

Service Standards



If you have difficulty in understanding this document or need it in another format, including Braille, large print, audiotape, interpretation, signed interpretation or translation into another language, please telephone **0800 121 60 60*** or **01795 434 606**** or email **contactus@amicushorizon.org.uk**

* Calls free from a BT landline, charges from mobiles and other networks may vary.

** If you are calling from a mobile, it may be cheaper for you to dial 01795 434 606.
Calls may be recorded and monitored quality and training purposes.

Service Standards

We aim to deliver excellent services to your satisfaction. The service standards have been developed with residents for residents with assured tenancies.

If you feel that the standards have not been met, please let us know and we will try to put things right. You have the right to make a complaint and if you wish to do so, please see page 13.

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Equality and diversity

AmicusHorizon is committed to supporting equality and diversity in every area of its work. We have a clear commitment to the equality of opportunity for all residents, tenants and staff.

We believe that everyone should be treated in a fair, open and honest way. Our approach reflects all areas of diversity. We recognise the value of each individual. We aim to ensure that no one is treated less favourably than others on the grounds of ethnic origin, nationality, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race or religion. Our intention is to reflect not only the latter, but also to meet legislation requirements.

Customer service

In all our contact with you, we will aim to:

- Get things right first time
- Inform you of when you can expect to hear from us and keep to those deadlines
- Be polite, honest and treat you fairly and with respect
- Respect confidentiality and give you access to your personal information in line with our legal duties
- Explain your rights and responsibilities
- Provide a consistent standard of service wherever you live.

In all our communication with you, we will aim to:

- Write to you in a clear and jargon-free style
- Clearly explain the reasons for any decisions made
- Provide information in large print and/or audio tape/CD upon request or where we know a need exists
- Provide access to translation or interpretation services upon request or where we know a need exists
- Look for ways to assist you if you have informed us that you have a disability, mental or physical ill health.

If you write to, or email us, we will aim to:

- Reply within 10 working days with a response that fully answers your enquiry
- If we cannot provide a full response, let you know who is dealing with your enquiry and when you can expect a reply.

If you telephone our offices, we will aim to:

- Answer telephone calls within 15 seconds, using a standard greeting and giving you our names
- Answer your enquiry immediately, or transfer you quickly to someone that can assist you or take a message
- Return your call by the end of the next working day if you leave a message.

If you visit us, we will aim to:

- Greet you quickly and politely, within five minutes of your arrival
- Ensure you are seen on time, when you have made an appointment with us
- Ensure, you wait no more than 20 minutes to see someone who can assist you if you do not have an appointment
- Keep our reception areas clean and tidy and display up to date information
- Provide private interview rooms to discuss confidential issues.

If we visit you at your home, we will aim to:

- Make an appointment at an agreed time with you, and arrive on time
- Inform you if we cannot keep the appointment and offer to rearrange it
- Show identification before entering your home.

If we get things wrong, we will aim to:

- Apologise for our mistake, put it right as soon as possible, and keep you informed of progress
- Inform you of your right to complain and advise you how to do so
- Inform you how we have learnt from our mistakes
- Always welcome your views and comments about improving our service.

You can help us by:

- Being polite, honest, and respecting our staff, suppliers and contractors
- Informing us if you require translation, or interpretation services, or require written information to be in large print, on audio or CD or another format
- Letting us know of any circumstances that we may need to take into account when we deliver services to you
- Informing us of changes in your circumstances and contact details, in particular telephone numbers

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- Letting us know if things have gone wrong
 - Making an appointment if you wish to see a specific member of staff at our office or at home
 - Keeping appointments, and letting us know if you are unable to.

Resident involvement and feedback

We want residents to give us their views to help improve and shape services. When involving you we will aim to:

- Enable you to influence major decisions that affect you
- Provide a range of opportunities to comment on and influence services
- Provide you with feedback on how your views have influenced decisions
- Provide the opportunity to be involved when, where and how you want to
- Reimburse your reasonable out-of-pocket expenses for being involved.

You can help us by:

- Giving us your comments and views on services whether good or bad
- Letting us know if we have not achieved the service standards.

Paying your rent

To help you to manage your rent and service charge payments we will aim to:

- Offer and publicise a range of payment methods
- Give you 20 working days written notice of any increase of service charge or rent
- Send you a rent statement every three months
- Provide you with a rent statement within five working days of your request
- Inform and support you to get help with money and debt advice
- Assist you with the completion of housing benefit forms
- Contact you as soon as possible if you fall into arrears
- Offer you the opportunity to agree a reasonable repayment plan if you fall into arrears, which we will confirm in writing
- Inform you before taking any legal action for rent arrears.

You can make payments to your account via **allpay.net**. We also offer regularly updated account statements and more via our secure online account service. Please visit our website for details: www.amicushorizon.org.uk

You can help us by:

- Paying your rent and service charges regularly and on time so that you do not fall into arrears and so that you avoid legal action
- Contacting us or seeking money advice at the earliest possible opportunity if you are having difficulties paying your rent or service charges
- Completing housing benefit claim forms as quickly as possible and informing the local authority (Council), and us as soon as your circumstances change
- Remembering to update standing orders with your bank/building society as soon as your rent changes
- Making sure that you renew your housing benefit claim when you need to
- Making sure that you keep to repayment agreements made with you.

Repairing your home

Contractors code of conduct

This outlines the service standards that you can expect from AmicusHorizon contract workers.

There will be times when contract workers carry out repairs, maintenance and other work in your home. We aim to deliver excellent services to your satisfaction and we expect the same from our contractors.

All contractors are required to sign a code of conduct that sets out the levels of service we expect from them.

You can expect contract workers to:

- Give you a morning or afternoon appointment when you report a repair
- Keep appointments that are made with you
- Show identification before entering your home
- Explain what the work will involve and how long it is expected to take
- Fix the repair at the first visit and, if not, inform you of the date when it will be completed
- Carry out all work in a professional way and in line with Health & Safety regulations
- Ensure that your home is left clean, tidy, safe and free from rubbish at the end of each working day
- Treat you and your family with courtesy and respect.

You can help us by:

- Informing us of any faults or repairs as soon as possible
- Allowing us access to carry out surveys, inspections, repairs and servicing
- Informing us if you are unable to keep an appointment
- Giving us feedback on whether we, or our contractors, have met the standards we have promised
- Treating contractors with courtesy and respect
- Taking care of your home and not causing, or allowing your visitors to cause any damage.

If you would like to see the full AmicusHorizon contractors code of conduct, please call us.

Please let us know if any of our contractors fail to provide the service we expect of them.

Gas servicing to your home

We will aim to:

- Carry out a gas safety service annually to ensure that your home has a current valid gas safety certificate
- Contact you 15 working days in advance of carrying out gas servicing
- Give you a morning or afternoon appointment
- Ensure that your home is left clean, tidy, safe and free from rubbish in relation to the works we carry out and at the end of each working day
- Provide you with a copy of the gas safety certificate within 15 working days.

You can help us by:

- Helping us to keep you safe, fulfil our legal duties, and to avoid having to take legal action by allowing access to carry out gas safety inspections and servicing
- Contacting us if you have a gas supply to your home and are concerned that you do not have a valid gas safety certificate
- Informing us if you are unable to keep an appointment
- Giving us feedback on whether we, or our contractors, have met the service standards.

Improving your home

When we are carrying out improvements to your home we will aim to:

- Inform you of the works to be completed, the contractor's name, and the likely duration of the work at least 25 working days before the work starts
- Provide details of a named contact person and their contact details
- Inform you if works will lead to an increase in rent or service charges before work starts
- Provide temporary heating if we are unable to provide permanent heating at the end of each working day*
- Ensure that essential services such as water, electricity and cooking facilities are available at the end of each working day
- Ensure that your home is left clean, tidy, safe and free from rubbish in relation to the works we carry out and at the end of each working day
- Give you a decision within 20 working days if you apply for permission to carry out your own improvements or alterations.

* Heating loss for elderly/vulnerable or for others during the period 31 October to 1 May.

You can help us by:

- Allowing access to carry out surveys, inspections, and improvements
- Informing us if you are unable to keep an appointment
- Informing us if your circumstances mean that carrying out improvement work may cause you problems (e.g. a member of your household has a health problem)
- Informing us if there are problems with the improvement work
- Giving us feedback on whether we, or our contractors, have met the service standards
- Seeking our permission before carrying out your own improvements or alterations to your home, and carrying out works to an acceptable standard.

Minor adaptations to your home

Examples of minor adaptations include fitting grab rails, and lever taps. When handling minor adaptations we will aim to:

- Give you support with completing applications for adaptations
- Give you a decision within 10 working days
- Give you a morning or afternoon appointment

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- Complete minor adaptations within 20 working days
 - Solve the problem first time
 - Ensure that your home is left clean, tidy, safe and free from rubbish in relation to the works we carry out and at the end of each working day.

When we are not able to carry out the adaptation ourselves we will:

- Inform you about sources of equipment within seven working days
- Inform you about sources of funding (including disabled facilities grants) within seven working days
- Give you support with completing applications for adaptations.

You can help us by:

- Informing us if the adaptation has not solved the problem
- Providing information to support your request for an adaptation
- Keeping appointments.

Support services for you

We aim to promote independence by providing support services. When delivering support services we will aim to:

- Agree a support plan with you to help promote your independence
- Carry out the actions identified in your support plan within the agreed times
- Review your support plan with you at least every six months, and earlier depending on your circumstances.

You can help us by:

- Informing us if your circumstances change
- Keeping appointments, and informing us when you are unable to keep an appointment
- Informing us if you receive help and support from other agencies.

Letting you a home

When we let a home to you we will aim to:

- Offer you an opportunity to view the home before you decide to accept it
- Inform you of the rent and service charges when we make you an offer
- Inform you of the letting standard that you should expect when we make you an offer of a home

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- Ensure that the condition of the home meets the letting standard
 - Ensure that the home is clean, tidy, safe and free from rubbish before you move in
 - Inform you of any repairs that may have to be completed after you move in and the date when they will be completed
 - Explain your tenancy agreement, rights and responsibilities before you move in
 - Agree a time with you before you move in to show you how to use facilities such as heating/hot water systems, and the location of the stop cock
 - Arrange an appointment with you before you move in to carry out a post letting visit and carry out this within 20 working days.

You can help us by:

- Keeping appointments to view the home that you are offered
- Informing us within the stated time whether you intend to accept or refuse an offer
- Letting us know if you would like further explanation of your rights and responsibilities at the post letting visit.

Your tenancy

We will aim to deliver the following standards in relation to your tenancy:

- Answer your enquiries about your tenancy conditions within seven working days
- Work with you and other agencies to help you to sustain your tenancy and meet your tenancy conditions
- Give you our decision about mutual exchanges within 28 working days
- Give you our decision about taking over a tenancy from someone else (successions and assignment) within 20 working days.

You can help us by:

- Keeping to your tenancy terms and conditions, and contacting us if you would like further explanation of your rights and responsibilities
- Informing us about changes in circumstances as soon as possible
- Seeking our permission before exchanging your home, assigning your tenancy, or carrying out improvements/alterations
- Giving the specified notice if you decide to leave your home, and ensure that the keys are returned by the specified date
- Leaving your home clean, free from rubbish, and completing repairs that are your responsibility before you move out, or move through a mutual exchange.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB), racial harassment, harassment and domestic abuse

When tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB), racial harassment, harassment and domestic abuse we will take a victim centred approach and will take all reports seriously. ASB, racial harassment, harassment and domestic abuse will not be tolerated.

When handling cases we will aim to:

- Contact you within one working day for urgent cases where there is a threat of, or actual violence, and within five working days otherwise
- Offer the best advice and support for your circumstances
- Provide a named person who will handle your case
- Agree the actions we will take with you
- Provide you with regular updates as agreed with you.

You can help us by:

- Reporting details of ASB, racial harassment, harassment and domestic abuse as soon as possible
- Not causing, or letting your family or visitors cause ASB, including harassment, noise nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to your neighbours or anyone else in the community
- Respecting other people's right to their chosen lifestyle, as long as this does not spoil the quality of life for others
- Taking responsibility for minor disagreements with your neighbours and to try and sort out such problems in a reasonable way
- Reporting crimes, including threats or acts of violence, to the police
- Helping to provide evidence, including completing diary sheets, witness statements, and acting as a witness in court.

Your neighbourhood

The standards for your neighbourhood apply to internal communal areas and external areas that we manage. We will aim to:

- Keep your neighbourhood clean and tidy
- Keep your neighbourhoods free from hazards
- Remove offensive graffiti within 24 hours
- Identify abandoned vehicles as soon as possible and inform the relevant agency with the power to remove the vehicle within one working day

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- Report issues that are not our responsibility to the relevant organisation within one working day of finding out
 - Carry out inspections at least every three months and provide feedback
 - Consult residents about neighbourhood improvements and plans.

You can help us by:

- Reporting repairs, hazards, graffiti, and abandoned vehicles
- Disposing of rubbish properly
- Keeping your garden, and the outside of your home clean, tidy, and free from rubbish
- Providing us with feedback and views about your estate.

How to make a complaint

Making a complaint

We aim to get things right first time but accept that mistakes can happen. If we make mistakes, we want to correct them and learn from our mistakes. The feedback you give us will help us improve the services we provide.

What is a complaint?

You have the right to make a complaint to us when you are not satisfied with something we have done or failed to do. This could be when we have:

- Failed to meet our service standards
- Not advised you of your rights
- Demonstrated poor attitude or behaviour.

We would not normally deal with the following matters under our complaints procedure:

- Complaints about the behaviour of other people in your area
- Making an insurance claim
- Where legal action is being taken.

If you wish to make a complaint about any of these areas, please contact us so we can advise you. You can find the contact details overleaf.

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including people applying for housing, members of the public and other people on your behalf.

How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint directly to a member of staff of your housing association or by contacting us via one of the methods below:

If you need help making a complaint

Please ask a member of staff. Alternatively, you can ask someone else to make a complaint on your behalf or represent you: For example, a support worker, Citizens Advice Bureau, a friend or family member. When we receive a complaint from someone else we will contact you to check you are happy for them to deal with the complaint on your behalf.

Once you have made a complaint

We will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- Tell you who is dealing with your complaint and how to contact them
- Offer to meet with you, where appropriate, to discuss the matter and ask you what you think we should do to put it right
- Aim to respond in full within ten working days
- Apologise where we have got things wrong, and let you know what action we will take to avoid this happening again.

Tel: **0800 121 60 60*** or **01795 434 606****

Calls may be recorded and monitored for quality and training purposes.

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Fax: **01795 434 344**

Email: **contactus@amicushorizon.org.uk**

Website: **www.amicushorizon.org.uk**

Or by completing the complaints form, or sending a letter to:

AmicusHorizon
PO BOX 322
SITTINGBOURNE
ME9 8PQ

Stage one: looking into your complaint

A member of staff will be asked to look into your complaint and let you know:

- Whether we have made a mistake, and if we have, what we will do to put this right
- The reasons for our decision
- What you can do if you are unhappy with the decision.

Stage two: Reviewing the decision

If you are unhappy with the response you receive at stage one, please contact us within 20 working days to let us know. A more senior member of staff will be asked to review the decision.

Stage three: Appeals Panel

If you are still unhappy with the decision at stage two, please contact us within 20 working days. Your complaint will be reviewed by an appeals panel. The panel includes some of the Area Panel members, who will take an independent view of your situation. This is the final stage of our complaints procedure. A panel hearing will be set within 25 working days. In the hearing the panel will listen to the details of your complaint and the responses you have been given. You can bring a friend or a non-legal representative to the hearing. Travel and child/carer costs can be reimbursed on agreement with the co-ordinating officer.

Housing Ombudsman Service

If you have been through all stages of our complaints procedure and are still not satisfied, you may be able to ask for an independent review of your case through the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Ombudsman will only investigate a complaint from a tenant, leaseholder, service user or an applicant applying for housing.

81 Aldwych

London

WC2B 4HN

Tel: **020 7421 3800**

Lo Call: **0845 712 5973**

Minicom: **020 7404 7092**

Email: **info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk**

Web: **www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk**

A copy of our complaints policy and a leaflet about the Ombudsman Service are available on request.

Casa Support customers

Casa Support's non-housing activities and/or the conduct of staff are regulated by a variety of other independent agencies. For more information contact the Customer Care Line: **0845 072 7625**.



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