debit, cash, cheque, Standing Order, online, Credit/Debit Card, by post or home collection by swipe terminals in exceptional circumstances

## Housing benefit

It does not matter if you are in work, unemployed or retired you may qualify for housing benefit and receive some help.

Claim forms and advice are available from any One Stop Service, your local Income Management Officers, and the Rent Section or on the Councils or BHP website at [www.bhphousing.co.uk](http://www.bhphousing.co.uk).

You may also visit one of our housing benefit surgeries.

They are held on the first Tuesday of every month at the One Stop Service Hampton House, Dyne Road, Kilburn NW6 7XG, second Tuesday of the month at One Stop Service Brent House, High Road, Wembley and the last Tuesday of every month at South Kilburn community resource centre Albert Road South Kilburn NW6 5DE 10am-3pm.

## Rent arrears

Your rent is due in advance for the Monday of every week. If you get behind with your rent payments you will be in arrears. If this happens you should contact your local housing officer immediately who will discuss this with you.

Brent Housing Partnership will take firm action against tenants who get in to arrears and do not take steps to deal with the problem. If repeated attempts at collecting your rent fail you could end up in court and possibly lose your home.

## How we will help prevent arrears occurring

- we will explain rent accounts clearly to our tenants
- we will discuss issues sympathetically and confidentially
- we will advise you on any entitlement to housing benefit and welfare payments or refer you to a specialist advisor.
- we will help you complete any housing benefit claim forms or backdated information.
- offer you debt counselling with the Citizen Advice Bureau
- we will provide details of other agencies that can help you

## How we will tackle rent arrears

### If you fall behind with your rent we will:

- send a letter to you if you owe more than £25 explaining what you need to do
- make a further attempt to contact you if you have made no contact or your rent is not paid.
- try to make an agreement with you to repay any arrears, taking into account your income and expenditure.
- offer to refer you for independent advice if you so wish.

Before taking any legal actions we will ensure advice is always available, that housing benefit is up to date and that we have exhausted all other options. This will involve sending letters to your home and visiting your home telling you the situation.

We will treat vulnerable tenants with sensitivity and try to resolve any issues affecting payments before legal action is taken.

### Remember any debt could affect you in the following ways:

- prevent you from being re-housed
- details of debt may be given to a mortgage company or other housing provider if a reference is requested.
- affect your credit rating
- affect your Right to buy your council house

## Former tenant arrears

### If you are no longer a Brent Council tenant but still owe arrears – we will pursue this debt through;

- telephone calls to your home or mobile
- letters sent to your last known address
- contact a family member or employer
- a debt collection agency which will write to you or visit your new address
- tracing information to find your new address
- obtaining a court order
- putting a charge on your property
- deductions from your earnings

## Right-to-buy and leasehold management

The sale of Brent Council properties and the management of leaseholder properties are carried out by Brent Housing Partnership (BHP). We are committed to working with our customers to provide a professional service.

### Right-to-buy

If you are a Brent Council tenant you may be able to buy your home. The terms and conditions of the Right-to-buy scheme are defined by government legislation.

To start the process, you have to complete a Right-to-buy application form and submit it for consideration by BHP. If your application is accepted we will:

- arrange for your home to be valued
- calculate the discount (the maximum is £16,000)
- issue a RTB2 in 4 weeks
- issue a Section 125 offer notice within 8 weeks for a house and 12 weeks for a flat
- provide general advice on your application (please note we can not provide you with advice on mortgages)
- complete the RTB process for a house in 12 weeks
- complete the RTB process for a flat in 16 weeks

### Leasehold service charges

If you buy a leasehold property BHP will remain responsible for communal repairs and maintenance of the property. Leaseholders have to contribute towards the cost of these works through their service charges.

We will:

- send you a yearly service charge bill
- offer 5% discount if you pay the service charge bill within 28 days of the bill being issued
- send a quarterly service charge statement of your account
- collect 100% of the service charges owed to us and will take action to recover these costs under the terms of the lease
- offer repayment options or refer you to the Citizen Advice Bureau for independent money advice counselling

## Communal repairs for leaseholders

Leaseholders can report and request repairs to communal areas, but you are responsible for internal repairs to your home.

We will:

- calculate the cost of rechargeable communal repairs
- send you a list of all the communal repairs carried out every 6 months

## Major works and improvements for leaseholders

BHP is responsible for maintenance and improvements to the structure and exterior of the building.

We will:

- consult you prior to carrying out major works or improvements
- offer a loan facility to cover the cost of major works
- give you the option of paying for major works in 24 monthly instalments on an interest free basis

## Help with neighbour disputes for leaseholders

All leaseholders and tenants have the right to the quiet enjoyment of their home. Neighbours may have a dispute about issues such as anti-social behaviour or noise nuisance.

We will:

- offer leaseholders advice and assistance
- if necessary enforce the terms and conditions of the lease or tenancy agreement

## Tenancy management

For all new tenants, we will give you an information pack about your property when you move into one of our homes. We will visit you in your home within 6 weeks of you moving in, to check you are okay and the property and services we provide are meeting your expectations and:-

- advise you on handling your rent account
- discuss any concerns you may have as a new tenant
- refer you to the welfare benefits advisor if you require

Tenancy verification enables us to maintain personal contact with our tenants and to ensure the legal tenant is living in the property.

We will visit and verify all our tenancies at least once every 3 years.

The aim of the tenancy team is to provide a quality service to all our customers and we will:

- process your request for a succession of tenancy within 15 days
- process your application for separation of tenancy within 15 days
- on receipt of a report of an unauthorised occupier or abandoned tenancy visit within 24 hours
- on receipt of your mutual exchange form process your application within 42 days
- process your transfer form within 7 days of receipt
- contact you within 24 hours on receipt of an allegation of domestic violence

### How to contact us

If you need to contact us:

- telephone 020 8937 2424
- email [info@bphousing.co.uk](mailto:info@bphousing.co.uk)
- call into a One Stop Shop
- or write to Brent Housing Partnership, Chancel House, Neasden Lane, London, NW10 2US



## Neighbourhood warden service

To reduce crime and improve safety for residents living on estates, Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) has a neighbourhood warden service. This is part of our commitment to improving the quality of life for all our customers. Our aim is to create a better living environment through providing security.

We can help you deal with:

- abandoned vehicles
- rubbish
- racial harassment
- noise nuisance
- domestic violence

Any serious matter should be reported immediately to the Police by dialling 999.

### Warden services

The service was set up to make our customers feel safer when at home. This out of hour's service means that help is available between 3pm and 3am, if you are having a problem where you live. The wardens carry out regular foot and car patrols.

We will:

1. make it safer for customers to go out after dark
2. reduce anti-social behaviour
3. offer support to victims
4. target persistent problems

### Service provided

The neighbourhood warden service is available on council estates throughout the borough. Although the service is for BHP customers, we do have close links with other social landlords with properties in the area. We work in partnership with other agencies like the police and environmental services. If necessary we will use legal remedies to resolve problems.

We will:

1. employ uniformed wardens who will carry clear identification
2. provide a service from 3pm to 3am, 7 days a week
3. aim to attend calls within 30 minutes
4. hold weekly surgeries
5. provide a confidential customer hotline to report incidents
6. carry out casework for difficult cases

## Working in partnership

The neighbourhood warden service has been developed following consultation with our customers. To enable us to continue providing quality services, BHP encourages customers to provide comments, complaints and feedback about services. Service improvement is important to BHP. Together we can find ways to reduce crime in your area.

We will:

- provide youth activities
- publicise services
- take part in community events, youth clubs and resident meetings
- give the results of consultation in our publications
- display this information in our public offices

## How to contact us

If you are concerned about your safety on your estate, please contact us. We can take action to improve the quality of your life.

You can contact us by:

- telephone 020 8451 5050
- email [info@bhphousing.co.uk](mailto:info@bhphousing.co.uk)
- call into a One Stop Service
- or write to us at Brent Housing Partnership, Chancel House, Neasden Lane, London, NW10 2US