

Information about Wiltshire Council services can be made available on request in other languages including BSL and formats such as **large print** and audio. Please contact the council by telephone **0300 456 0100**, by textphone 01225 712500, or email customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk

This document was published by Wiltshire Council.
You can contact us in the following ways:

by telephone

0300 456 0100

in person

Wiltshire Council, 27 - 29 Milford Street,
Salisbury, Wiltshire. SP1 2AP

by post

Housing Management, Wiltshire Council, P.O. Box 2281,
Salisbury, Wiltshire. SP2 2HX

by email

HSGMail@wiltshire.gov.uk

by website

www.wiltshire.gov.uk

Housing management service standards



December 2010
LW/00000



Wiltshire Council
Where everybody matters

About us

The council has a stock of approximately 5,300 houses, flats, maisonettes and bungalows. Service standards promote good practice and set out the level of service that you can expect from Wiltshire Council's housing management service. These standards ensure that we treat everyone fairly and respond to the needs of our tenants effectively and efficiently.

We are always keen to improve our services and welcome suggestions or comments on how we can do better.



Complaints

We work hard to avoid complaints, but where they do arise we use the council's corporate complaints procedure, which can be viewed on the council's website or is available in printed form on request.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, you can write to the council's Corporate Complaints Team, for a review of your complaint.

We will apologise if we get things wrong or make a mistake, and strive to improve our service by learning from our mistakes and making sure they do not happen again.

We will respond to complaints within 15 working days.

If you need to take your complaint further, we can provide forms for you to take your complaint to the Ombudsman.



Providing support

We provide an alarm service, connecting vulnerable people in the community to the council's Careconnect centre. We work with other agencies involved with the 'supporting people' initiative to help people who are vulnerable or who need assistance.

Energy advice

We will...

- ensure that the council's housing stock is energy efficient in order to minimise greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the council's climate change policy
- keep the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating in the upper quartile of all local authorities
- promote energy efficiency advice included in our housing magazine and work towards the eradication of fuel poverty.

Disabled facilities grants

We will:

- acknowledge requests within five working days
- work with occupational therapists to assess the need for adaptations for disabled people and assist residents to apply for means-tested grants. We then organise and supervise work that is carried out
- aim to process the means-testing part of applications within the statutory guideline times of less than six months and to complete work within one year, subject to a budget for the work being available.



Customer service

We will...

- keep our reception areas staffed during opening times, tidy and well stocked with up-to-date, relevant information
- treat all customers fairly according to their individual needs, and provide an interpretation service if English is not the first language
- always be professional and courteous, and ensure that our staff are wearing a name badge
- ensure that we can assist people with specific communication needs, for example people with limited vision or hearing.
- ensure that all our new public reception areas are fully accessible to disabled people
- offer appointments and home visits
- provide local services at our estate offices on Bemerton Heath and The Friary

Correspondence

We will...

- respond to letters and emails within ten working days. Sometimes this is not possible and in these instances we will acknowledge your correspondence within five days, telling you who is dealing with your enquiry and the likely response time
- ensure that staff thank the writer for their letter or email.

Reception waiting time

We will...

- see you within five minutes of your arrival
- keep all appointments

Telephone response

We will...

- answer the phone within five rings during office opening hours
- ensure that if a call has to be passed on to another member of staff, the caller is kept on hold no longer than 30 seconds
- ensure that our staff answer the phone by saying "Good Morning Afternoon, and then give their full name, say that they work in Housing Management, Wiltshire Council, and ask how they can help
- ensure that staff conclude the call by saying "Thank you for your call
- ensure that if Voicemail is switched on, that messages are responded to within one working day

Access to our service

We will...

- provide an easily accessible service
- provide direct dial phone numbers to make it easier to contact our staff

Access to personal information

The Data Protection Act 1998 gives you the right to access your own personal data. If you wish to make a request for information, you will need to do so in writing, by email, fax or letter. Please send to the Corporate Information Team. Please provide a clear description of the information you require, your name and contact details. If you need advice or assistance in making a request, please contact the Corporate Information Team using the contact details below. A charge may be made.

Email: foi@wiltshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 01225 713643

Fax: 01225 718399

Address: Corporate Information Team,
Wiltshire Council, County Hall,
Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 8JN

New standards

As part of our Improvement Plan we will...

- work with the new “Wiltshire Tenants and Residents’ Voice” organisation
- work in partnership with tenants on the “Wiltshire Housing Partnership”
- include tenants on the new “Housing Commission”
- involve tenants in the “Tenants Improvement Steering Group” that is monitoring the implementation of the Improvement Plan
- continue to include tenants on the editorial board for “Housing Matters”
- invite tenants to take part in service review groups
- establish “Finger on the Pulse”, a pilot group for tenants with mental health support needs
- feature tenant consultation on the development of our housing strategy
- ensure that there is tenant consultation on the review of the corporate approach to domestic abuse
- involve tenant in equality impact assessment panels for new policies.

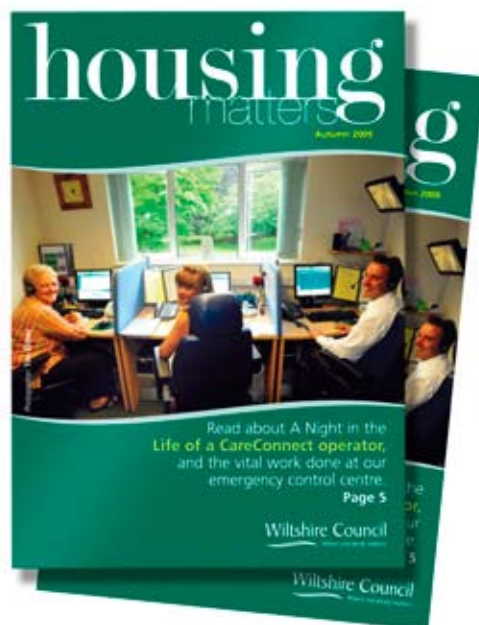
Satisfaction with the housing service

We will maintain a level of satisfaction with the overall service provided by the council as a landlord of over 85%.

Consultation

We will:

- work with residents to improve the service, including the tenants' panel, sheltered housing forum, leaseholder panel and residents' associations
- publicise the dates and venues of meetings at least a month in advance
- actively seek your opinions, views and ideas on how we can improve our service
- promote new methods of participation to seek involvement from all sections of the community
- ensure tenants receive our magazine 'Housing Matters' four times a year
- work with other statutory and voluntary agencies to identify housing needs and develop plans and strategies to meet them
- make information available across a range of formats including email, letter, text, phone, council website and newsletter
- encourage tenants' participation to seek their views on our service, so that over 85% of tenants are satisfied with their opportunities to participate.



Equal opportunities

We are committed to the principles of equality and diversity in employment and the delivery of services, and opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination or harassment.

We will...

- make services accessible to all
- treat all people fairly
- provide services and employment in an environment which promotes equality, values diversity and celebrates excellence
- ensure that we can assist people with specific communication needs, for example people with limited vision or hearing, and that we ask callers and visitors about any support needs they may have, to identify if they are vulnerable and need extra assistance
- ensure that all our new public reception areas are fully accessible to disabled people
- ensure that our leaflets are available in other formats to assist people with specific communication needs such as limited sight or hearing, or who need them translated
- build and maintain a profile of our customers so that we are aware of your communication needs and preferences
- carry out equality impact assessments of new policies before they are introduced.

Repairs

We provide a comprehensive repair and maintenance service to our housing stock, covering responsive repairs, and servicing of gas appliances and hardwired smoke detectors. A list of the repairs the council is responsible for is contained in the tenancy pack issued to all new tenants.

We will...

- inform you of the target time for every repair and who the contractor will be
- provide a freephone repairs number to report repairs
- aim to carry out over 90% of all repairs within the target time
- aim to carry out over 98% of urgent repairs within the target time
- aim for a repairs service satisfaction level of over 90%
- aim to keep over 99% of appointments
- provide a pre-paid satisfaction survey card with each repair ordered
- post-inspect work, when cost-effective, to ensure excellent service
- service all gas appliances provided by the council on an annual basis using 'Gas Safe' registered contractors
- service all smoke detectors provided by the council on an annual basis
- leave your home clean and tidy after the work
- when you call our repairs team we will tell you who you are speaking to, and ask if you have any care, support or other relevant needs that you would like to tell us about
- we will be polite, courteous and understanding of your needs.
- we will not carry out work in your home unless you or another responsible person is present.
- we will only send workers with the right skills and training.
- workers will be neat and tidy, wear uniforms and show you their identity card.
- we will carry out high quality repairs to meet your needs with minimal disruption, in a clean, sensitive and tidy manner, and use dustsheets and shoe covers when you ask us to.



Sheltered housing

The council has 23 sheltered schemes for elderly people who are able to live independently, but may need some support. The schemes are linked to our Careconnect centre to provide emergency cover 24 hours a day and are located in the city and around the district.

We will...

- work in partnership with other support or care agencies on behalf of residents to provide a safe and attractive environment for residents to live in
- provide opportunities for resident involvement and social activities
- achieve a level of satisfaction with the sheltered housing service of over 85%
- ensure that every resident has a support plan that is updated with a home visit every year, with clear outcomes to meet their needs

Right to buy and leaseholders

We will...

- aim to process initial right-to-buy applications within four weeks and to carry out valuations for houses within eight weeks and flats within 12 weeks
- provide leaseholders of sold flats with a prompt account of expenditure along with an annual service charge invoice
- seek to answer all enquiries promptly and efficiently.

Promoting inclusion

We will work with partners to support the Bemerton Heath Neighbourhood Centre and other organisations around the county which promote social inclusion.

Neighbour nuisance

We will contact both the complainant and the alleged source of nuisance within five working days and within 24 hours in the most serious cases

- we will ensure that any case involving hate crime or racial harassment is referred immediately to the Police, as well as making our own investigations
- we will assess every case for priority when a complaint is first received and deal with the most serious cases within one working day

Anti-social behaviour

We will...

- promote estate walkabouts with tenants' representatives to identify areas for improvement
- maintain a database to record all significant reports of anti-social behaviour affecting our tenants
- make contact with complainants within 5 days of their complaint and keep them informed at least every 4 weeks

- remove graffiti within five working days; racist, homophobic or other offensive graffiti will be removed within 24 hours
- seek to remove abandoned vehicles quickly within the permitted timescales
- seek to remove any dumped rubbish or appliances within five working days
- where necessary take firm action to control anti-social behaviour, including the use of injunctions, acceptable behaviour contracts, parenting orders and anti-social behaviour orders.

Domestic abuse

We will treat seriously any report of domestic abuse and deal with it under our victim-centred policy, including liaison with other agencies and enforcement action against perpetrators."

- Repairs have different priorities, depending on what the fault is, the scale of the fault, your general health and safety and the risk of damage to person(s) or property. We may upgrade the priority of a repair depending on personal circumstances, for example if there is a risk to your health or welfare. We will always tell you the priority of your repair, time scale to complete, and why.
- We will make appointments for all non-emergency jobs. We will offer you flexible appointment times to suit you:
 - Morning
 - Afternoon
 - Avoiding school runs
- If we need to cancel an appointment, we will contact you as soon as possible and offer the next available date convenient to you.
- We will attend 1 booked appointment, and if you are not at home, we will put a card through your door asking you to contact us.
- We will try to finish the repair on the first visit to your home.
- We will try to complete all your outstanding work orders, of a similar nature, in the same visit.
- We will provide an Out of Hours service that enables us to make safe all emergency jobs within 24 hours, and return later to finish the job.

- We will monitor our repairs and involve our tenants to improve our performance and publish results in Housing Matters, the Annual Report and on our website. We will listen and learn from our mistakes, and involve tenants early in the process of improving our services.
- We will provide you with an up to date Repairs Handbook.

We will not:

- use your electricity, gas, water, toilet, telephone or any other facilities unless absolutely necessary and not without your permission.
- smoke or use audio equipment such as radios.
- Park our vehicles irresponsibly on grass verges or drive in an unsafe manner
- If you are not happy with the service you receive you can make a complaint using our corporate complaints procedure. Details of how to make a complaint are available from the Council's offices, or on our website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/corporatecomplaints.htm
- We are committed to the principles of equality and diversity in the delivery of the repairs service. This means we will be fair, treat customers fairly, meet their needs, and respect all.



What we ask from you

- To keep appointments and let us know if have to cancel early as possible
- To be flexible when making or rearranging appointments
- To keep children and pets away from the work area
- To keep your home tidy
- To report repairs as soon as possible
- To carry out small repairs in accordance with your tenancy agreement
- To make sure our workers can get into your property to carry out repairs
- To be courteous and polite to our workers
- To have contents insurance for your belongings
- To pay for repair of damage caused by neglect, careless or misuse
- To ask to see a worker or council employee's identity badge.

Rent

We will...

- provide you with a rent payment card at the start of your tenancy
- continue to offer flexible options for rent payments including direct debit, payments at the Post Office, over the phone, or via the internet
- provide you with a rent statement four times a year.

Planned maintenance

- we will ensure that 100% of the council's housing stock meets the decent homes standard.
- we will ensure that once we meet the Decent Homes for 100% of our housing stock we then maintain it at this standard in future.
- to achieve 100% access to service every smoke detector on an annual basis
- to achieve 100% access to service every home with gas on an annual basis



Empty properties

We will...

- re-let empty properties in an average of 24 days or less
- ensure that when we re-let a home it meets our published property letting standard.

Allocating empty properties and helping you move

We will:

- issue Choice Based Lettings application forms
- maintain a "mutual exchange" register
- provide advice on the HOMESWAPPER scheme
- acknowledge your completed application form within five working days
- process your application within 21 days (subject to any other statutory requirements)
- give you an opportunity to view property that is offered to you

Enforcement

The council's neighbourhood managers are responsible for...

- To reduce rent arrears to a level as low as the best-performing 25% of councils still owning their housing stock."
- trying to resolve neighbour disputes
- ensuring tenants keep their homes maintained by reporting repairs and that other tenancy conditions are kept to
- liaising with the police and other agencies to tackle problems of anti-social behaviour in terms of specific targets.
- we will offer advice on benefits either from our own staff or by sign-posting to other relevant agencies."