



# TENANT HANDBOOK

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# Welcome to your new home


North Devon Homes is dedicated to ensuring you receive the highest quality service.

If you have a question about your home, your neighbourhood or your tenancy, please speak to our Customer Care Team. You can contact us by telephone, email, fax, post, via our website or in person at either of our Barnstaple offices.

Outside our opening hours telephone calls are automatically transferred to our emergency repairs out of hours service.

Getting in touch with us is easy:

Telephone.....  **01271 312500**

Emergency Out of Hours...  **0800 9170619**

Fax.....  **01271 377810**

Email .....  [enquiries@ndh-ltd.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ndh-ltd.co.uk)

Website .....  [www.yourlocallandlord.com](http://www.yourlocallandlord.com)

Write to us.....  At either of our Barnstaple offices

## About North Devon Homes

North Devon Homes is a registered social landlord that was created to take over the management of approx 3100 North Devon Council properties in 2000, in a transaction worth over £44 million.

We are a not-for-profit organisation, and as such have no shareholders. Any money received in rents is ploughed straight back into the improvement of homes and the services provided. The company is governed by its Board of Management who work in a voluntary capacity and receive no payment for their services. The Board of Management has 12 members; five independent members, four tenant members and three local authority members.

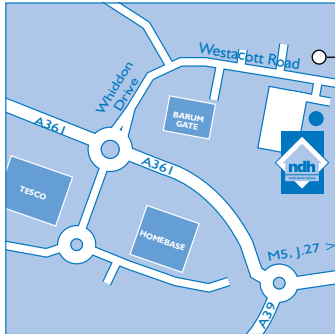


As a Registered Social Landlord the company has to ensure it meets all of the high standards set by The Tenant Services Authority (TSA). The TSA was launched in December 2008 to take over the regulatory powers from the Housing Corporation. The TSA regulates affordable housing and aims to raise the standard of service for tenants.



# Our Offices

## Head Office



Bus Stop

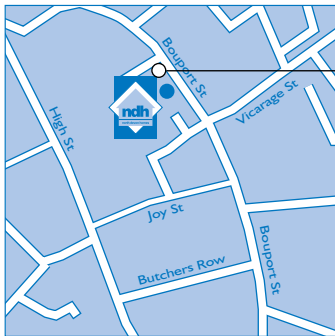
Bus Numbers:  
10, 10A, 10B, 8E

North Devon Homes, Westacott Road,  
Barnstaple, Devon EX32 8TA

## Office Opening Hours

Monday to Friday 08.30 - 17.00

## Town Centre Office



Bus Stop

Bus Numbers:  
1, 2, 34, 6, 10, 10B,  
30, 30C, 301, 303,  
308

116 - 118 Boutport Street, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 1TD

## Office Opening Hours

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 08.30 - 16.00  
Tuesday 10.00 - 16.00

## Useful Telephone Numbers

Age Concern .....	<b>01271 324488</b>
Care Direct.....	<b>0845 155 1007</b>
Citizen's Advice Bureau .....	<b>01271 377077</b>
Council Tax enquiries .....	<b>01271 327711</b>
Devon and Cornwall Constabulary.....	<b>0845 277 7444</b>
24 Hour Domestic Abuse Helpline.....	<b>0808 2000 247</b>
Emergency Services .....	<b>999 / 112 / 911</b>
Greensweep.....	<b>01271 374776</b>
Housing Benefit enquiries.....	<b>01271 327711</b>
Jigsaw Furniture Projects.....	<b>01271 327564</b>
Job Centre Plus.....	<b>0845 604 3719</b>
National Debt Helpline .....	<b>0808 808 4000</b>
National Grid – GAS LEAKS .....	<b>0800 111 999</b>
North Devon Council.....	<b>01271 327711</b>
Samaritans .....	<b>08457 909090</b>
South West Pound .....	<b>0800 316 9296</b>
South West Water.....	<b>0800 169 1133</b>

\* Please note 0800 numbers are not free from mobile phones



# Useful Information

Do you know where equipment is in your home and how to turn things off? Please use the space below to make a note of where the meters and stopcocks are in your home Your Neighbourhood Officer will help you complete this page.

## Where to turn things off

Cold water: .....

Hot water: .....

Gas: .....

Electricity isolation switch: .....

## Where to find your meters

Water: .....

Gas: .....

Electricity: .....

## Where to find other equipment

Water tank: .....

Boiler: .....

Hot water cylinder: .....

Fuse board (electrical consumer unit): .....



# SERVICE STANDARDS



# Our Service Standards

Everyone at North Devon Homes is committed to “working together to create communities where people want to live” To ensure that we do this for you we have created a set of values for ourselves. These values ensure our service delivery is focused on how we work with you.

## Values:

Be **R**eliable, honest and accountable in all we do  
Aim for **E**xcellence  
Deliver **S**ervice Excellence  
Be **P**rofessional and polite  
Value **E**mployees and manage effectively  
**C**elebrate Diversity  
Work **T**ogether

We want to deliver excellent service standards for our customers. We aim to continually improve these by listening to and learning from our customers. This is why we monitor all of our service standards and report on our performance to you.

The following pages show what you can expect from our services. For a copy of our service standard leaflets and more information on how we monitor and report on our standards, please contact our Customer Care Team on 01271 312500.

# Equality and Diversity – our service promise to you

One of our core values is to “Celebrate Diversity”.  
The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this.

**Equal Opportunities** – ending or reducing discrimination and improving social justice.

**Diversity** – valuing everyone as an individual.

We will:

- Provide you with positive and responsive services that best meet your needs
- Flex our services to help overcome any barriers that you may experience
- Use our resources to respond to your individual or specific group needs in the most useful way
- Make our physical buildings accessible, and if necessary, we will bring our services to you
- Recruit and promote staff based on ability and support them to realize their potential
- Only use contractors who actively share our commitment to Equality & Diversity
- Take prompt and effective action in any situation of harassment or discrimination
- Regularly challenge and test our services to make sure they are fair, and equitable

## Customer Care Services – our service promise to you

One of our values is to “Be Professional and Polite”. The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this.

We will:

- Reply to your letters and e-mails within **10 working days**
- Answer your telephone calls within **5 rings**
- Carry identification badges and introduce ourselves on the telephone and when we meet you
- Display our office opening times clearly
- Not keep you waiting more than **10 minutes** in reception
- Respond to requests for an interview within **10 minutes**
- Respond to requests for a home visit within **48 hours**

# Complaints and Feedback – our service promise to you

One of our values is to “Be Reliable, Honest and Accountable in all that we do”. The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this.

We will:

- Provide a prompt and efficient response to all complaints and feedback by:
  - acknowledging feedback within **3 working days**;
  - responding to complaints within **15 working days** of acknowledgment;
  - reviewing complaints within **10 working days** following a request from you;
- Provide a variety of different ways for you to give feedback
- Ensure that complaints are reviewed and that the learning from this is shared with managers and customer groups
- Ensure that you have the ability to review and influence our complaints process
- Ensure that our complaints policy is reviewed with you every **2 years**
- Provide information to support you to access the Housing Ombudsman services where we are not able to resolve complaints internally
- Tell you how we are performing against these standards
- Make sure we continually improve by listening to and learning from you

## Customer Involvement – our service promise to you

One of our values is to “Aim for Excellence”. The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this.

We will:

- Encourage you to get involved by providing a range of activities that will enable you to have your say
- Offer you practical support and training to carry out a range of scrutiny activities
- Agree with you what your service priorities are for customers
- Involve you in the development, review and improvement of the services we provide, including our newsletter
- Provide you with information about our performance and how it compares with other social landlords
- Keep you informed on how your input has influenced, changed and shaped service improvement
- Have twelve Customer Forum members who represent you
- Hold monthly Customer Forum meetings and an Annual General Meeting
- Have four customer Board members who help to govern the organisation

# Older Persons Service Standards

One of our values is to “Deliver Service Excellence”. The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this. The Older Persons Support Team is committed to providing high quality support services, in line with individual needs. Our main aims are to promote independent living and offer choice, flexibility and guidance on available services.

We will:

- Make an initial visit to you within **10 working days** of you requesting the service
- Agree your individual service requirements within **10 working days** of service start date
- Notify any service changes to you within **10 working days**
- Demonstrate how to use your community alarm system
- Maintain accurate records about your individual support needs and review on a 12 monthly basis
- Respect and respond to your individual requirements and right to confidentiality
- Encourage and support social activities and promote links with the local community

## Rents Service Standards

One of our values is to “Deliver Service Excellence”. The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this

We will:

- Aim to collect all rent and any other charges
- Provide you with a wide range of convenient payment methods
- Provide confidential advice and support to assist you in claiming benefits
- Provide confidential support and guidance by offering you a financial health check
- Offer benefits signposting and financial advice through our partner agencies as required
- Send you rent statements on a regular basis and upon demand when you request them
- Give you at least four week’s written notice of any rent and/or service charge review
- Discuss and agree an affordable repayment plan with you, should you fall behind with your rent

# Neighbourhood Services Standards

One of our values is to "Work together". The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this.

We will:

- Respond to your requests for tenancy changes with a decision within **28 calendar days**
- Respond to requests for mutual exchanges with a decision within **42 calendar days**
- Work with you to create an action plan for each neighbourhood, called "Me, My Home, My Neighbourhood"
- Visit each neighbourhood at least twice each year and carry out at least 4 community improvement days across all neighbourhoods each year
- Work with local agencies to hold fun days in at least 3 neighbourhoods each year
- Work with you to maintain the standard of our cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts on a quarterly basis
- Consult with you as a resident of your neighbourhood to decide priorities for annual estate expenditure
- Work with you to develop and agree "Neighbourhood Agreements"

## Anti-Social Behaviour Service Standards

One of our values is to “Work Together”. The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this.

We will:

- Acknowledge Anti-Social Behaviour complaints within **2 working days**
- Where there is a risk to you or your property, be in contact within **24 hours**
- Hold an initial discussion with you, within **5 working days**
- Interview neighbours or witnesses within **10 working days**
- Establish agency involvement within **10 working days**, if required
- Advise you of your options and provide any support you need
- Develop an action plan in consultation with you
- Advise on the conclusion and closure of every case in writing
- Remove offensive graffiti within **1 working day**
- Remove fly-tipped items from our land within **3 working days** of notification

## Allocations Service Standards

One of our values is to “Deliver Service Excellence”. The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this.

We will:

- Offer you an appointment for viewing and signing for your tenancy which suits your personal circumstances when you are moving into your new home
- Explain the contents of the tenant handbook during your sign up meeting; highlighting the importance of the tenancy conditions
- Ask you to sign a neighbourhood agreement which explains how we expect you to behave as a neighbour and a member of the local community
- Provide you with the lettable service standard for your home
- Grant you a “starter tenancy”, i.e. a trial tenancy for the first year in your accommodation
- Provide you with a welcome visit within your first four weeks
- Contact you again after nine months to discuss the progress of your tenancy and the steps to becoming an assured tenant
- Confirm the outcome of all tenancy conversions in writing within **10 months**

# Neighbourhood Repairs Service Standards

One of our values is to “Aim for Excellence”. The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this.

We will:

- Indicate at the time of reporting a repair when you can expect the repair to be attended to:
  1. Emergency Repairs – within **24 hours**
  2. Urgent Repairs – within **7 calendar days**
  3. Routine Repairs – within **28 calendar days**
- Provide a 24 hour service for repairs which are an EMERGENCY outside of office hours
- Make it easy for you to report a repair by providing a range of convenient methods
- Give you opportunities to influence, change and improve the service
- Ask you to tell us how satisfied you are with our service and where it falls short
- Investigate and respond to all complaints within our published time scales
- Ensure all our staff and contractors follow our Code of Conduct
- Carry out gas safety checks on all of our properties every **12 months**

# Planned Maintenance Service Standards

One of our values is to “Deliver Service Excellence”. The standard below sets out how we intend to deliver this.

We will:

- Agree with you when planned maintenance works will take place in your home and publish an overall plan
- Make appointments that suit your needs
- Work in your home in line with “considerate contractor” principles
- Make improvements to your home to ensure it meets the Decent Homes Standard (excludes Pre-cast Reinforced Concrete properties)
- Offer you as wide a choice of product and finish as possible
- Ensure that all of our Contractors follow our Code of Conduct
- Inspect all improvements to make sure they are carried out to our required levels of quality and workmanship
- Provide you with opportunities to influence, change and improve the service
- Work with Care & Repair and other agencies to provide minor aids and adaptations improvements



# SUPPORT SERVICES - OLDER AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE



# Support Services for Older and Vulnerable People

We help people to live independently in their home by providing the support services of Devon Homelink and Home Support. The service is tailored to the individual needs of each person and may range from emergency alarm cover through to regular visits and contact from a support advisor.



## Devon Homelink Community Alarm Service

Devon Homelink provides affordable, invaluable reassurance and peace of mind. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can ask for help at any time of day or night and someone will always be there to answer your call.

Some North Devon Homes properties have hard wired emergency alarm systems. Or, a small unit that plugs into the telephone line can provide the service.

The service may be particularly useful for:

- Older or retired people
- People living on their own
- People with mobility or sensory impairments
- Vulnerable people

Whether you need advice or reassurance, a visit from a family member, or medical attention, the appropriate support can be provided quickly and efficiently at the press of a button.

## Home Support

Our aim is to support people to make the choices and decisions necessary to help them to live independently in their own homes.

We can help to do this by:

- Discussing your support needs with you and your family or representatives, if you wish.
- Agreeing your needs and the level of support with you.
- Providing you with a support plan.
- Delivering the agreed type and level of support. Some examples of support available includes regular visits by a support advisor to monitor your well being; dealing with other agencies on your behalf; helping you to maintain social contacts or assistance dealing with correspondence.
- Regularly reviewing your assessment and support plan to make sure you receive the most appropriate level of support.
- Talking to you regularly to find out your views of our services and how we could improve them.

Devon County Council provides Supporting People funding for people meeting certain support and financial criteria. Your support advisor will be able to explain this process in detail.

The support service can be requested by you or by referral from Social Services or your GP. You can also directly contact the Supported Housing Team on **01271 313358**, and request an information leaflet.







## YOU AND YOUR RENT



## You and your rent

We aim to collect all rent, service charges, costs and recharges due. It is important that everyone pays their rent when due. Rental income is used to provide repairs, maintenance and other services to all of our customers.

### How to pay your rent

Rent is payable every Monday in advance. There are many ways you can pay. Please see our leaflet “Guide to Paying Your Rent” for full details. If you need a replacement payment card, please contact our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

### Rent setting

Rents and service charges are reviewed yearly and we will give you 4 weeks notice of any change.

### Housing Benefit

We can offer guidance and help on how to claim housing benefit from North Devon Council. Please note if you are entitled to housing benefit, payments will be made by North Devon Council and not North Devon Homes.

**If your circumstances change in any way that might affect your benefit, you must notify North Devon Council as soon as possible. Please also advise North Devon Homes Rents Team.**

## Difficulty paying your rent

Paying your rent is your number one priority and it must be paid on time. Rent arrears are taken very seriously.

We do recognise that customers can have financial problems and we want to help before the problem gets out of hand. We can offer benefit checks, housing benefit advice and debt guidance.

If arrears continue we will start legal proceedings and you may lose your home.

Eviction is a last resort. We want to keep our customers in their homes but we do have a duty to all customers to collect all rent and other charges due. You will always be given the opportunity to pay the money you owe.

## **YOU ARE AT RISK OF LOSING YOUR HOME IF YOU DO NOT PAY YOUR RENT**

### Service charges

In addition to your rent you may have a service charge payable for your home. This usually applies to customers living in homes with communal areas.

The service charge covers services like: communal lighting, maintenance of communal gardens, nearby grassed areas, and the cleaning of communal areas. You will be advised of the cost of any service charge when you accept your tenancy.





## REPAIRING YOUR HOME



# Repairing your home

We are committed to maintaining your home to a high standard.

## How to report a repair

You can report a repair by:

Telephone.....		<b>01271 312500</b>
Emergency Out of Hours...		<b>0800 9170619</b>
Fax.....		<b>01271 377810</b>
Email .....		enquiries@ndh-ltd.co.uk
Website .....		www.yourlocallandlord.com
Write to us.....		At either of our Barnstaple offices

Please note calls may be recorded for training purposes.

It will help us to deal with your repair quickly and efficiently if you have as much information as possible when you are reporting it, including:

- Your name, address and phone number
- When someone will be at home so the repair can be inspected or carried out
- As much detailed information about the repair as possible (for help to identify the fault see 'Identifying repairs and helpful tips' on page 36)

In return we will explain the target timescales for completing the repair and arrange access at your convenience.

# How soon will the repair be carried out?

## Emergency repairs (A)- within 24 hours

This category includes work that needs to be done to prevent danger to you and others in your home, or to prevent severe damage to a property.

Although our target time is 24 hours from the time the repair is reported, it may be done sooner. We aim to make sure that 99% of emergency repairs are carried out within the target time. Any emergency repairs reported out of normal office hours will be treated with the same priority as the above.

## Urgent repairs (B) – 7 calendar days

This category includes work such as fixing a minor leak. Repairs will be carried out within 7 calendar days of the repair being reported. We aim to make sure that 97% of urgent repairs are carried out within the target time.

## Routine repairs – (C) 28 calendar days

Work in this category includes jobs such as easing doors that are sticking. These repairs may be inspected and carried out within 28 calendar days. We aim to make sure that 97% of routine repairs are carried out within the target time.

## Minor works – (MW) 120 calendar days

Work in this category includes jobs such as flat roof and chimney renewal. We aim to make sure that 90% of minor works are carried out within the target time.

\* These targets may be subject to change.

## Right to repair

The Government has introduced this scheme to ensure that we carry out certain small, urgent repairs that may affect your health, safety and security. Repairs included in this scheme are called qualifying repairs and are detailed in the Right to Repair information leaflet available from our Customer Care Team.

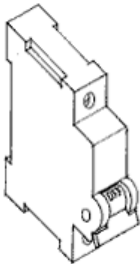
# Identifying repairs and helpful tips

This section gives you some helpful information and tips on running your home and the equipment in it. It includes pictures that may help identify the fault when you report a repair.

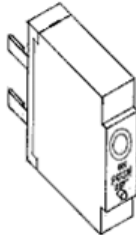
## Electricity

Make sure you know where your fuse board is and how to turn off the electricity supply. See page 9.

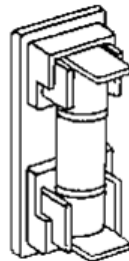
### Fuse types



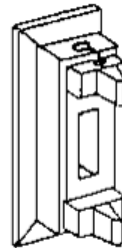
Trip switch



MCB



Cartridge type



Rewirable type

Diagram 1

Your fuse board will either have fuses or trip switches. Modern fuse boards are fitted with a circuit breaker fuse system. If there is a fault, a switch is tripped and the circuit is blown. Older fuse boards have fuse holders and when a fuse blows it must either be replaced, if it is a cartridge, or rewired using special fuse wire.

If a fuse continues to trip or blow, this may be due to a faulty appliance.

## Changing a fuse

If you cannot sort out the problem, check with your neighbours because there may have been a power cut. If there has not been a power cut, ring our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500** for advice.

We may charge you for a visit if we find that one of your appliances are causing the problem.

## Water

Find out where the stopcock is for your water supply and test it regularly to make sure it works. They are usually found where the water supply enters your home. You use these to shut off the water supply to the property if there is a leak or burst. See page 9.

## Stop tap or stopcock

You can test that it works by turning it off and running the cold tap in the kitchen. If the water does not turn off, please report this to our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

## Isolation valve

Isolation valves will allow you to isolate the service to the cistern, taps, bath, and basin and so on by simply turning the screw at the top of the valve. This will then shut off the individual supply. This will allow you to keep a water supply to the rest of your home. Please see Diagram 2 below.

## Stopping an overflowing cistern

If a cistern overflows, you can take temporary action. Lift the float to stop the overflow. Tie a length of string to the arm of the float and attach it to a piece of wood or similar to bridge the width of the cistern.

## Cistern

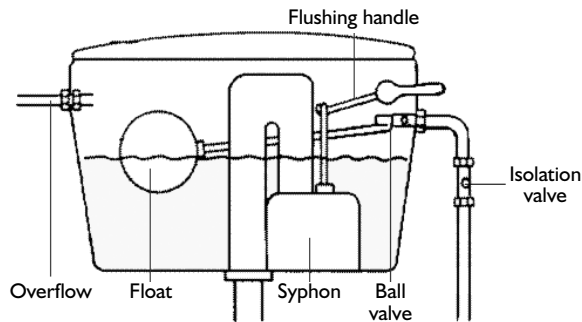


Diagram 2

## Leaking pipes

If your pipes are leaking you should do the following:

- Turn off the stopcock.
- Turn off your water heater, emersion heater or central heating boiler. If you have a back boiler put sand on the fire and let it go out.
- Turn on the hot and cold taps to drain all water.
- Put a container under the leaking pipe to collect any water. If the leak is close to the floor use a baking tray or something similar with a towel placed in it.
- Report the problem to our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

## Frozen pipes

In very cold weather the water in your pipes can freeze. Here is how you can avoid this happening.

Keep some heating on at all times. Open inside doors to allow warm air to circulate as well.

Look in your loft to check if pipes and tanks are lagged (covered). If they are not, please contact our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

## Thawing frozen pipes

If your pipes freeze it can take a long time for them to thaw out. You need to turn off the stop cock and immediately contact the Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

## Bathroom

The next set of pictures should help you identify a fault in your bathroom when you talk to our Customer Care Team.

### Toilet

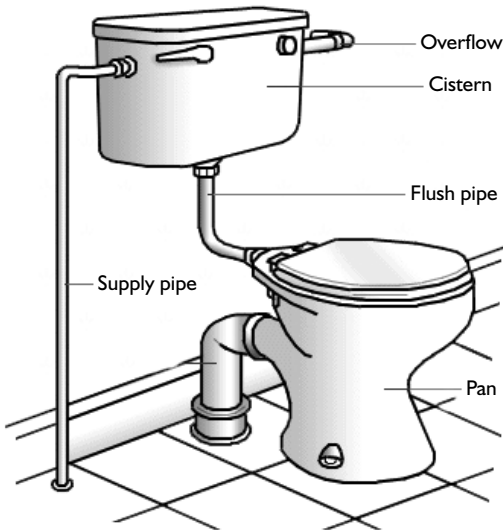


Diagram 3

### Basin

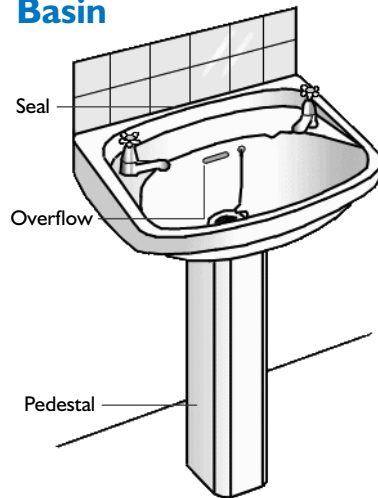


Diagram 4

# Bath

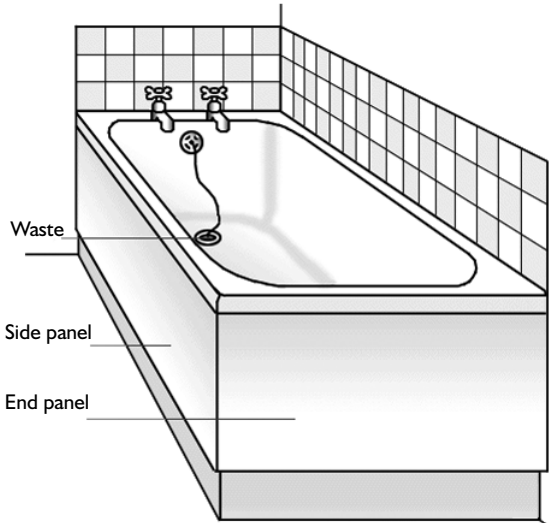


Diagram 5

# Taps

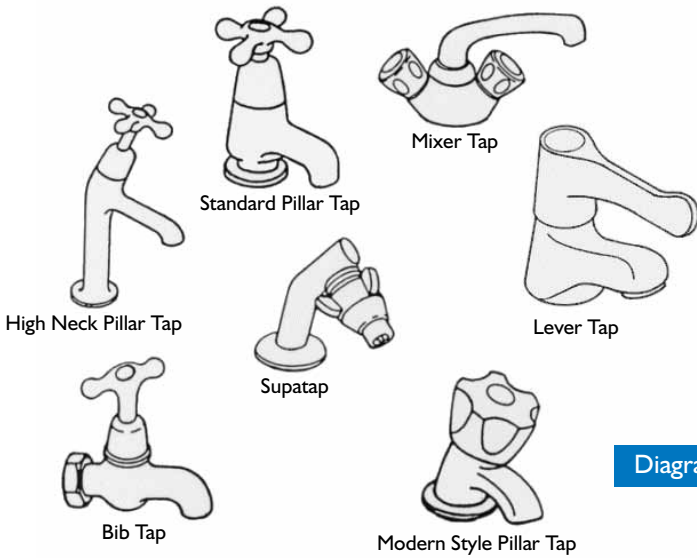


Diagram 6

# Shower

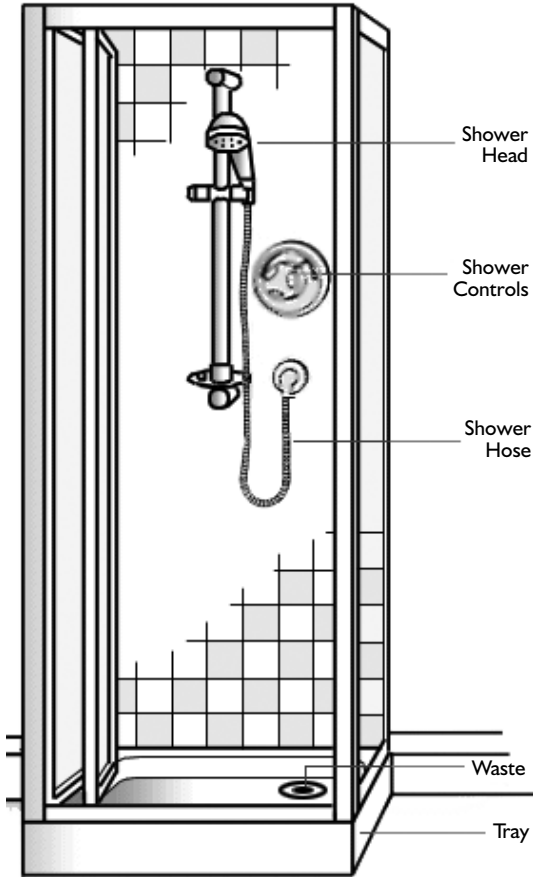
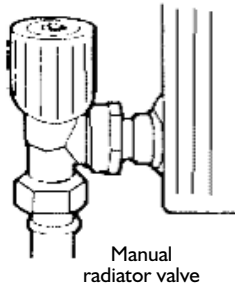
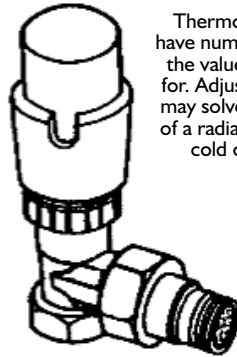


Diagram 7

## Radiators



Manual radiator valve



Thermostatic radiator valve

Thermostatic valves have numbers indicating the value they are set for. Adjusting the knob may solve the problem of a radiator that is too cold or too hot.

Diagram 8

## Bleeding a radiator

If the top part of your radiator is cold this may be because air is trapped. Bleeding the radiator will release this air and allow hot water to fill the radiator.

Always bleed a radiator once the heating has been off for at least 2 hours. Put the bleed key over the bleed valve, holding a cloth underneath to catch any water. Turn the key anti-clockwise and you will hear a hissing noise. This is the air being released. When the hissing stops and water starts to appear turn the key clockwise and close the valve tightly. **Never unscrew the valve completely.**

Once complete, always check the pressure on the boiler. You can use a small screwdriver to open the valve on some modern radiators. Please remember that when you bleed your radiator the water may be hot.

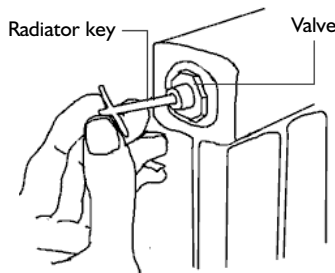


Diagram 9

# Doors and door locks

Please tell us the type of door lock when reporting a repair.

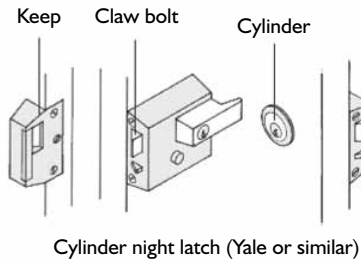
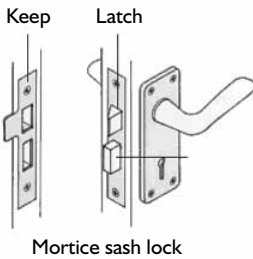
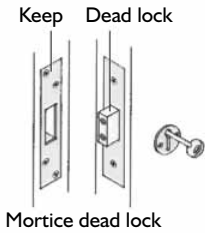
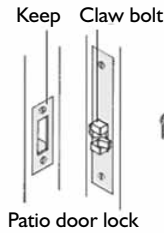
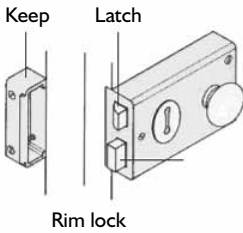
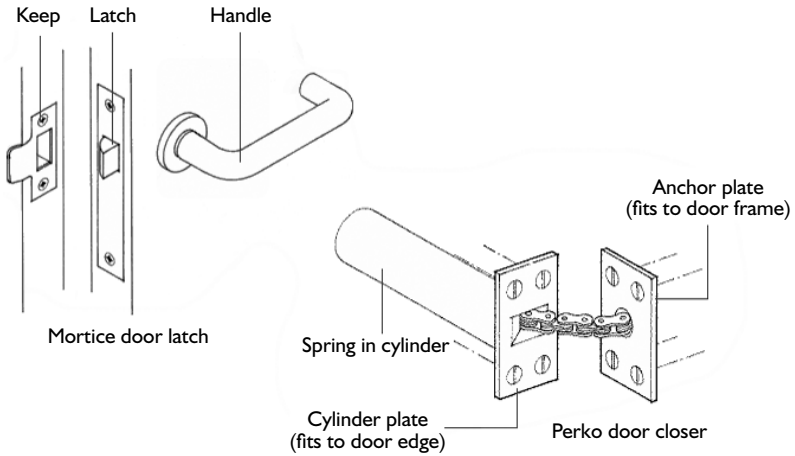
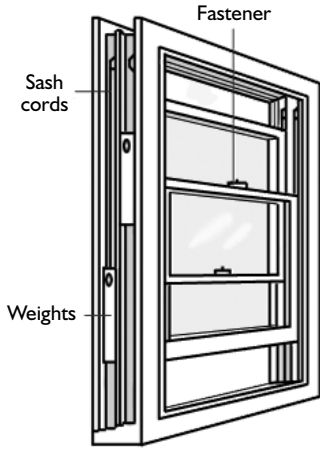


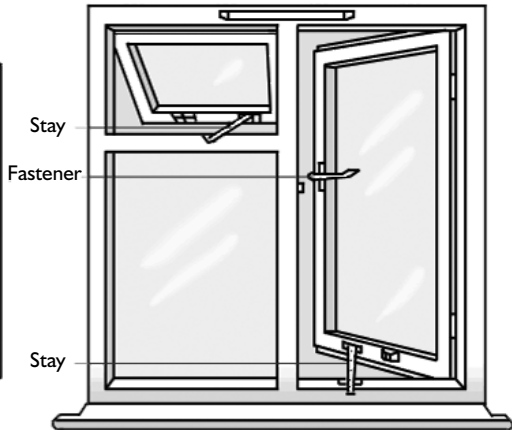
Diagram 10

# Windows

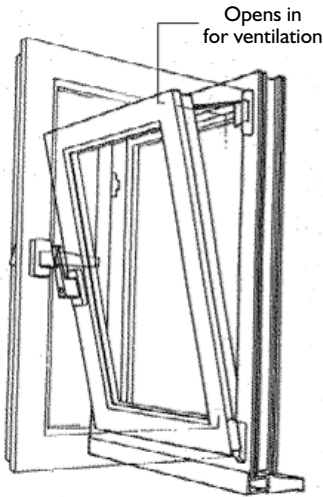
Please tell us the type of window when reporting a repair.



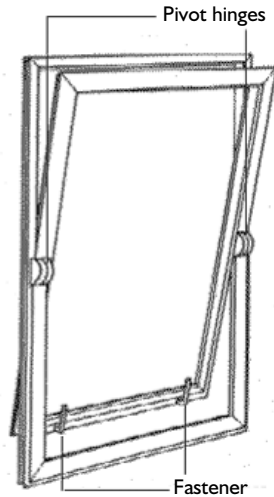
Sash window



Casement window



Tilt & turn window

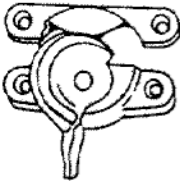


Pivot window

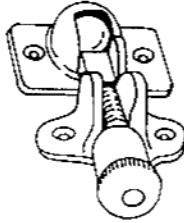
Diagram 11

## Window latches

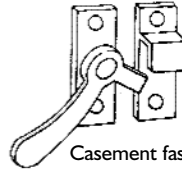
Please tell us the type of window latch when reporting a repair.



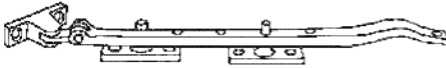
Fitch sash fastener



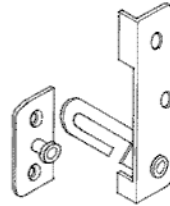
Brighton sash fastener



Casement fastener



Casement stay



Restrictor stay  
(restricts window opening)

Diagram 12

## Blocked drains

If you have a blocked drain stop using the kitchen sink and bathroom until the drain has cleared.

Report the blockage to our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**. Try and make arrangements to use a neighbours bathroom facilities. If the blockage is caused by something you have disposed of then you will be charged for this.

## Who is responsible for the repair?

Customers are responsible for all of the repair items listed below:

Type of repair	Comments
Bathroom fittings	Towel rails etc
Washing lines	Unless communal use and provided by NDH
Chimney sweeping	
Cookers	
Curtain fixtures	
Internal decoration	
Doorbell	Unless it is a communal or entry system, found in blocks, or flats
Door name plate	
Electric plugs	
Fencing	For dividing properties unless boundary is owned by your neighbour
Fixtures and fittings	
Floor coverings	
Fuse wire/cartridge	
Fuses on plugs	
Garden	Maintenance and tidiness
Garden timber sheds	Including gates and their staining and painting

Type of repair	Comments
Glass	Unless we are satisfied that you, your family, or visitors are NOT responsible for the damage. In cases of criminal damage NDH will repair following verification of crime reference number
Timber garages	Erected by tenants
Greenhouses	
Keys	Replacement keys
Lightbulbs	Or fluorescent tubes and starter valves
Outbuildings	Unless provided by NDH
Pest control	Excluding rats nests on NDH land
Pigeon lofts	
Plugs and chains	For sinks basins and baths
Shower units	Unless provided by NDH
Soft furnishings	
Toilet seat	Including fittings
TV aerial and satellite dishes	Unless communal provided by NDH in flats
Walls	Small cracks in plaster or walls due to wear and tear

For all other repairs, please contact the Customer Care Team on **01271 312500** or report online at [www.yourlocallandlord.com](http://www.yourlocallandlord.com) (see page 5 for ways to contact us).

## Charging for repairs

Customers are responsible for the cost of carrying out any repairs, which are not a result of fair wear and tear, as stated in the tenancy agreement.

Customers will be charged for unnecessary expenditure incurred by North Devon Homes. Some examples of chargeable items are shown below:

- Alterations undertaken without North Devon Homes' prior consent
- Unsatisfactory home alterations
- Customer appliances causing electrical or other faults
- Gaining access due to lost or forgotten keys
- Gaining access to make safe emergency repairs
- Clearance of rubbish from an empty property or garden
- Reinstatement or cultivation of an unkempt or untended garden on empty properties (e.g. grass cutting, hedge trimming etc)

North Devon Homes may carry out some repairs, which are the customer's responsibility on request, and only if it is an emergency. The customer will be charged the full cost of the repair.

**Please note repairs undertaken out of office hours will be charged at a premium rate.**



## LOOKING AFTER AND LIVING IN YOUR HOME



## Looking after your home

You are responsible for keeping your home clean and tidy. This includes decorating the inside of your home, and making sure that any shared areas are kept clean and tidy.

### Our improvements programme

We complete a comprehensive stock condition survey to gather, constantly monitor and record information about the condition and state of repair of our properties. This information helps to see what improvements we need to make to your home. We are committed to providing quality homes that exceed the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

The Decent Homes Standard states that the property:

- Must meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- Must be in a reasonable state of repair
- Must have reasonably modern facilities
- Must provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

Our improvements programme is based on information gathered from the latest stock condition survey. This allows us to prioritise the areas that will receive new kitchens, bathrooms, more efficient central heating systems, new external doors and environmental improvements.

If your home is included in our improvements programme you will receive a booklet detailing the standards you can expect from us.

# Carrying out your own home improvements

## Applying for permission

If you want to improve your home by making alterations or providing extra facilities, please write to North Devon Homes for permission.

We will not normally withhold permission, but may apply conditions that you must keep to.

You must keep to any conditions attached to the permission, as it is a term of your tenancy agreement. If you do not keep to it, you will be breaking your tenancy agreement and you may put your tenancy at risk.

**It is your responsibility to get any necessary planning and building regulation approvals from North Devon Council.**

## Help for people with disabilities

If you or a member of your family has a disability that makes it difficult to get around the house, you should contact Care Direct at Devon County Council to arrange an appointment with an Occupational Therapist (see useful numbers on page 8).

They will assess your need and place an order with us for any work required. Major adaptations may not be appropriate or suitable in all our properties and we reserve the right to refuse these changes.

## Routine (Cyclical) Maintenance

We carry out a number of routine maintenance tasks on a regular basis, these include:

- Gas and smoke alarm servicing every year
- External painting
- Legionella testing in communal areas every year
- Lift servicing in enclosed schemes
- Sheltered scheme fire alarm and extinguisher servicing every year
- Grass cutting
- Septic tank emptying
- Solid fuel appliance testing

As a landlord it is our responsibility to carry out this servicing and it is your responsibility as a tenant to help us do so, and ensure that we have access to your home.

### Gas

If you smell gas:

- Turn off your gas supply at your gas meter
- Open your windows and doors to ventilate your home
- Do not switch on any electric appliances or light switches
- Put out all cigarettes, cigars and pipes immediately
- Do not use a match or a flame to find the leak

These should be reported immediately and directly to the National Grid Emergency Telephone Number (Transco):

**0800 111 999.**

## Gas servicing

We are responsible for carrying out an annual safety check of all the gas appliances in your home.

It is important that we gain access to your home to undertake gas servicing. The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 state that you must allow us access to your home.

When your safety check is due we will contact you with an appointment. If this is not convenient, please contact us to arrange an alternative date.

Our engineer will call on the arranged date to carry out the work. If you are not home, the engineer will leave a 'no access card'. Please contact us to arrange an alternative date.

North Devon Homes takes the safety of our customers very seriously, therefore if you do not allow us access we will issue a formal notice, instructing you that we will start legal action for recovery of the property or an injunction to gain entry to the property to carry out the gas service.

## Smoke detectors

North Devon Homes provides smoke detectors that are wired into the main electricity supply and are serviced every year. It is important that you test the detectors weekly by pressing the 'test' button. If they are faulty please contact the Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

## Carbon Monoxide detectors

By the end of 2010 all properties with open fires, solid fuel central heating and open flu devices, such as Boxi-back boilers, will have a carbon monoxide detector fitted as a safety precaution. These will be maintained in the same way as smoke detectors.



## Fire prevention

Fires can start suddenly and spread quickly, damaging your home and furniture and putting lives in danger. Please contact us for a copy of the Fire Service information leaflet.

In the event of a fire, close the door of the room where the fire started. If you can, block off any gaps under the door as a closed door will slow down a fire.

Do not reopen the closed door. Remember to check that everyone has left the building, get out and stay out.

Call the fire brigade on **999**. Please report the fire to our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**, or if outside normal office hours on **0800 917 0619**.

## Asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral that breaks into very tiny pieces in the atmosphere. Everybody is exposed to some asbestos fibres at all times. These low natural levels do not cause a danger. Asbestos only becomes dangerous when you are exposed to a high level of free fibres.

We have undertaken a comprehensive survey of all our properties. We have written to all of our customers to confirm whether there is asbestos in their home. The report identifies any areas where asbestos is present, including the location, type and condition of the material containing asbestos.

Please make sure you read the report carefully as you need to know where any asbestos containing materials are. All you need to do is make sure you do not disturb or damage the material. **It is safe if you do not damage it.**

If asbestos is damaged, don't panic. Leave the material alone, do not vacuum or sweep it up. Leave the affected area and close the door. Do not let anyone into the affected area and call us immediately on **01271 312500**. We will provide all the necessary services to remove the damaged asbestos and make the area safe.

For more information on asbestos, and for a copy of our asbestos leaflet, please contact our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

More information is available from the Asbestos Information Centre Ltd at [www.aic.org.uk](http://www.aic.org.uk) or Asbestos Watchdog at [www.asbestoswatchdog.co.uk](http://www.asbestoswatchdog.co.uk).

## Condensation

Condensation in your home is caused by too much moisture and can cause dampness if not dealt with.

Condensation occurs when warm air hits a cold surface, like a window or a wall, and the water vapour turns into water droplets. Every home gets condensation at certain times.

For more information on how to combat condensation, and for a copy of our condensation leaflet, please contact our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

Tips to tackle condensation:

- Produce less moisture - cover sauce pans and don't leave kettles boiling
- Ventilate to remove moisture - open windows or use an extractor fan
- Heat your home - in cold weather keep the heating on low during the day even when there is no one home.

## Economy 7 Heating

Your Neighbourhood Officer will explain how to use your Economy 7 Heating System. If you are unsure of any aspects of your system then please telephone our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**. They will be able to provide you with an information leaflet.

## Home insurance

North Devon Homes ensures that buildings insurance is in place on all of our properties. This does not include the contents of your home, personal belongings, internal decorations or floor coverings. It is important that you take out your own home contents insurance to cover for loss or damage.

Working with partners we have arranged a low cost contents insurance scheme. Payments can be made fortnightly, monthly or annually.

For further information, please contact our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500** or Aviva directly on **0845 408 2033** to request an application pack.

## Loft spaces

These spaces are only for repair and maintenance. Please do not store any items in your loft.

In order to make your home warmer we supply and fit insulation in your loft. Please contact the Customer Care Team on **01271 312500** if you do not have any insulation in your loft.

## Lodgers and subletting

The rules around subletting and housing lodgers vary depending upon your tenancy type. Regardless of the circumstances none of these options are available without our prior written consent. You should contact your Neighbourhood Officer for further information.

## Running a business from home

If you are considering starting a business from home, you should contact your Neighbourhood Officer. You are not entitled to run a business without our written authorisation. However, this is unlikely to be withheld if it is thought that the business will not have a detrimental impact on the neighbourhood.

## Looking after your garden

If you have a garden, you are responsible for maintaining:

- Flowers and flower beds
- Lawns
- Hedges
- Shrubs
- Gates
- Fences

If you want to put up a shed, green house, lean to or any other construction, you must first get permission in writing from your Neighbourhood Officer.

## Keeping a pet

You may keep domestic pets, such as a cat or a dog, in your home if the property is suitable and your pet does not cause a nuisance to your neighbours.

You must obtain written permission from your Neighbourhood Officer before you keep any pet in your home. For more information on keeping a pet, please contact our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

## Pest control

From time to time, homes can get infested by various pests, which may include mice and rats, ants, wasps, fleas and other insects.

You are responsible for making sure that your home and garden are free from pests at all times. If you discover any pests you should contact a pest control specialist to treat them (you can find details in the phone book).

North Devon Homes is only responsible for the removal of rats nests located on North Devon Homes land. On sheltered schemes we will remove wasp nests.



## NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES



# Neighbourhood Services

## Your Tenancy

### Starter Tenancies

All new tenancies are known as starter tenancies. These tenancies typically last for 12 months, at which time they are converted to an assured tenancy. Should you breach any of your tenancy conditions, within the first 12 months, then the starter tenancy period may be extended for a further 6 months, or terminated.

Full details of your terms and conditions are provided with your tenancy. Please make sure that you fully understand your responsibilities as a tenant.

**Your tenancy agreement is the legal contract that describes your rights and responsibilities (as a tenant) and our rights and responsibilities as a landlord. It is very important that you keep this safe at all times**

### Assured Tenancies

Assured tenancies provide greater security and are long-term tenancies. This means that you can stay in your home as long as you wish provided you comply with the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement.

An assured tenancy also gives you additional legal rights regarding succession, exchange and the possible purchase of your home. Further information will be provided when your tenancy is converted after the 12 month probationary period.

## Joint tenancies

A joint tenancy is when two or more adults have equal rights and responsibilities for the tenancy. A joint tenancy is created when all the adults involved sign the tenancy agreement.

We issue most of our tenancies on a joint basis to married or other partners. Any of the joint tenants can end the tenancy; sometimes this means that everyone must leave the home.

When relationships breakdown it is not always easy to change the tenancy from a joint to a single one. If your relationship breaks down you should contact the Customer Care Team on **01271 312500** as soon as possible for advice.

## Your Neighbourhood

### Neighbourhood agreements and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Your neighbourhood is covered by an area agreement. This agreement will cover any issues that may be a potential problem, for example: excessive noise, rubbish or graffiti. The agreement will let you know how we intend to deal with these problems.

We consider the issues mentioned above to represent ASB. For further information on any aspect of ASB please ask for a copy of our ASB leaflet. This is available for download from our website or alternatively you can receive a copy through the post by contacting our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

## Your housing options

### Transferring to another home

Devon Home Choice is a way of finding available Council and Housing Association homes. Under Devon Home Choice you can choose which homes interest you and move anywhere within Devon.

For more information on Devon Home Choice and how to register, please visit our website, the Devon Home Choice website, contact the Customer Service Centre at North Devon Council on **01271 388870** or contact our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**. The Customer Care Team will be able to provide you with an information leaflet.

### Exchanging your home

A mutual exchange is when you arrange a swap with someone else. You must be a Council or Housing Association tenant anywhere in Great Britain to apply for a mutual exchange. You must have your landlord's written permission before you swap.

If you would like more information about how you can find a mutual exchange, please contact the Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**, who will be able to provide you with an information leaflet.

### Can I buy my home?

You may be entitled to buy your home. For more information on your options please contact our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**, or your Neighbourhood Officer. There are a range of leaflets available to provide information on conditions and regulations.



## GET INVOLVED!



## Get Involved - Have your say!

We are committed to customer involvement and putting our customers first. We want you to work closely with us to continually improve our services, become more cost effective and more responsive.

We want to provide excellent services to our customers. To do this we need you to tell us what you think. This will help us to understand what you want and expect. Your views will influence change and shape service improvements.

We encourage involvement from all customers by providing a range of activities that will help you to do this. You can choose to take part in a way that suits you. Your views are important to us and any time you can spare is a valuable contribution.

We publish the results and outcomes of all activities to show how customer contributions have directly resulted in service changes and improvements.

The Customer Involvement Team is able to offer help and advice to anyone who wants to get involved.

For more information please contact us on **01271 312500**, or download our Customer Involvement Strategy from our website [www.yourlocalandlord.com](http://www.yourlocalandlord.com).

## Customer Comments and Complaints

The opinions of our customers are important to us; we want you to let us know if our services are good or bad.

To help you share your experiences with us we have the Customer Comments form which is available from our offices or you can download it from our website [www.yourlocallandlord.com](http://www.yourlocallandlord.com). A feedback form can also be found on the other side of this page, simply fill in the form and hand it in at one of our offices.

### Customer Complaints

A complaint is where we (the company, a member of staff or a contractor) have not provided you with the appropriate level of service, or you are unhappy with the manner in which you have been dealt. As a result, you may wish to let us know that you are not satisfied.

A complaint is not:

- A request for service
- The initial report of a fault or repair
- A query about a North Devon Homes' policy
- A request for information.

If you would like more information on our Complaints Procedure please visit our website [www.yourlocallandlord.com](http://www.yourlocallandlord.com) or contact the Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**.

# Customer Feedback Form

**Name:** .....

**Address:** .....

.....

**Telephone Number:** .....

**Feedback:** .....

.....

.....

.....

**I would like to be contacted about my feedback**      **Yes / No**      (Please delete as necessary)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. Please hand it in at either of our offices or to any member of staff.

The information you have given will be used to improve the services we provide you.

## Data Protection at North Devon Homes

- We will process your information in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- We will use the information that you have provided for the purpose(s) for which it has been provided and ensure the accuracy and completeness of all North Devon Homes records and ensure that our records are kept up to date.
- We may also use the information to inform you of other North Devon Homes services to which you may be entitled.
- We may also share the information you have provided with other agencies where it is in the interests of your health, safety or welfare.
- We will not ask you for more information than is necessary.
- We will not keep information for longer than is necessary.
- We will take all reasonable measures to keep your information secure.
- We may use your information both within North Devon Homes and with external statutory agencies for the prevention and detection of crime.

You may obtain details of the information held about you from: The Data Protection Officer, North Devon Homes Ltd, Westacott Road, Barnstaple, EX32 8TA.

**North Devon Homes Ltd  
Westacott Road, Whiddon Valley,  
Barnstaple EX32 8TA**

**Telephone: 01271 312500  
Fax: 01271 377810  
[enquiries@ndh-ltd.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ndh-ltd.co.uk)**

**If you would like this publication in any  
alternative format or language please contact  
the Customer Care Team on 01271 312500.**



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