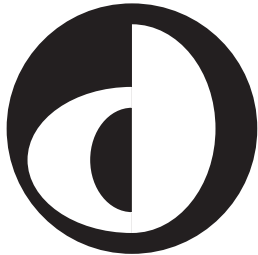


Your guide to the empty property service standards





DIRECT
Debit

Rent payments made easy...

- No cheques to write
- No paperwork or postage
- No queuing

Payments are made for you, by your Bank or Building Society. You simply complete and sign a Direct Debit authorisation then send it back to us and we take care of the rest.

**Take the hassle out of paying your rent.
Sign up for Direct Debits today...**



**Ring the Rents Hotline
on 01670 542121
for more information.**

Introduction

This leaflet explains the standard of service you should receive when you accept a new home.

Providing services fairly

We aim to ensure that our customers can use our services regardless of age, race, sex, disability, religion or sexuality.

We do this by ensuring our staff are trained to understand the different needs of customers and making sure our services are provided fairly to everyone.

Our staff will:

- help you fill in forms
- provide an interpretation service if your first language is not English
- give you information, on request, in different languages or in different formats such as large type, Braille, CD or audio tape
- use plain English
- take account of any special needs you may have
- provide you with support if you need it
- take calls using Typetalk
- arrange for you to speak to or be visited by a member of staff of the same sex as you, if you wish
- provide induction-loop systems
- visit you at home if you can't get to our office
- provide you with a sign-language service if you need it.

Why have service standards?

It is important to us that all the homes we let are a good standard. We will make sure that your new home is safe, clean and in a good condition for you to move into.

We want you to be happy with the standard of your new home. Once the empty property has been repaired, we will inspect it with you. We will give you a copy of the empty-property service standard when you view the property. Then you can be sure we have met the standard and you can be satisfied with the condition of the property before you sign up for the new tenancy.

Our staff will discuss any concerns you may have and agree with you what will be done to address your concerns.

Your empty property service standards – our promise to you

We are committed to providing you with excellent services. These are the standards of service all our customers can expect us to meet.

We will regularly review and publicise our performance against these standards to make sure that we continue to provide a high level of service to our customers.

We will take action to improve our service where we do not meet these standards.

Leaving your home

When you decide to leave one of our properties we will give you advice about:

- giving us 4 weeks' notice to end your tenancy
- how to qualify for our empty-property reward scheme
- outstanding rent or other charges
- handing in the keys
- how to get compensation if you have improved the property
- charges you may be liable for if you have damaged the property.

Essential repairs

All essential repairs identified below will be completed before you move into your new home:

- repairs affecting the health or safety of the occupants
- repairs to make the home fit to live in
- repairs that would make life very difficult for you if we did them after you moved in
- repairs to make the home secure
- a gas-safety check
- an electrical-safety check.

Minor repairs

So we can help you move into your new home as quickly as possible, we will do minor repairs as soon as we can after you move in. When you move in, we will tell you what work still needs doing and arrange an appointment with you to have it done.

Programmed repairs

If a repair you want can be done during our planned programme of repairs, it will have to wait until then. This is more efficient than doing lots of small, one-off repairs. However, this does not apply to the essential repairs already mentioned.

Quality of the inspection

Before you move into your new home we will check all the following to make sure they are suitable for you:

- **Windows** – should open and close, all catches should work and the glass should be secure and not broken. We'll provide keys for any window locks we fit.
- **Doors** – should open and close, and handles, locks and catches should work. We'll fit new locks to external entrance doors. Door skins and frames should be solid and any glass panels should be secure and safe.
- **Sanitary ware** – the bathroom will have at least a bath or shower, wash-hand basin and toilet. The toilet should not have any cracks or leaks and should be clean, and the flush should work properly. A new toilet seat with a sanitary seal will be fitted, taps should turn on and off correctly, and all sinks and baths should have a plug.

Continued overleaf

- **Kitchen units** – base and wall unit doors should open and close and the catches should work. Cupboard drawers, door handles, door and drawer facings, sink and work tops should be in a satisfactory condition. There should not be any leaks under the sink unit, and the taps should work properly.
- **Heating appliances** – all heating appliances should work properly. All parts including fire bricks, front plates, grates, radiants, fire glasses, the external casing, fire surrounds, hearths, tiles and all moving parts including the door, shaker bar, damper and control knobs should be in a satisfactory condition.
- **Floors, walls and ceilings** – all plasterwork should be dry, firm and free from large cracks. All joinery including skirting boards, mouldings, stanchions, banisters, floorboards, treads and risers should be sound. We will deal with any infestations or wood-boring insects.
- **Electrical fittings** – all light fittings, sockets and switches will be safe and work properly. All properties will have an electrical-safety test before you move in.

Continued overleaf

- **Alterations / DIY by previous tenants** – we will make sure that any work done on the property by previous tenants is safe and suitable for you to use.
- **Exterior** – fences, walls, brickwork, paths and drives will be safe. Gardens that are severely overgrown will be cut back and cleared. We will inspect from ground level the condition of all roof tiles, slates, gutters, chimney stacks and pots. We will clear all rubbish from any outbuildings and gardens.
- **Interior** – we will clear all carpets and furnishings, unless they are of good quality and you want to keep them. We will clear all rubbish.
- **Water supply** – we will ensure the water supply to your home is working correctly.
- **Facilities** – if there is room, we will ensure that the property has washing machine connection points and a waste pipe for drainage. The kitchen will have a gas or electric cooker point.

Continued overleaf

- **Gas safety** – the property will have a gas-safety check and you will receive a gas-safety certificate. We will give new customers operating instructions for their boiler, information on the gas-safety check and what to do in an emergency.
- **Safety** – a smoke alarm will be fitted.
- **Decorating** – depending on the property offered and the condition of the decoration, there are a number of things we may do:
 - We may offer you decoration vouchers to use at local shops to buy materials. This is to help you pay for decorating and is not meant to cover all your costs.
 - Or we can supply paint and painting tools up to the value of the vouchers with a selection of colours to choose from.
 - We may decorate individual rooms or strip wall coverings so you can decorate more easily.
 - We may fully decorate your home.
 - If we paint a room, we will give you a choice of colours to choose from a colour chart.
 - We will do nothing if the decoration standard is fine.

Continued overleaf

- **Cleanliness** – we'll clean the inside of your new home to an acceptable standard. By acceptable we mean:
 - the floors will be swept, cleaned and free of all coverings, such as carpets and lino
 - the kitchen units and worktops will be cleaned
 - the bathroom fixtures and fittings will be cleaned
 - 2 air fresheners will be left at the property.
- **Repairs support service** – we will provide 2 hours of a tradesperson's time for any small items of work. You will be responsible for providing any materials; the work will be done in one visit after you move in.
- **New home starter pack** – when you receive the keys to your new home, you will receive a new home starter pack with cleaning materials and cloths, energy-efficient light bulbs and air fresheners.

Viewing and signing up for a property

- If you have been offered a property, we will give you an estimated date when the keys will be available for you to view the property.
- When you are offered a property, we will accompany you to view it
- Once the empty property has been repaired, we will inspect it with you. We will give you a copy of the empty-property service standard when you view the property. Then you can be sure we have met the standard and you can be satisfied with the condition of the property before you sign up for the new tenancy..
- We will give you a copy of your tenancy agreement.
- We will provide a welcome pack with useful information and advice.
- We will make arrangements for your heating system to be connected and water-storage system to be re-filled.
- We will give you advice about rent-payment options, applying for housing benefit and a low-cost insurance scheme for your belongings.

Your views count – did we meet the service standards?

When you move into your new home we will send you a questionnaire, which gives you the opportunity to comment on the standard of the property and our service.

Spending money wisely

We aim to make sure we get the most out of the money we have available for our customers.

You can help us by:

- keeping any appointment we make with you
- only bidding for homes you will accept if offered
- making your mind up quickly if we offer you a home
- keeping your home in good condition
- paying your rent on time.

Improving our service

We will always try to provide the best services that we can so we make sure we learn from any complaints and compliments.

If you are not satisfied with our service, please let us know and we will try to sort out your complaint immediately. Our complaint leaflet explains how to complain.

We also welcome your comments and suggestions and regularly ask for your views on our services.

For more information, please contact us at:



Homes for Northumberland
Dinsdale House
75 Marine Terrace
Blyth
Northumberland
NE24 2LN



Phone: (01670) 542424 - Blyth Office



Phone: 0800 0461 431 - Alnwick Office



RNID Typetalk service –
prefix numbers with 18001



Text: 07950 080908



Fax: 01670 542420 - Blyth Office



Fax: 01665 510352 - Alnwick Office



Email: repairs@hfn.uk.com



www.hfn.uk.com

Visit any Northumberland County Council Information Centres:

- Avenue Road, Seaton Delaval
- Keel Row Centre, Blyth
- Forum Way, Cramlington
- Greenwell Lane, Alnwick
- The Fourways Centre, Amble.

Annual gas-safety check



**CARBON
MONOXIDE**

you can't see it,
you can't smell it,
you can't taste it...
...it's too late

**Your annual gas-safety check – it's
free, and it could save your life!**

Gas safety section: 01670 542479

Repairs call centre: 01670 542424

Out-of-hours emergencies call: 01670 540501

We can provide this information in alternative formats and languages. If you would like information in another format or language, please contact one of our offices.

Arabic	يمكننا تقديم هذه المعلومات بتنسيقات ولغات أخرى. إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على هذه المعلومات بتنسيق أو لغة أخرى، برجاء الاتصال بمكاتبنا
Bengali	আমরা এই তথ্য বিকল্প ফরম্যাট ও ভাষায় প্রদান করতে পারি। আপনি যদি এই তথ্য বিকল্প ফরম্যাট বা ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের যে কোনো একটি অফিসে যোগাযোগ করুন
Chinese (simplified)	我们可以提供此资料的其它格式和语言版本。如果您希望获取其它格式或语言版本，请与我们的任一办事处联系。
Chinese (traditional)	我們備有此資訊的其它格式和語言版本。若您需要其它格式或語言版本，請聯絡我們的辦事處。
Hindi	हम यह जानकारी वैकल्पिक फार्मेटों और भाषाओं में मुहैया करा सकते हैं। अगर आप अन्य फार्मेट या भाषा में जानकारी चाहते हैं तो कृपया हमारे कार्यालयों में से किसी एक में संपर्क करें
Polish	Możemy udostępnić Państwu te informacje na różnych nośnikach i w różnych językach. Gdyby chcieli Państwo otrzymać informacje na innym nośniku lub w innym języku prosimy skontaktować się z jednym z naszych biur.
Portuguese	Podemos disponibilizar esta informação em formatos e línguas alternativas. Se gostasse de receber informação noutro formato ou língua, por favor contacte um dos nossos escritórios
Punjabi	ਅਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਬਦਲਵੇਂ ਫਾਰਮੈਟਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਪਸੰਦ ਕਰੋਗੇ, ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਦਫਤਰਾਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਇਕ ਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ
Slovak	Môžeme poskytnúť tieto informácie v ďalších formátoch a jazykoch. Ak budete chcieť informácie v iných formátoch a jazykoch, prosím, kontaktujte jednu z našich kancelárií.
Turkish	Bu bilgileri başka formatlarda ve dillerde sağlayabilmekteyiz. Bilgiyi başka bir formatta veya dilde almak isterseniz, lütfen ofislerimizden biriyle irtibat kurunuz.
Urdu	ہم یہ معلومات متبادل شکلوں اور زبانوں میں فراہم کر سکتے ہیں۔ اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دیگر شکل یا زبان میں مطلوب ہو تو، براہ کرم ہمارے کسی دفتر سے رابطہ کریں

