

Tenant Empowerment & Service Standard Agreement (TESSA)



Chief Executive, Ali Akbor

A word from your Chief Executive

Unity is extremely proud to be marking 25 years of providing choice, improving life opportunities and addressing inequalities.

In the past quarter century, Unity has added nearly 1200 affordable homes to local housing stock. We continue to be involved in regeneration and encourage enterprise to fuel the local economy, but it is the service we provide to our tenants that we pride ourselves on.

We believe our tenants and customers should expect a certain level of service. TESSA tells you exactly what this level is, so that you know whether or not we are meeting our ambitious targets.

> 'Getting tenant feedback or views from our tenants perspective is vital when making sure Unity provide the best possible service'

Changes in the way we are regulated



Homes & Communities Agency

The TSA closed down and transferred all of its regulatory responsibilities to the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) on 1st April 2012. The HCA have issued a new regulatory framework (guide) which you can find here:

http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ ourwork/regulatory-framework

There are now two strands to the regulation process:

- Economic Standards (any financial or money related issues)
- Consumer Standards (any customer service issues)

The HCA will focus on the economic standards, with the consumer standards being monitored using a process called 'Co-Regulation'.

What is co-regulation?

Co-regulation basically means we all share the responsibility of making sure Unity Housing Association performs to the best of its ability and that services (consumer standards) are delivered and meet customer expectations. As your landlord, Unity is expected to continually monitor and review our performance, while offering tenants the opportunity to be involved in the monitoring process. We aim to do this by supporting you (as our tenants) in scrutinising and shaping the services you receive.

'The co-regulatory principles underpin the regulatory approach'

Economic vs. consumer standards

What's the difference between an economic standard and a consumer standard?

Economic standards are rules Unity must follow relating to money based issues, like rent setting and accounting issues which will be regulated by the Homes & Communities Agency.

Consumer standards are the rules Unity must follow relating to customer facing issues, like involving tenants in scrutinising services, improving the estates where our tenants live or even issues with anti-social behaviour and much more.

'It is for providers to support tenants both to shape and scrutinise service delivery and to hold boards and councillors to account'

How were Unity's standards developed?

The standards and commitments have been formulated and developed in consultation with our customers and staff. We will review our standards to make sure that they continue to reflect what matters to you. By monitoring how well we meet these standards we will be able to use the information to help us to continuously improve.

We welcome your comments on how we are performing against our standards and any ideas you may have in respect of helping us to improve our service. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact our Customer Services Department on 0113 200 7700.

Why does Unity set standards?

- We set standards for our services that you know what to expect. Targets have been set for each standard so that we can monitor and report back on our performance, allowing us to be accountable to you.
- Having standards in place helps us make sure we provide you with the best service possible.
- They help us find areas in which we can improve our levels of service



Supporting BME Communities and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods





Tenant Involvement & Empowerment

Service Areas

- Customer service, choice and complaints
- Involvement and empowerment
- Equality and diversity

Customer service, choice & complaints



Customer service, choice and complaints relates to us giving you services you can access easily and choices over the services you receive. In addition, we must have a clear and accessible complaints policy and feedback to change how we do things and improve services.

Unity Housing is committed to putting our customers first. We aim to deliver a high quality, professional service in which our employees are responsive, efficient and helpful. We recognise the diversity of our customers and understand that your needs are varied. All of our customers will be treated with respect. We will listen to your comments and suggestions and act on them to improve services.

As a tenant of Unity our staff will:

- Be polite and helpful at all times
- Act in a professional manner at all times
- Listen to you, deal with your enquiry or refer you to the appropriate person where applicable
- Value the confidentiality of our customers

When we visit your home, you can trust we will:

- Agree an appointment with you, when you request a home visit
- Notify you if we are unable to attend
- Show you identification when we arrive at your home

When you visit our offices you can expect to:

- Be seen within **5 minutes** of your arrival
- Be told if your appointment is delayed, and the reason
- Be interviewed by someone of the same sex, if you prefer
- Be offered a private interview (if requested)

You can trust that our offices will:

• Be clean, tidy, welcoming and accessible

Display opening times and out-of-hours contact details

If you receive any printed information from us, you can trust it will:

- Include our company contact details
- Be translated into Braille, large print or audio tape if requested
- Be available in other languages, if requested
- Be easy to understand 'jargon free'



Involvement and empowerment



If you contact us, you can trust we will:

- Introduce ourselves when we answer the phone
- Try to help you straight away, take a message or arrange a call back from the member of staff you would like to speak to within 2 working days
- Reply to your letters within 10 working days of receipt and your emails within 10 working days of receipt. If more time is needed to respond to your query, we will contact you within these timescales to explain the reason why and when you can expect a full response

We may not always get it right, so when this happens we want you to let us know what you are unhappy with.

- Make the complaints service simple and accessible
- Acknowledge your complaint within 2 working days and aim to give you a decision within 10 working days
- Make sure complaints are dealt within in a fair (confidentially, if necessary) manner
- Accept complaints in person, in writing, by telephone or by email to uha@unityha.co.uk
- Tell you who is dealing within your complaint, their contact details, and a date for a response
- Ask tenants who have logged a complaint to give feedback on how satisfied they were with the way it was handled



Involvement & Empowerment means the way we offer you as our tenants the opportunity to influence housing related policies, service delivery as well as the chance to scrutinise our performance. We actively seek input from you as it helps us to provide a better service. We understand that our tenants have varied lifestyles and different interests, so we have a wide range of ways for people to get involved.

So we will:

- Continue to develop our resident panels and focus groups
- Publish an annual review of our resident involvement strategy
- Seek resident satisfaction feedback via telephone and postal surveys and act on your comments
- Work with tenants on 'mystery shopping' exercises to audit and improve our service delivery
- Offer a wide range of opportunities to become involved, publishing details of how you can get involved and a copy of our Tenant Panel meeting schedule
- Provide tenants that get involved with expenses to cover childcare and travel
- Send all tenants a copy of our newsletter 'Unity News' on a quarterly basis, which will include a 'you said, we did' section to highlight exactly how tenant involvement has impacted our services



Your opportunities to get involved

If you want more say in where you live and the services you receive, join Unity's Tenant Panel! Our friendly, informal meetings are held at least once a month - they're your chance to meet with managers, influence strategy and change things where you live. To find out more, give Lewis a call on **0113 200 7751** or drop her an email at **lewis.holloway@unityha.co.uk.**

Equality and diversity



Equality & Diversity relates to how we take measures to understand tenants' needs and use this information to design and deliver our housing services and communicate with our tenants (including those with additional support needs). As a BME housing association, we are committed to promoting the nine strands of equality and diversity as defined in the Housing Corporation's Good Practice Note 8. These are:

- Sexual orientation
- Age

• Faith and belief

 Pregnancy and maternity

• Marriage and civil

partnership

- Gender reassignment
- Race and ethnicity
- Disbality
- Gender

Therefore we will:

- Ask you to fill-in surveys about you and your family as part of our Census information collection. This information will help us to identify and deliver relevant services. We aim to collect information on at least 80% of our tenants.
- Make sure our policies and procedures incorporate and promote equality

- Offer all publications in a variety of languages (if requested)
- Develop a 'Single Equalities Scheme' document with a view to organising annual equality impact assessments.
- Offer interviews with someone of the same sex (if requested)
- Provide our staff and contractors with regular training in equality and diversity and promote equality through the services we/they offer you.

Protecting your personal information

In terms of the information we hold about you, you can be sure we will:

- Treat it with sensitivity and confidentiality
- Only keep information that is needed for our work
- Make it accurate
- Not share this information with anyone unless you tell us we can
- Sometimes be required by law to share information about you, ie. if the police request it
- Work within the requirements of the Data Protection Act

Targets and monitoring plan

What we will report to you:	Our target
% of tenants satisfied with landlord services (reported annually)	88%
% tenants satisfied that their views have been taken into account (reported annua	70% ally)
Number of complaints received	
% of complaints responded to on time	100%
% of tenants satisfied with complaints handling system	85%
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Home

Service Areas

- Quality of accommodation
- Repairs and maintenance

Quality of accommodation



The Home standard 'quality of accommodation' and 'repairs and maintenance' means we have a responsibility to provide our tenants with warm, weatherproof homes with modern facilities, while offering you a cost effective repairs and maintenance service that responds to the needs of and offers choice to you.

Unity Housing Association pride ourselves on providing clean, tidy homes in a good condition. To ensure this we have 'Lettable Standards,' which are things we do to make sure your home is ready for you.

Therefore we will:

- Inspect your home when the previous tenants give us notice and once again when they hand in their keys
- Give our contractors **21 working days** to do repairs to your home when it is empty
- Make sure your home is clean, cleared of rubbish, well ventilated and free from damp

- Replace any damaged fixtures of fittings
- Carry out energy performance surveys and provide you with an Energy Performance Certificate at the start of your tenancy
- Check that walls, fencing and gates are free of graffiti
- Check the gas and electricity installations at the start of your tenancy and at regular intervals throughout the year



Repairs and maintenance



There are many types of repairs and maintenance; they're all treated differently.

- Day To Day Repairs are things that we fix when they break through normal wear and tear
- Planned Maintenance means programmes of bigger works like kitchen or boiler replacements
- Cyclical Maintenance means things that need doing regularly, like gas safety checks or repainting the outside of your homes

Reporting a repair

You can report a repair:

- By calling our offices on **0113 200 7700**
- At our office at 113-117 Chapeltown Road, Leeds, LS7 3HY
- By emailing us on **repairs@unityha.co.uk**

We aim to give you the most efficient and cost effective service possible, **therefore we will**:

- Respond to emergency repairs within 24 hours
- Respond to urgent repairs within **5 days**
- Respond to routine repairs within **21 days**
- Send you a letter to confirm your repair details, within 3 working days of you reporting it to us
- Offer you an out-of-hours emergency repairs service
- Offer you a morning (8am-1pm) or afternoon (12pm-5pm) appointments for urgent and routine repairs
- Offer a **'first call'** appointment for tenants who have to take time off work or college

Gas and electrical servicing

We have a legal obligation to carry out gas safety checks on all our properties which have a gas supply. **To achieve this we will:**

- Visit your home at least once a year to carry out a gas safety inspection
- Service any gas appliances, check ventilation and smoke alarms
- Undertake a full electrical test and upgrade (if needed) to a minimum of **10%** of our properties annually
- Check electric and gas supplies in empty properties before you move in



External contractors

Unity Housing insist all of our contractors provide you with the best possible service, and follow our code of conduct **which says that contractors will**:

- Arrive on time to your home
- Show an ID card and introduce themselves and the job they have been sent to complete
- Not use any of your facilities (gas, electric or water) without getting your permission
- Treat your possessions with respect, and not leave any mess (relating to works) when they leave
- Be courteous, never use bad language or smoke in and around your property.

Aids and adaptations

Sometimes people find that changes in their personal circumstances, perhaps due to age or disability, make it difficult to live safely and comfortably within their home. We are committed to providing an excellent 'Aids & Adaptations' service to support you in your home. We consider all adaptation requests fairly and we aim to provide you with a fast responsive service.

- We will provide a variety of ways for you to request an adaptation (telephone, email, letter or in person at our offices)
- We will respond to your request within **10 working days**
- We will respond to your request for an adaptation fairly and promptly.
- Unity will provide training to all front line customer staff so that they have a thorough understanding of the aids and adaptations service
- Staff will provide you with clear and reliable basic advice regarding aids and adaptations
- We'll get minor adaptations to your home ie; lever taps or grab rails completed within 21 days

Planned maintenance

We carry out maintenance work on or around your home regularly. It's more cost effective to you, our customers, to undertake maintenance work that is planned rather than just doing a repair when something breaks. We gather information on the condition of our houses and use this information to design **Planned Maintenance Programmes.** We aim to spend **70%** of our maintenance budget on planned maintenance works. The types of work we include on our planned maintenance programme include:

- Painting of windows and doors
- Door and window replacements
- Annual gas servicing of boilers and gas fires
- Boiler replacements
- Kitchen and bathroom replacements
- Scheme improvements

We aim to replace items within a 'standard life cycle' which is an average length of time that something is expected to last before it needs to be replaced or renewed. This process ensures you remain safe and comfortable in your home.

To do this we will:

- Publish our planned maintenance programmes at least **once a year**
- Give you a range of opportunities to get involved in how your home is being maintained, ie. being part of our Tenant Panel or filling in feedback surveys
- Inspect your home before any planned maintenance is started, to make sure we only invest in necessary improvements (value for money)
- Offer you a choice of fittings, colours styles or finish of works (where appropriate)
- Make sure that our contractors keep disturbance to a minimum
- Provide you with a satisfaction questionnaire, when the works are completed

Targets and monitoring plan

To manage our Home Standard we have set targets and will report the results of these to you on a regular basis.

What we will report to you	Our target
Number of jobs logged	
% of emergency/urgent/routine repairs completed in target time	99 %
% of 'first time fix' repairs	85%
% of appointments made that we kept	99 %
% tenants satisfied with repair	85%

Tenancy

Service Areas

- Lettings and allocations
- Rent

Lettings and allocations



Lettings and allocations means that we must let our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way that takes into account the housing needs and aspirations of our tenants and potential tenants. Unity Housing Association is committed to building strong, sustainable neighbourhoods. If we are able to offer you a home we aim to provide you a home in the area you have expressed an interest in, in a good condition and of the size/type that is required by your family needs.

To accomplish this we:

- Provide support and advice for accessing the Leeds Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- Provide you with a Leeds Home Register application form and assistance to complete the form (if requested)
- Provide tenants with advice on transfers and mutual exchanges
- Aim to re-let our empty homes within 22 days
- Allow you to view any property and 48 hours to accept it

For your new home we will:

- Give you a copy of your tenancy agreement and sign up pack containing useful information to help you settle in
- Make contact within **6 weeks** of moving in, to see whether you are settling in to your new home.
- Provide you with a home that is in good condition
- Supply you with a decorating grant where the property requires it

When leaving your home we will:

- Tell you the length of notice needed to end your tenancy
- Provide you with advice on leaving the property clean and tidy
- Advise you as to whether there are any outstanding rent and/or service charges
- Let you know how and when to hand in your keys
- Recharge you for any damages you have caused to the property, or for the removal of any items that you have left within the property



Rent relates to how we must evidence that tenants have been provided with clear information that explains how our rent and service charges are set. We also aim to make the payment of your rent and service charges as simple and convenient as possible.



We try to achieve this by offering you a variety of ways to pay your rent like:

- Standing order direct from your bank account
- In person by coming into our offices
- Over the telephone by calling reception on **0113 200 7700**
- Visiting our website unityha.co.uk/properties/section/7/paying-rent
- Using any shop that displays the PayPoint logo
- By text from your mobile phone
- Using your local Post Office











Unity Housing Association is committed to remaining financially viable, to be able to provide you with high quality housing services.

To do this, it is important that our tenants pay their rent on time. We aim to focus on providing support and advice to help prevent non-payment of rent.

We will do this by:

- Explaining to you how much rent you will need to pay when you sign up for your home.
- Giving you advice on benefits relating to social housing (if required)
- Assisting you in the completion of housing benefit claim forms (if required)
- Providing you with help and advice on how to manage your rent account
- Providing you with a rent statement every 3 months, or more regularly if you request
- Signpost you to support agencies if you are experiencing financial difficulties

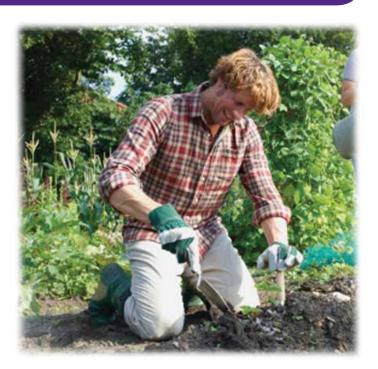


- Informing you by letter of any increase or decrease to your rent amount, 4 weeks in advance
- Processing refunds / credit balances on your rent account, within 10 working days of your request

If you do fall behind in your rent payments we

- Contact you by letter, telephone, text or home visits if you have arrears of 2 or more weeks
- Advise you exactly how much you owe
- Inform you of any actions that may be taken against you
- Arrange a repayment plan which will be reviewed regularly to make sure you are keeping up with your payments

Service charges



All Unity residents must pay rent on their homes. However some residents receive extra services (e.g. cleaning or gardening if there is a communal area) and they will pay a charge for these items, in addition to their rent.

We aim to make sure that residents receive services undertaken to a high standard and a service the provides excellent value for money.

So we will:

- Consult you before providing any additional services that may add to what you pay now
- Inform you if your service charge increases or decreases, 4 weeks in advance
- Make you aware of how we calculate our service charges
- Ask you what you think about the quality of the services you pay for

Targets and monitoring

To manage our Tenancy standard, we have set targets and will report these to you on a regular basis.

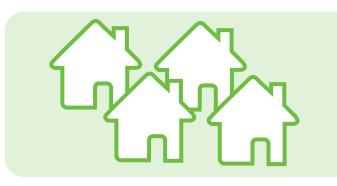
What we will report to you	Our target
Rent arrears as %	6.25%
Average time to re-let a property	22 days
% of lets to nominations	50%
% GN lettings to BME tenants	50%

Neighbourhood & Community Standard

Service Areas

- Neighbourhood management
- Local area cooperation
- Anti-social behaviour

Neighbourhood management



Neighbourhood management is all about the measures we will take to keep your local environment, estates and homes clean and safe.

To achieve this you can trust we will:

- Conduct estate inspections every **3 months** and publicise the dates of these inspections
- Remove racist and other offensive graffiti within
 24 hours of it being reported to us
- Put a notice on abandoned cars within
 5 working days and remove it within 3 months of it being reported to us
- Begin our Abandonment procedure within 24 hours of an abandoned property being reported

Communal areas will be kept clean and tidy. To ensure this we will:

Vacuum, mop, wipe down and tidy away rubbish every week



- Wash shared windows once a month
- Deep clean your hallway once a year
- Repaint your hallway every five years

You can help us by becoming a cleaning monitor. We will regularly give you freepost cards for you to send back to tell us how good the service is.

We expect our tenants to use the council's free collection service for large items of rubbish. If we find large items of rubbish in shared areas we will:

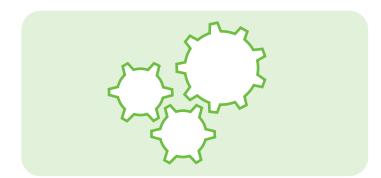
- Put notices on them asking the owner to take them away within 5 working days of the item being reported
- Remove any items within 3 weeks if the owner does not take them away

Here at Unity Housing Association we take our environmental responsibilities very seriously and we will do the following:

- Cut the grass every **14 days** but it may be longer depending on the weather
- Cut the hedges in these areas twice a year
- Pick up litter from shared areas once a month
- Write to or visit anyone with an untidy garden and request that they tidy it



Local area cooperation



Local area cooperation is the way we work with the council, other housing associations and community agencies to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the areas where your homes are.

To accomplish this you can trust that we will:

- Work with other housing associations and share resources to improve the local area
- Continue to tackle worklessness in the areas we serve by providing local people work placements, apprenticeships and a dedicated Employment Outreach Worker.

Harrassment and anti-social behaviour



We want all of our tenants and their families to enjoy living in their Unity home, in neighbourhoods that are pleasant places to live. Unfortunately, sometimes people are not good neighbours.

ASB stands for 'anti-social behaviour' it's the general term used to describe a range of actions that may cause distress, fear or upset other people. The Government describe ASB as: 'Any aggressive, intimidating or destructive activity that damages or destroys another person's quality of life.'



In an attempt to prevent this we will:

- Investigate all reported incidents of anti-social behaviour and harassment
- Work closely with external agents to resolve incidents
- Take legal action in respect of perpetrators of such behaviour (where applicable)
- Respond to reports of hate crime or cases where there is violence or the threat of violence within 24 hours of this being reported to us
- Respond to reports of anti-social behaviour not involving violence or hate crimes, within
 5 working days of this being reported to us
- Let you know how your case will be dealt with and agree a plan of action with you
- Ask for your assistance in respect of gathering evidence
- Contact you regularly and keep you up to date with the progress of your case
- Agree realistic timescales with you for dealing with the case (where other agencies are involved)
- Try to resolve disputes via dialogue, mediation service and most serious cases legal action

Targets and monitoring

To manage our neighbourhood and community standard, we have set targets and will report the result of these to you on a regular basis.

What we will report to you

Our target

Number of ASB cases reported

% of ASB reports acknowledged within five working days

100%

% tenants satisfied with the outcome of ASB complaint



Useful telephone numbers

From time to time, Leeds City Council may be better equipped to deal with your complaint, particularly if it involves someone who is not a Unity tenant.

Environmental health

Dumped rubbish (not on Unity land)?

0113 222 4406 - Leeds City Council

Noise

Noisy neighbours? Barking dogs? Call the Council's noise nuisance team on:

0113 222 4406 - Leeds City Council

Abandoned cars

If a car's been abandoned on your street (not in a Unity parking area), write down the make, model and registration and call

0113 222 4406 - Leeds City Council

Value For Money

Service Areas

• Value for money

Value for money



The Value For Money standard looks into how we monitor our spending to make sure we give you the best services at the 'right price'.

Unity Housing Association is dedicated to finding new ways to delivering our services while saving money for our tenants, then reinvesting the savings into the areas that our tenants value the most.





To achieve this we will:

- Complete service reviews and benchmark against other housing associations to make sure we are being efficient
- Continue to involve tenants in future procurement exercises
- Listen to tenants feedback and use it to improve our services
- Report in the 'Self Assessment' and 'Annual Report to Tenants' how money has been spent over the year so you know where your money is going
- Work with other housing providers and agencies to reduce costs in service areas that we can work together

Targets and monitoring

To manage our Value For Money standard we have set targets and will report the results of these to you annually:

What we will report to you

Where each £1 of income comes from

Where each £1 of income is spent

% tenants satisfied that their rent charges represent value for money

Monitoring & Review of this Agreement



Each of our service teams here at Unity measure their performance and have targets (called Key Performance Indicators or KPIs) we aim to achieve. These targets are reviewed regularly by our Tenant Panel, Senior Management Team and our Board. Each day our dedicated staff team strive towards these targets by using a number of tools, techniques and practises which drive improvement within Unity Housing Association.

Including things like:

- Thinking of the cost of our activities while trying to provide good value for money in all service areas across the business
- Providing our tenants opportunities to get involved, so that we can find out what matters to you and how we can make things better for you.
- Understanding the diverse needs of our customers
- Comparing our performance with similar associations
- Understanding what drives performance and looking for ways to improve it

A review of this agreement in consultation with tenants will be planned every three years.



How you can get involved

At Unity we pride ourselves on giving you the best service possible. We monitor the quality of our services in lots of ways. We monitor our performance, how well we meet our service standards, how satisfied you are with us and we use feedback from you to improve the services we offer you.

To help you monitor our performance and if we have achieved the targets we have set we will provide you with:

- Quarterly website updates
- Quarterly update in 'Unity News' newsletter and put on display in our Head Office reception area.
- Summary of performance indicators in the 'Annual Report To Tenants'
- More detailed update in the Unity Housing Association's Annual Self Assessment
- Satisfaction surveys will continue to be collected on different areas of our services.
- To identify ways we can improve our services continuously.



Get more involved - Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Our Tenant Scrutiny Panel are a group of volunteers, who provide Unity with an independent tenant view on how they feel we are performing as a landlord. The Scrutiny Panel meet quarterly to review all our service areas to make sure we meet the standards set out in the Tenant Empowerment & Service Standard Agreement.

Tenant Scrutiny is going to be very important to us as an Association over the coming years. It is our duty to ensure you, as tenants, feel you are able to shape and influence the services you receive from us.

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel will evaluate how well Unity are performing in delivering services to our tenants, which means the Scrutiny Panel will have the power to:

- Hold Unity to account for performance against our service standards (TESSA)
- Look at customer feedback, complaints and satisfaction levels
- Request service review
- Compare Unity's performance against other housing providers



What happens if we fail to achieve our targets?

If we fail to meet our targets, or you feel we could be doing better, we want to hear from you. That's the only way we'll know you aren't happy – if you tell us.

- Attend our Tenant Panel meetings and have your say
- Email us at uha@unityha.co.uk
- Write to us at Unity Housing Association, 113-117 Chapeltown Road, Leeds, LS7 3HY
- Visit our website www.unityha.co.uk , go to the performance page and leave your comments there

What do we expect in return?

Unity Housing strongly believe in mutual respect. This means that we will treat you with courtesy and respect but we also expect the same treatment from you.

We understand that you may be angry, upset or frustrated when you contact us but you can help us by:

- Treating our staff with respect and not behaving in an abusive, threatening way or using foul language
- Letting us know if you need to cancel or rearrange an appointment
- Giving us the information we need to help you
- Telling us about changes to your circumstances that may affect the way we can best meet your needs

My Unity



Unity tenants can now register online and use the following convenient features:

- Look at your rent account and print statements
- Report repairs
- See what repairs have been ordered
- Look at your repairs history
- And much more!





Problems understanding?

If you need any of our information translating or if you need an interpreter, please contact us. We can also provide this information in large print or on CD if you need us to.



Our contact details

Unity Housing Association Ltd 113-117 Chapeltown Road, Leeds, LS7 3HY

113 200 7700

uha@unityha.co.uk



web:www.unityha.co.uk