



CUSTOMER CHARTER

**Dartford Borough Council
Housing Services**

DARTFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Customer Charter

Dartford Borough Council Housing Services strives to provide the best possible service it can to its tenants, leaseholders and residents. To help us achieve this we have produced a series of service standards to help you understand what level of service you can expect from us.

Being accessible and providing information

- Staff will be available from 8.45am - 5.15pm, Monday to Thursday and 8.45am - 4.45pm on Friday (excluding bank holidays). A duty Housing Officer will be available between the hours of 10am and 1pm, Monday to Friday.
- We offer an emergency service for repairs, the homelessness service and supported housing, which is available outside of office opening times.
- We will ensure that our reception area remains accessible and comfortable and will provide private interview facilities.
- If you request a home visit, we will arrange it within 7 working days. In an emergency we will arrange it on the first day.
- Staff will be polite, professional and positive at every point of contact and will always show identification.
- We will treat all people fairly, whatever their age, sexual orientation, religious belief, disability, gender or race.
- We will treat any information that we have about you and information that you give us, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- We will aim to answer 80% of telephone calls within 20 seconds and will give our name and department. If you leave a message we will call you back within one working day.
- We will respond to a letter or a fax within 10 working days and an email within 2 working days. If we cannot do this we will advise when a response will take longer.
- We will send forms/leaflets or general information to you within 5 working days
- We will provide translation if you need it and will provide documents in alternative formats, such as Braille, large print or audio tape.
- We will ensure that our website is up to date and includes all the information that you would want to know.
- If you wish to complain about the service you have received we have a formal complaints form which is available to complete online or can be posted. You will

receive an acknowledgement that we have received the form within 7 working days and you will receive a full reply to the complaint within 15 working days.

- Customer Access Reviews will be undertaken when developing strategies, plans and when reviewing services, to ensure that all customer needs are taken into account and there are no barriers preventing participation.

Helping you to find a home

- We will provide free housing advice appointments and will give you the opportunity to request a male or female advisor.
- Where possible the same officer will deal with your case from start to finish.
- We will tell you how you can join the housing register, use Kent Homechoice and will inform you of your priority listing and the likely timescales for re-housing. Your application will be registered with the date that it was received on.
- If you are made homeless and we have reason to believe that you are in priority need, then we will see you on the day you first approach us for help.
- If we have reason to believe that you are homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need, we will offer temporary accommodation whilst your application is being assessed.
- Once you have submitted a homeless application form we will make a decision within 33 working days in line with homelessness legislation.

Improving private sector housing

- We will give advice and information to owner occupiers, leaseholders, private landlords, tenants and potential investors, through our website, verbally or through sending written advice.
- We will improve poor and dangerous housing conditions by offering advice, information or taking enforcement action and undertaking works in default.
- We will signpost older and vulnerable people to the Home Improvement Agency when they require advice on home improvements and repairs.
- We will provide a variety of financial support schemes to assist in adapting, improving and repairing private sector housing, which may be subject to a test of resources.
- All payments are dealt with on the week they are received.
- We will endeavour to undertake periodic housing surveys every five years to establish the condition of housing. This will support the strategic decision making and enforcement processes.

- We will identify long term empty properties, trace owners and encourage reuse.
- We hold a list of all the Houses in Multiple Occupation in the borough and review the conditions of these on a five year rotation, or sooner after a complaint.
- We will issue licences on caravan and camping sites to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the occupiers. We will enforce action when complaints are received which indicate that the requirements of licences are not met.
- We will provide a Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Service, which will provide advice and assistance to travelling communities on site, by telephone or at the Civic Centre.

Services for our tenants

Maintaining homes

- When you first move into your home it will be of a safe and sound standard and will comply fully with our void standard.
- We will carry out gas servicing to your property every year and electrical checks periodically.
- We will enable you to report a repair by phone, on line or by text or email.
- When you report a repair we will tell you the expected time of completion, in line with our Repairs Policy:
 - Emergency repairs will be completed within 2 hours
 - Urgent repairs priority category 2 will be completed within 48 hours and category 3 completed within 5 working days.
 - Routine repairs category 4 will be completed within 10 days, category 5 within 20 days and category 6 within 40 days.
 - Gas repairs: Priority 1 – 24 hrs
 Priority 2 – 7 days
 Priority 3 – 31 days
- We will give you a choice of appointment times when repairs can be carried out e.g. am, pm or late evening on a Wednesday.
- If you are not home when we call, we will leave a card asking you to rearrange the appointment.
- We will ensure that contractors carry and show their identification and leave your home in a clean and tidy state.
- We will advertise on the internet and through the tenants' newsletter that anyone can request a female chaperone.

- We will consider recommendations from occupational therapists to install disabled adaptations.
- We will offer choice on major refurbishments such as kitchen, bathroom and door replacements.
- We have a decorating scheme for residents who live independently and are aged over 70 or physically disabled. A Handyman Scheme is also available for tenants who are over 65, physically disabled or living in our supported housing schemes.

Managing homes and neighbourhoods

- We will give you a copy of the tenancy agreement and will make sure that you understand the clauses before signing it.
- We will visit you within the first 6 weeks of starting your new tenancy, to resolve any issues.
- We will supply you with a tenants' handbook, which explains your responsibilities as a tenant and ours as landlord.
- We will send you quarterly rent statements by post or email.
- We will provide a number of different ways for you to pay your rent and will give you support and advice if you have difficulties paying your rent.
- Housing officers will carry out estate inspections three times a year.
- Our cleaning contractors will clean the communal areas of the flats weekly and will provide a call centre for comments and complaints, which is available 24 hrs, 7 days a week.
- We will respond to reports of anti social behaviour and breaches of tenancy conditions within ten working days. If the report is of an urgent nature we will respond within 24 hours or the next working day if the report is made over the weekend.
- We will remove racist graffiti within 24 hours and other graffiti within 72 hours.
- We will work with our partners, which include members of the Community Safety Partnership and other external agencies to resolve neighbourhood issues such as anti social behaviour, neighbour disputes and abandoned vehicles.

Supported housing

As well as the services which are available to all tenants, supported housing tenants receive the following additional services:

- Provision of an emergency alarm system, with 24 hr monitoring.

- Calls and visits from a Supported Housing Officer.
- A personal support plan which will be updated at least every 6 months, or more often upon request or as your own circumstances dictate.

Services for our leaseholders

We aim to provide a first class leaseholder service. To do this we will:

- Provide a Leaseholders Handbook, detailing how service charges are calculated, what your responsibilities are as a leaseholder and the Council's responsibilities as the freeholder.
- Send you a printed invoice for service charges by post at the start of every quarter and send you a yearly statement each year after the 1st April. We will send you actual statements in July each year for the previous financial year.
- Consult with you before taking major decisions that will affect you.
- Consult with you under the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002, before carrying out major works (£250 per leaseholder) or entering into any long-term contract (£100 per leaseholder).

Keeping our tenants and leaseholders involved

- We will consult with you on changes to contractors and/or services that affect you
- We will produce 'the Link' magazine for all our tenants and leaseholders at least three times a year.
- As requested by our regulator we will produce an annual report each year and publish a summary of this which will set out how we are meeting our service standards.
- We will work in accordance with the Resident Involvement Agreement, which sets out how we will involve residents in influencing, monitoring and improving service delivery.
- We will provide a menu of opportunity for involvement, which is available on our website and within our Resident Involvement leaflet.
- We will provide resources, support, training and guidance to residents wanting to get involved.
- Leaseholders and tenants can apply to join the Dartford Borough Residents Forum, which meets every month.
- We will ensure that meeting venues used for resident involvement are accessible for all.

- Where practical and appropriate we will attend and support neighbourhood and community events and initiatives and use a mobile trailer to assist these.

Housing policy and development

- Housing strategies and policies will be relevant, up to date and where necessary formed through comprehensive consultation with our partners, agencies, service users and residents.
- We will carry out research into the housing needs of the community.
- We will enable the provision of affordable housing by working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords.

In return we ask that you:

- Treat our staff with respect and without aggression or abuse.
- Do not visit us under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Provide all of the information we need to help us deal effectively.
- If you feel that we have failed to live up to our promises then we would welcome your feedback.

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ Punjabi	தமிழ் Tamil	Polski Polish	česky Czech	简体中文 Mandarin	Français French
01322 343610	01322 343611	01322 343612	01322 343613	01322 343614	01322 343615

If you or anybody you know requires this or any other council information in another language, please contact us and we will do our best to provide this for you. Braille, audio tape and large print versions of this document are available upon request.

Tel: 01322 343434

Fax: 01322 343432

Email: customer.services@dartford.gov.uk

Calls are welcome via [typtalk](https://www.typtalk.com)

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www.dartford.gov.uk/housing

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