

ELIM HOUSING ASSOCIATION CUSTOMER STANDARD: YOUR HOME

INTRODUCTION

The Elim Standard has been developed to provide a uniform standard for all owned Elim Housing Group properties. This Standard does not apply to short term leases, or properties managed on behalf of other organisations. This will include the amenity blocks on Gypsy and Traveller sites. All properties we own or manage will as a minimum comply with the Decent Homes Standard.

The Elim Standard goes beyond Decent Homes Standard and reflects Elim's ambition to ensure that our homes are sustainable, well maintained and meet the needs of existing and future customers. This will be achieved by carrying out the stock evaluation assessment process following the stock condition survey. This evaluation process will categorise our properties into good, average and poor and will identify which properties meet the standard and those that require further investment to bring them up to the standard and provide a benchmark for new properties or properties that we are considering leasing or managing.

The following requirements set out in greater detail the key elements of the Elim Standard; these requirements are not intended to be exhaustive. The Standard will continue to develop over time in response to resident feedback, best practice, regulatory framework and wider legislation:

- Safety & security
- State of repair
- Provision of modern facilities and standards
- Environmental sustainability
- Compliance
- Customers aspirations and expectations
- Energy efficiency & thermal comfort
- Value for money
- Future needs
- Coordinated management approach

SAFETY & SECURITY

Our customers should feel both safe and secure in their homes. All homes will provide tenants with a reasonable level of physical security with controlled door entry systems on all communal entrances and secure external and flat doors.

For details of building safety related to compliance, please see section 5, Compliance.

- All new windows and doors will meet 'secure by design' (or equivalent) standards, where this is achievable.
 - Communal entrances should be covered with a canopy or have a lobby and should have suitable security lighting so that the entrance is safe to use.
 - Entrances should be easily accessible, well-lit and if there are more than 3 steps a handrail will be fitted.
- Consideration will be given to providing level or ramped approaches.
- Communal areas should be illuminated to provide safe transit and be well decorated and maintained, clean and kept clear of debris.
 - Grounds are to be kept maintained and rubbish & debris cleared on a regular basis.
 - All opportunities will be taken to respond to resident's safety concerns in their external environment (e.g. lighting, landscaping, and boundaries).
 - Upper windows will have window restrictors fitted.
 - There will not be any open flued gas appliances.

STATE OF REPAIR

Properties will be well maintained, this will include the servicing of gas, fire prevention equipment and other items as detailed below:

- Customers will receive a high-quality repairs service carried out to meet the Elim repair timescales.
- External and internal decorations of communal areas are to be carried out as part of the planned works programme and be carried out on a 7 year cycle and shall include the washing down of PVCu elements and the cleaning of gutters and downpipes. Internal colour schemes to communal areas will be provided for customer consultation and shall coincide with floor and lighting replacements to provide a refresh to these areas.
- Voids will only be let if they meet the Elim Void Standard to ensure are properties are appealing to our customers and to an agreed standard.
- Key elements will not be allowed to fall into a state of disrepair and will be replaced on agreed life cycles set out in the stock condition survey which will reduce repair costs and inconvenience to customers.

PROVISION OF MODERN FACILITIES & STANDARDS

It is important that our properties are attractive to our customers and places that they want to live and are proud to live in, to achieve this we need to:

- Ensure where possible the design, space and layout of kitchens and bathrooms meet 'Lifetime Homes' principles. Kitchens should be as a minimum in good condition i.e. fully operational and easily cleanable and not be more than 20 years old. When replacing kitchens customers will be given a choice of kitchen units from a range, be able to choose floor and tile colours. Additional electrical outlets will be provided as well as LED lighting and mechanical extraction.

- Bathrooms should be as a minimum in good condition and not more than 30 years old. When replacing bathrooms customers will be able to choose floor and tile colours. An over bath shower, LED lighting and mechanical extraction will be provided.
- Heating systems are to be economical, automated, with simple controls. Gas boilers will be in good condition and not be more than 15 years old.
- Communal areas will be regularly decorated and refurbished as detailed in section 3.
- Elim will explore ways to improve internet access for its customers, for example by taking opportunities to provide improved cabling or wireless infrastructure as part of related planned works.
- Ensure that the SCS lifecycles and costs match those on the finance system so that the programme of works is correctly forecast and adequate budget provision is made.

COMPLIANCE

All customers have a right to be safe in their homes and to ensure this all elements requiring statutory inspection and servicing will be carried out regularly as legally required. Some of these elements will be within customers' homes and others will apply to the communal areas that they share with others. To comply with the standard all compliance servicing and inspection shall be 100% within date and follow the Health and Safety procedures.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Elim will enhance the housing Group's position as a sustainable & environmentally conscious organisation by contributing to key appropriate and practical objectives to enhance environmental sustainability for owned, occupied homes. Included within these objectives will be considerations relating to customers aspirations and expectations with value for money a priority. These key objectives primarily being:

- To reduce the impact on the environment by delivering effective, sustainable services and developments.
- To achieve a minimum EPC rating on assets of C
- To achieve a reduction in CO2 emissions over the Group's assets (to include construction on new developments).
- Reducing waste and fuel bills.
- Respond to customers' needs with minimum impact on the environment.
- Provide high quality new homes and effective investment in existing stock to minimise future carbon and CO2 emissions, reduce power and water consumption and encourage the use of grey water systems where possible. The implementation of the above will require performance monitoring to ensure the impact on the environment is kept to a minimum and value for money can be achieved. Areas for improvement and efficiencies will also be identified in the process.

- For new build developments and refurbishments energy performance standards will be set by Building Regulations, with changes in legislation, requirements and regulations monitored and improvements made where required. Future anticipated amendments are expected, in particular to relate to fire assessments, thermal insulation properties and waste.
- Through active asset management existing properties with poor thermal efficiency and heating will be improved and new developments will aim to reduce waste and generate best value for money through the construction process, providing homes which are affordable to heat and ventilate.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY & THERMAL COMFORT EPC

Rating must be carried out on properties rented as homes. The EPC details the energy efficiency of a property and the environmental impact rating. A typical rating for an occupied residential home is D/E and the certification is valid for 10 years. Elim's goal is to reduce its environmental impact by ensuring the EPC band for all owned properties is brought up to a minimum of a C rating. This may not prove achievable or realistic for some properties owned by Elim for a variety of reasons potentially being due to age, design, layout, etc. If these properties are in locations where customers want to live and meet the other criteria set out in this standard, we will advise them that these properties cannot reach this EPC standard.

The aim of improving energy efficiency is to protect tenants from fuel poverty and high energy costs and lower the environmental impact of each home. This will require some properties to be upgraded to meet minimum standards. We will ensure all properties have a minimum loft insulation thickness of 270mm where feasible. Flat roof insulation will be upgraded to current building regulations when these roofs are replaced. We will fit A rated energy performance windows and doors as calculated by the British Fenestration Rating Council (BFRC).energy to properties when we replace these components. New heating will have fully automated, easy to use controls, shall be suitable for the building and will be economic to use.

New developments will follow requirements on a project specific basis in relation to the scale and nature of energy efficiency provided where practical and considering local and national policies. This potentially in the form of new modern methods of construction, increasing overall efficiencies of a building's performance and through the construction process, through design, procurement, sourcing of and use of materials. In turn lowering the general running and maintenance costs and subsequent environmental impact of housing developments, in the process improving modern technological provision to individual homes in many forms, from IT to vehicle charging points.

CUSTOMER ASPIRATIONS & EXPECTATIONS

Research programmes and feedback from our customers is essential to promote added services and to support and understand customers aspirations and expectations, providing an insight into the priorities for individuals and communities. From previous feedback received some of the main priorities for customers would appear to be repairs and maintenance, keeping homes warm and secure, planned works and the overall quality of their home.

Proactive work and data analysis provide vital information on these aspirations and expectations which allows an understanding of the required delivery of services and developments and to enhance these where possible. Customers profiles must be understood which in turn assists in meeting current needs/demands, priorities and aspirations, these varied profiles will include different requirements depending on property type, tenure, age, gender, economic, vulnerability, etc, all of which will be closely monitored and reviewed through customer surveys carried out in person when the SCS is undertaken and also by telephone or via video via smartphones, with regular reviews of the information received.

A summary containing a condensed version of the Elim Standard will be made available to all our new and existing customers. This summary will contain a link to this document which will be available on our website

VALUE FOR MONEY

Value for money (VFM) is the balance between the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of a home, minimising costs but not compromising on quality or environmental impact. Elim aim to maximise the services provided to customers by building and maintaining quality, sustainable homes and investing in customers and employees. It is important to consider if more could be delivered with more input. VFM will be achieved by the following:

- Innovation and review of homes and services is essential and the way these services and homes are delivered, providing overall affordability and value for money to benefit the customer and environment.
- Elim will continue to invest in homes to ensure that they continue to meet the standards required and expected and increase investment in existing stock. This will improve the overall quality of homes, providing value for money for customers.
- Ensuring contracts are procured that represent both quality and VFM and that key building elements are selected for their VFM, environmental and energy performance over the service life of a home to reduce premature failure, early replacement and excessive repairs and maintenance.

FUTURE NEEDS

Future aspirations and requirements of customers and environmental sustainability is key, this requires customer feedback and regular reviews with subsequent actions to maintain an in demand, quality, value for money, sustainable home adaptable for future requirements of customers and diverse communities. The pipeline of development opportunities takes a commercial approach to delivery and demand and drives value for money and futureproofing of homes. Delivering a mix of homes and tenure types and future proofing in terms of low carbon heating and energy efficiency on new projects/developments.

Planned improvements will take place on existing owned properties where cost effective, safe and practical to do so with future requirements and expectations at the forefront of this planning.

Elim will work with its customers and will provide minor aids and adaptations works for customers and encourage customers who need additional adaptations to seek Disabled Facility Grants to make their homes suitable for their long-term needs. Elim will be proactive in making customers' homes suitable for their occupancy and will carry out level access shower bathroom installations instead of standard bathrooms where customers need these facilities.

COORDINATED MANAGEMENT APPROACH

We will have a coordinated management approach to ensure that properties meet and are maintained to the above standards. We will have an integrated approach to the asset management of these properties. This approach will capture feedback from customers on repairs and the questions asked when carrying out the stock condition survey on what is important to them, this information together with the stock condition survey information, repair trends, servicing reports will all feed into the planned works programmes. Properties will be inspected internally and externally on a regular basis by both the maintenance and housing teams to ensure properties are kept in good condition.

Close working between the housing and maintenance teams will ensure items that require actioning are dealt with effectively and efficiently with customer liaison being key.

When appropriate, for example, where customers do not want the interruption of planned works being carried out in their homes, these works will be captured when the home becomes void and will be brought up to the standard.

There will be a close working relationship between maintenance and development teams at a very early stage of a project, from initial investigations of sites, especially when refurbishment are being considered. This will include input into the specification on key elements such as heating, glazing, roofing, landscaping, position of bin/cycle stores. The maintenance team will provide QA input throughout the works and will be formally involved in the final snagging, handover and defect management of the works.

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