

Customer Service Strategy

2018 - 2020

Delivering a great Customer Service experience



Right Tools

Staff have tools and systems to do their job

Know me

Understand and anticipate my needs

Integrate

Ensure business systems are integrated

Right Person

Let me speak to the right person

Save my time

First time fix and resolution

Omni-Channel

Let me use my preferred method of contact

Have context

Know about me and my past requirements

Self Serve

Let me resolve my own issues

Happy

Keep me a happy customer

Analytics

Create information that helps to improve the service

Consistency

Treat me fairly and with consideration

Impress

First impressions count

Easy to do business with

Personalised service for me

Delivering a great customer experience

Values and listens to me

Empower me

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Foreword

Mike Kay Chief Executive

The world in which we live and work is changing at a tremendous speed. We are living in a 24 hour multi-media world and our Northampton Partnership Homes customer experience is judged alongside the likes of Amazon (highest scoring organisation in The Institute of Customer Service 2018 results). We know from the same survey that customers identify the top 3 areas of improvement as;

1. Easier to contact the right person to help me
2. Speed of response and resolution
3. Better website navigation

With so much change and high expectations, where we start to define our own approach and journey is a challenge in itself.

We know that customers expect, as a norm, higher standards and tolerance levels are lower than before. Many of our employees struggle to keep up with the demands of change and living with uncertainty and our systems and ways of working are sometimes not supportive of the way we need to work in the future.

So given the challenges, this strategy suggests that our approach is one where we stay focussed, true to our purpose and goals, but alive to the challenges and possibilities. We can then stay

committed to the customer experience agenda. We can embrace that customer satisfaction matters and this will bring us measurable benefits, including a great reputation and a great NPH team.

This strategy sets out the key things that we need to do if we are to drive both the quality of the customer experience and overall business performance forward. Some of these things are new but many are 'works in progress'. We need to create the right building blocks so our people, leaders and systems can achieve the right balance and environment to demonstrate continuous improvement.

To help us do this, we have the benefit of our customer's feedback, the ability to benchmark with other organisations and a roadmap to achieving ServiceMark (the independent accreditation of commitment to and achievement in Customer Service).

In order to achieve this, we believe that we need to focus on 4 key aims;

1. Making it easy to do business with NPH and contact the right person to help me
2. Customer Insight, involvement, listening to our customers
3. An omni-channel approach to maximise customer choice and preference

4. Effective employee engagement

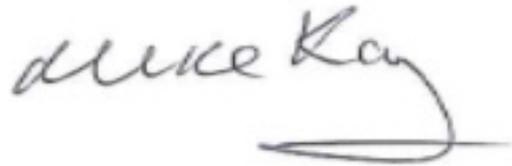
By having 4 key aims, this will enable us to focus on the things that really matter. This will enable us to make a tangible and measurable difference to our customers and also to how NPH grows, is trusted and develops loyalty.

This approach reflects the view that, to impress our customers, we need to get the fundamentals right every time... being brilliant at the basics.

We recognise that the basic tenets of service don't really change, but how people experience them does. Technology is defining what is acceptable; we want things faster, but for many of our customers, the digital world is one that they remain excluded from. We need therefore to be flexible in our approach and ready to adapt and change into the future. This is a challenge for many businesses and service providers and is one that NPH needs to be clear about in its approach

to the digitalisation of the way we want to do business.

In order to demonstrate that we have achieved our stated aims and objectives we intend to obtain ServiceMark through The Institute of Customer Service (IOCS). This is a national standard which will recognise our commitment to and achievement in Customer Service. It will help us to benchmark our Customer Service Strategy and prioritise areas for improvement. We will, through this accreditation, be able to demonstrate our commitment to Customer Service to customers, employees and stakeholders.

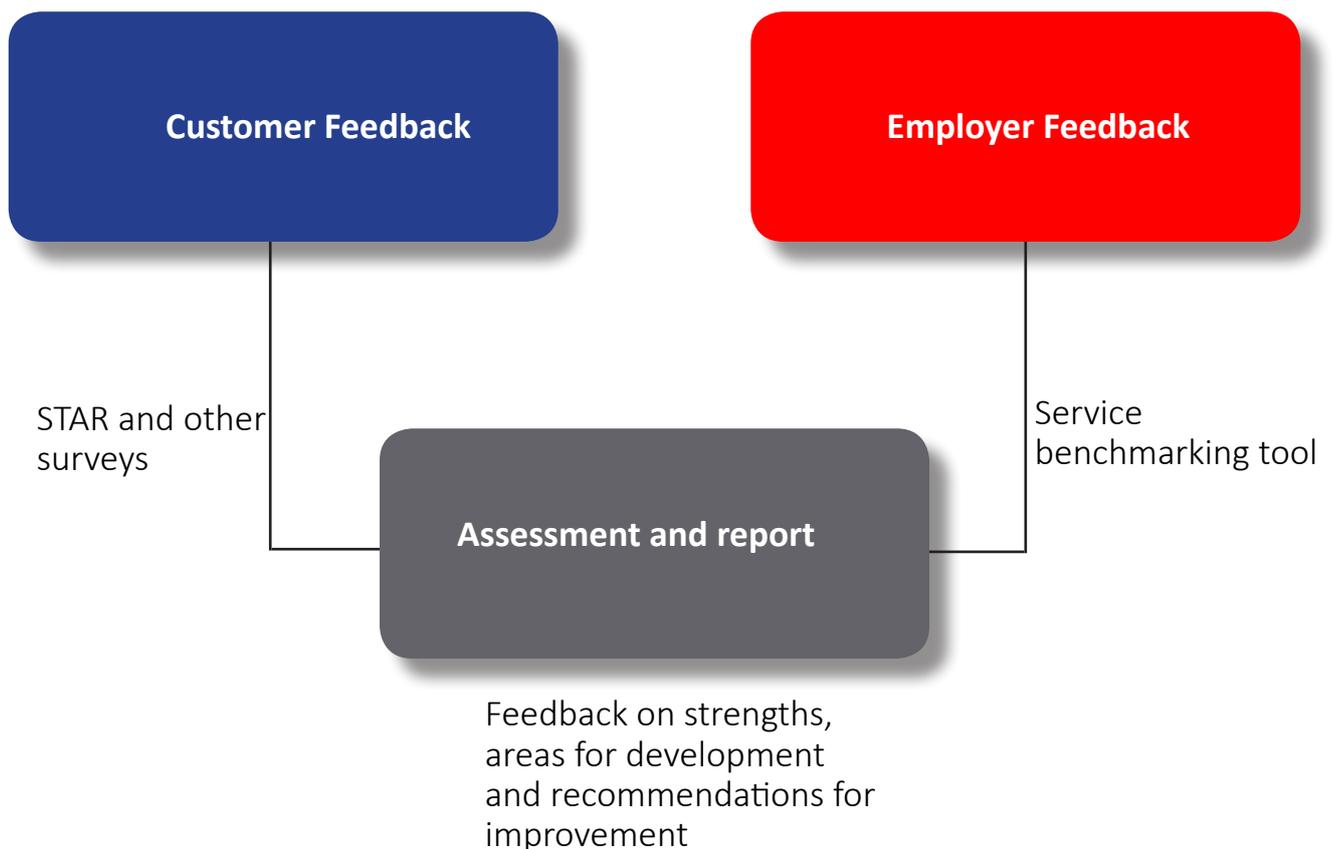


Our ultimate aim through this strategy is to achieve increasing customer satisfaction through great customer experiences.

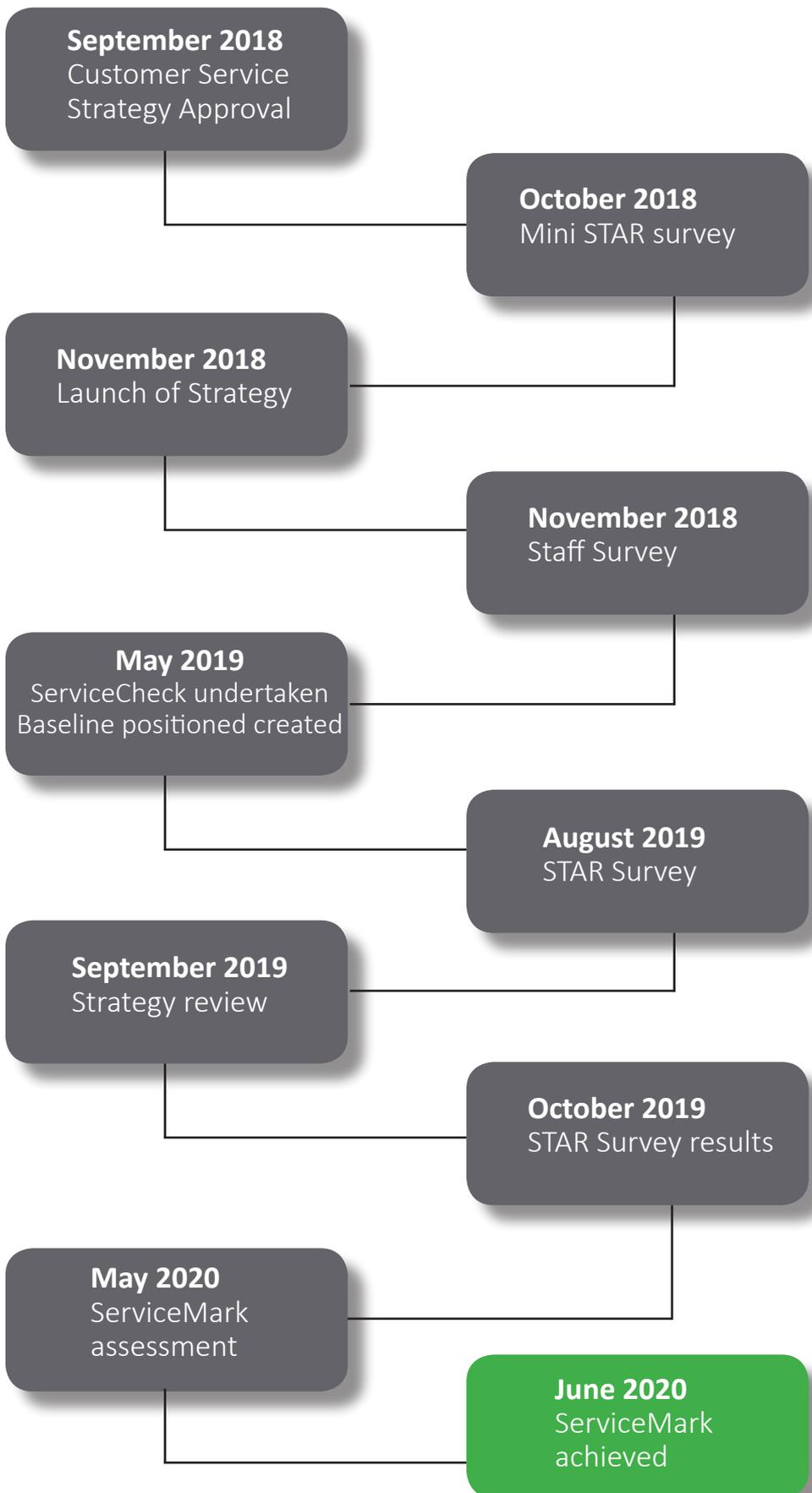
Service Mark Accreditation

The following schematic shows both the elements involved in attaining accreditation and the timeline that we need to work to and plan for. Along the way, we will have the opportunity to see how well we are doing and also how far we will still need to improve. In order to achieve accreditation we must ensure that we deliver on the strategy and in doing that, satisfaction will be improving.

Elements of ServiceMark:



Accreditation Timeline:



Who are our Customers

The majority of our customers are tenants of the housing stock that we manage for Northampton Borough Council. They are the main focus of this strategy. We also have 918 leaseholders, of which 506 only are residents, Right to Buy owners with the remaining relationships through managing agents/ landlords. We also consider the 2900 households on our waiting list as future tenants and customers.

Other customers include tenants of the Empty Homes scheme, Travellers, Temporary accommodation and garage tenants.

We recognise that we have a broad range of other customers who work with us and the principles of providing great customer experience can also be applied to those transactions.

One of our aims from this strategy is to confirm our position on customer insight data, how we capture this and what we use the data for.

What we currently collect from our customers is information that helps us to have a broad perspective on those living in our accommodation and goes some way to enabling decisions to be taken about service delivery. However what we need to know is more about the lives of our customers, their aspirations and how then we as an organisation can help them deal with ongoing issues and challenges and ultimately contribute positively to overall wellbeing.

We know that the basic information we currently collect is incomplete and we need to think both about what we need to know about customers and how we capture this on a regular basis. Information that we collect to date indicates:

- Female tenants outnumber male tenants by a ratio of 3:2
- The average age of our tenants is 51
- The largest group is the 40-49 age group
- Just over two thirds of our tenants do not have any recorded vulnerability
- Just under half of our tenants are on *Standard Secure* tenancies
- The average length of time for a tenancy is just under 11 years
- The largest group of tenants has had a tenancy for between 1 and 4 years. Combined with those who have had a tenancy for under a year, this makes up over a third of all tenants
- Just under 60% of tenants are in receipt of housing benefit
- Just over four fifths of the total number of tenancies are single tenancies
- Just under 44% of tenants live in houses and just over 31% in flats
- Sheltered bungalows are the next most common at just over 10%, followed by sheltered flats at 7%
- In terms of bedrooms, the biggest group is one bedroom properties at just over a third of the total
- Two bedroom properties make up just under another third

Welfare Reforms have been impacting on our customers, many of whom are struggling with their finances.

We recognise that we need a deeper understanding of our customers in order to tailor our products and services to suit their needs. We cover this in more detail on page 24 in the strategic objective: 'Customer Insight, involvement, listening to our customers' .

Satisfaction with NPH... a 2018 position

In June 2017 we undertook a STAR Survey for the first time as NPH. Previously this had been completed when NBC were managing its tenancies. The following shows the progression and % change in the customer perception of the service they receive:

Core question	2010	2012	2014	2017	Change since 2014
Overall service provided	78%	▼ 75%	▼ 72%	▲ 76%	4%*
Quality of home	79%	▼ 72%	▼ 71%	▲ 75%	4%*
Repairs and maintenance	72%	▼ 71%	▼ 67%	▲ 72%	5%*
Neighbourhood	83%	▼ 72%	▼ 68%	▲ 72%	4%*
Rent provides value for money	77%	▼ 70%	▼ 66%	▲ 78%	12%*
Service charges provide value for money	N/A	51%	▲ 53%	▲ 61%	8%*
Views listened to and acted upon	N/A	▼ 49%	▼ 46%	▲ 56%	10%*

*denotes a statistically significant change

In order to provide further context on this, we have also presented a position for NPH compared to other organisations. On page 42 you can read our position in relation to other Housing organisations.

Whilst we recognise an improving situation, we know that we have further progress to make.

The response to the STAR survey has resulted in;

- An action plan
- Targets set for 2018-2023
- Additional focus groups
- Mini STAR survey for September 2018

This strategy sits above the action plan,

captures the actions that have been agreed to improve customer satisfaction and linked to our key aims.

What we also know is that our customer views are captured through a range of other methods;

- Satisfaction surveys
- Complaints and compliments
- Involved and engaged customers
- Scrutiny reports
- Employee engagement

Monitoring and improvement is recorded against these measurements and reported through to senior managers and the Board at NPH.

Our External World

We know that research undertaken by The Institute of Customer Service indicates that organisations across the board with the highest customer satisfaction can also demonstrate better growth, profit, employee productivity higher than their peers. They comment that:

“In an uncertain and challenging environment, a consistent focus on customer experience and employee engagement is the most powerful investment that can deliver both short and longer term financial benefits, sustainable productivity and performance”

In our context, we need to ensure that we have the focus on doing the **right things in the right way, at the right time**. Doing the right thing isn't a strategic expedient; it's a fundamental approach to achieving sustainable business performance.

The Institute of Customer Service also note that there is a sense that vulnerable people have been let down by institutions and organisations. The drive to change the way business is done and change business processes has excluded many customers. In the NPH context and the environment we operate in, we need to be reflective of this comment. In our Housing world there is talk across the sector about the reputation and trust held by customers

and in the political world being damaged, as there has been a refocus following rent reductions on digitising services and moving away from traditional ways of engaging customers. That fact, along with the increasing pressures on many of our customers from welfare reforms, presents us with the challenge of changing the way we do business, delivering value for money and improving the way our customers value the services we provide.

Yes, we need to be efficient and improve digital access, but we must also design an experience which suit the needs of our most vulnerable customers, equipping our teams with specialised knowledge to be applied with empathy and common sense.

How Customers
access services

The majority of customer service contacts (requests for service) occur each day through the Customer Contact team. This is a service that is delivered by the Council and is monitored through a service level agreement. In 2017-18 they managed;

Calls	78209
Face to face	6902
Emails	4688
TOTAL	89799

In previous years the number of calls they handled was:

2015-16	102098
2016-17	105206
2017-18	88821

The year on year reductions relate to work around;

- ✓ Service improvements
- ✓ Promotion of customer portal
- ✓ Online module
- ✓ Work on repeat callers
- ✓ Promotion of direct debit as a payment method

Average waiting times for calls to be answered has been the focus of work over the last 12 months and the current performance whilst in target needs to reduce further down to 30 seconds. In order to achieve this we need to reduce the number of calls and particularly those calls of no value that are either repeat requests for service or information that could be obtained online

2016-17	166 seconds
2017-18	186 seconds
June 18	94 seconds

Not all calls are dealt with by the Contact Centre team and customers can select to be put straight through to other areas through an option choice;

1. Repairs- NBC Contact team
2. A big improvement to your home- NPH Asset Management team
3. Adapting your home- NPH Asset Management team
4. Progress of an existing repair- NPH Repairs & Maintenance team
5. Other enquiries- NBC Contact team

Whilst the menu system is not universally liked, it does create the choice for customers to be able to quickly speak to the **right person**. There are however limitations on this way of working and on 2 of the options above, we are at present unable to collect data and report on the number of calls coming through. We can though, with the information we collect through option 4, start to understand the reasons why 562 customers a month used this service to make enquiries about follow on work. This is useful benchmarking information for the Right First Time project.

Customers are also invited to contact NPH via the Guildhall and the One Stop Shop, where there is a triage process through to other service areas. Appointments are made for customers to see NPH staff and information is provided through a suite of reports on the nature of all contacts and the time customers wait to be seen.

NPH Contact

The operating platform we employ works on the basis of an initial telephone contact for service or a face to face discussion at the Guildhall. The response or follow up service will then depend on the nature of the request and the action that needs to be taken. We are also a mobile organisation, out there in our neighbourhoods providing a repair service, interventions and support on a day to day basis. Our aim is to be more mobile and so able to spend a greater proportion of time in our neighbourhoods.

Digital Services

In 2017 we created the opportunity for customers to access service through a portal. This only allows customers to see their rent account balance, make a payment and set up a direct debit. There are only 967 customers to date that have accessed this service to view their rent account.

The focus so far has been on improving the customer experience with the Contact Centre. We have a new Service Level Agreement, new targets, increased performance information and a collaborative approach towards joint aims and targets.

The move towards digitalisation and an easier access to service is a key priority and development of 24/7 Self Service will be realised later this year. The project should see the delivery of this self-service option by the end of September 2018, although the target for customers using this have yet to be determined. Experience from other providers shows that it is imperative to get the Self Service offer right and a slow measured roll-out is intended.

Strategic Context

This strategy builds a firm foundation towards the organisation, achieving its aims and objectives;

NPH Vision:

NPH provides homes which enable people to live happy and healthy lives in enriched communities.

NPH Mission:

- We improve lives by sharing a common purpose.
- We improve and maintain the quality of our homes.
- We provide services which endeavour to meet the needs and aspirations of all tenants and residents.
- We will provide the opportunity for people to influence the immediate and long term futures for themselves and their communities.

NPH Values:

- Open and Strong
- Listen and Respond
- Achieving more with others
- Aim High and Deliver

Whilst this strategy supports many of the other NPH strategies, it is also reliant on the successful implementation of others that both compliment and support the delivery of excellent customer service. The main reliances are;

- Involvement & Engagement Approval September 2018
- Tenancy Sustainability Approval September 2018
- Asset Management
- People
- ICT
- Income Management
- Empty Properties

Service Standards: a range of service standards has been developed with customers that help to describe the service that will be available from NPH and what they can expect from the individual service areas. All of the standards are SMART and annually we will report through to customers about how we have performed against them. We will also continue to reflect changes in service through the standards where enhancements and amendments are needed to either meet a regulatory requirements or service improvement.

Approval for the 2018 service standards is required and are attached at the end of this strategy (Appendix 1).

Strategic Objectives

1

Making it easy to do
business with and
contact the right
person to help me

We recognise that our customers have busy lives, they sometimes present us straight forward service requests but also sometimes with complex issues. They want us to do what we say we are going to.

Getting the basics right is as important now as it has ever been and we can expect our customers' expectations to increase. That first contact with NPH is really important to get right and sets a good foundation for a great customer experience. Our challenge is to get the balance right between making it easy for customers and to have the right processes and systems in place to deliver what we say we will do.

In every interaction, by whatever means, we want to be an organisation that provides;

- Accessible services
- Deals quickly with service requests
- Commitment to do what we say we will do
- Easy access to the person that can help
- Asks how we can improve and acts upon it
- Customer insight, involves our customers and listens to what they say
- Delivers and uses a set of service standards that defines what service customers should expect

Action Plan:

Action	Outcomes	Timescale	Existing project or action
Drive the Customer Service culture and ensure all actions in this strategy are achieved	All outcomes and actions achieved	December 2020	N
	Achieve ServiceMark accreditation	June 2020	
	Embed a 'Customer first' culture	May 2019 (Staff Survey)	
Ensure Service Standards are measured, communicated annually to customers and reviewed each year	Customers are aware of the service they should receive	October 2019	N
	Customers see the performance of the organisation. Are we doing what we say we will do	Every 6 months	
	Services are measured and improved each year	Annual review	
Implement 'Right First Time' project recommendations	Higher % of repairs are completed on first visit	April 2019	Y
	Satisfaction with service increases	June 2019 (STAR Survey)	
	Efficiency savings are measured	December 2019	
Ask the question 'Did we do what we said we would, and how can we improve service satisfactions surveys?'	Satisfaction data created	January 2019	N
	Feedback received on improvements ideas		
	Increased satisfaction and a listening organisation		
Reduce number of calls and repeat callers coming to customer service and scheduling teams	Increased customer satisfaction with: less time to wait for call answer; directing customer to right person; keeping customer up to date for follow on repairs	6 month review	y

2

**Customer insight
involvement and
listening to our
customers**

We recognise the need to know more about our existing customers and continually look at the needs of future customers in order that we can use that information to build and deliver cost effective services and provide great customer experiences.

Our approach to this is;

1. Use of information to:

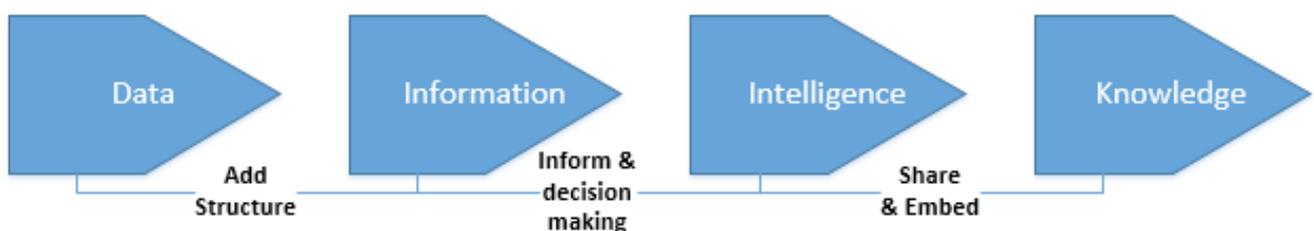
- Know, understand and respond to the needs of current/future customers
- Develop services and provide homes that meet the needs and aspirations of both existing and future customers
- Provide a right first time offer
- Use resources efficiently to deliver Value For Money services
- Enable knowledge-based decision making
- Know what can enhance and enrich a community

2. Create engagement and involvement opportunities

- See involvement and engagement review 2018

3. Create a listening organisation that asks for and learns from feedback by:

- Asking ‘how can we do better’
- Having a clear plan to obtain feedback
- Developing a variety of tools to capture feedback
- Ensuring that the whole organisation hears the views of customers
- Demonstrating what has changed and measuring impact
- Listening and learning from its staff and other stakeholders



Action Plan:

Action	Outcomes	Timescale	Existing project or action
Design a modern, fit for purpose approach to customer feedback	Feedback to provide satisfaction data- guides and informs decision making	January 2019	N
	Negative feedback is dealt with straight away		
	Easier for customers to provide feedback		
	Feedback provided to customers about what has changed as a result of views captured		
Undertake leaseholder survey	Baseline information provided on service delivery	September 2018	Y
	Improvement plan created	November 2018	
	Satisfaction improved	September 2019	
Collect information on our customers to help develop and design services to meet both housing needs, and improve wellbeing	Understand the profile of our customers	July 2019	Y
	Create personas to help design services	December 2019	
	Understand aspirations and issues of wellbeing to inform future services	December 2019	
Implement mini STAR survey	Update 2017 results	September 2018	Y
	Identify areas of improvement and concern	November 2018	
	Measure improvements in areas of investment and service change	November 2018	
Implement new involvement and engagement structures and ways of working from strategy review	Increased opportunity to hear customer voice	September 2018	Y
	Increased number of customers engaged to help improve services	April 2019	
	Services changed and improved from customer voice, review and scrutiny	June 2019	

3

**An Omni channel
approach to maximise
customer choice and
preference**

We recognise the need to provide easy to use Digital access to our services. However, the diversity of our customers demands that we continue to provide access to service through more traditional methods that we need to improve.

We want an Omni channel approach. By that we mean we offer a choice of channels and can use more than one over multiple transactions, while retaining the history and context of the original enquiry. Relevant information follows the customers across channels and interactions. This helps to deliver services, but also creates a history that can help to manage a tenancy.

We further recognise the need to create a relationship with customers that delivers an increased level of trust and higher levels of satisfaction.

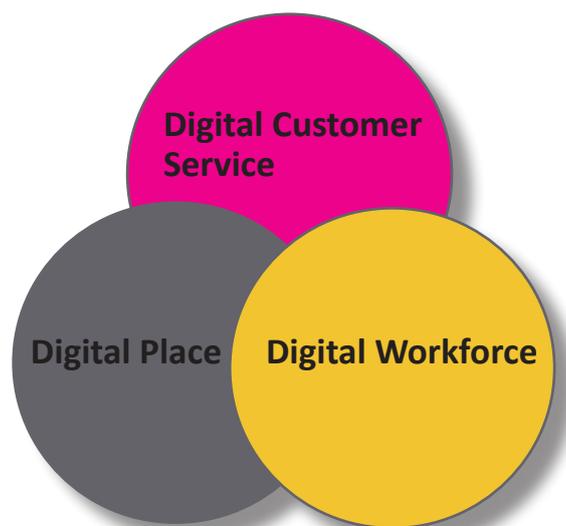
Our approach to achieve this will be:

- A digital access to service that provides a 24/7 offer
- An online service that is liked and well-used by our customers
- To reduce the number of telephony service requests and so reduce call waiting times and increase satisfaction
- Enable customers to talk to the right person to help them
- All of our customer facing staff are skilled at delivering great experiences
- Continue to deliver an enhanced face to face service at times convenient to customers

- Simplify our processes to allow easier access and better customer experiences
- Review what we do and how we do it based on customer preferences and value for money
- Help our customers be part of the digital world

Our digital journey will require the right culture, leadership which embraces the vision and a clear approach to transformation. This isn't only about our customers but is about team NPH, its leadership, how we want to do business. We need to ensure that the people we employ and the systems that they use are able and capable to deal with the digital change and can make improvements to the way we work and that customer experience that we want to deliver.

The benefits of digitalisation are well known but the whole collaboration journey is essential and can look like this:



Action Plan:

Action	Outcomes	Timescale	Existing project or action
Develop 24/7 customer online self-service solution	Easier service access, especially repairs	September 2018	Y
	Reduced number of calls to Customer Service and call waiting times reduced	April 2019	
	Efficiency savings achieved	April 2020	
	Simplified processes to support digital platform	April 2019	
	Assistance to customers to 'get online' through training and awareness	January 2019	
	All new customers are set up to transact online	January 2019	
Review performance targets for customer service team	Reduce waiting time target to 30 seconds	April 2019	Y
	Increase % resolved at first contact, 10% year on year		
	Increased satisfaction with telephony and One Stop Shop services, 10% year on year		
	Target to move people onto digital services		

Review processes of all online services to improve efficiency	Customer experience is a good one	April 2019	N
	Number of customers using service increases		
	Reduced cost and greater efficiency		
	Customers provide feedback on service experience		
	Customer service request history is available to view on all systems		
Provide training and support to enable customers to use Self Service and use other digital services	Increase number of customers using Self Service	April 2019	N
	Use customers emails to talk about service and service improvements		
	Enable customers to access other services i.e. Job Centre re Universal Credit, Energy Switching etc.		
	Digital Champions to advocate for improvements in all we do.		
Programme of training and development for NPH staff on Digital skills	Efficient working of NPH staff with new systems	April 2019	N
	Increased access to Digital services for NPH staff		
	Improved consistency and performance across the team		

4

Effective employee engagement

Evidence from The Institute of Customer Service's research ('The Customer Knows', 2018) would strongly suggest that employee engagement has become more important to customer satisfaction and performance but even more challenging.

The Institute of Customer Service note:

“The experiences customers have can't be achieved through processes and technologies alone. They depend crucially upon motivated, committed employees who display empathy, act in a manner to solve problems, demonstrate consistency and care in their work and constantly seek ways of improving customer experiences”.

Employee engagement is influenced by related but distinct dimensions

How employees think about the way they and their colleagues are led and managed

How employees think about the way they and their colleagues are led and managed

How employees feel about their organisation, its purpose and strategy

Employees' satisfaction with their working environment, terms & conditions and the tools and resources to do their job

Our approach to delivering this aim will be to;

- Measure the extent of employee engagement
- Ensure that we create the right environment to increase engagement, empowerment and satisfaction levels
- Embrace an approach to customer service excellence as a key driver to organisational improvement and development
- Benchmark ourselves against the best in customer service and learn from others
- Recruit for attitude
- Provide training and support to front line teams on customer engagement skills
- Achieve ServiceMark in 2020
- Provide an enhanced working environment

Action Plan:

Action	Outcomes	Timescale	Existing project or action
Measure employee engagement with customer service strategy	Benchmark of employee engagement and awareness through ICS	June 2019	N
Design and deliver an approach to training and self-development programme on customer service	Increased awareness of customer service strategy	April 2019	N
	Upskilling of staff on Customer Service skills	December 2019	
	Increased training and qualification levels for staff	April 2020	
	Reduced complaints and increased satisfaction	April 2020	
Implement staff survey	Benchmark results to 2016 to show progression	October 2018	Y
	Measure employee satisfaction		
	Measure culture, personal empowerment, loyalty and engagement	July 2019 (ICS Survey)	
	Identify areas for development and improvement and create action plan	December 2018	
	Create a great organisation		
Achieve ServiceMark	Recognition and commitment to customer service	June 2020	Y

Consultation

This strategy takes its points of reference from a number of sources:

- What our customers have been telling us
- The Institute of Customer Service results 2018
- The Customer Knows – The Institute of Customer Service
- Profile information from NPH records
- Other strategies from Housing Associations

We have consulted with a variety of customers and stakeholders to help produce this strategy including:

- Customers from our tenants panel
- Colleagues and Board members at NPH
- Colleagues from NBC
- The Institute of Customer Service

Conclusion

This strategy aims deliberately at making sure we are clearly focussed on the things that will make a difference now to the experience that customers get, but then also change the way we approach the delivery of customer service in the future. We have a way to go on aligning all the component parts, but through this strategy and the drive and determination to make a difference, the road to achieving accreditation is mapped out.

With help and support from The Institute of Customer Service we can learn from the best that is out there and apply this to the environment we operate in. In embracing all they can offer, we can not only develop our training and coaching approach, but also encourage those key influencers in the organisation to achieve qualifications to demonstrate their skills.

With leadership and delivery of the actions needed to support the aims outlined, not only will the customer receive a better experience with NPH, but also our team here at NPH and those contractors that work with us can enjoy a changing relationship where we are trusted to do the things we say we are going to do and more. Our accreditation in 2020 will be a milestone of achievement but our culture will be one of continuing to learn, improve and celebrate the great things that get done here at NPH every day.

Leadership, Monitoring & Review

The actions to deliver this strategy are SMART and allow the organisation and the Board to measure progress and outcomes.

The significance and impact of this strategy is recognised in the creation of a Customer Service Excellence Group (CSEG) that will be led by the Chief Executive Mike Kay. Other senior managers of the organisation will also have membership of the group. The terms of reference reflect the delivery focus of NPH but also that cultural and digital change needs to be embedded for the full outcomes to be realised.

This group will be accountable to the Operations & Resources Committee which will monitor progress and provide reassurance to the Board that the agreed targets are being achieved.

The outcomes from the strategy will be shared throughout the organisation as part of the culture change and customer focus that will develop.

The strategy will be reviewed following ServiceMark accreditation, to reflect feedback in that process, but also by way of recognition that we live in a fast-changing world; we should always be responsive to change and we want to do the right things in the right way at the right time.

Customer Service Excellence Group: Terms of Reference

Membership and Purpose

Purpose

- Ensure that the Customer Service Strategy outcomes are delivered
- ServiceMark accreditation is achieved
- NPH continues to refine its approach to delivering an excellent customer experience

Group Membership

- Chief Executive
- Head of Housing
- Head of HR & OD
- Head of Property Maintenance
- Head of Corporate Services
- Customer & Business Development
- NBC Customer Service Managers
- PA Support

Activity

- Monitor progress of the action plan
- Ensure progress is measured and outcomes measurable
- Monitor satisfaction levels
- Engage with ICS on accreditation and training support
- Report through to the Board on progress against the Strategy and accreditation
- Ensure resources are available to achieve outcomes
- Be ambassadors, leaders and advocate for customer service in the organisation

Risks

Risk	Impact	Mitigating actions
ServiceMark accreditation not achieved	Medium	Customer service group set up to monitor
		Ongoing support from ICS
		Ongoing customer satisfaction data to show direction of travel
Delay in major project i.e. Self-Service and Right First Time	High	Project monitoring by EMT/SMT
		Project planning training due September 2018
Employee engagement low	High	Actions implemented from last survey
		Survey in April 2019 will sense check and improvement plan to follow
		Leadership from Executive team
Insufficient resources to complete actions and achieve aims	Low	Current and future budget provision committed
		Focus in organisation on delivery, and most key projects already planned improve service
External factors influence satisfaction levels: Unitary Authority, Brexit etc.	Medium	Branding work ongoing to help differentiate the service
		Regular satisfaction testing ongoing to show up trends
Customer Service centre-performance falls	Medium	SLA in place to measure performance
		Senior leaders at Council engaged with NPH
		Joint aims and objectives on Customer Service

Key Performance Indicators

Aim	Overall Measure	Target	
Improve the service provided	% of tenants satisfied with service provided	2019/20 78%	2020/21 82%
We are a listening organisation taking views into account	% of tenants satisfied with views taken into account	2019/20 65%	2020/21 70%
Improve the service provided to leaseholder	% of leaseholders satisfied with service provided	To be set following survey	
We are a listening organisation taking leaseholder views into account	% of leaseholders satisfied with views listened to and acted upon	To be set following survey	
Improve repairs service	% of tenants satisfied with the repairs service	75%	
Increase the number of customers using Self Service	No. of customers using Self Service	Year 1 10% increase	Year 2 10% increase
Attain recognition for customer excellence	ServiceMark accreditation 2020	2020	
Right First Time repairs service	% of repairs completed at first attempt	Year 1 Benchmark provided	Year 2 10% increase
Deal with service requests at first contact	Customers do not need to be referred on	75%	78%

STAR Survey benchmarking data

Core question	NPH 2017 (%)	All national similar sized organisations (approx. 10,000-15,000 properties)		
		Bottom quartile	Median Quartile	Top Quartile
Overall service provided	76%	81%	85%	90.50%
Quality of home	75%	79.80%	81.40%	86.90%
Repairs and maintenance	72%	74.15%	79.65%	85.55%
Neighbourhood	72%	80.10%	84%	88.03%
Rent provides value for money	78%	80.25%	83.15%	86.05%
Service charges provide value for money	61%	69.60%	74.15%	79.58%
Views listened to and acted upon	56%	65.55%	71.05%	77%

Core question	ALMO			National			East Midlands		
	Bottom Quartile	Median Quartile	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile	Median Quartile	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile	Median Quartile	Top Quartile
Overall service provided	83.90%	87.25%	89.93%	82.65%	87%	90%	86.23%	88.35%	91%
Quality of home	82.08%	81.70%	87%	81%	85.22%	88.70%	81%	86%	89.85%
Repairs and maintenance	77%	84%	85%	75.30%	80.71%	86%	79%	84%	87.10%
Neighbourhood	80.83%	84%	89%	82.48%	86%	89%	82%	85%	90%
Rent provides value for money	78.40%	85.48%	89.20%	80.50%	84.01%	87.70%	80%	84%	89.18%
Service charges provide value for money	68.15%	76.50%	78.63%	67%	74%	78%	67%	84%	85%
Views listened to and acted upon	64%	67.40%	75%	65%	70.90%	76.30%	67%	74%	79.40%

Glossary of Terms

ServiceMark

A national standard that recognises an organisation's commitment to, and achievement in, customer service.

STAR

Survey of Tenants And Residents. Provides a framework for periodic survey of customers' perception. Developed in 2011, over 350 landlords regularly collect and benchmark information.

Triage

System for assessing priorities.

Digitalisation

Process of converting information into a digital format to improve business processes.

Customer Insight

An interpretation of trends in human behaviour to increase the effectiveness of a service for customers.

Omni-channel

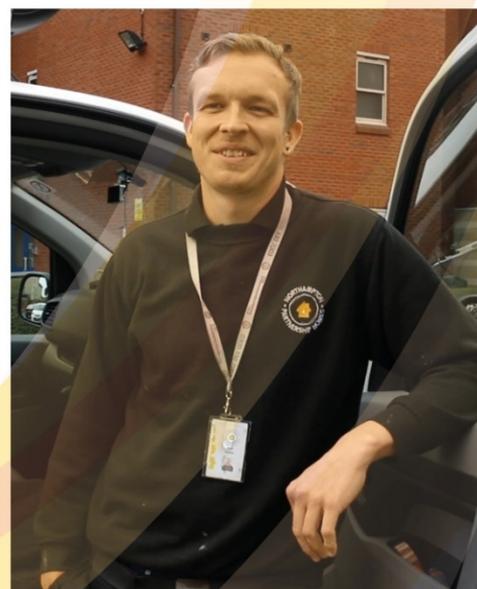
A variety of points of contact that are seamlessly connected (e.g. telephone, website, face to face). A customer can start a service request through one and complete in another.

CSBG

Customer Service Excellence Group. Providing leadership and monitoring progress against this strategy.

NPH Service Standards

What you can expect from us



Service Standards: what you can expect

This guide explains the services you can expect to receive from Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH).

It describes the range of services NPH offers, the standards of service you can expect from us and how we will check that we are meeting these standards.

There are a number of standards in each section of this guide. If you feel we are not meeting any of these standards then please tell us.

We aim to measure how well we do against each of our standards. To help us do this, we occasionally ask for your assistance through satisfactions surveys. Your views help us to measure both how we are doing and also what we can improve on.

These standards are available on our website or you can contact any member of our team to receive a copy.

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Foreword

At NPH we are committed to putting you, our customers, first by providing you with excellent and responsive services. We have set out in the following pages the standards you can expect us to meet.

The service standards have been developed and agreed with customers.

Why have service standards?

They explain what services NPH provide and how we will respond when you contact us about them. Every customer should be clear about the level of service they can expect to receive from us. We always try to provide the best service we can, however when we don't meet these standards we want you to tell us about it so we can put things right. We aim to continuously improve the service and to do this your feedback is essential. When we cannot meet your needs ourselves, we will try to refer you to other sources of help.

Providing services fairly

When offering and using our services we will ensure everyone has equal access to services regardless of age, race, gender, disability, sexuality or religious beliefs.

Improving services through monitoring

We will regularly monitor, review and publicise our performance against these standards to make sure that we continue to deliver a quality service. We will monitor our standards by:

- Regularly quality checking our work by conducting satisfaction surveys
- Listening to any comments you make, so that our services can be improved
- Involving our customers in reviewing our services

To let you know that we are keeping to these standards we will aim to:

- Publish the results of this monitoring in The Voice and on our website
- Report results regularly to our Tenants' Panel



Mike Kay,
Chief Executive,
Northampton Partnership Homes



Customer Care

You can access all services provided by NPH by telephone, in person, in writing, either by letter or email, on our website, by visiting The Guildhall and by requesting us to visit you at your home.

The Customer Service team at The Guildhall can be contacted Mon-Fri 09:00-17:00. We also offer an out of hours service for emergency repairs.

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, respond, show empathy and honesty
- Treat you politely and respectfully
- Provide quality services
- Let you know when things go wrong, keep you updated and learn from it

The service you can expect:

- ✓ On the phone we aim to answer your call in 90 seconds
- ✓ If you can't wait for us on the phone then you can leave us a message and we will ring you back within 1 working day
- ✓ If you email us we will acknowledge receipt within 1 working day and aim to fully reply within 3 days
- ✓ We will carry out satisfaction surveys to ensure we are continuing to improve and you are happy with the service provided
- ✓ At The Guildhall One Stop Shop we aim to keep you no longer than 10 minutes to see a member of the team
- ✓ If you have an interview we will see you within 10 minutes of the allotted time
- ✓ Where a call back needs to be arranged, NPH aims to call back within 1 working day
- ✓ Online you can pay your rent, report a repair, report anti-social behaviour, apply for a garage and other service requests

How we will measure this:

- Monitor how quickly we answer your call
- Check that we call you back or answer your contact within the timescales
- Report back to you through our newsletters and website
- Through 'mystery shopping' via our customers

Neighbourhood Services

NPH aims to provide excellent neighbourhood management to the customers who live in our homes.

- ✓ Housing officers will attempt to make contact with new tenants within 2 weeks of their tenancy start date to make sure they have settled into their home
- ✓ Housing officers will attempt to make contact with new tenants within 26 weeks of their tenancy start date to ensure they are sustaining their tenancy and whether they need any help or support
- ✓ Every estate will be audited every quarter to highlight any environmental issues impacting the area
- ✓ We will ensure every block of flats are inspected quarterly for cleanliness, fire safety and repair issues
- ✓ We will investigate suspected abandoned properties within 2 working days of a report being received
- ✓ We will ensure there is a Duty Housing Officer available on the telephone every working day to deal with urgent enquiries

How we will measure this:

- Satisfaction surveys for new customers
- Annual Estate Audit plan
- Records of the quarterly inspection of blocks of flats

Tenancy Support

We aim to support our customers to live as independently as possible. This can mean help and advice from us or support from another agency.

- ✓ A Support Plan and Risk Assessment will be completed for all supported Customers who require some help and support
- ✓ Every 3 months we will review your support plan for the following 3 month period
- ✓ All referrals received will be categorised by a Team Leader within 1 working day
- ✓ All referrals deemed urgent will have an assessment completed by a Support Officer within 5 working days, and in cases of Domestic Abuse 24 hours
- ✓ All referrals deemed non - urgent will have an assessment completed by a Support Officer within 10 working days
- ✓ Our Welfare Officers will attend all emergency call outs on day of report
- ✓ 4 weekly welfare visits will be completed with all qualifying vulnerable tenants
- ✓ Welfare Officers will install emergency lifeline equipment within 1 working day of a tenant moving into Older Persons accommodation or at a later date if the landline hasn't been connected

How we will measure this:

- Performance information
- Satisfaction surveys

Allocations and Lettings

- ✓ We will assess your application within 28 days of receiving all of the required documentation
- ✓ We will respond to your email query within 48 hours of receiving it
- ✓ We will talk to you about any special help you might need to set up a home
- ✓ We will assess your overall satisfaction after being rehoused so we can understand where we have done well or where we need to improve
- ✓ We will publish details about the numbers and lettings of empty homes. This will help you decide what to bid on and how long you might have to wait

How we will measure this:

- Satisfaction survey for new customers
- Spot checks of the website
- Performance measures reported to NPH Board and Committees

Anti-social Behaviour

- ✓ We will contact you within 1 working day of receiving your initial report of ASB
- ✓ A risk assessment will be completed in order to help identify vulnerable and repeat victims
- ✓ When your report of ASB is received you will be interviewed by a Tenancy Compliance Officer in accordance with the following timescales;
 - 1 working day: Domestic abuse, hate-related violence
 - 3 working days: Verbal abuse, harassment and vandalism
 - 5 working days: Noise, fly-tipping and nuisance pets
- ✓ When you report an ASB concern, we will always complete an Action Plan with you
- ✓ We will assess your overall satisfaction with our ASB service so we can understand what we have done well or what we need to improve
- ✓ We will agree with you the type and frequency of contact
- ✓ We will provide guidance on Out Of Hours support and a telephone number for Community Safety partners

How we will measure this:

- Overall satisfaction with the service
- Performance information on timescales
- By asking: did we offer you choice on contact and keep you up to date

Customer Engagement

Currently under review September 2018

- ✓ We will demonstrate an open and friendly approach to tenants to encourage them to engage with NPH
- ✓ We will create involvement opportunities to enable NPH customers to get involved and share their views
- ✓ Recommendations made by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel will be considered by the Executive Team
- ✓ We will make training places available for Tenants to learn something new
- ✓ We will work towards reaching a wider audience to engage with by expanding the engagement and community activities we offer
- ✓ We will continue to offer the NPH Community Hubs for local community groups to run sessions and projects for the local communities

How we will measure this:

- Number of engaged customers
- Outcomes from training received
- Improvements to service from scrutiny reports

Repairs and Maintenance

- ✓ We put our repairs into 3 categories each with their own priority and timescale:
 1. EMERGENCY - this includes work to remove immediate danger to people, avoid serious damage to the property or make the property secure - attend within 24 hrs - this may require follow up works after making safe
 2. URGENT - this is work that is needed to quickly prevent immediate damage to the property, to overcome serious inconvenience to you or where there is a possible health and safety or security risk - attend within 7 working days
 3. ROUTINE - this is work that is not urgent but cannot wait for our planned programme of works- attend within 28 days
- ✓ We will change the repairs timescales if vulnerability is established and the repair requires more urgent attention
- ✓ We will provide a variety of ways for you to report your repair including telephone and online. Phones are also available for use at the One Stop Shop at The Guildhall
- ✓ We will provide multiple appointment options for you to choose from - AM, PM, avoid school run and all day. All appointments will be offered at point of contact (for online bookings, tenant will be contacted)
- ✓ All appointments will receive confirmation by letter and 3 texts; the 1st when it is initially booked, the 2nd on the day before the appointment, the 3rd when trade operative is on their way
- ✓ We will provide an option for you to rearrange your appointment, providing a dedicated line for existing repairs queries
- ✓ We aim to carry out repairs Right First Time:

We will aim to send one of our team of fully trained and multi skilled tradesmen with the correct skill to carry out the reported repair on the first visit and at the appointed time slot

All our vehicles will carry the most frequently used materials to ensure your repair can be carried out on the first visit
- ✓ All our staff will follow our code of conduct at all times; this will include:

Showing their ID badge

Ensuring a clean and tidy area around the repair

Inform you of any reasons why they cannot complete the reported repair
Make follow up appointments if required with you prior to leaving your property

- ✓ We will undertake tenant satisfaction surveys upon completion of works and follow up the reasons why you might be unhappy with the work or service

How we will measure this:

- Performance information
- Customer views on service quality

Empty Property Management

- ✓ Allocations:
 - Explain clearly how we allocate our homes
 - Arrange an appointment with you to view the property with a member of staff so any queries can be answered
 - Arrange a time to sign for your tenancy

- ✓ Before moving into your new home :
 - We aim to offer homes that are clean, safe and secure and meet our minimum standards
 - All properties will be visited on the same day keys are handed in and utilities isolated
 - All properties will have their electrical installation tested and will be compliant with current IEE electrical regulations
 - The gas installation at a property will be visually inspected for safety and capped off at the meter to allow for our gas servicing partner to arrange for a full commission of the system on commencement of tenancy
 - Each property will, where not previously undertaken, be checked for asbestos-containing material at the property

- ✓ Our minimum standard ensures your home:
 - Is clean throughout
 - Is structurally sound and weatherproof
 - Is free from damp
 - Is free from infestations
 - Does not have any major works outstanding
 - Has an energy efficient boiler
 - Has a valid Energy Performance Certificate
 - Meets gas, electrical and heating compliance standards

- ✓ At tenancy sign up:
 - We will provide you with information about your tenancy rights and responsibilities, including information on rent and other charges and assist you to make a claim for housing benefit where needed

- ✓ After you move into your new home:
 - We will arrange to contact you within 2 weeks of moving in and visit you at your home
 - Ask your opinion of the condition of your new home and also get your opinion of the service you received from us during the allocation and letting process

How we will measure this:

- Your views from our surveys
- Performance information to the NPH Board
- Benchmark what we do with others

Planned Maintenance & Major Works

We will:

- ✓ Consult with you about any major works which may affect your home
- ✓ Give you choices of components and finishes where appropriate. For example, the installation of new kitchens, wall tiles, kitchen worktops and drawer fronts
- ✓ Keep you informed of any delays or changes to the works needed
- ✓ Ensure that our contractors keep appointments made and that they are polite, helpful and treat your home with respect
- ✓ Ensure contractors and anyone visiting your home, carry identification
- ✓ Ensure contractors clean up at the end of each day and once the work is completed
- ✓ Ask your opinion about the quality of our service and how we can improve it

How we will measure this:

- Ask your opinion about how we did
- Ask your views on contractor performance
- On site spot checks

Aids and Adaptations

Aids and adaptations is a term we use to describe changes to your home to enable you to live there if you have a disability. Adaptations can be minor such as a handrail, or major such as a walk-in shower or a stair lift.

We will:

- ✓ Respond to your initial referral within 10 working days (acknowledging the enquiry) by sending a self-assessment form to determine the correct assessment approach
- ✓ Once the self-assessment form is returned and is reviewed, if appropriate, we aim to provide you with a letter offering an appointment for an assessment date within 10 working days of receipt of the form
- ✓ Visit to assess your needs within 6 to 8 weeks on receipt of the SAF
- ✓ If your home requires a survey to determine if the adaptation works can be achieved we aim to visit within 4 weeks
- ✓ Complete recommendations received from a community O.T. or discharge team for minor adaptations within 10 working days
- ✓ We will inspect the work to ensure it is completed correctly

How we will measure this:

- Performance reporting
- We will ask you about the service we provided and how happy you are with the work

Income and Rent Services

- ✓ We will provide you with a breakdown of your rent and service charges at the start of your tenancy and then once a year as part of the rent review
- ✓ We will provide a rent statement four times per year, or upon request. The statement will show the payments you have made to your rent account
- ✓ We will make contact by letter within a week of your rent account falling into arrears
- ✓ We will agree a way for arrears to be cleared based on your individual, personal and financial circumstances
- ✓ Undertake a home visit to discuss arrears before taking legal action
- ✓ We will ensure you are offered a face to face interview with a Rent Income Officer before a county court possession hearing
- ✓ Offer debt advice including a referral to partner agencies that can provide debt and money management

How we will measure this:

- Performance information
- Record checks
- Ask you about the quality of your service

Estate Services

- ✓ We will monitor the cleaning standards of communal areas both internally & externally so that the blocks are kept clean and tidy by our external contractor
- ✓ We will monitor the grounds maintenance standards of communal areas so that the blocks are regularly attended (grass, shrubs, hedges and trees)
- ✓ We will provide a service where our external contractor responds to unforeseen cleaning requirements within working hours
- ✓ We will provide a fly tipping removal service on the land we manage and will take appropriate enforcement action against those who illegal tip or deposit rubbish
- ✓ We will ensure that a zero tolerance approach is taken for communal areas in blocks and will remove items promptly that are left in communal areas

How we will measure this:

- Performance reports
- Spot checks on records and on-site visits
- We will ask you about the quality of our services

Leasehold Services

- ✓ We will provide an itemised quarterly service charge bill in a clear appropriate format
- ✓ Provide an Actual Service Charge Expenditure Statement in a clear appropriate format, together with a breakdown of responsive repairs where necessary
- ✓ To ensure Leaseholders are fully consulted in compliance with the legal Section 20 process regarding major works/refurbishments
- ✓ Provide a detailed breakdown of any major works/refurbishment costs to Leaseholders and outlining payment options
- ✓ Provide an informative welcome pack to all new Leaseholders including the Leasehold Handbook, Service Charges and payment options available
- ✓ Provide a Leaseholder drop in surgery twice a year, to enable Leaseholders to share their concerns, complaints and compliments

How we will measure this:

- Performance information
- Satisfaction survey about the service offered and the information you received

Complaints

We aim to provide an excellent service for our customers. However, we acknowledge that sometimes things go wrong and people may wish to make a complaint. If you believe we have not met your expectations, we need you to tell us. Your complaints give us valuable feedback and help us to improve our services.

- ✓ We welcome and encourage all tenants and customers to tell us when we've got it wrong, to give us their views and opinions and to praise us when our team members do things well or go the extra mile. We aim to maximise the opportunities to gain this type of feedback by:
 - Encouraging tenants and customers to provide feedback and make it as easy as possible to do this
 - Having a clear and simple complaints procedure
 - Ensuring all tenants and customers can access our complaints service and provide support when needed
 - Investigating and resolving complaints as quickly as possible, in accordance with response times set out below
 - Ensuring our team members are well trained and supported to handle complaints effectively
- ✓ Complaints will be acknowledged within 2 working days
- ✓ Where it is not possible to resolve an informal complaint or request for service at the first point of contact, we will operate an escalated 3 stage formal process which consists of:

Stage 1 – Quick resolution: A complaint will be investigated by the most appropriate service manager. The service manager will do all they can to resolve a complaint and respond to the complainant within 10 working days.

Stage 2 – Formal investigation: If a complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1 it will be reviewed by a Head of Service. The Head of Service will look at the handling of the complaint at Stage 1 and make sure that all the issues have been properly looked into. A full response will be given to the complainant within 10 working days of the complaint being escalated.

Stage 3 – Formal review: A review by our Complaints Panel. The Panel is made up of 3 persons:

- a) Tenants Complaints Panel representative
- b) Member of Executive Team and
- c) a NPH Board member

The Review Panel will hear the complaint within 20 working days of the request to escalate it, and will respond to the complainant within 10 days of the Panel hearing.

- ✓ We recognise that complaints, comments and compliments provide a valuable source of information to help us improve our services. We will ensure that our complaints service is working by:
 - Monitoring and reporting our performance including the number of complaints received and performance against target response times
 - Displaying performance information on our website and in our tenant and customer newsletter and reporting quarterly to our Tenant Complaints Panel
 - Testing the satisfaction of tenants and customers with our complaints service
 - Analysing the types of complaints we receive across all our service areas
 - Recording the lessons learned from complaints and using this information to change and improve services

Your Responsibilities

We value your views and suggestions about the services we provide and want to work with you to improve services

To help us give the best possible service we ask that you:

- Be considerate and polite when speaking to our staff and contractors
- Give us all the information we need to help you
- Be on time for appointments or let us know if you are unable to attend
- Tell us if you are unhappy with the service you have received
- Tell us if the service has been better than you expected

We will:

- Provide information from time to time about your responsibilities as a tenant

How we will measure this:

- Record any abusive or aggressive behaviour, the number of missed appointments, number of complaints or dissatisfaction and compliments

Contact Details

Northampton Partnership Homes

The Guildhall

St Giles Square

Northampton

NN1 1DE

Contact Us

Monday – Friday 09:00 until 17:00

0300 330 7003

Out of Hours for emergencies only

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