

## **The Association for Rental Living**

### **Setting the Standards for Built to Rent (BTR) customers - A BTR Customer Charter**

January 2025 DRAFT Rev1

#### **Our Commitment**

The Build-to-Rent sector is committed to raising the standard for the rental sector, affording each and every resident respect, fairness, and transparency. This Customer Charter outlines the shared principles, responsibilities, and expectations between BTR operators, and tenants within the UK Built to Rent (BTR) sector. It represents our collective commitment to fostering respectful, transparent, and customer-focused living communities.

Definition of a BTR customer: a resident or tenant of a BTR Building

#### **Core Principles**

1. **Respect:** Every resident is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of background, circumstances, or status.
2. **Transparency:** Clear, honest, and timely communication between landlords, operators, and residents.
3. **Fairness:** Equal access to services, fair rental terms, and unbiased resolutions to disputes.
4. **Community Focus:** Promoting a culture of inclusivity, engagement, and sustainability within the living environment.
5. **Accountability:** Commitment to full high standards of service and responsibility for actions and outcomes.
6. **BTR Code of Practice:** Adhere to the BTR Code of Practice which aims to elevate standards and governance across the BTR sector.

#### **Customer Behaviour Expectations**

Residents are encouraged to:

- Treat fellow residents, staff, and the property with respect and consideration.
- Honour tenancy agreements by paying rent on time and adhering to property rules.
- Maintain open communication with the landlord or property manager regarding any issues.
- Take reasonable care of the rented property and shared spaces.
- Foster a sense of community through neighbourly conduct and mutual respect.

## **BTR Operator Behaviour Expectations**

Landlords and operators will:

- Provide quality accommodation by ensuring homes meet or exceed safety, health, and building standards.
- Be responsive by addressing maintenance and repair requests within reasonable timeframes.
- Offer transparent tenancy agreements by presenting clear and fair tenancy agreements without hidden charges.
- Communicate clearly by providing timely updates on any property changes, notices, or community developments.
- Respect privacy by honouring tenants' privacy by giving appropriate notice for access to the property.
- Support sustainability by promoting eco-friendly practices and facilitate greener living.

## **Fairness & Affordability**

- We will limit all deposit payments at the start of tenancies to 4 weeks rent. *(Subject to Renters Rights Bill.)*
- We will ensure fair and transparent repayment of deposits at the end of tenancies and commit to resolving deposits within 28 days. *(Subject to Renters Rights Bill.)*
- We will support renters facing financial hardship by providing financial payment plan options, in the event of a temporary cash flow issue.
- We will ensure we have a fair rent review mechanism in place for all residents. *(Subject to Renters Rights Bill.)*
- We will review rents no more than once a year, unless short term leases are requested by resident.
- We will ensure an accessible complaints process by providing residents with access to clear and straightforward procedures to report concerns or issues.
- We will offer Third-Party Mediation. In unresolved disputes, an impartial mediation service will be available. *(Subject to Renters Rights Bill.)*
- We offer a commitment to the resolution of complaints. BTR Operators pledge to address complaints promptly, fairly, and transparently.

## **DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION**

### **Security** *(All Subject to Renters Rights Bill)*

- We support the Government’s manifesto pledge to end “no fault evictions”. We will help to implement the Government’s manifesto commitment to replace no fault evictions with a fair, evidence-based system, which can be implemented by a rejuvenated court process and modernised reformed section 13 process.
- We will offer residents the choice of tenancy length over six months for as long as they wish, up to at least 3 years, with an automatic right to renew thereafter (subject to T’s & C’s).

### **Housing Standards and Safety**

- All our homes will exceed the criteria set out by Government as part of on the Decent Homes Standard.
- We will never pass any costs related to fire safety, building safety or health & safety onto our customers.
- Pets will be accepted in properties as a default, except where not appropriate or possible in a small number of circumstances. *(Subject to Renters Rights Bill.)*
- Our homes comply with all relevant UK Housing Standards and the Building Safety Act.

### **Sustainability**

- We will commit to maintaining all properties to the highest EPC rating as possible to keep energy bills low.
- Where older AST properties don’t meet top EPC standards, we will publish a plan to upgrade them to EPC C at a minimum, within 3/5 years.
- We will ensure that all properties we operate are net zero by 2050, in terms of communal spaces and operations.

### **Liveability**

- As professional Build To Rent Landlords, we commit to have a dedicated team responsible for managing our properties and handling customer queries who are contactable within normal working hours (as a minimum) and 24/7 in emergencies.

## **DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION**

- We will respond to any in-home essential repairs reported by a resident in 48 hours or less
- We will never enter a resident’s property without giving a minimum of 48 hours’ notice, unless given consent by the resident, or in an emergency.
- We support, within reasonable limits, a resident right to personalise their home.

### **Digital & Smart Living**

We embrace technology to enhance convenience and efficiency for residents.

- We will offer robust Digital Experience where residents can manage their tenancy, book services, and access support online.

### **Consumer Standards & Transparency**

- We will provide clear documentation on residents’ rights and obligations at the start of every tenancy and commit to publishing a transparent complaint handling process.
- Where multiple groups want to rent the same property, we will never consider factors like race, age, gender or any other protected characteristic to make a decision on who to rent to.
- We will allow sharers to move-in and move-out, and change the tenants on the lease in the same property (subject to referencing and meeting affordability criteria).
- We welcome families and households with children, offering longer term tenancies of up to three years if possible
- As an industry we are open to discussing what data makes sense to be transparent on for stakeholders to understand what is happening with the market.

### **Continuous Improvement**

- Regular tenant surveys will guide service enhancements.
- Annual reviews of the charter to align with evolving customer needs and legal requirements.

This charter reflects our dedication to exceptional customer experience, transparency, and resident well-being.