

RESIDENTS' HANDBOOK

N.B. this is an interim version, the final version will be distributed to all courts as soon as possible.

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Welcome

Welcome to your new residents' handbook. This handbook has been put together in partnership with residents and replaces all other versions of the residents, tenants or leaseholders handbook including the Housing 21 Tenants' Handbook - Guidance on your tenancy.

Please note your tenancy agreement or lease define precisely your entitlement to any services provided.

The handbook is divided into separate sections and will be regularly updated. The most up to date version of your handbook, and therefore the version that is applicable at any point in time, can be found on our website with copies also being held by your court manager. Should you have any questions about the residents handbook please speak to your court manager, or see the 'how to contact us' section.

Who is Housing 21?

Housing 21 is a leading national social enterprise providing a range of care, health and housing services to older people. We've been around for nearly 50 years and are proud of our wide ranging knowledge and specialist expertise.

Our vision is a life of choice for older people. We offer a complete service designed to promote choice and independence and to meet the changing needs of our customers.

We own or manage over 17,500 sheltered and extra care apartments and bungalows across England and are one of the largest providers of home care services. We are a registered housing association with charitable status and are non-profit making. Any surplus we make is used to improve the properties and the services that we provide.

Our care and support services are for residents of our courts and older people in the wider community. These services include home care services, such as shopping and cleaning, personal care services, live-in care services and specialist services such as dementia care.

Our intention is that this will be your home for life. We realise that you may need additional support services as you get older or if you are unwell and we hope we can help if or when you need more assistance.

We may also be able to access local services such as shopping and cleaning on your court, which you can purchase at cost price through our Service Promise initiative.

At Housing 21, we aim to ensure that residents receive a first class service throughout their time with us.

As part of our commitment to the well-being of residents we provide a Welfare Benefit Advice service. This will help to ensure that you receive your maximum benefit entitlement and identify any income that you may be entitled to. All court managers are trained to help you apply for benefits in order to help you pay for any extra services you wish to receive.

Our mission, vision, values and service offers

Housing 21's vision is "A life of Choice for older people" and our mission is to promote independence and choice for older people through quality housing, care and support.

In other words, we want to work with you to achieve the quality of life, well-being, security and participation in the community that suits *you*.

We are guided by our values and we want you to experience the positive impact of these values in all the services you receive from us.

Our values are:

Caring

Individuality

Empowering

Integrity

Improving

Investing

Ambition

We have worked with residents to develop our new 'service offers', linked to our well established values. These are our commitments to the level of service that we want to provide to you. Our service offers are published and readily available. Ultimately, we want you to decide

whether or not we have met our service offers and will detail these findings in an Annual Report.

We are aware of the need to ensure that the services we provide meet local priorities and are tailored to meet local needs. We will be working with residents locally to establish the types of services which they may like to see in their areas or on their courts.

These will be our 'local service offers' and we will publish details of these in places where we agree them.

How to contact us

When contacting Housing 21, we aim to ensure that:

- All those who come into contact with Housing 21 staff will be treated equally, with courtesy, honesty and respect and according to their individual needs regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation.
- Confidentiality will be respected at all times.
- Our staff will be polite, professional and helpful.
- Our staff will deal with enquiries efficiently and quickly, within expected standards and targets.
- All Housing 21 staff will respect your privacy.

Housing 21 head office

Housing 21
The Triangle
Baring Road
Beaconsfield
Bucks
HP9 2NA

Telephone: 0370 192 4000

You can contact us by e-mail using:

enquiries@housing21.co.uk

website: www.housing21.co.uk

Customer services and rent enquiries

Tel: 0345 607 0272

Email: customerservicesadministration@housing21.co.uk

Opening hours: Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm, closed on bank holidays.

Leasehold enquires and leasehold sales

E-mail: leaseholdsales@housing21.co.uk

Opening hours: Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm, closed on bank holidays.

Contact us out of hours

Repairs: All repairs should be reported to your court manager, but if they are unavailable please call 0345 603 0099.

Care: If you need to contact us about a care issue out of hours, please call: 0370 192 4242.

Suggestions, comments and complaints

At Housing 21, we aim to deliver consistently high standards of service to our customers. There may be times however when our high standards are not met. If you are not happy with our services in any way, we welcome your comments and feedback. We want to resolve any problems you might have experienced as promptly and effectively as possible and your feedback is invaluable in helping us improve our services for the future.

What is a complaint?

If you tell us you are making a complaint, we count it as such – we receive feedback on many issues, both positive and negative, but generally we will consider something to be a complaint if it is a criticism which expects a reply and would like things changed.

Very often customers contact us with issues that can be dealt with simply and quickly without the need for a more formal response. Sometimes, a complaint raises more complex issue and we will need to formally investigate it.

How to report your complaint?

If possible, in the first instance, you should contact your court manager. If you do not wish to speak to your court manager about your complaint then you can contact our complaints management officers.

You or your representative can make a complaint. Your representative can be a friend, a family member or your social worker acting on your behalf or someone from an independent organisation like your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Age UK.

If you have any difficulties in communicating with us, our complaints management officers will be pleased to help you.

You can contact our complaint management officers through our Suggestions, Comments and Complaints telephone number, via our website, by letter, by email or in person.

Telephone: 0303 123 1622

Post: FREEPOST SUGGESTIONS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Email: scc@housing21.co.uk

More information on how we handle complaints can be found in our complaints guide.

N.B. Please note that 03 numbers are charged at exactly the same rate as 01 or 02 numbers, so shouldn't cost any more than a normal phone call. The numbers can be included in Friends & Family and similar packages and within contract minutes on a mobile phone. The rate depends on the service provider and varies. All 0345 numbers are charged at a lo call rate.

Your court manager service

On most of our courts, Housing 21 employs full time court managers. On our extra care courts there is often staffing cover available 24 hours a day.

Sometimes this may vary, especially on smaller schemes. Court managers are entitled to annual leave and public holidays. If your court manager works alternative hours, you will be notified of their hours of work.

There is some flexibility in working hours and sometimes court managers are required to attend meetings off site. The court manager's availability, including any planned leave, will be notified to residents.

The court manager is your main point of contact with Housing 21 in regards to your housing and support needs. The court manager is employed to ensure the safety and well-being of residents. In addition to this main duty, the court manager will offer assistance and advice whenever requested or needed. They will also be a useful point of contact for you discuss any other needs you may have. The court manager is expected to:

- Welcome and introduce new residents to the scheme.
- Provide background support without interference and to respect your privacy and independence.
- Maintain daily contact with residents unless requested not to.
- Provide the same level of service to each resident.
- Help in an emergency by summoning relatives, calling a doctor or any other professional help that may be required.
- Keep on file the names and telephone numbers of your nearest relatives or friends and of your doctor, so that they can act quickly in case of emergency. It is important that you provide this information and inform your court manager of any changes to these details.
- Work with other organisations and professionals who support you and provide help in arranging assistance from family, Social

Services and other agencies to meet your changing needs so that you can remain independent and in your own home.

- Encourage residents' social activities and to participate where appropriate.
- Support the Residents' Association where applicable.
- Take responsibility for the safety of residents. It is essential, therefore, for you to advise the court manager when you are going to be away from home overnight so that, in the event of a fire or other emergency, they will know which apartments are unoccupied.
- Take responsibility for the security, safety and cleanliness of the court.
- Look after the building and its equipment and arrange for repairs to be carried out, including reporting repairs on your behalf.
- Deal with bookings of the guest room or arrangements for use of communal facilities.
- Work closely with the ancillary staff working at the court, such as cleaners and gardeners.
- Help you to access a range of other services including shopping and cleaning services through our 'Service Promise'.
- Extra care court managers will be responsible for home care workers who can offer more personal care services.
- Develop services on court for you and for other older people in the community. The court manager will inform you about the range of activities taking place on your court.
- Be responsible for all the back up paperwork and administration associated with the running of the court.

When the court manager is not on duty

The court manager will advise you of their hours of work and any planned absences, such as annual leave. A relief court manager may be employed when your court manager is on annual leave or off work due to ill health.

When the court manager is not on duty any emergencies are dealt with by the emergency control centre, which residents can access via their emergency call system. Calls are automatically routed to the control centre when the court manager is not available.

For more information please see the chapter on “Your Call Monitoring Service”

Your call monitoring service

On most of our sheltered and extra care courts, Housing 21 employs full time court managers who are normally on duty five days a week. When they are not available you should be able to rely on our call monitoring service.

The majority of our courts are connected to Tunstall Response, with few residents covered by other call monitoring providers.

All the call monitoring centre staff have many years experience and expertise in delivering community support services throughout the UK. They are dedicated to providing services that enable people to retain their independence in both independent and assisted living settings. They have teams of very skilled, experienced and caring operators who work within their response centres, which are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, providing immediate help and reassurance in the event of you pulling the pull cord, using your pendant or phoning in.

You may use the pull cord or press your pendant at any time, safe in the knowledge that when the court manager is not available their operators will answer your call quickly and arrange the necessary support for you, and please don't worry about pressing your pendant or pulling your cord by accident.

Court managers test the pull cords regularly and the call monitoring company will test the dedicated telephone lines to ensure that the service is always working.

If you experience any problems with your pull cords, your pendants or the voice box in your home, then please let your court manager or in their absence let the Regional Office know as soon as possible. They will inform the call monitoring company to rectify the situation.

If your call monitoring system has failed and you need to report an emergency when the court manager is off duty, you should ring the following number: **0845 055 0946**.

Your home

We want you and your neighbours to lead as comfortable a life as possible. The quality of your home, the communal facilities, our Service Offers and our general guidelines, are designed to help all residents lead an enjoyable life.

Communal facilities

Our courts usually have communal facilities for use by the residents. These facilities can normally be used by all residents at any reasonable time during the day and evening. Sometimes the communal facilities may have been made available for the use of a meeting or other group. Residents will be made aware of instances where this is the case.

The court manager is responsible for supervising and co-ordinating the maintenance, care and cleaning of these facilities and you should speak with your court manager should you wish to use the facilities for your own purposes.

Increasingly, communal facilities are designed in such a way that they can also be available for older people living locally without affecting your security and privacy.

Communal lounge

On most courts Housing 21 provides a communal lounge for the pleasure and use of residents and other visitors to the scheme; you have the right to use and enjoy the lounge area. Housing 21 employs a cleaning service to maintain the communal lounge.

The communal lounge can be used for formal and informal social and recreational activities for all residents living on the court and for older people living in the wider community.

The communal lounge can sometimes be used for private occasions, however, this is subject to it being used in a way that is fair to all those living on the court. Many of our communal lounges are fitted with a hearing loop to assist those who have hearing difficulties.

Social activities

We actively encourage residents to arrange social activities on the court. The court manager can facilitate social activities, however, this is

not considered to be one of their main duties. Residents are encouraged to arrange social events and activities themselves, liaising with either the court manager or other groups or agencies in the local community. It is important that all residents living on the court have equal opportunity to take part in social activities.

Guest room

There is a guest room on many courts so friends or relatives can make short visits. A booking system operates and there is a charge to help cover the costs. If you have guests to stay, you are responsible for ensuring the guest room is left in a clean and tidy condition. The court manager will arrange for the linen to be laundered and the room to be cleaned.

Laundry

The laundry is for the exclusive use of Housing 21 residents. Some courts have agreed a rota so that you do your laundry on certain days. You will find the details relating to your court's arrangements in the laundry room.

Other facilities

Many of our courts have other facilities such as a hairdressing salon, a gym, a bar, a restaurant or shop.

Grounds and gardens

In general the grounds and gardens surrounding the court are provided for the pleasure of all residents and you have the right to use and enjoy them. Housing 21 employs a gardening service to maintain them. If you are interested, you may be able to cultivate small areas of the garden and have space for tubs and baskets. Please let your court manager know if you are interested.

In some instances an area of garden will be designated for the exclusive use of one property. Please ask your court manager if you are in any way uncertain about the areas of the scheme you can enjoy in common with other residents.

TV licence

Many of our sheltered and extra care courts have a concessionary TV licence and receive their TV reception through a communal TV aerial. If

your picture is poor, please tell your court manager/locality manager who can arrange for an engineer to rectify it. All aerials on courts will be prepared and upgraded to receive digital broadcasts in time for the digital switchover, however, you will need to subscribe to a digital television provider (such as Sky) or have a TV capable of receiving services through a 'freeview' set top box.

Car parking

Car parking on the site is available for residents, visitors and staff members. We do not allocate specific parking spaces to individual residents. If parking at the court is limited, we may request that visitors park elsewhere.

It is a resident's responsibility to ensure vehicles are insured and taxed correctly or that the DVLA are informed that the vehicle is being kept off-road by making a Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN). Failure to do so may result in Housing 21 staff reporting the vehicle to the DVLA. If car parking at the court is limited, we may request that a car which has been declared SORN be removed from the car park. We expect all residents to demonstrate co-operation and reasonableness where car parking at a scheme is limited.

Scooters and motorised wheelchairs

Housing 21 supports, where practical, the use and storage of scooters and motorised wheelchairs. However, not all courts have suitable storage facilities for storage of such items.

If your court has access to a buggy store you must have permission from your court manager to use it. If your court does not have access to a buggy store then you must speak to your court manager who will try and find an alternative place to store your scooter or motorised wheelchair. When looking for alternative storage areas we have to be aware of our responsibilities for health and safety of the court, including guidance issued by the Fire Service.

It is important to understand that the health and safety of the scheme is of paramount importance and it may not always be possible to find suitable storage areas for your scooter or motorised wheelchair. Where we agree that you are able to store a motorised scooter you must provide a current and valid copy of the certificate of insurance covering the motorised scooter on request. The insurance certificate should cover at a minimum, third party liability. If you are unable to do

this, you will not be able to use or store the vehicle on the grounds or within any property managed by Housing 21.

Communal door entry systems

Communal door entry systems are designed for your safety and the security of your home. It is important that you never let a stranger in on behalf of someone else and that you never prop open communal doors. This is not only a fire and security risk, but it could also damage the mechanisms of the door.

Emergency alarm system

The pull cords in your home and communal areas are connected to the alarm system so that you can summon help if you need it. The court manager is able to hear and speak to you over this system. In the absence of the court manager, a remote call centre run by our nominated service provider can respond in the same way.

The remote call centre is able to allow emergency services access to the communal front door of the court and to the key safe, thereby ensuring swift access in the case of any emergency. The service operates whenever your court manager is not on site or on duty. For more information see 'your call monitoring service'.

The alarm system will be tested regularly by the court manager to ensure that it is operating satisfactorily. Please DO NOT tie up the pull cord on the assumption you will not need it.

You will be advised of any local arrangements should there be an emergency when the court manager is away either on holiday or sick leave.

Extra care

Housing 21 is a leading provider of extra care housing. Extra care courts have a wide range of on-site care and support services, special adaptations and additional design features for those who need a bit of extra help. All extra care courts will have a court manager and may have an on-site care team. Facilities often include hairdressers, restaurant, a small shop or a gym.

The aim of our extra care courts is to enable older people to remain independent and in their own homes for longer by providing additional care and support services. Please note: nominations to extra care

housing often need to be received from the local authority and normally require an assessment.

Assisted bathing areas

Some of our schemes have bathrooms with specially adapted equipment for assisted bathing. This equipment is usually operated by trained care teams who use them for individuals in receipt of a care service. The equipment can also be used by other residents who may have other people who help them, following a small amount of training from either the care team or court manager. Residents use the equipment at their own risk and would be liable for any damage to the equipment resulting from misuse or negligence. If residents do not feel entirely comfortable using the equipment, but feel that they could benefit from its use, then they may wish to consider whether they would like support from a care team in order to meet their needs. For more information please speak to your court manager.

Service Promise

Housing 21 has developed the Service Promise in response to residents' needs. This represents an undertaking to residents to facilitate the provision of services on your court in seven basic areas:

- Cleaning
- Shopping
- Transport
- Lifelong Learning
- Money
- Health
- Social Activity

If you require more information on the service promise please speak to your court manager, or another member of Housing 21 staff. We will work with you and other residents to try and establish a service locally to meet your needs.

Useful information

My Time

We publish a residents magazine three times a year called '**My Time**' that contains a lot of useful information about the ways in which we are improving services as well as sharing stories and initiatives that are taking place on courts across the country.

Other publications

There are a number of leaflets that are available on your court or from your court manager/locality manager that give you more information in relation to issues such as Paying your Rent, Anti-Social Behaviour and how to make Suggestions, Comments or Complaints.

Some other useful points

A few things to bear in mind in order to make the court a happy place to live:

- The court manager/locality manager will inform you of any general guidelines in place on your court in order to ensure that it remains a safe and secure place to live. We try to keep these to a minimum, but, inevitably, when a number of people are living close together, some guidelines are needed for the benefit of everyone.
- We cannot make rules and policies which account for every day court life. We will sometimes have to make a commonsense decision which will be made in the best interests of all concerned.
- Noise nuisance can be extremely irritating and difficult for the person on the receiving-end to live with. We have found that, in most cases, the person responsible does not realise they are causing a problem. We suggest that, in the first instance, you approach the neighbour in a friendly and sensitive way and let them know what the problem is. If the situation continues, please inform the court manager/locality manager who will try to find a solution. (See section on anti-social behaviour for further details).
- Please try to be a considerate neighbour. Avoid banging doors and try to place televisions or stereos away from shared walls if possible. Special ear phones or an induction loop can be

purchased for those who are hard of hearing.

- Littered and untidy bin areas are a health hazard and attract pests and vermin. Please keep bin areas clean and tidy. This is much easier if rubbish is wrapped before being put in the bin. If bin liners are provided in your area, please use them.
- Be mindful about items which you flush down the toilet. Ensure that you only flush products which are designed to be disposed of in the toilet (so easily break down). Other products, not designed to be flushed, can cause blockages and may result in charges being incurred for unblocking drains.
- Large items of household waste are not to be left in the bin area or in any other communal area. Your court manager/locality manager will be able to advise you about disposal of large household items.
- Where practicable, Housing 21 will be providing recycling areas in courts for you to use.
- Not all courts are suitable homes for keeping pets, especially those with no immediate access to the outdoors. You must obtain written approval before keeping a pet and, where this is granted, your pet must be kept under proper control, and not cause a nuisance to your neighbours.
- If justifiable complaints are received, you may be asked to find another home for your pet. When requesting permission to keep a pet, you must ensure that arrangements are in place for looking after it should you go on holiday, become ill or unable to care for it. More information can be found in our Pets Policy.
- All courts have a no smoking policy in communal areas. If you want to smoke in your home, you may do so, but, please be aware of the potential fire hazards involved. Please be sensitive to visitors, contractors and staff.

Rent and other charges

Your rent

The rent charged is to cover the costs of providing the accommodation. Your gross rent is made up of:

- Net rent
- Service Charge
- Support Charge
- Utility Charge (where applicable)

Rents and related charges are due weekly in advance. The rent week runs from Monday to Sunday. If you choose to pay your rent fortnightly, four weekly or monthly, this must also be in advance so that your rent account does not fall into arrears. You can pay your rent in the following ways:

1) Using your Housing 21 'AllPay' Card

In person: You can pay your rent and associated charges by cash or cheque (it will depend on the shop as to what they accept) using your Housing 21 'AllPay' card at all Post Offices and any shop showing these signs:



Internet - you can also pay online using your Housing 21 'AllPay'Card. Visit our website www.housing21.co.uk where you can use the link for payments online.

By telephone - if you have a swipecard, you can also pay over the telephone using your debit card by calling 0844 557 8321.

2) Standing Order

You can arrange to pay your rent and associated charges by Standing Order. If you would like to set up a Standing Order, please speak to

your court manager or contact customer services on 0345 607 0272 for further information.

3) Cheque

You can pay your rent and associated charges by cheque. Please make cheques payable to **Housing 21** and write your name, address and tenancy number on the reverse of the cheque. Please send your cheque to:

Housing 21
Accounts Department
The Triangle
Baring Road
Beaconsfield HP9 2NA

Changes in rent and rent arrears

We will tell you of any change in rent at least four weeks before the change.

If you are having difficulties paying your rent please let your court manager/locality manager know immediately, alternatively call customer services on 0345 607 0272.

Our aim is to help you resolve the problem by coming to a mutually agreeable arrangement. If you do not tell us about financial difficulties, or you continue to build up further arrears, we may, as a last resort, have to follow legal procedures to collect the debt or gain possession of your home.

You may also find that financial advice is available from other organisations, such as Citizens Advice Bureau.

Other services and charges

In addition to your gross rent, you may be liable for the following charges:

- **Council Tax** - you are responsible for paying your own Council Tax. Your rent does not cover this. You may be eligible to help with payment of this charge through your local Council Tax Benefit section.
- **Television licence** - the television license is now free to everyone over 75 years of age. For those residents below this age, some courts qualify for the concessionary TV licence.

- If your court qualifies, and you or your partner are over retirement age, you may be able to benefit from the concession. Housing 21 cannot claim the concession as a right and it is possible that the National TV Licensing Authority may decide to withdraw the concession should the circumstances of the court change. Your court manager will be able to keep you up to date.
- **Utility charges** - residents will be subject to a utility charge to cover the cost of communal energy and water and this will be included in your service charge. On some of our courts, residents will contract directly for the electricity and water used in their flats and may have individual meters. On other courts these costs are included as part of the overall charges and will be identified separately on your tenancy agreement and in any other correspondence relating to the charges for your accommodation.
- **Usage charge** - the application of a 'usage charge' is a fairer, more transparent and consistent way of apportioning costs for the use of furnishings and equipment on your court. The basic principle is that Housing 21 apportions a cost to each item used by residents on court. We then undertake to replace the item if it is no longer functional or fails to meet an acceptable standard due to wear and tear. We will always try and ensure that we only replace when the item is unfit for purpose, not just because it is old.

Each resident will be charged a standard amount each year based on the expected life cycle of the item and the number of residents that are living on the scheme. This will be a standard charge applied to all residents who are provided with or have the option of using the item or any other equipment or furnishings. The usage charge is about having the money to be able to replace the item as and when required. This ensures that we do not waste money replacing items which do not need to be replaced.

Each year your court manager will be asked to verify just what is available at your court, this record will be part of your service charge schedule and should be carefully checked.

Some examples of items subject to the usage charge are:

- fridges/ fridge freezers
- cookers

- cooker hoods
- communal chairs and tables
- communal furnishings
- guest room furnishings
- office equipment
- laundry equipment
- communal kitchen equipment
- other items as specified within an extra care court.

Safety and security

Safety

Housing 21 is committed to ensuring the health and safety of residents, staff and anyone else connected with the court. Residents have a part to play in helping us to keep courts safe. You can do this by applying our health and safety policies and ensuring that you notify the court manager of any health and safety concerns that you may have.

Fire safety

Housing 21 accommodation complies with fire regulations and the arrangements are regularly reviewed and updated. Housing 21 carries out fire risk assessments on an annual basis and as and when there is a material change to the court.

Fire lectures and, where appropriate, fire drills are held regularly and residents should attend these and be aware of the action to be taken in the event of a fire. Notices advising the correct fire evacuation procedures are displayed at appropriate points throughout the court.

In the event of a fire, please do not attempt to tackle the blaze yourself.

In those courts with fire alarm systems, the court manager carries out a weekly test of the system - this is normally done at the same time and on the same day of the week so that you are aware it is only a test. In all courts fire doors are installed and these must not be wedged open and the door closers must not be removed as this could endanger your life and that of others.

Fire hazards in the home

Most fires in homes are caused by:

- careless use of matches and smoking materials
- careless use of cooking appliances, e.g. chip pans
- airing of clothes over electric heaters
- defective electric blankets
- failure to disconnect TV sets and other electrical appliances at night or when away from home
- overloading of electric sockets and using incorrect fuses in plugs
- paraffin heaters – please do not use

Please reduce the risk of fire by taking sensible fire precautions for your own safety and that of your neighbours. Should there be a fire in your home that causes any damage whatsoever, it should be reported immediately to your court manager.

You can access more information on fire safety by speaking with your court manager and the local fire and rescue service. It is recommended that you contact the local fire and rescue service to arrange a free Home Fire Safety Check.

Snow and ice

Snow and ice clearance, together with gritting, are dealt with by a suitable contractor and not the court manager. The court manager will inform all residents concerning the hazardous state of the un-cleared footpath by the use of the warden call system. Appropriate notices will be placed at all entrance doors and on the court's notice board in the event that a contractor is unable to clear the snow immediately.

Accidents within communal areas

If you have an accident within the communal areas it must be reported to your court manager as soon as possible. This will allow us to investigate and, where necessary, make changes to ensure that there will be no recurrence.

Insurance

Housing 21 is responsible for insuring the structure, fittings, communal furnishings and equipment of all its housing. You are responsible for insuring the contents of your home and your possessions against accidental breakages, flood, fire and theft. You may lose everything without compensation if you are not insured. Details of a suitable household contents insurance policy are available from your court manager.

Security in your home

It is the responsibility of residents to take sensible precautions to maintain security by observing the following points:

- At night and when you go out, even for short periods, make sure you have closed all windows and locked all doors.

- Check the identity of all callers to your home before letting them in. All Housing 21 staff who visit residents in their homes have identification.
- Never leave notes outside for callers or friends when you go out.
- Do not leave a key under the mat or on a string inside the letter box.
- Always cancel newspapers and milk when you go away.
- If you use an external communal door, please ensure that it is properly closed after use.
- Be vigilant and report any irregular incidents immediately to the police.
- Always advise the court manager when you will be away from the court overnight. The court manager is also responsible for being vigilant and checking external doors and windows prior to going off duty at night.

Use of the master key

The court manager holds a master key which operates the lock on your front door. It will only be used in emergencies, or to provide access for workmen in your absence, with your prior permission and with a witness present. We strongly recommend that you do not fit additional locks, bolts or chains as valuable time may be lost by the court manager gaining access in an emergency. If a forced entry is necessary, you are responsible for the cost of making good any damage. The court manager is responsible for the safe custody of all keys and only an authorised key holder has access to a master key. This ensures that your privacy is respected at all times. When the court manager is absent, the master key is locked in the key safe. The call centre can remotely unlock the safe in an emergency.

The court manager is able to advise you on how to obtain additional keys for family members – any additional keys can only be obtained with permission from Housing 21.

Duty manager system and court emergencies

If you experience an emergency outside of office hours or the court manager is not on site, you should make use of the emergency alarm system. Normally those operating the emergency alarm system will deal with emergencies. However, Housing 21 operates a duty manager system in addition to this.

Emergency alarm staff may, on occasions, contact a duty manager for advice or in cases of serious incident such as a fire or flood affecting a

court. In these incidences each court can call upon its scheme continuity plan, which contains procedures that can be initiated by the court manager or duty manager staff and given to the emergency services when they arrive. You should follow the advice and instructions given by the court manager or emergency services in the event of such an incident.

Repairs and maintenance

Who is responsible for repairs?

Your rent includes a contribution towards the cost of repairing your home. The tenancy agreement lists the repairs Housing 21 is responsible for. In summary:

- We carry out most items of maintenance to Housing 21's property, fixtures & fittings except where damage has resulted from misuse or neglect or been caused by yourself or visitors to your home.
- We redecorate and maintain the communal areas of your court and the outside of your home regularly.
- Except in emergencies, we will give you at least 24 hours notice of work being done.
- You are responsible for insuring your personal possessions and the contents of your home against damage.
- We will continue to only carry out the redecoration of residents' homes in conjunction with other works under our capital programme. Responsibility for individual flat redecoration varies by tenancy and this is currently being reviewed.

Items the resident (i.e. not Housing 21) is responsible for:

- residents' own possessions
- fittings and appliances installed by residents
- drains, sinks and toilets blocked as a result of misuse of inappropriate disposal of items
- the cost of gaining access if door keys are lost including replacement locks and/or keys
- items damaged by residents or relatives
- insurance cover to take account of damage to contents
- electric plugs or fuses
- non-communal light bulbs (excluding fluorescent strip tubes and bathroom sealed units)
- internal decorations (inc minor plaster cracks and holes)
- adjusting internal doors for new carpet/flooring you fit
- TV/satellite aerials (non-communal) you fit
- fitting or adjusting curtain poles
- plugs and chains to sinks and baths

- repairs necessary as a result of alterations you have carried out
- clearing of all personal possessions including carpets at the end of your tenancy
- any other repair we believe you should pay for.

We can, if requested, assist with finding a suitable contractor to undertake repairs that are not Housing 21's responsibility, but you would have to pay the contractor for these works when they have been completed.

How do I report a repair?

For suspected gas leaks at any time, immediately contact the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999.

For all other repairs:

During normal office hours, repair requests should be reported to your court manager or to the Housing 21 responsive repairs team if your court manager is away (tel: 0345 603 0099).

Outside of normal office hours, at weekends and bank holidays, faults should be reported on the above number or your call monitoring (pull cord) system.

Please give as much information as you can about the repair needed e.g. exact location, clear description, gas or electric, make and model of appliance, major or minor leak etc. The court manager will also need to know when you will be in so that they can arrange an appointment with the contractor within the timescales set out above. Workmen will not enter your flat to carry out work in your absence without permission, except in an emergency.

How long will my repair take?

Housing 21 classifies repairs according to how urgent they are and will respond to repairs requests within the following time limits. When a repair is reported, we will tell you how long it will take to be carried out.

Emergency repairs (a defect that puts the health or safety or security of the resident in immediate risk) **will be done within 24 hours of us being advised. Emergencies are defined as:**

- total loss of power (excl. local power cuts)
- total loss of water

- total loss of gas supply
- total loss of heat to your home or water heating
- severe water leak through roof/ceiling, water or heating pipe, tank or cistern
- blocked flue to open fire or boiler
- blocked or leaking toilet pan, soil pipe or foul drain, where there is no other toilet available
- tap that cannot be turned off
- kitchen sink blocked and unusable
- door entry phone not working
- insecure external window, door or lock, (where vulnerable e.g. ground floor)
- rotten timber flooring, loose or detached, hand rail, stair tread, unsafe power or lighting socket
- failure of passenger lifts
- failure of warden call system
- failure of fire alarm system
- racist or abusive graffiti.

Urgent repairs will be done within 7 calendar days of us being advised:

- partial loss of water
- partial loss of power (excl. local power cuts)
- partial loss of heating e.g. individual radiator or heater not working
- toilet not flushing properly (when there is no other working toilet available)
- blocked bath, shower or basin
- tap that cannot be turned on
- mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen/bathroom not working (where there is no other ventilation)
- insecure window locks above ground floor
- minor water leaks
- faulty communal TV/satellite aerials
- White goods subject to a usage charge
- minor electrical faults
- blocked drain
- minor roof leaks

Routine (non-urgent) repairs will be done within 28 working days of us being advised, unless re-programmed for planned maintenance in which case you will be informed. Examples include:

- minor plaster or painting repairs following other repairs carried out
- non urgent carpentry, joinery, plastering, plumbing or electrical works
- non urgent external repairs e.g. paths, fencing, guttering
- dripping taps
- wall tiling
- non-hazardous flooring repairs
- non-offensive graffiti.

We use detailed information from our stock condition survey to prioritise and plan any major capital works on courts. Where such works are required they will generally be planned at least one to five years ahead. Examples of such works could include:

- work to the exterior, paths, fences and boundaries
- external re-pointing and other brickwork repairs
- roof replacement
- cyclical redecoration (including prior to painting repairs)
- window replacement
- court improvements.

What if a problem occurs?

Housing 21 will issue a works order to the contractor describing the work required and including a date for completion. If the contractor does not carry out the repair within the timescale, you will need to inform your court manager or Housing 21. The matter will then be raised with the contractor who will arrange for another visit to occur.

Housing 21 is committed to ensuring that repairs are carried out right first time and within our clearly laid out timescales. We take any failure to meet these targets very seriously and review our contractors performance in order to ensure that they are performing to a high standard. If you are concerned about the performance of one of our contractors, then please let us know.

Claims for compensation should be received by Housing 21's complaints department. Please note that we will offset any compensation payment against any arrears on your rent account.

You may also be entitled in law to get the repair done yourself and charge the cost to Housing 21, but the process listed below must be followed:

Your 'right to repair' – to get the repair done and charge Housing 21

If you believe that we have consistently failed to carry out repairs to your home effectively, you have a statutory 'right to repair'. This means that you can arrange to have the work done yourself and claim the money back from us. However, you must fully follow Housing 21's repairs procedures:

- If you are not happy with the standard of repair work, you should firstly speak to your court manager, who will try to get the situation remedied.
- If there is no court manager for your court, please contact the responsive repairs department in Bradford (number above).
- If you are still not satisfied please refer to our complaints procedure.
- If we still fail to remedy the problem, then you may be entitled to arrange to have the work done yourself and claim the costs back from us. However, please be aware that your precise rights and obligations are quite complicated. Because of this, we recommend that you take advice from the Citizen's Advice Bureau, your solicitor or ourselves before taking any further steps.

What about major building works?

Occasionally, it may be necessary to do major building works, such as a roof renewal or a full refurbishment of the court. On these occasions, you will be fully consulted before we do any major works and receive at least a month's notice of when the works will start. If it becomes necessary to move you before or during the works, we will organise any temporary housing and pay additional costs.

What do I have to do if I want to make improvements to my home?

If you wish to make improvements to your home, such as fitting a new shower or cupboards, you must get Housing 21's written permission before you do the work. This work must be carried out by a reputable contractor. You may also submit a claim to Housing 21, if you end your tenancy, for the value of any improvements that you are leaving behind, provided that it is in accordance with our policy.

Failure to obtain Housing 21's written permission will make you liable for the full costs incurred to reinstate the property back to its original condition.

Where you require support in making improvements to your home you should speak to your court manager in the first instance.

What should I expect of the maintenance contractors?

Maintenance contractors used by Housing 21 are expected to follow a code of conduct, which includes health and safety, and to work to a good standard.

They should:

- contact the court manager on arrival at the court
- keep appointments and be punctual
- never smoke on court
- introduce themselves – and show identification to you
- be polite, presentable, friendly and professional at all times
- be patient
- be aware of the cultural needs of all residents
- respect your home at all times
- leave everything safe, clean and tidy.

If you are not happy with the conduct of any contractor, or the quality of the work, please inform your court manager. The full code of conduct that we give to all maintenance contractors is available from your court manager.

What is the handyperson service?

Most of our courts will be visited by a handyperson once a month. This person's job is to carry out minor repairs on the court which have been reported to the court manager and are not urgent in their nature. You can get more information on the handyperson service from your court manager.

Resident satisfaction survey

We want to ensure that we are continuously improving the services you receive from us. With this in mind we will carry out resident satisfaction surveys of all aspects of our service to you including repairs and maintenance.

Your cooker and refrigerator

On most of our sheltered and extra care courts, Housing 21 provides a cooker and a refrigerator for your use and enjoyment as part of your tenancy agreement. If you wish to install your own appliance, this can be arranged with your court manager.

Housing 21 undertakes to keep these appliances safe and in working condition, if you notice a fault please contact your court manager who will arrange for a service engineer to attend to the fault. The appliances that we supply are covered by a two year warranty. We will undertake reasonable repairs for residents who decide to install their own white goods where they also pay a usage charge to Housing 21.

We will only replace the faulty appliance if a service engineer informs your court manager that the appliance cannot be repaired.

We have a range of replacement appliances that can be ordered and your court manager will be happy to help you choose the best one for your needs.

We have a well established and trusted company that supplies our cookers and refrigerators, all of their employee will be uniformed. In every case a prior appointment will be agreed with you through your court manager.

We welcome your comments on the service that we offer, the performance of our delivery contractor and the range of appliances that are available, if you have any comments please let your court manager know.

Residents requests for reasonable adjustments

Although Housing 21 already supports residents in their homes through the court manager service, and provision of adaptations, legislation formalises how we do this.

We have a duty to consider and respond in a timely way to disabled resident requests for reasonable adjustments. These requests might come to court managers or locality managers directly. The requests may be made in writing or they may be made verbally.

The request might be, for example, for an application form or information leaflet to be provided in an alternative format (for example, someone with a visual impairment) or help with reading/filling out forms. It may be a request to amend or waive a policy in regard to a particular resident because of their disability, for example, allowing someone to have a dog because they have a hearing impairment and need a 'hearing' dog. We may be asked to organise the installation of a grab rail, a special tap or doorbell or even a portable ramp to the communal lounge.

There is no definitive list of specific adjustments. Housing 21 will act within the spirit of the legislation which means being flexible and responsive in meeting residents' specific needs as they relate to their disability.

Reasonable adjustments **DO NOT** include major adaptations to the physical structure of our schemes e.g. permanent ramps, walk in showers. Where such works are required we will work with you to contact your local authority, who will be able to offer advice on support on your entitlement to a grant to get the work completed.

Transfers, mutual exchanges and ending your tenancy

Transfers

As a Housing 21 resident, you are entitled to apply for a transfer to another property owned by Housing 21. Your court manager will be able to give you more information.

Your application will be reviewed in date order along with any external applicants in date order, as long as you fulfil the criteria:

- You have held your current tenancy for at least two years.
- Your rent account has been clear for the last six months.

If there are exceptional needs, your case can be presented to the Housing Needs Panel.

The condition of your home will be inspected by your court manager and it is expected that you will vacate your home in good condition, as per the conditions of your tenancy.

Mutual exchange

You have the right to exchange your home with another Housing 21 resident or a resident from any other housing association or local authority.

Both landlords must give their written consent before the exchange goes ahead.

Our criteria includes:

- Any incoming resident must satisfy the criteria for living in one of our properties.
- Your rent account has to be clear of any arrears.
- The condition of your home will be inspected by your court manager and it is expected that you will vacate your home in good condition, as per the conditions of your tenancy.
- We reserve the right to request a reference for the incoming resident.

Your court manager can give you more information. If permission is granted, all the paperwork must be signed with both landlords before the exchange can go ahead.

Ending your tenancy

You can end your tenancy by giving four written weeks notice, your court manager can give you more details about this.

Our tenancies run between Monday and Sunday, therefore the keys should be handed in on or before the Sunday of the last week of notice. We are able to receive the keys before 12 noon of the following Monday without you incurring any further rent. Rent will continue to be charged until the keys are received.

Before you move from your home, the property should be cleared of all possessions, unwanted items and rubbish (including carpets and other floor coverings), except for Housing 21 items such as any cookers and fridges. The property should be left in a good condition, as per the conditions of your tenancy.

If the property is not left in a clean and good decorative order or there is damage which is not associated with normal 'wear and tear', Housing 21 reserve the right to re-charge you to put right these items.

As a reminder, you may also want to:

- notify your bank, building society, pension and benefits office, council and utility companies and any other interested parties of your change of address
- cancel any standing order payments (if applicable)
- notify Housing Benefit if you are claiming Housing Benefit.

Help with benefits

Where can I find information about benefits I may be entitled to?

Each court displays literature in the communal area giving access to information about various benefits that are available to older people.

Housing 21 employs two financial wellbeing managers who have a programme of court visits each year to provide on site benefit health-checks and to give benefits advice. Many residents have increased their income by using the benefit health-check service, often by significant amounts.

Your court manager, with support from the financial wellbeing managers where necessary, can advise on many benefit issues.

In addition, the Housing 21 website www.housing21.co.uk has a benefit calculator where you can input your individual details and one of the financial wellbeing managers will undertake a confidential benefit health-check for you.

The main benefits that you could be eligible for are:

Housing and Council Tax Benefits – these benefits are paid by your local council. They are paid to help people with their rent and service charges and their Council Tax liability. In some cases Housing Benefit may also be payable to people who own a lease on their home to help with the service charge they have to pay. Where people own part of their home and rent part of it Housing Benefit may be payable for the rent *and* some of the service charge.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit entitlement depends on your level of income and savings. Claim forms for Housing Benefit include a claim for help with payment of Council Tax. Council Tax benefit is calculated using the same information provided for a Housing Benefit application.

Your court manager can help with the completion of Housing and Council Tax Benefit application forms. Independent help and advice is also available from local agencies such as Citizens Advice. Responsibility for ensuring the rent and/or service charge is paid remains with you, even when Housing Benefit is in payment.

The initial and continuing claim for Housing and Council Tax Benefit is also your responsibility and you must make sure that all necessary

information is given to your local council's benefit section to ensure your claim is correct at all times. You must also ensure that you provide them with any further information and updates regarding any changes in your circumstances as and when they occur.

Pension Credit - if you are over Pension Credit qualifying age, which is currently increasing in line with women's State Pension age, and your income is below the minimum level set yearly by Government, you may be entitled to a top up payment of Pension Credit **guarantee credit**.

If you get Attendance Allowance, or are the carer for someone who does, you may be entitled to some Pension Credit **guarantee credit**. You may get this even if your income is above the minimum level. This is because the minimum income levels that apply to people in receipt of Attendance Allowance or who are carers are usually higher.

If you own a lease on your property and are required to pay a service/maintenance charge as a condition of you living in your home, some of the charge you pay is likely to be allowable in the calculation of Pension Credit. This will increase the minimum income level so, again, you may qualify for Pension Credit **guarantee credit** even if your income is higher than the basic minimum guarantee income level.

People entitled to Pension Credit **guarantee credit** are automatically entitled to maximum Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

In addition to the **guarantee credit**, Pension Credit has a separate component called **savings credit**. This can be paid on top of the guarantee credit or on its own if your income is over the minimum level that applies to your own particular circumstances.

Information about Pension Credit and how to claim can be found in the Benefit Information Centre on your court and at www.direct.gov.uk

Attendance Allowance/Disability Living Allowance - you may be eligible for these allowances if you have ongoing health issues that result in support needs and/or mobility difficulties. Your court manager can assist in claiming these benefits and more information is available from the on court Benefit Information Centre or at www.direct.gov.uk

These allowances are not affected by income or savings and do not have an adverse effect on any of the income related benefits (Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Pension Credit), they may even allow for extra amounts of these benefits to be paid.

Support charges

Some courts have a support element included within the rent or service charge. This is for housing related support services which are services designed to enable and support vulnerable people to live as independently as possible. Housing related support is provided to many different vulnerable adults, including older people.

In most cases the support charge covers the cost of the emergency alarm system and part of the court manager service.

In some areas we may receive a small amount of Supporting People funding to help pay for this support charge. Residents who receive housing benefit, whether full or partial, are entitled to a Supporting People grant to cover the support charge where this funding is in place.

Fairer charging

If you are not receiving Housing Benefit it may still be possible to get some assistance with paying your support charge where we receive Supporting People funding. Your local authority should have a Fairer Charging Policy in place. This is used to work out what people can reasonably afford to pay towards the cost of the services that they receive. If you feel you cannot afford to pay the support charge, please contact either your court manager or local authority to request a fairer charging assessment which will then be carried out by the local authority.

Housing Related Support Plans

The Housing Related Support Plan is designed to give you the opportunity to have a regular discussion with your court manager and to ensure that together, you identify and record what you feel your needs are and what you would like to achieve.

Your Housing Related Support Plan is also a record of useful support services - ones that help you enjoy your home to the full and maintain your independence and well-being.

Your court manager works with you to review your Housing Related Support Plan at least once a year (in most cases every six months or whenever your circumstances or needs change) in order to make sure you have the right support available to you at all times. This way we can note any changes in your situation or in the services you would like and we can also assess with you how effective the services provided to you have been in achieving the outcomes you want.

We increasingly recognise the role that good housing-related support planning plays in providing high quality, relevant services to our residents and in providing evidence of the positive impact of those services.

The completion of your Housing Related support plan is not compulsory and very much down to your choice, but the information gathered through housing related support planning will influence the development of different support models and services within Housing 21. Some of these services will be provided directly by Housing 21, and some will be co-ordinated or facilitated by us but come from other organisations or services.

Your Housing Related Support Plan should not be confused with your Care Plan.

Your Care Plan is a document that outlines your care needs (for example, assistance with personal care, medication, meal preparation, laundry, cleaning or shopping) and how your care provider will meet these needs on a day to day basis.

If your care is being partly or wholly funded through Social Services, your Social Worker will have already discussed and agreed your care needs with you. Your Care plan should cover things in more detail, like the times you would like carers to visit you and exactly what you need help with.

Anti-social behaviour and harassment

Housing 21 has a clear policy and procedure on how it will deal with cases of anti-social behaviour, nuisance, harassment or racial harassment.

Housing 21 is committed to preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB). We will not tolerate ASB and have published a policy to reaffirm our strong approach to tackling ASB.

Our approach is fact-based, centred around complainants and witnesses and takes into account Housing 21's responsibilities to protecting vulnerable people. In doing so, we will work closely with relevant partner agencies to prevent and tackle ASB in all neighbourhoods where Housing 21 own properties ensuring that our customers' lifestyle differences and choices are respected and tolerated.

If you wish to see the full policy statement, then please contact your court manager or locality manager, who will be happy to provide this to you.

What is anti-social behaviour?

Examples of ASB may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- arson or attempted arson
- assault
- bullying
- burglary
- car damage and theft
- criminal damage
- drug dealing and drug use
- drunkenness
- fly tipping
- graffiti
- gun crime
- knife crime
- loud music
- noise nuisance
- pet nuisance
- prostitution
- racial harassment and hate crime
- sexual offences

- verbal abuse, threats, harassment and intimidation
- violence or threats of violence.

Residents have a responsibility to comply with the terms and conditions of their tenancy agreement or lease. Those agreements contain provisions which require residents not to cause ASB and not to allow members of their households, invited visitors or pets to cause ASB.

Below are some of the interventions available to Housing 21 in order to help prevent or manage ASB. In certain cases it is possible that Housing 21 will work through the list of available interventions in this order. However, it is equally possible that the circumstances of the particular case will justify that one or more of the intervention options are missed and/or that interventions will be used out of order.

- Verbal warning from Housing 21 to the perpetrator.
- Warning letter from Housing 21 to the perpetrator.
- Mediation.
- Acceptable Behaviour Contract between Housing 21 and the perpetrator.
- Notice Seeking Possession/Forfeiture from Housing 21 to the perpetrator.
- Suspending Right to Buy claims.
- Refusing Mutual Exchange requests.
- Injunction (including Exclusion Orders, Powers of Arrest and Undertakings).
- Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) (including Parenting Orders and other associated Orders).
- Possession/Forfeiture proceedings, including Demotion.

If you wish to report an incident of anti-social behaviour or nuisance that you or any other resident are experiencing, please contact your court manager or speak to your locality manager immediately.

Protection of staff

Housing 21 will not tolerate any ASB directed at our staff, agents or contractors. Housing 21 will take a tough approach against any customer who directs ASB at our staff. Housing 21 may intervene immediately and seek an Injunction or Possession against the perpetrator without taking any preliminary steps.

Safeguarding

Housing 21 is committed to preventing and detecting any form of abuse or neglect that may harm residents or visitors. Older people can be at risk from abuse and you will see leaflets and advice, along with telephone help line numbers on court notice boards about preventing and reporting abuse or suspected abuse. Housing 21 works in partnership with the local authority and other organisations to prevent or investigate any incidents of suspected or actual abuse.

Housing 21 has a detailed procedure and policy on safeguarding adults and protecting them from abuse of any kind and your court manager will ensure that from time to time you have the chance to understand ways of reporting concerns and of getting advice.

If you have any concerns, speak to your court manager, locality manager or use one of the telephone help lines that are advertised on court.

Financial abuse

Housing 21 is committed to ensuring that you have the correct information regarding your financial well-being, whilst also ensuring you can access support on issues surrounding your financial well-being. Unfortunately financial abuse can happen. We have produced a leaflet, available on your court, which gives you specific information about how you can prevent financial abuse from happening to you.

Wills and bequests

It is a sad fact that many people die without making a will. This can cause distress and worry to those who have to deal with the affairs of the deceased, so please consider the wisdom of making a will and directing how your possessions are to be distributed.

Most solicitors offer a cheap and simple service, or advice can be obtained from your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Help the Aged area representative.

Court managers, because of their position, can develop close personal relationships with those living on their court and sometimes people wish to acknowledge this by giving to the court manager a gift in their will.

For very good reasons, our court managers' conditions of employment do not allow them to receive gifts of money, bequests or presents. Nor should they be asked to act as Executors for the Estate of a resident or to be a witness to the will. We ask you to respect these conditions when making your will as complications can arise both for the court manager, those administering your estate and other beneficiaries if you do not do so. Furthermore court managers should not ever be signatories to any other legal document.

Given the restrictions on personal gifts to the court manager, if you do wish to acknowledge the care and support you have received by making a gift which could be used to benefit other residents of Housing 21 courts, you may like to consider making a bequest to Housing 21. A vote will be required in order to agree how the funds should be used. This decision will need to be taken in accordance with health and safety considerations and any other policies and procedures which may apply at the time. If this course of action is of interest to you, please contact the company secretary at our Head Office and we will be pleased to give you or your advisors further information and discuss the matter with you.

Professional boundaries

It is important to remember that court managers are paid members of Housing 21 staff. Whilst it is recognised that staff must establish a rapport with residents and provide friendly and accessible services, they are responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries between themselves and residents.

Staff must ensure that working relationships are not misread or confused with friendship or other personal relationships. This is essential in order to protect residents and staff from any risk.

Residents are asked to respect professional boundaries at all times.

Getting involved

We want you to participate in the improvement and development of our services nationally and locally. Your views count and you can have a real influence over the way in which we operate. How far you get involved is up to you. Some residents enjoy being involved in the formal structures we have, others prefer more informal involvement.

This is your home. You should not only know what is going on, but be able to influence decisions that affect it.

By involving you regularly and in different ways, we hope that:

- you feel able to influence policy
- we use your ideas to constantly improve our service
- we offer you value for money.

We will consult you regularly on issues affecting your home, such as:

- management, maintenance or improvements to your home
- the provision of services nationally and locally
- proposals to change any terms of conditions of your tenancy agreement
- changes in our policies
- capital investment programme and performance
- our service performance.

We give residents regular information on the work of Housing 21 through our quarterly magazine, *My Time*.

Your right to consultation

You have a right to be consulted about the service we provide. Consultation takes various forms. We may contact you by letter, by personal visit, hold a general meeting at your court, liaise with you through the Residents' Association or ask you to be involved in other ways. Some examples of the ways you can become involved are:

Court meetings - we seek your views on what you would like to be done on your court, from major works through to more social activities. We aim to hold local court meetings on an annual basis. Your views will be recorded and you can discuss services which you may like to see provided locally. The court manager/locality manager will then provide

feedback on how these issues and requests are being dealt with, and any cost implications they may have. All residents, the court manager/locality manager and your Residents' Association representative or Court Voice can play a part in these meetings.

Area forums – our area forums are held quarterly at venues across the country. They are chaired by residents and attended by senior members of Housing 21 staff. All residents are invited to attend forums – for more information on your nearest forum please speak to your court manager.

Annual conference – we have an annual conference where all residents have the opportunity to apply to attend. The conference receives an update on all activities that have been taking place throughout the year and focuses on improvements that we want to deliver over the course of the next year.

Housing Services Committee – Housing Services Committee (HSC) are a sub-committee of the Housing 21 Board. HSC is made up of residents, independent members and Housing 21 staff. Their role is to scrutinise Housing 21 performance, consider policy changes and ensure that service improvement activity is carried out.

Residents' panels - these panels are made up of groups of residents who work with Housing 21 on specialist subject areas. This may be anything from reading new literature to meeting with contractors who are providing a service to Housing 21.

Resident inspectors - resident inspectors are residents who will be trained to inspect and feed back on the quality of Housing 21's services.

Resident satisfaction survey - resident satisfaction surveys give residents the opportunity to make their views and priorities known. The results are published so that everyone can see the general view of how our service is improving.

We aim to publish a resident partnership strategy outlining the opportunities for you to be involved, and our plans to improve these opportunities.

If you wish to get involved in any activities, or have any views on other ways in which we can involve you then please speak to your court manager.

Fairness and equality

Meeting your needs

We want to make sure that our services meet the needs of all the residents of our properties. We also recognise that whilst residents often have many shared needs they also have their own individual ones. Residents are diverse - in terms of their lifestyles and background, values, preferences and also in terms of race, cultural, ethnic or national origins, religion, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, age, disability or marital status.

We believe that no person should suffer disadvantage because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, or because of their religion, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, age, disability or marital status. We aim to make sure that our services do not have hidden barriers that prevent people with different needs and requirements from accessing them.

In order to ensure that no group is being treated less favourably than others, we ask everyone who is offered accommodation or employment to indicate their ethnic origin, disability status, gender and age anonymously. This is so we can monitor our services to ensure we meet requests for services such as translations in relevant languages.

When we ask you to tell us if you have a disability, this information will be recorded to ensure that we deliver the service in the way you need. For example, if you have a visual impairment we may provide reading material in a different format.

Any information you provide will be treated confidentially and only used to ensure you receive the services and information you need.

Equality and diversity

We all have both rights and responsibilities when it comes to equality and diversity. What do we mean by this? For Housing 21, equality is about ensuring fairness and freedom from discrimination whether we are Housing 21 employees, contractors or residents. We all have the right to be treated with respect, dignity and to have our needs met. We also have the responsibility to make sure that others are treated in this way too. Diversity is about positively harnessing and valuing people's

differences, recognising the benefits this diversity can bring in developing our services or in creating more vibrant courts.

Housing 21 works to ensure that all our policies and procedures are fair and equitable and recognise the diverse needs and expectations of residents. We operate an equal opportunities policy on all courts. This means we do not discriminate against any person because of their race, colour, ethnic origin, national origin, religion, gender, sexuality, HIV status, appearance, disability, marital status, age or caring responsibilities. We monitor all of our policies and procedures regularly to ensure equal opportunities principles are being followed.

Housing 21 strives to create living environments that are inclusive and welcoming to all, and are free from discrimination or harassment. We want to encourage and enable everyone to have the opportunity to contribute in creating a warm and positive environment.

Data protection and your right to know

Your rights under the Data Protection Act

All information relating to you and your tenancy is confidential. You have the right to see information held about you on computer or paper files. Housing 21 has a computerised system for dealing with rent and service charge accounts, repairs and re-housing and holds paper files about properties and tenancies. If you wish to see this data, please write to your locality manager.

Right to information

You have the right to receive information about our performance, for example, how long it takes us to do repairs or how we have performed in meeting our service offers. This will be reported to you every year. We also report to you on performance and many other issues at meetings we have with residents.