



## Service Standards 2024 -2029

These Standards were produced in 2024 and is version 3.00

These Standards were presented and noted by the Homes PDG on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Review Frequency: MDH will review these Standards every 5 years and as required to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues. However the Head of Housing and Health is given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Standards as required by legislative changes, formal guidance or local operational considerations.

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## 1. Introduction

Welcome to Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Service Standards. Our Service Standards cover all aspects of our housing service and inform you of what you can expect from us as a tenant or leaseholder.

Our Service Standards are divided into four areas:-

- Safety and Quality Standard
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Tenancy Standard

We will review our Service Standards, in conjunction with our tenants, every five years. We will inform you how we have performed over the course of a year in our Annual Report.

As part of the new consumer regulation regime the Regulator of Social Housing introduced a series of 22 mandatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) creating a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services. These measures include those applicable directly to building safety as well as those based on tenant perception surveys setting out tenants' views on our performance.

We will publish your responses regarding TSMs annually.

We are happy to receive feedback from you about our Service. If you feel we have not met our obligations, or if you want to make a complaint or compliment about our Service, please let us know. There are a variety of ways to make contact with us which include:

- Telephone: 01884 255255;
- Online: [www.middevon.gov.uk](http://www.middevon.gov.uk);
- Email: [customerservices@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@middevon.gov.uk) or [htenancy@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:htenancy@middevon.gov.uk);
- Visit: Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6PP;
- Post: send us a letter to the above address; or
- Completing a "Have Your Say" form which can be obtained from the Council office's;
- Via your MyMidDevon account;
- Via the Council's social media pages.

## 2. Safety and Quality Standard

We will provide safe and good quality homes and landlord services to tenants.

### Homes Safety

MDH has set out how we manage the safety of our homes and fulfil all the statutory duties associated with safety that are required of us in relation to:

- Gas Safety Checks;
- Electrical Safety Checks;
- Fire Risks in Communal Areas and Flats;
- Asbestos Management;
- Water Safety Checks;
- Lift Safety Checks; and
- Solid Fuel Appliances.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

### **Damp and Mould**

MDH wants to take every reasonable action to identify, remedy and provide advice on damp and mould in Council homes in order to ensure a safe, healthy and comfortable environment for our residents, as well as to protect the fabric of our buildings.

Our approach to delivering a fit for purpose damp and mould service is to:-

- Provide clarity on the ways in which tenants can report such issues;
- Provide staff with the ability to understand what is going on by giving them tools to aid diagnosis;
- Ensure that tenants are treated in a fair and consistent way;
- Comply with statutory, regulatory, legislative and contractual requirements and good practice;
- Focus on working in partnership with tenants ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is possible;
- Allow MDH to undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable remedial repair solutions and improvements to make eradication of damp and mould possible;
- Ensure that tenants have access to and/or are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling damp, mould and condensation;
- Maximise the available budgets and ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to deal with damp, mould and condensation problems;
- Ensure that the fabric of our property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp, mould and condensation; and
- Identify where financial hardship may be a factor in damp or mould, in order to be able to signpost tenants to the right financial or tenancy support.

### **Recharges**

MDH wants to take fair but firm action to ensure that all debts relating to rechargeable repairs are collected to cover MDH costs.

Our approach to managing recharges and explaining:-

- Under what circumstances we recharge tenants;
- When we would decide not to recharge a tenant; and
- How to recover overdue chargeable repairs.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

### **Void Management**

MDH will ensure that properties which become void are re-let as quickly and efficiently as possible, with due regard to the needs and requirements of outgoing and incoming tenants and the need to maintain our properties to the agreed, safe lettings standard whilst retaining a sustainable stock and Housing Revenue Account.

We will do this by:-

- Ensuring compliance with our regulatory framework and that our properties are safe;
- Ensuring that properties are re-let to an appropriate standard;
- Balancing the need to ensure maximum occupancy of homes and minimum void re-let times with the needs of tenants;
- Ensuring our void periods are used as part of an overall asset management approach that is as efficient as possible to deliver works required as cost-effectively as possible; and
- Enabling new Council homes to be built in line with our overarching Housing Strategy.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

### **Aids and Adaptations**

Our approach to providing aids and adaptations for tenants, or eligible household members, who have a disability or are suffering from long term ill health, is to help them remain and live independently in the home and is designed to make best use of the housing stock. Our policy on this is available to read on our webpages or upon request. It is recognised that, in some instances, the existing accommodation may no longer be suitable to support the needs of the household and alternative accommodation may need to be provided.

In addressing the identified and assessed needs of our tenants, or eligible household members, we aim to ensure that we comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Housing Act 1985.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

### **Improvements to Council Properties**

Our approach to responding to requests from tenants, leaseholders or freeholders for permission to carry out alterations or improvements to their property is available to read on our webpages or upon request. Any improvements made must be fully funded at the expense of the household and we will take a robust approach towards dealing with unauthorised alterations or improvements which have been carried out and identified.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

### **Repairs and Maintenance**

MDH recognises that the efficient and effective repair and maintenance of its housing properties is an important service to tenants and leaseholders and an essential part of a much wider asset management function.

The framework enabling the delivery of an effective maintenance service which fulfils our statutory obligations, protects council assets, and offers value for money is available to read on our webpages, or upon request.

We will respond to repair problems in an efficient and helpful way. Most repairs are carried out by our own repair operatives but we sometimes use specialist contractors. If this happens we will tell you the name of the contractor.

Our Office staff will:

- Answer calls promptly; and
- Be polite, honest and helpful.

Anyone working in tenant's homes will follow certain rules of behaviour:

- Treat you and your household with respect and always behave in a professional way;
- Consider any tenant vulnerabilities and make reasonable adjustments if required;
- Introduce themselves and show photo identification before entering;
- Explain what they are going to do and discuss how this will affect you or your household;
- Protect belonging from damage, dust and paint;
- Make sure materials and tools do not cause a danger to anyone;
- Keep you informed about how the work is progressing;
- Clear rubbish from the home at the end of each working day;
- Make sure electricity, gas and water are connected at the end of the day; and
- Be dressed appropriately for the type of work they do.

We will carry out regular checks to make sure we provide a good standard of service by selecting a number of completed repairs on a random basis. We will also contact tenants by telephone to find out what they thought about our service. Our inspectors check twenty percent of all jobs for the standard of workmanship either by telephoning the tenant or visiting the home to look at the repair.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section on the Council's [website](#) or upon request.

### 3. Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

We will be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account. We will work with you to shape our services and monitor our work.

Our complaints process will resolve issues promptly, politely and fairly and we will provide you with the information required so that you can easily make a complaint.

#### **Service Delivery**

We will:

- Be committed to the principles of openness and transparency and for this reason we will ensure that our policies are well publicised;
- Provide services in line with current policy, regulatory and legislative requirements;
- Ensure that you are made aware if there are any operational matters which impact upon our ability to operate our policies and that this information is given to tenants and stakeholders;
- Carry out service reviews to ensure that our services continue to be efficient and effective;
- Publish and have readily available a copy of our Service Standards so you know the standard of service to expect from us;
- Publish our performance in our Annual Report and on the Council's website;
- Listen to your feedback to improve services; and
- Review our policies in accordance with legislative and regulatory changes and good practice.

## Customer Service

We will:

- Provide a range of different contact methods, you can call into our offices, phone, email or write to us, or use online services;
- Provide a range of different ways you can communicate with us;
- Foster good relations with people when providing services to eliminate discrimination and to promote equal opportunities;
- Ensure that our staff are polite, friendly, helpful and listen to your enquiry;
- Treat you with fairness and respect;
- Respond to the diverse needs of our tenants, adapting our approach if reasonable to do so;
- Ensure that publications are available in standard and alternative formats;
- Ensure that our offices comply with legislative requirements for disabled access;
- Provide telephone interpretation services and arrange interpreters on request, including sign language;
- Train staff in diversity and safeguarding issues;
- Refer you to other agencies when we cannot assist or if it will be beneficial to you;
- Provide a duty officer to deal with your query if the member of staff you wish to speak with is absent from their desk; and
- Introduce ourselves and wear an identification badge when we greet or visit you.

## Tenant Involvement

There are a number of ways you can get involved with MDH at a level that suits you. This is available to read in the MDH [Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#) section on the Council's website or upon request. We will provide you with key information on how we will consult with you and use your views to influence the way MDH delivers its services.

MDH will ensure that:-

- You have access to information about housing policies and related services;
- You will be consulted on issues that affect your home;
- You will be encouraged to participate in decisions that affect the services you receive;
- We regularly review how well tenant participation is working;
- We will give all residents the opportunity to get involved at a level that suits them and engage in ways that are accessible;
- We promote good practice and innovative ideas for encouraging and sustaining tenant involvement;
- We provide residents with the option to comment on policy, service improvements and any proposals that may affect them;
- We support our residents to meet their obligations and develop their activities;
- We make training and resources available;
- We provide an expenses scheme to cover reasonable costs arising from getting involved with the work of MDH;
- We offer you a range of opportunities to be involved in issues that interest you; and
- You have the same opportunities as everyone else if you want to be involved.

We are aware that there are groups of residents that are often under-represented in tenant participation. We will look to develop different ways to involve residents so that groups of people

are not excluded. We will do this by raising awareness of involvement opportunities through our media platforms such as Facebook, Let's Talk Mid Devon, newsletters and our website. We will also discuss tenant involvement during our sign-up process for new tenants.

## **Complaints**

We will:

- Have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly;
- Publish clear guidelines on how to report a complaint, the procedure followed, timescales and what you can do if you are still unhappy with the outcome of a complaint;
- Provide you with information on how we have used complaints to improve our services;
- Publish information about complaints each year, including the number, nature and outcome of the complaints;
- Learn lessons from your complaint;
- Include details of how to contact either the Housing Ombudsman Service or Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman in our response to a complaint;
- Monitor, evaluate and report complaints to the relevant working groups on a regular basis; and
- Annually self-assess against the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.

For stage 1 complaints we will:-

- Acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of the complaint being received;
- Provide details of who will be investigating your complaint and when you can expect a response;
- Investigate the complaint and provide a response within 10 working days of the complaint being logged;
- If for any reason your complaint is going to take longer, keep you up to date on our progress and give you a clear timeframe for when a response will be provided;
- Make a decision on the evidence obtained;
- Communicate the outcome of the investigation; and
- Take action to put things right where they have gone wrong.

For stage 2 complaints we will:-

- Acknowledge your escalation to stage 2 within 5 working days of being received;
- Establish whether the stage 1 investigation was adequately thorough and impartial;
- Establish, if any fault was found, whether things have been put right;
- Provide details of who will be investigating your complaint and when you can expect a response;
- Investigate the complaint and provide a response within 10 working days of the complaint being logged; and
- If for any reason your complaint is going to take longer, keep you up to date on our progress and give you a clear timeframe for when a response will be provided.



## **Vulnerable Tenants**

MDH aims to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access and benefit from our service. MDH realises that for some service users who may be vulnerable, barriers can exist which may prevent participation.

MDH is committed to making sure our services can be easily accessed by tenants with complex and/or additional needs.

At MDH, one of our objectives is to ensure that our vulnerable tenants receive the services and assistance they require to sustain their tenancy. To achieve this, we will:-

- Identify a tenant who may have a vulnerability and/or support need;
- Record any vulnerabilities on the housing management system;
- Use all available information to identify if a tenant is vulnerable;
- Take account of known vulnerability factors in the provision of services and in decisions around tenancy management and enforcement;
- Assist vulnerable tenants in accessing additional services that they may need;
- Record any known representatives who act as a 'delegated authority' or with a power of attorney or other care givers who may act on the tenants' behalf;
- Consider any additional needs due to the vulnerability and where appropriate vary our service delivery to ensure vulnerable residents still receive the same level of service;
- Make appropriate referrals to tenancy sustainment services, such as CHAT (Churches Housing Action Team) or support agencies, based on our local knowledge of resources and the needs of the tenant, where appropriate to do so; and
- Make reasonable adjustments when an appropriate request is made.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

## **Income Management**

We will:

- Provide advice and support if you are experiencing difficulties with paying your rent and/or charges;
- Investigate all cases of rent arrears after a missed payment by making early contact with you;
- Offer a variety of ways to pay your rent and charges;
- Give you a minimum of 4 weeks' notice of any proposed increase or decrease of rent or charges;
- Provide clear details of the rent and/or service charges for individual properties at the time of signing your tenancy agreement;
- Encourage you to contact us at any point during your tenancy if you are worried about maintaining your rent payments;
- Provide advice on how to apply for benefits or help with housing costs;
- Provide quarterly rent statements and at any other time when requested;
- Make arrangements wherever possible to help you pay your rent arrears over a reasonable agreed period;
- Decide what appropriate action we will take when you owe us money, which could include legal action;

- View eviction as a last resort where other debt recovery action has failed;
- Provide an estimated final rent account balance when you give us notice to end your tenancy; and
- Make referrals to supporting agencies.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

## 4. Neighbourhood and Community Standard

We keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with your homes in a safe, clean and secure environment. We engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.

### **Anti – Social Behaviour**

We will:

- Work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB);
- Publish a policy and procedures which explain how we work to prevent and address ASB;
- Explain how we work with agencies to prevent and tackle ASB in areas in where we own properties;
- Respond to reports of harassment, neighbourhood nuisance or ASB in accordance with our published policy and procedures;
- Provide you with a named officer who will lead and handle your case;
- Investigate complaints of ASB and nuisance in accordance with our published policy and procedures;
- Agree an action plan with you and regularly review the actions taken;
- Tailor action plans to take account of the circumstances of each case;
- Make best use of the remedies available;
- Involve vulnerable tenants, reporting parties and those reported, to resolve ASB problems;
- Deal with all reports of harassment and hate crimes efficiently and sensitively;
- Provide support, either directly or through other agencies to victims, witnesses and those causing ASB;
- Work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle ASB;
- Inform you before we close your case and ask for feedback on how we have dealt with it and the outcome;
- Use our computerised system to manage our ASB cases and provide reporting information on the types and location of ASB complaints. This will enable us to direct our resources more appropriately and effectively;
- Use the tools and legal remedies available to prevent and resolve ASB;
- Include clear statements about your rights and responsibilities in our tenancy agreement;
- Help you to consider all of the housing options available to you in cases where it has been agreed by the Police it is unsafe for you to remain in your home; and
- In cases of domestic abuse, racial harassment and hate crime we will carry out, within 24 hours, any emergency repairs needed to ensure your home is secure.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

## **Neighbourhood Management**

We will tell you about our approach to managing our estates with the help of our tenants and residents to keep our neighbourhoods clean, safe and secure and where people want to live.

We will:-

- Provide residents with a named Neighbourhood Officer;
- Conduct regular neighbourhood inspections of communal areas and ensure that they are well maintained, tidy and free from graffiti;
- Work in partnership with the Police and other services to help keep our estates free from ASB, harassment and hate crime;
- Conduct fire risk assessments in blocks of flats to identify and address fire risks;
- Ensure communal areas are well maintained;
- Ensure that grounds maintenance work is carried out to the required standard;
- Make residents are aware of their responsibilities, both in relation to their property and neighbourhood;
- Consult with our tenants to identify improvements and work together to address local priorities;
- Identify areas that need improvements and undertake measures to resolve them;
- Promote tenant involvement opportunities, activities and events to help develop and support vibrant communities;
- Investigate all acts of vandalism and graffiti and appropriate action will be taken against all known perpetrators of vandalism;
- Remove offensive graffiti within 1 working day and non-offensive graffiti within 7 working days of being notified;
- Consider proposals to install CCTV or camera doorbells where appropriate to do so;
- Listen to and work with you to improve our estates;
- Work with you to avoid and resolve tenancy breaches;
- Support you to maintain your home and sustain your tenancy; and
- Carry out a post-tenancy visit after a mutual exchange has taken place.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/procurement-policies-and-strategies)) on the Council's website or upon request.

## **Pets and Animals**

We will tell you about our approach to keeping pets and animals. This is set out on our webpages and is available upon request. MDH understands the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring. Owning a pet or animal can be life enhancing and we recognise that it can have a positive impact on physical health and mental well-being.

Our aim is to provide a pet-friendly and common-sense approach to tenant requests to keep a pet or animal. We will review all applications if a tenant is able to responsibly, and safely, keep a pet or animal without causing a nuisance or ASB to other residents living in the community.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section (under Help and Support/Policies and strategies) on the Council's website or upon request.

## 5. Tenancy Standard

We aim to be fair and transparent in the way we offer a tenancy, let our homes and offer housing advice. We will take into account the housing needs of tenants and potential tenants.

### Tenancy Management

We will set out our approach to providing an efficient and effective tenancy management service to our tenants.

We will provide details of:

- The types and lengths of tenancies MDH offer;
- The circumstances which determine the type of tenancy that will be offered;
- How a tenancy can be brought to an end;
- Changes to tenancies; and
- MDH approaches to tenancy management, tackling tenancy fraud and tenancy sustainment.

MDH is committed to helping tenants to maintain their tenancy and offers a variety of ways to support tenants in achieving a successful tenancy.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/procurement/policies-and-strategies)) on the Council's website or upon request.

### Letting our properties

We will:

- Arrange and carry out a pre-void inspection at your property before you move out, where possible;
- Inform you of any repairs that you have to carry out before you move and the amount you will be recharged if you do not carry out this work;
- Advise of when and where you need to return the keys to your home when the tenancy ends;
- Advertise your property, where applicable through the Devon Home Choice Scheme;
- Minimise the time that properties are empty between each letting. We aim to re-let homes within published timescales;
- Provide you with the contact details of your Neighbourhood Officer when you sign up for your tenancy;
- Publish on our website the contact details of your Neighbourhood Officer;
- Provide a tenancy agreement and an information pack which will be explained to you when you sign up for your tenancy; and
- Explain clearly your rights and responsibilities as a tenant when you sign up for your tenancy.

### Allocations

We will:

- Publish clear guidance to our approach to tenancy management, including interventions to sustain tenancies and prevent unnecessary evictions and tackling tenancy fraud;
- Use Devon Home Choice Scheme to advertise our vacant homes;
- Provide you with affordability documents at your viewing to enable you to make an informed decision about whether to accept the offer of a property;

- Allocate our properties in accordance with published policies;
- Offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community and to make the best use of our housing stock;
- Arrange and carry out accompanied viewings at an agreed time with you; and
- Arrange for you to attend a meeting to sign your tenancy and collect your keys.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk)) on the Council's website or upon request.

### **Mutual Exchange**

We will:

- Provide an opportunity to exchange your tenancy with that of another tenant, by way of internet-based mutual exchange services;
- Take reasonable steps to publicise the internet-based mutual exchange service that we subscribe to;
- Provide reasonable support for you to access the mutual exchange service we subscribe to when you do not have access to the internet;
- Agree or deny all mutual exchange applications within 42 days;
- Notify all applicants in writing the result of their application; and
- Arrange for the necessary health and safety checks to be completed prior to the exchanging of properties.

MDH will ensure that tenants who wish to mutually exchange are aware of any implications to their tenancy, such as:

- Any rent changes;
- Any changes between security i.e. secure or assured status;
- Any implications on the Right to Buy; and
- Responsibility to keep in repair any non-standard fittings and fixtures that you have decided to retain.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk)) section on the Council's website or upon request.

### **Right to Buy**

We will provide you with a balanced view on the expectations and restrictions which may occur when you exercise your right to buy.

We will inform you of:-

- The circumstances in which the Right to Buy can and cannot be exercised;
- The exceptions to the Right to Buy;
- The procedure for claiming to exercise the Right to Buy;
- The price payable for the dwelling-house by a tenant exercising the Right to Buy;
- The options available to you in relation to solar panels if fitted on your property;
- The delay notice procedures for landlords and tenants as set out in sections 140, 141, 153A and 153B of the Housing Act 1985;

- The fact that initial costs are likely to be incurred by a secure tenant exercising the Right to Buy, with specific reference to costs in respect of:
  - Stamp duty.
  - Legal and survey fees.
  - Valuation fees and costs associated with taking out a mortgage.
- The fact that a secure tenant will likely have to make regular payments as an owner of a dwelling-house, with specific reference to payments in respect of:
  - Any mortgage or charge on the dwelling-house.
  - Building insurance, life assurance, and mortgage payment protection insurance.
  - Council tax.
  - Water, sewerage, gas, electricity, and other utility services.
- The risk of repossession of the dwelling-house if regular mortgage payments are not made; and
- The fact that in order to keep the property maintained and in good repair, the owner of the dwelling-house will be likely to have to incur expenditure, which may include payment of service charges in respect of major works.

We will:

- Inform you about any costs you should consider when buying your home;
- Let you know that non-urgent repairs are paused during the Right to Buy process;
- Provide help and advice on any matters relating to the purchase of your home under the Right to Buy Scheme (this cannot be legal advice – you will need to take such advice from an independent solicitor);
- Confirm if you are eligible to buy your home within 4 weeks of receiving your application;
- Instruct our Valuer to make an appointment before visiting your home;
- Issue you an offer price for your home within 8 weeks for freehold properties or within 12 weeks for leasehold properties;
- Give you 12 weeks to appeal against the valuation to the independent district valuer, once you have received your offer; and
- Liaise with our Legal team to make sure that the completion of your sale is carried out efficiently.