



**Our vision is  
"to deliver excellent Housing Services"**

## **Literacy Policy**

# **Newark and Sherwood Homes Limited**



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## **1 Context**

Newark and Sherwood Homes vision is “to deliver excellent Housing Services”. We are committed to ensuring the best standards of service delivery based on customer involvement, partnership, value for money, innovation and continuous improvement.

We recognise that excellent customer service must be an integral part of everything we do to ensure delivery of high quality services. Newark and Sherwood Homes is committed to continually improving standards of customer service and the quality of customer care. Continuous improvement is often based on issues raised by our customers and demonstrates that we are delivering responsive and customer focused services.

## **2 Policy Aim**

This policy aims to ensure that services provided to tenants and other service users, who have difficulty reading and writing, are accessible to them.

An essential feature of this policy is to set standards for providing people who have difficulty reading and writing with alternative means of communication to enable them to access the service.

## **3 Scope of the Policy**

- 3.1 This policy extends to all tenants, leaseholders and other service users, in particular those who have who have difficulty reading and writing.
- 3.2 This could be due to a variety of reasons including being unable to read or write, sight impairment, dyslexia, physical disabilities or having English as a second language.
- 3.3 This Policy supports the delivery of the Company’s Equalities and Diversity Strategy and works in conjunction with other strategies that aim to maximise access to services for all include the Access and Customer Care Strategy, and Financial Inclusion Strategy.
- 3.5 Newark and Sherwood Homes recognises difficulties in reading and writing can create considerable challenges for individuals in their day to day lives. This policy explains what Newark and Sherwood Homes will do. Where the opportunity arises, Newark and Sherwood Homes will work with the community and partners in the housing and voluntary sector to signpost service users to support organisations which are available to empower the individual by developing individuals’ literacy skills.

- 3.7 This can be important in supporting individuals in terms of prospects of employment and independent living.

## **4 What we do now**

Newark and Sherwood Homes facilitates direct access to services for tenants in a range of ways. We publicise the offer of information in alternative formats:

- Include a strap line of alternative information formats in all publicity material.
- Have access to Browse Aloud already on the Newark and Sherwood Homes website.
- Provide Language Line.
- Provide translation service.
- Provide signing.
- We aim to maximise access to services by having a variety of methods of communication with Newark and Sherwood Homes in place.
- We explore with tenants their preferred communication methods, as part of the annual tenancy visits, in particular for new tenants, Newark and Sherwood staff will routinely establish their preferred means of communication.

## **5 Using the Web**

- 5.1 Service users can listen to text as words spoken aloud while accessing services through Newark and Sherwood Homes' website. Once the "Browsaloud" software is installed on the computer, tenants can choose to listen to the content of web pages and files such as pdf documents being read to them.
- 5.2 The service is designed to improve access to information and services on our website for people who find it hard to read. This includes people with dyslexia or mild visual impairments and those who do not speak English as their first language.

## **6 What we will do through adoption of this policy**

- We will ask all new tenants, when signing for the new tenancy, if they have any problems filling in forms or would it be easier to receive communications by telephone or other means.
- Where a tenant or service user indicates that they do not want to receive the written word as the default communication, alternative

processes will be arranged to contact that tenant by phone, or other agreed method.

- Where a pattern of non response to non verbal communication is identified, staff will as part of normal procedures probe whether there are literacy issues, ensuring enquiries are made sensitively, and seek to establish in what ways the individual tenant can be supported.
- Where possible we will work with partners to support tenants who want to develop their reading and writing skills. We will also work with partners to facilitate access to locally provided ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) training.
- In addition to publicising this policy and other policies through Newark and Sherwood Homes' normal communication channels through media such as the Home from Homes, service standards leaflets and posters, Newark and Sherwood Homes will where possible provide information through other non written methods such as radio advertising

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

An EIA on this policy has been completed and is available on request.

## **7. Monitoring Delivery and Continuous Improvement**

- 7.1 A Service Development Group (SDG) made up of tenants will monitor implementation of the Literacy Policy. The policy will be reviewed annually and a clear action plan will be drawn up to ensure delivery of the policy is effective.
- 7.2 The Service Development Group will be invited to monitor the implementation, application, review and action plan of the Literacy Policy.
- 7.3 This will involve a suite of information and performance indicators.
- 7.4 We will measure our performance against indicators including:
- Number of alternative language information provided.
  - Number Browse Aloud hits on the Website
  - Proportion of tenant data base with "literacy flag" set.
- 7.5 In order to ensure there is continuous improvement of the Literacy Policy the Service Development Group will also be advised of latest research and best practice and to comment upon the development of

the new initiatives and the progress being made by Newark and Sherwood Homes in implementing this Literacy Policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

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