

# Sentinel Customer Deal 2012



# Our Customer Deal

## Introduction

At Sentinel, we are committed to delivering outstanding standards in service delivery, and are continuously looking to develop ways in which we can improve services further.

We set out here in detail our current range of services, and the standards that you can expect from us as your landlord.

These service standards were agreed, following feedback from customers over the first half of 2011. The feedback has also resulted in a range of new service improvements and service reviews to enhance your service experience in 2012 and beyond.

You are welcome to comment further on these standards, and to become involved in setting all of our service standards for the future.

We will regularly monitor our performance against these standards, to ensure that we provide you with what we promised, as well as looking at ways to continually improve and enhance overall value.

**Remember:** Please contact us if you have any comments about our Customer Deal, or if you would like to get involved in helping us to improve and develop services further.

# Responding to your Feedback 2012

## Your neighbourhood

- Introduction of Customer Estates Inspection programme
- More frequent and all year round grounds maintenance service
- Refocused our care-taking service to deliver better services
- £2m Fund to improve the appearance of homes and neighbourhoods
- Car-parking – implementation of garage court improvement programme.

## Your home

- £3.3m investment in Photo Voltaic Panels to reduce energy bills for customers and reducing the carbon footprint of our homes
- Introduction of a kitchen and bathroom Virtual Showroom, offering customers easy access to choose from the range of choices on offer
- Reduce refurbishment of homes from 10 days to 9 days
- Carpets to be provided in all new homes
- Higher quality decorations to all new lettings, offering choices of colours where possible
- Introduction of our in-house maintenance service to enhance responsiveness of repairs
- £300k insulation programme to improve the energy efficiency of homes

## Your services

- Introduction of new computer software to improve communication with customers
- Newly refurbished reception area to provide better customer facilities
- Successfully achieved the Customer Service Excellence accreditation
- Introduction of support and training to help with money management.



**fund to improve the appearance of homes.**

# Your Service

We are committed to providing services that are customer focused, reflect our values, and are continuously improving.

We have adopted the following customer service pledge for all the services we provide: We will-

- Always treat you with courtesy and respect
- Aim to resolve your query on first contact with us
- Be polite and friendly, and deal with all your enquiries in a responsive and professional manner
- Provide wheelchair accessible offices and amenities for customers
- Introduce ourselves when we speak to you by phone, and wear identity name badges when we meet you
- Provide accessible opening hours and publish these clearly for our offices and Customer Service Centre, and provide you with the contact details of your neighbourhood team
- Provide a free phone number, [0800 195 5515](tel:08001955515), for all landline customers and a discounted [0300 666 5515](tel:03006665515) to customers phoning from mobiles
- Aim to answer 90% of all phone calls within 20 seconds
- Aim to respond to all phone messages by the end of the next working day
- Aim to respond to your letters within 10 working days, and emails within two working days.
- If you have an appointment we will see you within 10 minutes of your appointment time
- Aim to make someone available to see you within 15 minutes of your arrival at our offices, if you do not have an appointment
- Call you if we are running late for an appointment
- Let you know, if possible, at least one day in advance, if for some unavoidable reason we have to change or cancel your appointment – we would respectfully request you do the same
- Offer an interview room at our office if you'd like to discuss something in private

- Respect and treat everyone fairly, irrespective of age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or any other personal characteristics
- Provide hearing loops as required in our offices
- Make individual arrangements for access and participation for people with disabilities
- Provide a telephone interpretation service to those who do not speak English as a first language. Please call **0845 310 9900** and state our Identification Number L31220.

## **Complaints**

We welcome your comments as a valuable source of customer feedback and we will use them to help us drive service improvements. We recognise that sometimes we may fall short of our published service standards. In such circumstances, we will apologise and seek to resolve service shortcomings as quickly as possible. However, where we cannot resolve the issue at first point of contact we will commit to dealing with it as follows:

- Resolve all complaints within twenty working days of receipt
- Adopt a three stage complaints process:

**STAGE 1** A member of frontline staff will seek to resolve the issue within five working days.

**STAGE 2** The Customer Services Manager, in conjunction with the respective Service Manager, will investigate the matter further and seek to resolve your complaint within a further 10 working days.

**STAGE 3** If the matter still remains unresolved to your satisfaction, you can request that the issue is referred to a hearing of our Complaints Panel, made up of three of our board members. This will be arranged within twenty working days.

### **Throughout the complaints process we will:**

- Ensure your personal details are kept confidential
- Keep you informed of progress, with at least fortnightly updates

- Offer mediation as a means of resolving issues whenever appropriate
- Pay compensation appropriate to any service failure
- Learn from the complaint and invite you to contribute to our complaints review group
- Publish quarterly our complaints performance, and involve our customer body, Sentinel Tenant's & Resident's Association, in scrutiny of performance.

If your complaint is still unresolved after the Complaint Panel hearing, you have the right to refer the matter to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service at The Housing Ombudsman Service, 81 Aldwych, London, WC2B 4HN. Telephone [020 7421 3800](tel:02074213800), Fax [020 7831 1942](tel:02078311942) or Email [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

## **Customer involvement**

You are the best judge of whether we are delivering the right services in the right way. We very much welcome your input to all aspects of our business, and invite you to help us achieve service excellence. To achieve this we will:

- Offer a choice of ways in which you can have your say on the issues that affect you and your neighbourhood. These are set out in our Customer Involvement Statement. These range from membership of our board, tenants body, local neighbourhood panels, scrutiny groups, focus groups, email panels and giving us your views through surveys
- Offer opportunities to contribute to and develop our annual service priorities
- Training to become a Customer Inspector to scrutinise services
- Consult with you on changes to your home, local environment or the services we provide
- Keep you informed about what we are doing in a variety of ways, including newsletters, magazines, annual reports, meetings, our website, Facebook and Twitter
- Provide support to help form a tenant and resident group, or less formal groups, to tackle particular issues and be involved in our work
- Ensure you are not out of pocket for any travel or other costs that you incur through your involvement activity with us
- Create an annual environmental budget for you to suggest improvements to address local matters prioritised by you and your neighbours
- Involve you in service reviews, satisfaction surveys and reviews of our policies and procedures

- Work with young people through our 'Get With' programme to help understand their needs
- Support Sentinel Tenant's and Resident's Association (STARA) so that they can continue to work on your behalf
- Offer the opportunity for you to become a Sentinel Board Member
- Welcome feedback, positive or negative, and use it to improve our services
- Expand your involvement opportunities offering more online options including Facebook and Twitter, so you can share your service experiences with other customers.

## **Helping us to improve our performance**

We are committed to involving you in ways to improve and enhance performance of our services, and how they are delivered on a daily basis. In recognition of this, we will commit to the following:

- Work with you to develop a range of ongoing performance measures that will ensure that we are measuring the right things for you
- Make available to you our performance measures on at least a quarterly basis, through our website, our Customer Magazine and through reports to Sentinel's Tenants and Residents Association (STARA)
- Set up and facilitate a range of focus groups to review how best we can improve services
- Explore with you how we can best give value for money throughout the services we offer
- Work with other housing providers in Hampshire to compare, contrast and publish service performance.

# Your Tenancy

## Letting homes

We aim to achieve the highest level of satisfaction when you move into your home.

## Offers of accommodation

When you are made an offer of a home, we will arrange to show you around the property. As part of this accompanied viewing we will:

- Offer you the opportunity to visit the property on an early evening, up to 7pm, if more convenient
- Explain the rent and service charges of the property
- Assess any support or assistance that you may require, for example, support for young people moving into a home for the first time
- Explain to you, both your obligations, and Sentinel's obligations, under the tenancy agreement
- Provide you with projected average annual energy and heating costs for the property through an Energy Performance Certificate
- Help you to complete your housing benefit application form, if applicable, and the supporting documentation required
- If you are not eligible for full housing benefit, notify you of the amount of rent you will need to pay directly to us
- Advise you of any community events – for example, tenant associations or community groups, and how to have a say on our services
- Inform you about other Sentinel services for Care and Support of older people or vulnerable people.
- Where the property requires redecoration and where possible, offer you choices in terms of colours, decoration vouchers, or where eligible, decoration assistance to undertake the necessary work
- Discuss any other relevant information to help you to make a decision on whether to accept the property

- Collect reasons for any refusals to help us better understand customer expectations and improve our services
- Ensure that, in the case of sheltered housing, the scheme meets your needs and that you are introduced to the Scheme Manager.

## **Settling in visit**

As part of our commitment to high quality customer care, we will arrange for a follow up visit to be made to you within six weeks of the start of your tenancy to discuss your satisfaction with your home and the neighbourhood where you live, and to resolve any problems.

We offer a range of tenancy types to meet the needs of people in different situations and with different support requirements. These are the general principles however we will consider individuals circumstances on a case by case basis.

## **Tenancy types**

There are four kinds of tenancies – Assured, Fixed Term, Assured Shorthold, and Starter tenancies.

## **Assured tenancies**

Assured tenancies last for as long as the customer wishes providing that they do not breach any of the terms of the tenancy agreement. We will give full Assured tenancies where our customers:

- Are allocated properties that are specifically designated for older people or long term registered disabled
- Have reached the current state pension age at the time when they are offered a property. Joint tenants will be offered an Assured tenancy if one of them meets this criteria.
- Currently have a Starter tenancy that will graduate to a Full Assured tenancy at the end of the Starter tenancy period.
- Currently have a full Assured tenancy that was granted prior to 1st April 2012 and are transferring to a Sentinel property let at a Social Rent.
- Satisfy the conditions for a Property Swap, and currently have a full Assured tenancy that was granted prior to the Localism Act 2011 and wish to exchange with a tenant who has a Fixed Term tenancy, or a full Assured tenancy

- Are given the tenancy following the death of a partner or spouse who had a full Assured tenancy. This is called succession
- Are granted a full Assured tenancy through a court order.

## **Fixed Term tenancies**

These tenancies are a form of assured shorthold tenancy, but for a stated Fixed Term. At the end of the period, the customer either will be given a new Fixed Term tenancy, or may have to leave the property.

People of state pension age or older, or allocated accommodation specifically designated for the elderly, or permanently disabled, will be exempted from Fixed Term tenancies.

All other new tenants will normally be offered an initial Fixed Term tenancy of six years, which includes a first year probationary period.

Tenants who currently have an Assured tenancy will be offered a five year Fixed Term tenancy if they choose to move to an affordable rent property. This does not apply to people of state pension age or older, or allocated accommodation specifically designated for the elderly, or permanently disabled.

## **Assured Shorthold tenancies**

These tenancies are for a minimum of six months. They have fewer rights than the other types of tenancies and we can end the tenancy without having to give a reason. We give Assured Shorthold tenancies to customers in temporary accommodation, and in properties that are not allocated through the local authority, such as intermediate rent properties offered at below market rent. The duration of these tenancies will vary according to circumstances.

## **Starter tenancies**

These tenancies are for a probationary period of 12 months. Tenants who maintain their tenancies without breaching the terms of their agreement will convert to an Assured tenancy at the end of the first 12 months. Tenants who fail to remedy any breaches may have their tenancy ended, or the probationary period extended.

## Joint tenancies

We will grant joint tenancies on request by any two people living together as partners, regardless of gender or marital status, depending on the terms and conditions of the particular tenancy agreement and subject to our procedures. In order to make the best use of the housing stock for both existing and future residents, applications for joint tenancies between other relations will usually be refused (e.g. between mother and daughter, brother and sister).

## Ending your tenancy

When you end your tenancy we will expect you to:

- Give us four weeks notice in writing
- Return the keys to us within the timescale given
- Leave the property in good repair and a clean condition
- Remove all rubbish from the property and garden
- Arrange via a qualified tradesman to disconnect all services such as gas and electric
- Inform us and all agencies and companies of your forwarding address
- Pay your rent and any other amount outstanding in full

We will find a new tenant for your property during the four week notice period.

During this period we will:

- With your agreement, show prospective tenants around your home during the notice period
- Prior to leaving your home, we will arrange a visit from one of our surveyors to inspect your home and to advise you of any work that needs to be done which is your responsibility under the tenancy.

**Remember: Any such work advised by the surveyor, not completed, will be charged to you. Typical examples will be the removal costs of excess rubbish, furnishings or other items left at the property, and for any repairs caused by damage or misuse.**

## Moving home

We will:

- Advise you how to apply to find a home through the Local Authority's Choice Based Lettings scheme or through a Property Swap
- Offer incentives to you to move from a large property to a smaller property (if you are under-occupying your current home)
- Offer help and advice when you are considering swapping your home with another tenant under the 'Property Swap' scheme (this allows tenants of housing providers to swap homes by agreement).

**Remember: Anyone seeking an internal transfer, mutual exchange or downsizing must leave their existing home clean, tidy and in good repair and decorative order**

### If moving as part of a regeneration scheme we will also:

- Provide you with a tenancy liaison officer to help you with your move
- Pay for your removal costs
- Lift and re-lay your carpets, if appropriate
- Pay for your cooker, washing machine and dishwasher to be disconnected and reconnected
- Pay for your mail to be redirected for the first three months after you move
- Offer statutory compensation for loss of your home.

## Lettings standard

As part of our commitment to providing high quality homes, all our homes will meet the agreed lettings standards. We will seek to let all properties within 21 days of receipt of the keys. Our lettings standards will embrace the following minimum standards.

We will:

- Publish all our homes through local Choice Based Lettings schemes
- Give you the opportunity to comment on your new home, telling us what was good and what we could improve on.

## **Electrical checks**

We will ensure that the property is fully checked and tested and brought up to the current national standards before you move in.

## **Gas checks**

We always cap the gas meter when a property becomes vacant. When you first move in, we will commission for all appliances to be safety checked by an approved Gas Safe Register Engineer in accordance with the Gas Safety Regulations.

## **Heating**

We will make sure all homes have an adequate and safe form of heating.

## **Water service**

We will make sure that all plumbing and water supplies work properly and that any stop taps turn freely.

## **Bathrooms – Sanitary ware**

We will:

- Make sure that all sanitary ware is clean, free from defects and leaks, and is securely fixed
- Supply plugs and chains
- Keep any over-bath showers, installed by previous tenants, if we determine that these are in excellent condition and pass an appropriate electrical test
- Make sure that any shower rail is secure and useable.

## **Insulation – Thermal Insulation**

We will insulate all water cylinders where necessary. All loft spaces will have modern standard insulation that covers the full roof space.

## **Floors**

We will make all floors level and safe, with no loose, dangerous or missing floorboards and with no sign of active woodworm or rot.

## **Walls/ceilings**

We will make sure that walls and ceilings are in a sound condition with no loose plaster or holes, so that they can be easily decorated.

## **Stairs and hand rails**

We will ensure that all staircases and handrails are safe and secure.

## **Rooms**

We will provide architraves around the door frames, skirting boards, and fit curtain battens above windows.

## **Decoration**

- We will leave existing wall and ceiling paper if it is attractive and enhances the appearance of the property
- If walls/ceilings are dirty, we will wash them down or paint them
- Where the condition of decoration is poor, we will re-decorate
- We will assist redecoration work where tenants are over 70 years old or disabled and are unable to carry out works themselves.

## **Kitchen units/worktops**

All kitchens will be in good working order with provision for a cooker, fridge, and where possible a washing machine.

## **Locks on windows and doors**

We will replace front and back door locks and provide at least two keys for each lock.

## **Windows and internal doors**

We will ensure that all the windows are windproof, watertight, open and close freely, and we will provide keys for all window locks, where fitted. We will also ensure that internal doors open and close freely, and all doors and windows have the appropriate handles and catches.

## **Smoke detectors**

We will ensure that all properties are fitted appropriately with smoke detectors.

## **Fixtures and fittings**

We will remove all rubbish from the property, including from lofts, outbuildings, shed etc. We will ensure that the property is clean and all furniture, non standard fittings, fixtures or furnishings left by the previous tenant are removed from the property, unless you wish to retain them. We will not accept any maintenance or cleaning obligations towards any non-standard fixtures, fitting or furnishings retained by the incoming tenant.

We will leave any clean and well-maintained carpets and curtains to enhance the property. We will inform you of what items are to remain in the property and if you view the property early enough in the letting process, you can ask for any remaining items to be removed.

## Cleaning

We will:

- Ensure that the property is clean and presentable throughout
- All kitchen units, toilets, baths and washbasins are cleaned, disinfected and free of staining
- Wash down all paintwork
- Clear all rubbish and litter from gardens, sheds, outbuildings and pathways.

## Pest infestation

We will ensure your new home is free from any pest and/or vermin.

## Paths/footpaths

We will ensure that all footpaths are sound and level and free from trips and defects.

## External structure

All external walls will be free from defects and graffiti, and all fascias, soffits, gutters, and roofs will be free from defects.

## Gardens

We will cut and trim back the grass, hedges and bushes. We will only remove trees if they are causing damage to the property or they are diseased.

**Ensure that the property is  
clean and presentable  
throughout**



# Rents & Service Charges

## We will:

- Set your rent as set out in your tenancy agreement
- Give you at least 4 clear weeks, prior written notice, of changes to your annual rent and service charge
- Offer advice on how you can pay your rent and other charges, including:
  - A choice of payment dates by direct debit or standing order
  - A payment card to use at post offices and other payment points, which we shall supply within 14 days
  - Via a secure payment page on our website
  - Over the phone using your debit card
- Help you with any claims for Supporting People subsidy
- Help to verify your Housing Benefit claim and provide evidence of your claim as appropriate
- Send you a quarterly rent statement, and more frequent statements, if requested
- Issue additional statements, if requested, within two working days of the request being received
- Ensure that a member of the Neighbourhood Services Team is available during office hours to help with any queries or worries you may have about your rent account
- Contact you within 10 days to alert you if you miss a rent payment and keep you informed throughout any period of arrears
- Work in a sympathetic and sensitive way to develop an arrears repayment plan that takes account of your particular circumstances
- Confirm the agreed payment plan arrangement in writing, within two days
- Explain clearly what will happen if you do not pay your rent or charges, or if you fail to keep to an arrangement
- Recover all outstanding rent due at the end of the tenancy, using reputable debt recovery agencies, where necessary.

## Service charges

We provide a range of services to you that are in addition to our standard service. These are chargeable services that you will have to pay. In many cases, service charges may be covered by benefits that you are receiving. Where this is not the case, you will have to pay these amounts in addition to your rent.

We will:

- Set an annual service charge budget for newly developed homes to include our estimate of the costs of day to day services for your property or neighbourhood, the costs of long term maintenance or repair, and a management fee where applicable
- Give you at least four weeks, prior written notice, of changes to your annual rent and service charges
- After the end of each year, send you a statement showing the actual service costs for the year and adjust your charges as appropriate
- Offer advice on the range of ways in which you can pay your service charges
  - Including a choice of payment dates by direct debit or standing order
  - A payment card to use at post offices and other payment points
  - Via a secure payment page on our website
  - Over the phone using your debit card
- Issue additional statements if requested within two working days of the request being received
- Offer you advice and guidance about welfare benefits and managing your debts, and/or refer you to another agency that can help
- Contact you early to alert you if your account goes into arrears and then keep you informed at all stages of the arrears process
- Pursue all outstanding arrears if you abandon or sell the property, using reputable debt recovery agencies, where necessary.

## **Your choice – service charges**

- We offer a range of different ways to pay your rent & service charges
- We offer a choice of dates to make your payment to best suit your circumstances
- We offer the facility to view your rent account online at any time
- We can help you to open a bank account
- We will involve you in the selection of contractors and suppliers responsible for delivery of related services
- We offer you advice and guidance about welfare benefits and managing your debts, and/or refer you to another agency that can do this
- We arrange appointments at our office or in your home, at a time convenient to you, to discuss any worries about your rent or service charge.



**We offer a range of different ways to pay your rent & service charges**

# Your home – Maintenance & Repairs

Delivering an excellent repair service is one of our key aims. Responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of your home is divided between you and Sentinel.

## **Our responsibility**

- Repairs to the structure and exterior of the property, heating and hot water installations, basins, sinks, baths, kitchens, and other sanitary installations
- The safety of gas and electrical installations
- The fire safety of any furniture or furnishings provided under your tenancy
- Ensuring that the property is fit for habitation
- Repairing and keeping in working order the room and water heating equipment
- The general upkeep of communal entrance halls and stairwells serving your property
- Carry out an annual gas service check on all homes with gas boilers fitted.

## **Your responsibility**

- Allowing us access to carry out immediate repairs, or servicing of key components such as gas boilers
- Reporting repairs, as soon as identified and providing as much information as possible on the repair
- Taking care of the property
- Not damaging the property, including fixtures or fittings
- Keeping the property, and your gardens in a clean and tidy condition
- Maintaining and repairing fittings or fixtures that you have added to the property
- Replacement of lost keys for the property
- Providing good access to the repair area by clearing any household furniture or goods
- Seeking permission from Sentinel to make any structural changes to your home (removal of internal walls or similar), or removal of Sentinel fixtures or fittings (e.g. kitchens, doors, electric sockets or other).

## **For all Sentinel related repairs, we have set the following standards**

We will:

- Assist you to diagnose the repair through our on-line repairs reporting system
- Aim to complete all repairs within 21 calendar days of reporting
- Provide a repairs inspection service up to 7pm on two weekday evenings and Saturday mornings
- Respond to all emergency repairs within one working day, and to all urgent repairs within seven calendar days
- Arrange a convenient appointment time when you report your repair
- Seek to complete 70% of all routine repairs on the first visit
- Pay £25 in gift vouchers for all appointments missed by our contractor, MITIE, where insufficient notice was given to you
- Provide a Repairs Customer Liaison Officer to help you with any issues that arise as a result of a service shortcoming
- Ensure our contractor leaves your home clean and tidy after all work, and conducts themselves with the utmost courtesy and respect for your home
- Provide the same customer care from our contractors' workers as that from Sentinel staff
- Ensure contractors show you their ID cards, and wear Sentinel/MITIE badged workwear
- Provide you with a regular report on the performance of our repairs service.

## **Refurbishment and upgrade works**

We conduct an annual programme of upgrade and refurbishment works to properties. As part of this programme we have set the following standards.

We will:

- Ensure that all our properties continue to meet the Government's Decent Homes standard
- Make available details of our five year programme of planned work to all tenants and leaseholders, updated annually

- Offer you the opportunity to become involved in the selection of kitchen and bathroom suppliers, and the contracting fitting team
- Work with customers to set the service standards for all aspects of our home refurbishment services
- Write to you if any refurbishment or major work is planned for your home 12 months before the work is due to commence
- Give you at least four weeks notice before actual work is to be carried out, along with a proposed date and contact details, in case you may wish to change the arrangements
- Provide you with information leaflets for specific upgrades, giving details of the work, for example:
  - Kitchens and bathrooms
  - Rewiring
  - Central heating
  - Windows and doors
- Use the utmost care to protect your home and its possessions when work is being carried out
- Make good any decorations affected by the work
- Ensure our contractors remove all their rubbish from your home on completion of work
- Reconnect and test all mains services such as gas, water, and electricity at the end of each day and provide you with a temporary alternative, if any of these will be unavailable overnight.

## **Kitchens**

### **We will:**

- Replace your kitchen every 20 years, as required
- Design your kitchen to meet customer agreed standards on quality, storage, and design
- Ensure work is carried out with the minimum of disruption and is completed within 10 working days.

## **Your choice – Kitchens**

### We will:

- Provide a Virtual Showroom facility to allow you to choose from the range of kitchen units available and your selected colour scheme
- Offer you the choice to add to the basic specification, through payment for additional items
- Offer you 10 choices of kitchen unit door and drawer fronts, eight floor tile choices, seven wall tile choices
- Offer a choice of seven different worktops
- Offer up to 250 choices on paint colours for walls
- Design your kitchen with you at your home, using computer design technology to include provision for your own appliances.

## **Bathrooms**

### We will:

- Replace your bathroom sanitary ware – baths, sinks and toilets – every 30 years
- As part of your bathroom replacement, fit a shower-over-bath as standard
- Aim to carry the work out, with the minimum disruption, within five working days
- For a combined kitchen and bathroom refurbishment, ensure that the work is carried out with the minimum of disruption and is completed within 10 working days.

## **Your choice – Bathrooms**

- Offer you the choice to add to the basic specification, through payment for additional items
- Offer you a choice of four floor vinyls, a range of seven wall tile colours, and 250 paint choices
- In properties designed for the elderly or disabled, we will offer the choice of a level access shower or bathroom layout to suit your needs
- Design your bathroom with you at your home
- Provide an annual exhibition of the kitchens and bathrooms for you to see and choose from the ranges.

## **Redecoration**

We will:

- Redecorate the outside of all properties where necessary, and redecorate the internal communal areas of all blocks of flats every five years
- Provide a choice of paint colour for front and back painted doors, and any external rendering
- Wash down all PVC windows and doors, guttering and down pipes every five years.

### **Your choice – Redecoration**

- Choice of paint colour for previously painted doors and painted rendering
- If you are aged 70 years or over, or are registered disabled, you may qualify for our free internal decorating scheme
- If you qualify for our free decorating scheme we will offer you the redecoration of one room every five years with an unlimited choice of colours from the approved manufacturer's colour card.

## **Gas central heating**

We will:

- Replace boilers as necessary to ensure continued reliable heating and hot water
- Ensure all new boilers meet the very latest energy efficiency standard – "A" rated energy efficient condensing boilers
- Fit a new programmer, new valves, and new thermostatic radiator valves to give you complete control of heating throughout your home
- Ensure the work is carried out with the minimum of disruption and completed within three days
- Supply you with information on how to work your new boiler.

### **Your choice – Boilers**

- Where required, for people with visual impairment, we will fit programmers and thermostats with Braille markings, or with warning lights for customers who have a hearing impairment.

## Gas servicing

### We will:

- Ensure that all gas appliances that we have fitted in your home are serviced annually
- Write to you 12 weeks before your gas service is due to arrange a convenient appointment
- Text message when the engineer is en route to your property
- Ensure that flues within your home are checked for safety as part of the annual check
- Clean and check any smoke, heat or CO2 detectors during the service
- Provide you with a copy of the Gas Safety Certificate
- Ensure that we give you the opportunity to comment on the work carried out in your home
- Provide compensation of £25 in vouchers for all gas contractor missed appointments
- Give you advice on how to operate the boiler and to maximise the energy efficiency of your appliances.

### You will:

- Allow access to carry out the annual gas service. Failure to do so, could lead to us taking legal action and recharging you for all costs involved.

## Windows and doors

### We will:

- Replace windows and doors when required, with double glazed grade 'A' energy efficient units
- Ensure high standards of security in replacement windows and doors.

## **Electrical testing**

We will:

- Inspect and test the wiring circuits on your home every 10 years to ensure they are safe
- Inspect and test wiring circuits in communal areas every five years to ensure they are safe
- Carry out any urgent electrical work whilst the engineer is still at the property
- Carry out Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) of Sentinel owned appliances.

## **Aids and adaptations to assist mobility in your home**

Where you have a disability or mobility problem, we will aim, where appropriate, to make adaptations to your home to suit your circumstances.

We will:

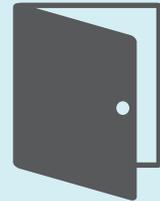
- Provide you with a dedicated officer to deal with your requests
- Publish and promote the Aids & Adaptation service through customer information leaflets and our website
- Process and carry out acceptable requests for minor adaptations that cost less than £1,000 within 21 calendar days, subject to annual budget provision
- For work requests over £1,000, we will work with you to apply for funding through our Local Authority partners
- Reply to any written requests for permission to undertake major adaptation/ modification of your home within 28 calendar days
- Link any essential adaptations to any scheduled improvements
- Show you how to use any new equipment we have fitted in your home, and provide written information, including what to do if there is a problem
- In line with our maintenance and repair standards, attend to any repair requests for adaptations fitted by Sentinel
- Arrange with the local authority for repairs to any items not fitted by Sentinel e.g. stair lifts, track hoists etc.
- Work with our Local Authority partners to maintain a database of properties fitted with major adaptations to best match people's needs, and make best use of resources.

## Your choice – Aids and adaptations

We will:

- Involve you throughout the process to ensure that the work carried out is appropriate to your needs
- Offer you the choice of bathroom layout to suit your mobility needs, in properties specifically designed for older people
- Consider with you if your needs can be met by moving to a more suitable home.

**Ensure high standards of security in replacement windows and doors.**



# Your Neighbourhood

## Estate management

### We will:

- Provide a year round estate grass cutting and cleaning service
- Publicise the names and contact numbers for your neighbourhood team and their responsibilities
- Regularly inspect all estates and paths for cleanliness, and take action as appropriate (Sentinel may not have responsibility for all paths)
- Ensure that your neighbourhood is regularly inspected by Sentinel staff, and that any minor works are completed within 21 working days
- Arrange for the removal of any needles or 'sharps' within one working day of being reported
- Remove all offensive graffiti within one working day of being reported
- Remove hazardous fly-tipping within two working days of it being reported
- Place Sentinel awareness stickers on all abandoned household goods or communal repairs
- Maintain gardens at empty properties, ensuring they are clean and tidy
- Ensure that all communal areas in flats are free of litter and rubbish; where we provide a cleaning service
- Set the standards of service for communal areas in flats with residents, and put up an information board in each block showing when areas will be cleaned and next inspected
- Work with our local authority partners to ensure a proactive approach to removal of litter from areas that are not managed by Sentinel
- Place a notice on untaxed and abandoned cars on our land within one week of being notified
- Provide a Community Chest Fund that will enable you to bid for funding to deliver local environmental projects
- Work with the Local Authority and the Police to help ensure your neighbourhood is a safe and pleasant place to live, and to support wider community services
- Work with local schools to promote and respect the local environment
- Respond quickly to reports of abandoned properties to ensure they are made safe.

## You will:

- Seek permission to keep a pet in your home
- Look after any pets in your ownership, ensuring that you clean up any mess made by them, and that the animals do not cause a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours
- Keep your gardens and communal areas tidy and free from rubbish, and hazardous materials
- Respect the use of all communal and parking areas, and not use such areas for the business of general vehicle repair
- Take responsibility to ensure that all members of your household and any visitors understand your commitment to respect your garden and communal areas.

## Grounds maintenance

### We will:

- Cut the grass every two weeks throughout the growing season (May to October) and provide year round estate maintenance service
- Either mulch or collect grass after every cut, giving a visually improved appearance
- Cut grass as close as possible to obstacles such as trees, buildings or benches
- Clear area of litter and rubbish prior to cutting grass
- Carry out fortnightly winter maintenance such as leaf clearance, edging and shrub maintenance
- Spray and clear weeds at least once a year, on all Sentinel owned communal footpaths and areas
- For every tree that we remove we will replant three new ones in the community.

## **Your choice – Grounds maintenance**

- If you are over 70 years old, or disabled, and you have no one to help you maintain your garden you may be eligible for our free garden assistance service
- We will review our standards of grounds maintenance service with you and offer you an opportunity to get involved in setting the service standards and the selection of our grounds maintenance contractors.

## **Anti-social behaviour**

We are committed to ensuring that all customers enjoy their home and neighbourhood. To achieve this, we will take all necessary and appropriate action against perpetrators of nuisance, racist behaviour, harassment or anti-social behaviour of any kind.

### **To achieve this we will:**

- Treat every complaint seriously and impartially
- Use legal powers, including injunctions and eviction notices to tackle serious cases
- Respond to reports of physical and domestic violence, abuse and racial harassment within one working day
- Remove any racist graffiti within one working day of being notified
- Keep all complainants informed at least every two weeks
- Keep in contact with you until the case is closed
- Give you feedback when the case is closed.

## **Supporting you**

We will:

- Encourage and help residents to solve their differences themselves
- Respect your wishes if you wish to remain anonymous (please see our Safer with Sentinel Scheme on the next page)
- Offer support when you make a complaint and take appropriate action against those responsible, where possible

- Offer the use of monitoring equipment to gather evidence on issues relating to noise or unruly behaviour
- Support witnesses with a range of measures including court training
- Review support needs for young or vulnerable people who have committed an offence
- Provide additional security to your home where there is likely further risk or vulnerability
- Refer to a local mediation service where appropriate
- Work in partnership with other agencies such as the Police, Environmental Services and Social Care and Health to help resolve more complex matters
- Take legal action, where applicable, to resolve serious anti-social issues, or allegations of incidents linked to racist behaviour
- Give advice about re-housing where appropriate.

## **Victim & Witness Support Scheme**

We have a scheme to support victims of anti-social behaviour (ASB). 'Safer With Sentinel' is a witness support scheme providing support and reassurance to victims and witnesses of ASB who are prepared to work with us to take action against perpetrators. Key aspects of our approach are:

- Assess your security needs if you feel you may need protection
- Provide you with information and coaching on the court process
- Work with the Police to make them aware of possible intimidation of witnesses and ask for a Police alarm to be fitted if necessary
- Arrange access to translation services or an appropriate interpreter
- Pay for travel, childcare and lunch expenses when people go to court as a witness
- Escort witnesses to and from court where necessary
- Use professional witnesses to carry our investigations where appropriate.

**Use legal powers, including injunctions and eviction notices, to tackle serious cases**



## **Equality & Diversity**

We are strongly committed to tackling and eliminating all forms of discrimination and prejudice in our workplace and neighbourhoods, and ensuring that all the services we deliver meet the highest standards of Equality & Diversity best practice.

To achieve this, we will:

- Make sure all our employees, contractors, and suppliers clearly understand their responsibilities under our commitment to Equality & Diversity
- Inform our employees and customers about their rights of protection from unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation
- Act decisively and immediately (within 24 hours) on all alleged acts of racial harassment providing support to the victim where needed
- Develop services that are open, fair and accessible to everyone
- Conduct an Equality Impact Assessment on all our policies
- Set clear performance targets for measuring and monitoring our commitment to equality
- Publish an annual plan and report of how we delivered against our commitment to Equality & Diversity.

## Your choice

We are committed to giving you as much choice as possible in our service delivery, and we offer you the following choices in every service we provide:

- A range of ways in which you can become involved in the setting and review of service standards
- A choice of how to contact us:
  - In person at our office
  - In writing to Sentinel Housing Association, 56 Kingsclere Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 6XG
  - Email: [customer@sentinelha.org.uk](mailto:customer@sentinelha.org.uk)
  - Telephone: **0800 1955515**
  - Mobile: **0300 666515**
  - Fax: **01256 844704**
  - Website: [www.sentinelha.org.uk](http://www.sentinelha.org.uk)
  -  [www.facebook.com/sentinelha](http://www.facebook.com/sentinelha)
  -  [@sentinelha](https://twitter.com/sentinelha)
  - Texting services
- Appointments at a convenient time for you at our office or at your home
- A choice of ways through which we can best communicate information about our services including other languages – by letter, via the website, texting, leaflets, communication support for customers with language, sight or hearing difficulties, Braille, Large Print or on CD when requested.

## Contact us

### **Basingstoke Office:**

Sentinel Housing Association  
56 Kingsclere Road,  
Basingstoke, Hampshire  
RG21 6XG

**Tel:** 01256 338800

**Residents:** 0800 195 5515 (Landline)  
0300 666 5515 (Mobile)

**Fax:** 01256 844704



### **Fleet Office:**

Sentinel Housing Association  
11 Church Road  
Fleet, Hampshire  
GU51 3RH

**Tel:** 01256 338800

**Residents:** 0800 195 5515 (Landline)  
0300 666 5515 (Mobile)

**Fax:** 01252 788780

**[www.sentinelha.org.uk](http://www.sentinelha.org.uk)**

**Sentinel** 