



Customer Services Standard

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. We have developed our Customer Services Standard to ensure that our homes meet a consistent quality standard.
- 1.2. Good design promotes quality of life for the residents of the building. It includes comfort, safety, security, amenity, accessibility and adaptability.
- 1.3. Well-designed homes and buildings are efficient and cost effective to run. They help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by incorporating features that encourage sustainable lifestyles.
- 1.4. Our Homes will be clean, safe and in a good state of repair when our customers move in. Our Customer Services Standard sets out what our customers can expect and was agreed in consultation. Equally we expect customers to keep their home in good condition.
- 1.5. The tenancy agreement requires customers to help us by allowing access and reporting repairs which need doing promptly.
- 1.6. We will take photos of the property at sign-up and ask customers to sign off that the property is in good condition at the point of letting.
- 1.7. Our Customer Services Standard is the standard our properties will be when re-let post-void. It is the responsibility of our tenants to maintain this standard throughout their tenancy.

2. Our Principles

- 2.1. We have based our Customer Services Standard around the following principles:
 - a) Our homes should be safe and secure.
 - b) Our homes should be let with the need to only carry out non-emergency repairs. Some repairs or improvements may be required and will be advised at sign-up.
 - c) Customers will need to decorate, install flooring and provide any furniture needed.
 - d) Our homes should, as far as practicable, conform to good design standards.
 - e) Our homes will meet the standards required by our funding partners.
 - f) Our properties will meet the government Decent Homes Standard.

3. Safety and Security

- 3.1. At sign up we will give a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) which shows how energy efficient our home is. All our homes will have an EPC rating of 'D' or above where possible.
- 3.2. Our Homes electrical fixtures and fittings will be tested and approved by a NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting) registered contractor and a certificate given to the customer at sign up.
- 3.3. The gas system will be tested and safety certificates will be provided at sign-up.
- 3.4. We will check our homes for asbestos and ensure that it is either removed or left in a safe condition.
- 3.5. We will ensure customers have access to asbestos survey results.
- 3.6. We will provide two smoke alarms which will be clean, secure and tested. Where appropriate we will use combined Carbon Monoxide and Smoke Detectors. It is the customer's responsibility to replace the batteries.
- 3.7. We will change the locks on any external doors to make sure no one else has a key. Where appropriate we will fit a 5-lever mortice deadlock that complies with Police and Insurance Company security recommendations to external doors.
- 3.8. Any controlled entry systems on communal doors will operate correctly and have any repairs required ordered or scheduled.
- 3.9. Polystyrene coving or tiles will be removed and the surfaces made good.
- 3.10. We will ensure that our homes are free from damp and mould and provide appropriate advice on condensation management to customers.
- 3.11. Any non-urgent repairs required will be planned or ordered in accordance with our repairs priorities.

4. Property Clearance

- 4.1. We will ensure all rubbish and furniture has been removed.
- 4.2. We will also remove any carpets, laminate flooring or ceramic flooring if they are in poor condition. In some situations, if floor coverings are in reasonable condition and have been properly fitted these items may be retained and gifted to incoming tenants, and customers will be asked to sign a declaration acknowledging their responsibility for these items if they wish to retain them. If responsibility is not accepted the items will be removed prior to letting a property.
- 4.3. We will treat any vermin or flea infestation inside a property. Customers are responsible for treating any infestations that occur during the course of the tenancy.
- 4.4. Our homes will have been cleaned throughout with particular attention to the bathroom, kitchen and floor coverings.

- 4.5. We are not responsible for previous installations of telephone, satellite and TV media packages. Any additional fittings are tenant responsibility and must be fitted and paid for without causing damage.
- 4.6. If customers make any arrangement to purchase any item from the outgoing tenant, we take no responsibility for these items.

5. External Doors

- 5.1. We will replace the locks to front and rear doors when the tenancy changes. Where applicable or required, single-point locks will be certified to BS 3621, and multi-point locks to PAS 024.
- 5.2. We will ensure that windows and external doors are secure and fully glazed and order any repairs where required.
- 5.3. We will provide customers with two sets of external door keys together with window-lock keys. Where there are communal doors we will issue one key per adult living in the property. Any additional communal door keys or access fobs request will be issued but will be recharged at a cost to the customer.
- 5.4. Where applicable we will provide an equivalent number of electronic fobs.
- 5.5. Where a door requires replacement, we will do this on a like-for-like basis, except where a fire door is required.
- 5.6. We will ensure doors are hung so as not to obscure access to light switches.
- 5.7. Where we install a new door we will ensure that any glazing is double glazing.

6. Hallways

- 6.1. We will give consideration to the installation of a radiator where there is not one in existence, to eliminate cold spots.

7. Lounges and Reception Rooms

- 7.1. We will ensure that door-opening directions do not obscure light switches.
- 7.2. We will retain dado and picture rails where these are intact.
- 7.3. We will ensure that the room has adequate heating and ventilation.
- 7.4. We will remove gas fires, cap and isolate and remove carcass back to the meter if possible.

8. Kitchens

- 8.1. The number of kitchen units will depend on the size and layout of the kitchen. As a minimum, we will fit one unit with a stainless steel sink, one double base unit and one double wall unit.
- 8.2. Kitchen will be able to be ventilated either by means of windows or extractor fan.
- 8.3. We will ensure all drawers and doors open and close without catching, and that they are sound and useable.
- 8.4. Where possible we will leave space to install a washing machine and double height fridge freezer space.
- 8.5. We will ensure worktops are clean and sealed where the work top meets the wall, and around sink.
- 8.6. Sinks will be clean and free of rust and stains, and supplied with a plug and chain.
- 8.7. Taps will be clean, easy to operate, marked hot and cold, and drip-free. We will fit lever taps as standard.
- 8.8. Tiling will be clean, not loose or cracked. We will make sure there is a minimum of 300mm of tiles on the walls above the work surface and sink, except where windows prohibit this.
- 8.9. Gas cooker points will be clean and capped off with bayonet fittings, ready for a cooker to be put in.
- 8.10. We will relocate gas hobs away from windows where necessary.
- 8.11. Electric cooker points will be clean and ready for a cooker to be put in.
- 8.12. Where there is sufficient room, we will leave a 620mm space with a water supply, with a waste pipe ready for a washing machine to be fitted. Washing machine valves will be clean and easy to open and close. Valves will be drip-free and marked 'hot' and 'cold'. Waste pipes will be secure and drip-free.
- 8.13. Sockets will be located at least 100mm from cookers.
- 8.14. Sockets will be located at least 300mm from sinks.
- 8.15. Where built-in appliances, such as ovens and hobs, are in situ, these are to be tested and if safe to use they will be retained. These are then gifted to the customer.
- 8.16. At the tenant's request, we can install gas or electric cookers using a suitably qualified gas and/or electrical engineer; the incoming tenant will be charged for this.

9. Staircases

- 9.1. We will ensure that new staircases, where building design allows, conforms to building regulations.
- 9.2. In all cases we will ensure that:

- 9.2.1. There is adequate lighting over stairs.
- 9.2.2. Handrails fitted to stairs, treads and risers are safely secured and nosings are in place as required.
- 9.2.3. The spacing between spindles on bannisters is safe.

10. Bathrooms

- 10.1. Bathroom and WCs can be separate or combined and ventilated either by window or extractor fan.
- 10.2. Your bath will be cleaned and sealed where bath edges meet the tiling and will be secure and free from major chips, with a plug and chain installed.
- 10.3. The bath panel will be secure and clean.
- 10.4. All toilets, including seats, will be secure, clean and easy to flush. New toilet installations will have low-flow flush.
- 10.5. Bathroom basins will be secure, clean and supplied with a plug and chain. Taps will be clean, easy to operate, marked 'hot' and 'cold', and drip-free. We will fit lever taps as standard.
- 10.6. Tiling will be clean, intact and not loose or cracked. We will make sure there is a tiled area above the wash-hand basin and 450mm tiles above the bath.
- 10.7. Vinyl floor covering will be provided.
- 10.8. We will ensure a steam-proof light is installed.
- 10.9. All light switches will be independently fused and pull-cord in style.
- 10.10. We will install a privacy handle on the internal door.
- 10.11. Where a shower is fitted, replace the curtain and, if required, the rail.

11. Plumbing and Heating Systems

- 11.1. We will ensure our homes have an adequate and safe form of heating.
- 11.2. When a gas fire is removed, the radiator to that room should be checked for sized and replaced if necessary.
- 11.3. Where a gas fire is removed the surround may be retained on a case-by-case basis where this prevents the need for further remedial works.
- 11.4. We will not locate boilers in bedrooms.
- 11.5. Wherever possible, boilers will be placed in cupboards.
- 11.6. We will check the plumbing and water system to ensure it is in working order and free of leaks.

- 11.7. Stopcocks will be accessible and easy to open and close; where replaced, a SureStop is to be used. We will make sure customers know at the start of their tenancy where the stopcock is.
- 11.8. Water pipework and storage facilities will be maintained according to the requirements of BS 6700.

12. Electrics

- 12.1. The consumer unit will be easily accessible and to a good modern standard which complies with BS EN 61439-3 and BS 7671.
- 12.2. All lights, light switches and sockets will be in good working order.
- 12.3. We will endeavour to avoid using surface mounted electrics where practicable.
- 12.4. Where required, all new electrical-wiring installation will meet the latest requirements of the Institution of Electrical Engineers/British Standard (BS 7671).
- 12.5. We will use sockets with integrated USB ports in bedrooms and kitchens where sockets require replacement.
- 12.6. We will ensure that there are adequate socket numbers. Generally, this will mean a minimum of:
 - a) Lounges: 3 double sockets
 - b) Double bedrooms: 2 double sockets
 - c) Single bedrooms: 1 double socket
 - d) Kitchen: 4 double sockets and 1 Hager switch
 - e) Hallways/Landings: 1 double socket
- 12.7 The above specification may vary depending on the style, size and requirements of the property.

13. Lighting

- 13.1. We will retain good-quality existing light fittings.
- 13.2. We will ensure any replacements comply with British Standards.

14. Internal Doors

- 14.1. All rooms will have a door fitted, unless the property is designed as open plan. Fire-rated doors will be fitted where appropriate.
- 14.2. Doors will be clean, secure and easy to open and close with the hinges and door furniture secure.
- 14.3. We will retain doors that are fit for purpose, even if these are not uniform throughout the property.
- 14.4. If any doors need easing after customers have had carpets fitted, this is the responsibility of the customer.
- 14.5. Glazing in 'critical locations' will safety glass. Glazing in doors – glass which is wholly or partially within 1500mm from floor level must be safety glass and comply with BS6206.
- 14.6. Glazing adjacent to doors – windows/side panels wholly or partially within 300mm of the edge of a door and which is also wholly or partially within 1500mm from floor level must be safety glass.
- 14.7. Other glazing that is wholly or partially within 800mm from floor level. This means that windows that are not located within 300mm of a door must use safety glass if the bottom of the glazing is within 800mm of the floor level.

15. Flooring

- 15.1. Where there is vinyl flooring present we will ensure this is clean, undamaged and slip resistant. Vinyl flooring or similar is provided in the kitchen, bathroom and WC. We do not provide floor covering in other rooms as standard.
- 15.2. We will ensure floors and skirting boards are clean, complete, secure, and free from rot and trip hazards and any repairs required are ordered or planned.
- 15.3. Carpets and carpet grippers left by the previous tenant will normally be removed, unless they are in good condition. Any carpets or floor coverings left will be gifted to the new tenant and become their responsibility, which we will require them to sign for.

16. Windows

- 16.1. The glazing of all windows will be intact and secure.
- 16.2. We will ensure all windows are easy to open and close.
- 16.3. We will provide window keys where necessary and restrictors to all opening windows on first floor and above upon request.
- 16.4. We will check that window vents are unobstructed and in good working order.
- 16.5. We will replace any failed glazing.

- 16.6. We will ensure that the window seals are in good condition.
- 16.7. We will ensure that at least one window at first floor level will open wide enough to be used as an emergency escape.
- 16.8. Any non-emergency repairs will be ordered or planned in accordance with the appropriate priority.

17. Roofs and Roof Spaces

- 17.1. We will ensure the property is safe, secure and watertight.
- 17.2. We will ensure all roof tiles and verges are in place, and the chimney stacks, flaunching, pots and lead flashing are intact.
- 17.3. We will replace any missing or damaged waste pipes, guttering and overflows and will ensure the system is in a good state of repair.
- 17.4. Gutters will be free from blockages, weed growth and leaks.
- 17.5. We will leave lofts clear of any items.
- 17.6. We will top up loft insulation to meet current energy efficiency recommendations.

18. Decoration

- 18.1. Where front doors require re-staining, this work will be ordered and carried out in accordance with our priorities.
- 18.2. We will ensure that walls and ceilings are sound, free from damp, graffiti, large cracks, loose plaster, bulges or holes and will be structurally sound.
- 18.3. We will ensure that walls and ceilings are in a suitable condition to decorate.
- 18.4. We do not normally decorate, however, any room which is in a very poor state of decoration – due to graffiti or mould growth for example – will be neutrally redecorated before the tenant moves in.
- 18.5. We will assess the plastering and conduct remedial works where the plastering is below our standard. We will typically remove or cover heavy Aertex where this is present.
- 18.6. Where walls require filling and are wallpapered, we will strip the wall of wallpaper before carrying out repairs.
- 18.7. We will ensure that we remove lead paint where possible.
- 18.8. Where it has been necessary to cut chases into the wall, we will strip the entire wall of wallpaper.

19. Period Features

19.1. Where possible, we will be sensitive to retain period features which add to the aesthetic of the building and are in keeping with the broader locality. Examples of this include but are not limited to:

- a) Period fireplaces
- b) Tiled floors
- c) Decorative cornices
- d) Dado and picture rails
- e) Decorative archways

20. Driveways

- 20.1. Where a driveway requires replacement we will typically match like-for-like, although tarmac is our preferred material.
- 20.2. We will not install gates at the top of driveways but will retain these if in existence.

21. Outdoor Spaces

- 21.1. We will ensure any repairs required to meet the standards below are scheduled in accordance with our priorities.
- 21.2. We will ensure brickwork is clear of graffiti, with no major cracks.
- 21.3. We will make sure the property is wind and watertight.
- 21.4. We will ensure access pathways to the front and back door are even and free of trip hazards.
- 21.5. We will check that all bricks are unobstructed and in good working order.
- 21.6. We will ensure that rear gates to your home are safe and secured with a bolt.
- 21.7. We will ensure that any outbuildings, such as garages, are fit for purpose.
- 21.8. We will ensure that gardens are free of items left by previous residents, are tidy and not overgrown. We will remove nuisance trees e.g., impact of the structure of the property, ingress on an access, considered too large for the space.
- 21.9. All paths, steps, yards and ramps will be safe, secure and free from trip hazards.
- 21.10. All fencing, walls, railings, gates, and handrails will be safe, secure and in good working order.
- 21.11. All ponds or pools will be filled in or removed.
- 21.12. Drainage systems will be free-flowing and fitted with covers.

- 21.13. Where the shed allotted to any property is in poor condition it will be removed. Where a shed is in good condition this will be gifted to the customer.
- 21.14. Existing sheds and outbuildings will be free from rubbish, safe, secure and watertight.
- 21.15. On some occasions we may remove the shed but leave the shed base in situ.

22. Boundaries

- 22.1. We will inspect boundary walls and fences and if repairs or replacement are required, and (subject to clarification of the ownership of the boundary) complete the repairs in accordance with our repairs priorities.

23. Green Initiatives

- 23.1. Where it is viable, we will seek to upgrade loft insulation to meet current recommendations in order to significantly reduce heat escape via the ceiling and roof.
- 23.2. To reduce water usage, we will (where tap or shower replacements are required) use aerated technology which could save up to 25 litres of water per person per day.
- 23.3. We will install only A-rated boilers in our properties. We will annually review the type of boiler we use to ensure that we are keeping up with technological advances.
- 23.4. We will provide toilets with a dual flush, low-flow function.
- 23.5. We will install low energy LED lighting when required.
- 23.6. We will ensure waste is disposed of in an environmentally friendly a way as possible.

24. Aids, Adaptations and Non-Standard Fittings

- 24.1. If there are disabled adaptations in place these will be left if they do not impede normal living arrangements. Any that are left will be tested for safe operation.
- 24.2. Some items may have been installed by the previous tenant; these may be items which are not standard EPIC fixtures and fittings. Some non-standard items may be retained by EPIC, if they are well fitted, fully operational and useful. If they become defective and subsequently need to be repaired or replaced, we will remove them and only replace with standard EPIC fittings and fixtures.

25. Customer Involvement

25.1. EPIC Housing are committed to embedding customer voice within the services which we deliver. For this reason, this standard is reflective of our Corporate Plan, and we will work closely with tenants to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. We will monitor feedback from applicants and customers to ensure that the standard remains fit for purpose.

26. Document Control

Document Control	
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Approved By	Operations Committee
EIA Completed (Where Required)	No
Customer Consultation (Where Appropriate)	Yes
Employee Handbook Amends	No
External Consultation Required?	Yes – Contractors