

Housing Services Access to Your Home Standard

We are committed to building strong and sustainable communities, delivering excellent customer service to our tenants across Housing Services and ensuring that our tenants receive a consistent standard of service.

Our Access to your Home Service Standard sets out what you can expect from Housing Services when we need to access your home.

Why would Housing Services need to access my home?

We may require access to your home for a number of reasons throughout your tenancy. It is a requirement of your Tenancy Agreement that you allow us access when required.

Some of these will be to carry out planned improvements to your home or to meet our legal and regulatory requirements for your health and safety. Its important that you work with us so we can access your home as easily and conveniently as possible.

Some examples of why we would need to access your home include (not exhaustive):

- Annual gas service – this is a legally required visit where we check the safety of any gas appliance owned by Darlington Borough Council such as a gas boiler.
- Electrical safety check – this is a regulatory and legal requirement to ensure the safety of your home. This check is carried out 5 yearly and at change in tenancy.
- Stock condition survey – this is a new regulatory requirement that we must inspect every property we own so we are aware of the condition of our housing stock.
- Planned maintenance – this can be to replace your bathroom, kitchen, windows, doors, roof etc to ensure that they are safe, modern and meet required standards.
- Tenancy checks – this is so we can meet regulatory requirements, have up to date information about who lives in our homes and meet the diverse needs of tenants.
- Repairs – this is so we can carry out repairs to your home to ensure it is safe, efficient and meets legal and regulatory requirements.

- Inspections – these are where we may need to inspect to assess for repairs, planned maintenance or improvements. We may also carry out post inspections after you have had repairs or work completed to ensure the quality of work.
- Fire door inspections – this is so we can meet legal requirements to ensure your fire door meets fire regulations and keeps you safe.



DARLINGTON
Borough Council



The Housing Services Access to Your Home Service Standard supports the Darlington Borough Council Tenancy Agreement, Housing Management Policy and Repairs & Maintenance Policy. When arranging access to your home we will:

- Be respectful towards you when trying to arrange access to your home.
- Use a variety of methods to arrange access to your home such as letters, home visits, text messaging, email and Whatsapp. We will also make contact with support workers and family members where agreed to arrange access.
- Offer a variety of dates and times to reduce any inconvenience to you as much as possible.
- Ensure we leave a calling card at all missed appointments.
- Only consider legal action for gaining access when all other reasonable attempts have been exhausted.
- Where possible link in visits so we can minimise the number of appointments for example, we will complete smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm testing at the same time as your annual gas service.
- Provide confirmation of appointments so you are fully aware of the appointment and to reduce missed appointments.
- Consider any vulnerabilities, disabilities or additional needs within your household.
- Give reasonable notice for appointments (except in the event of a health and safety concern, emergency situation or unplanned income recovery visits).
- We may apply a recharge cost to you for missed pre-planned work and appointments where you have not re-arranged.

- Work collaboratively with internal and external departments, external agencies, the third sector and partners such as Police, Fire Service to ensure we maximise opportunities to achieve success.
- Provide and arrange both internal and external training across all Housing departments to our staff and Tenants Panel to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to meet the standards our tenants and the Regulator of Social Housing expect.
- Ensure that all attempts at access are recorded on our internal Housing ICT system to ensure good quality data.
- Use 1:1 sessions and team meetings to assist staff to maintain their skills, knowledge, and experience. Use these as forums for good practice discussions, policy and process reviews and training.

How can you be sure we are meeting these standards?

We will:

- Keep up to date records on training completed by staff and arrange refresher training as required.
- Complete induction training with all staff.
- Involve our Tenants Panel in reviewing our standards.
- Use any actions from complaints, comments, or compliments as opportunities to improve our service.

