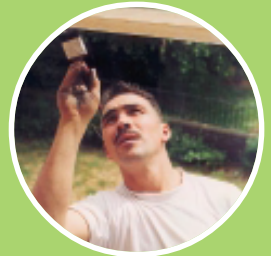


Tenants Charter



Service First

Tenants Charter



Section 1	Chairman's Introduction	2
Section 2	Services We Provide	4
Section 3	How to Contact Us	5
Section 4	How we will treat you	6
Section 5	Before you become a tenant	8
Section 6	Your rights and responsibilities	9
Section 7	Repairs and improvements to your home	11
Section 8	Moving to another home	12
Section 9	Buying your home	13
Section 10	Consulting and Involving you	14
Section 11	What to do if things go wrong	16
Section 12	Further Information	17

A leaflet describing how our actual performance compares with our stated standards of service accompanies this booklet.

Section 1 Chairman's Introduction

Dear Tenant,

I am delighted to introduce the Housing Executive's revised Tenants Charter.

The Housing Executive is committed to providing high quality services to its tenants. We have had a Tenants Charter since 1992 and have demonstrated our commitment to customer service by winning a total of 9 Charter Marks between 1992 and 1998.

The Executive's core values are:-

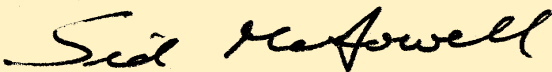
Fairness and equity, Value for money, Consultation and participation, Dedication to high quality and excellent customer service, Openness and accessibility, Professionalism and commitment to staff development.

These core values illustrate the importance the Executive places on the quality of our service to tenants.

We intend to meet the standards of service contained in this Charter. If we do so, we believe that you will receive the service you want and we will deliver a service which we can be proud of. If our standards are not met or if you are dissatisfied in any way I encourage you to use our complaints procedure, which is described in Section 11 of this Charter. I can assure you that we will investigate all complaints thoroughly and will put right any mistakes we have made as soon as possible.

I hope that we will be able to provide a level of service which you expect. If you have any comments on our service - good or bad - please let us know.

Yours sincerely



Sid McDowell Chairman



Section 2 Services we provide



The Housing Executive's primary aim is to provide housing for those in need.

It also provides a full range of services to its tenants. These services include:

Visiting you to provide advice and assistance on housing matters.

Carrying out repairs.

Collecting your rent.

Processing Housing Benefit.

Keeping the open spaces within estates neat and tidy.

Dealing with problems relating to housing in your estate.

Improving your home.

Consulting you about plans for your area.

Helping you to form a Community Association.

Providing or adapting accommodation if you have a disability.

Compensating you for disruption to your home.

The Executive also provides services to other members of the general public. These include:

Paying Housing Benefit for tenants of private rented housing.

Providing Renovation Grants for owner-occupiers and private landlords.

Providing temporary accommodation and assistance for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.



Section 3 How to contact us

The Housing Executive has District Offices throughout Northern Ireland. All the offices and their addresses and phone numbers are listed under Housing Executive in the Phone Book. If you are in doubt about which office you should contact speak to our Head Office on 028 9024 0588.

All District Offices are open from 9:30am to 4:00pm from Monday to Friday, with the exception of one afternoon each week when offices close for staff training. The early closing days vary from office to office. District Office phone lines are open from 9:00am to 5:00pm from Monday to Friday.

There are separate offices to deal with Renovation Grants. These are also listed in the Phone Book under Housing Executive.

On public holidays and outside normal hours an emergency repair service is available for Housing Executive tenants. This service can be contacted at 028 9024 6111 or 028 7126 2628. There are also emergency services' phone numbers listed in the Phone Book for people who become homeless outside normal office hours.

A minicom service is available for people with hearing and speech difficulties. To report repairs or obtain general housing advice phone 028 9031 1410 during office hours. This number can also be used for reporting emergency repairs outside office hours.

Information about the Housing Executive and its services is available on our Internet Website at <http://www.nihe.gov.uk>

Our e-mail address is:- info@nihe.gov.uk



Section 4 How we will treat you

We will treat information you provide with the strictest confidence.

In the Office:



- You will be treated in a courteous manner by a named member of staff;
- As a tenant you may always make an appointment by telephone, in writing or in person with your District Office. You can, if you wish, arrange to speak to the District Manager or a member of the Management Team;
- We aim to see everyone who calls into the office within 15 minutes;
- If you have an appointment we aim to see you within 10 minutes of your appointment time;
- We aim to provide access for people with disabilities. If access is not possible we will visit you in your home;
- We will provide you with information and advice on housing matters;
- We will help you complete forms if you wish;
- We will provide private rooms for interviews if required;
- We will display information about how our actual performance compares with our stated standards of service.



Letters:

- We will acknowledge all correspondence within 3 working days;
- We will write all letters in a manner which is clear and easy to understand;
- We will answer all letters (giving our name) within 15 working days;
- We will ensure a named member of staff signs each letter.

Phone Calls:

- We will answer all phone calls promptly and a named member of staff will deal with you in a courteous manner;
- If the person you wish to speak to is unavailable another member of staff will deal with your enquiry or we will return your call within 24 hours.

You have the right to:

- see the information you provided in your application for housing;
- know how your application for Housing Benefit has been worked out;
- know the reasons if you are not entitled to Housing Benefit;
- know how any decisions affecting you have been arrived at.

Section 5 Before you become a tenant

When applying to the Housing Executive for a home you have the right:

- to a free summary of our rules for deciding the order in which we allocate houses;
- to study the full rules at your District Office;
- to buy a copy of the full version for £10.

You are responsible for:

- providing full and accurate information about where you live and about yourself and your family;
- informing us if at any time there are any changes in your circumstances.

Before you become a tenant we will:

- provide free and impartial information on all housing opportunities in the area in which you are seeking accommodation, including that provided by Housing Associations and private landlords;
- visit you within 3 weeks of you applying for accommodation to assess your need for housing;
- place you on the waiting list within a further week;
- give you the opportunity to change the area in which you wish to be housed;
- give you the opportunity to view any property we offer, accompanied by a member of staff where necessary, before you decide whether or not to accept the tenancy;
- offer you another property if you do not wish to accept the first property offered.



Section 6 Your rights and responsibilities

When you become a tenant you have important rights. As part of your tenancy agreement you have the following rights:

- The right to security of tenure. Your tenancy will continue for as long as you wish providing you continue to live in your home and do what you agreed to do in your tenancy agreement;
- The right of succession. When you die your spouse or one other person who has been living in your home with you for at least twelve months may be able to take over the tenancy;
- The right to take in lodgers;
- The right to sub-let part of your home;
- The right to the quiet enjoyment of your home.

You are responsible for:

- paying the rent;
- taking care of the property;
- seeking permission from us if you wish to sub-let part of your home;
- making sure you do not create a nuisance that will affect your neighbours, for example, by creating too much noise or leaving rubbish lying around.

Before you become a tenant we will:

- tell you in writing if repairs are outstanding and when we intend to complete them;
- explain your tenancy agreement and issue you with a Tenants Handbook.

After you become a tenant we will:

- issue a rent statement every 3 months;
- give you 4 weeks notice of any rent increase;
- advise you of any entitlement you may have to Housing Benefit.

We will provide a detailed statement of how any claim to Housing Benefit was calculated within 14 days of receiving the necessary information.

We will pay you any money we owe you within a month of your claim for payment.

You should tell us if you believe a tenant is in breach of their tenancy agreement or is creating annoyance for other tenants. We will take action in a speedy manner. This may involve referring the complaint to another agency such as the police.

Section 7 Repairs and improvements to your home

You have:

- the right to carry out improvements and you may be entitled to a Self Help Grant for carrying out certain minor repairs;
- the right to compensation in certain circumstances when repairs for which we are responsible are not carried out in time.

You are responsible for:

- seeking our approval to carry out improvements or erect sheds and other structures;
- carrying out repairs listed in the tenancy agreement as your responsibility.

You may request a repair by telephone, in writing, by fax, by visiting your District Office or by minicom.

We will:

- carry out emergency repairs within 24 hours;
- carry out urgent repairs within 4 days;
- acknowledge your request for routine repairs within 3 days, and carry them out within 4 weeks;
- carry out repairs to lifts within 24 hours and door entry systems within 4 days;
- maintain the structure and outside of your home as well as certain internal items such as baths and room heaters;
- decorate the outside of your home once every 5 years;
- clean the common areas in multi-storey flats at least once a week;
- cut the grass in the open spaces regularly in the summer months;
- keep the open spaces in the estates clean and tidy.



Section 8 Moving to another home



You have:

- the right to exchange home with another Executive tenant, provided an agreement is in place to clear any rent arrears.

You are responsible for:

- seeking written permission from us before you exchange with another tenant;
- carrying out any repairs that are your responsibility before you exchange.

If you wish to exchange your home with another tenant we will:-

- give you permission to exchange within 4 weeks of receiving your request. (Permission will not be given if you are in rent arrears unless you have made an arrangement to pay off the arrears. This rule also applies to the person you wish to exchange with).
- provide in our District Office details of tenants wishing to exchange in our District.

If you have been in your home for over 2 years and would like to be considered for a transfer to other accommodation including that provided by Housing Associations we will:-

- assess your case and advise you about opportunities to transfer;
- place you on our transfer list within 4 weeks of receiving your request.

If you wish to move to another part of the United Kingdom we will provide you with information about exchanging your home with a tenant in Great Britain and about the "Homes" scheme. This scheme is designed to help people move for specific reasons such as supporting an elderly relative.

You have a right under our house sales scheme to buy your home as soon as you become a tenant, unless you live in a special sort of dwelling excluded from the scheme. Examples of these are older person's housing or two bedroom ground floor accommodation if you moved to it when you were over 60 years of age.

You are responsible for selecting and employing a solicitor to act on your behalf.

If you apply to buy your home we will:

- tell you within 2 weeks if you may buy and at the same time, tell you of any improvements planned for your home and the effect these may have on the sale;
- make you an offer within 10 weeks, which will include the price and if you are buying a flat, what service charges you will have to pay.

Section 10 Consulting and involving you

You have the right to be consulted about any major changes in the way we run your estate and any building work planned for your home or the surrounding area.

When we are planning a scheme involving work to your home or the surrounding area we will:

- inform you in writing that a scheme is planned;
- inform you of the name of the professional consultant in charge of the scheme;
- make you aware of and seek your agreement to the detailed work proposals, how the proposals will affect you, how the scheme will be carried out and the timetable for the work;
- inform you of the names of the building contractor and key people involved in the scheme and how to contact them;
- give you at least 3 weeks notice of when work is starting in your home.

We will send all tenants a local newsletter every year which will tell you whether our actual performance has fulfilled our standards of service, how much our services cost and our plans for the future. Each year we will also publish an Annual Report which can be obtained free of charge from any Housing Executive Office.

We carry out frequent surveys of our tenants so that we can use your views to improve our services. Results will be published in our Annual Report and local newsletters.



We encourage tenants to become more involved in running their estates by helping form Community Associations and by meeting and consulting with existing Associations.

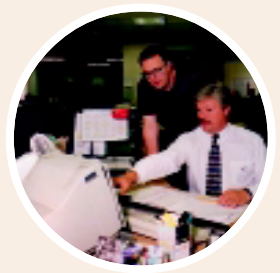
We welcome any suggestions you have for improving our service and will acknowledge any suggestions put in writing. We will also let you know whether your suggestion is being accepted and carried through.

We support Associations by providing training, help with arranging meetings and if possible, premises. We also provide Associations with a comprehensive guide to Housing Executive services.

We support the setting up of District Consumer Panels and other consultative bodies to discuss our policies, procedures and performance.

Whenever possible we will accept and carry through suggestions from Community Associations and Consumer Panels about the way we deliver services. If we cannot accept suggestions we will explain why it is not possible.

Your local District Office can provide information about joining Community Associations and Consumer Panels.



Section 11 What to do if things go wrong

If things go wrong and you do not receive good service you can make a complaint.

A complaint can be made about the lack of service or the manner in which service was provided.

When you make a complaint we will carry out a full and fair investigation. We will give an explanation and if a mistake has been made, we will apologise in writing and put matters right immediately.

You should first raise any problem with your local District Office, where someone will try to resolve your problem.

If you are still dissatisfied you may raise the issue formally with the District Manager, who will acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days and reply to it within 10 working days.

Following this, if you are still dissatisfied, you may write to the Chief Executive who will also acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days and reply to it within 10 working days.

The Chief Executive can be contacted at:-

The Housing Centre,
2 Adelaide Street,
Belfast BT2 8PB.

You have a right to complain to the Commissioner for Complaints who is independent of the Executive.

The Commissioner can be contacted at

Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast

free phone 0800 343424, or by writing to
The Ombudsman
Freepost
Belfast BT1 6BR.

The Commissioner expects you to have given the Executive an opportunity to consider and respond to your complaint before the matter is taken to his office.

There are separate procedures for appeals about homelessness and Housing Benefits.

If you are dissatisfied with a homelessness assessment you may ask your Area Manager to review the decision.

If you are dissatisfied with a Housing Benefit decision you may ask your District Manager to review the decision.

More details about all these procedures can be obtained at your District Office.

Section 12 Further Information



The Executive publishes booklets on various aspects of its service to tenants and applicants for housing.

New booklets and leaflets are produced frequently on various subjects and it is therefore not possible to give a complete list. Some of the more important booklets are:

The Tenants Handbook

General Conditions of Tenancy

Complaints Procedure

Housing Selection Scheme - Applying for a Housing Executive Home
Introduction to Social Housing Providers

Rent Scheme

Housing Benefit - Help with Rent and Rates Repairs

Right to Repair

Repairs to your home

Homes for Sale

Consultation Standards

Housing News

Anti-social behaviour

All booklets can be obtained free of charge from your District Office.

In addition the Executive produces various publications to provide information to the general public. These include leaflets and booklets on grants, on renting privately, on help for people with a disability, on homelessness, and on housing conditions and plans for housing in each Council area.

These can also be obtained at your District Office.

Information is available on the internet at <http://www.nihe.gov.uk>

" إذا كان لديك أي صعوبة في قراءة أو فهم هذا الكراس ، فرجاء التوجه إلى المكتب التنفيذي للمنح الإسكانية المحلي التابع لمنطقتك

Arabic

如你不明白本章呈，或有閱讀困難時，請與當地的房屋補助金執行辦事處聯絡。

Chinese

اگر آپ کو اس لیف لیٹ کو پڑھنے یا سمجھنے میں مشکل کا سامنا ہے تو مہربانی کر کے اپنے مقامی ہاؤسنگ ایگزیکٹو گراٹس آفس چلے جائیں۔

Urdu



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Housing
Executive

September 1999

www.nihe.gov.uk

Printed on 'Environmentally Friendly' paper