

# Service Standards

midland heart  
*housing, care and opportunity*



**The Newcastle Housing Advice (NHA) service is delivered under contract by Midland Heart on behalf of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council to deliver housing options, homelessness and housing register services.**

In partnership with the Borough Council we have developed a Housing Allocations Policy, in order to ensure that households in housing need are assessed and prioritised effectively and fairly.

## Access and Customer Care

Access and Customer Care is about how easy you find it to contact us, how well we deal with your enquiries and how we listen to and deal with your feedback on our services.

We are committed to delivering excellent customer services and these commitments and standards show the minimum level of treatment that you can expect no matter how you contact us, or who you speak to.

### Our commitment to you

- We want you to find it easy to contact us by phone, in person at our offices or by letter or email
- We want all our customers to receive prompt, polite, fair and positive service from our staff.
- If you visit our offices and we are not immediately available to deal with your query we will make an appointment for you.
- We believe in the fundamental principles of equality and diversity. We are committed to seeking equal outcomes, as well as equality of opportunities, in terms of the services we deliver to our customers.
- Where you have requested it, we can make documents available in alternative formats including large print, audio and translation.
- We will actively identify when our customers are dissatisfied and encourage them to use our complaints procedure in order to learn and improve our service.
- We will ensure that our staff are knowledgeable and have access to accurate and up to date information in relation to our service.
- We will ensure that your enquiries are dealt with in confidence.

### Standards we will monitor

- When you contact us by letter or email you will receive a full response to your enquiry within 10 working days.

- We will acknowledge all complaints in writing within 3 working days of receipt and provide a full written response within 20 working days inline with the timescales set out in our complaints procedure.

## Housing options and homelessness

The housing options and homelessness function seeks to assist households in the Borough who are threatened with homelessness (or who are homeless), to identify the best ways of assisting customers to keep their homes or to help them to find a new one.

### Our commitment to you

- Where possible we will seek to prevent homelessness.
- We will provide a number of homelessness prevention schemes to assist us in preventing homelessness.
- We will provide a debt and money advice service to assess your finances, seek to maximise your income and assist you with budgeting.
- We will provide information leaflets that may help you to keep your home, and give you details about other services that may also help.
- We will ensure that our staff have up to date training and information so that the advice given will always be of the highest quality.
- If you become homeless we will understand the urgency of your situation and see you immediately.
- We will provide an emergency out of hours service for homeless households.
- We will ensure that you are aware of the Homeless Decision Appeals Procedure and know how to make an appeal.
- We will offer you suitable temporary accommodation if we have reason to believe that you are homeless and have a priority need and you have no alternative accommodation.
- We will keep your stay in temporary accommodation to a minimum, providing assistance to help you find permanent accommodation.

### Standards we will monitor

- We will complete investigations and make a decision regarding your homelessness within 33 days and confirm this in writing, giving a full explanation for our decisions and what options you have next.
- We will process Homeless Decision Appeals and advise you of the outcome within 56 days of the date received.

## Housing register

The Housing Register function assesses and prioritises applications for social housing in the Borough. We are committed to ensuring that applications are processed fairly and efficiently inline with the Housing Allocations Policy, the document that sets the criteria for assessing households' housing need.

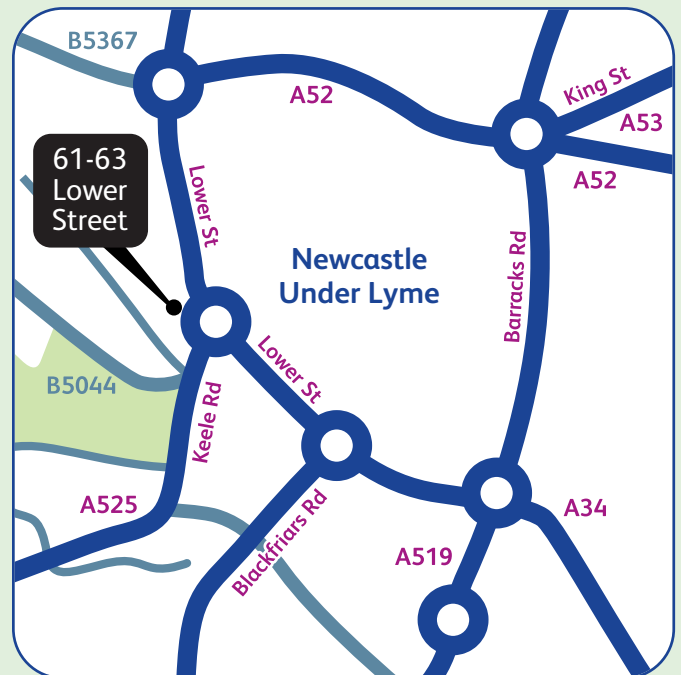
### Our commitment to you

- We will ensure that there are a variety of ways for you to make a housing register application, including online, and by telephone.
- We will assess your housing need, based on the information which you have supplied us with on your application for housing.
- We will ask you to complete a medical questionnaire if you have a medical condition that affects your need to move home.
- We will be fair and transparent regarding how we prioritise applicants on the housing register.
- We will make available the Housing Register Appeals Procedure should you wish to make an appeal.
- We will review your housing register application once a year to ensure that we have the most up to date information regarding your housing needs.

### Standards we will monitor

- We will ensure that your housing application is registered and assessed within 10 working days of the date received and will advise you of your priority award on the housing register.
- We will ensure that your medical application is registered and assessed within 33 days of the date received and will advise you if you are given an award.
- We will process Housing Register Appeals and advise you of the outcome within 10 working days of the date received.

## How to contact us



The Newcastle Housing Advice Centre is located at **61-63 Lower Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs, ST5 2RS**

Tel: **0345 850 9698**

email [nha@midlandheart.org.uk](mailto:nha@midlandheart.org.uk)

[www.nhaoptions.co.uk](http://www.nhaoptions.co.uk)

### Our opening hours:

Monday to Friday 9am until 5pm

**For homelessness emergencies out of the normal office hours, you can call**

**01782 615 599**

Appointments can be made by telephone or in person by calling into the reception at Lower Street, Newcastle.

[www.nhaoptions.co.uk](http://www.nhaoptions.co.uk)