



General Jargon Buster

Audit Commission

This is the public body that inspects all housing associations and awards them either no stars (very bad), one star, two stars or three stars (the best). They also inspect local authorities.

Board members

All housing associations have board members who oversee the work of the executives and the organisation. They are generally not paid for their work, or only paid a minimal rate. The current LHT chairman is Bill Tubey.

Customer Service Centre

Most Housing Associations have a department staffed by Customer Service Officers (CSOs) or similar staff. They take calls from customers, many of them related to repair reporting. Some centres also deal with complaints and general enquiries. LHT's Customer Service Centre is located in our Runcorn Office.

Decanting

The process by which residents in areas that are about to be redeveloped are moved out of an old home into alternative accommodation. Some may wish to return to newly-built homes, but some prefer not to have two lots of upheaval. Occasionally residents are decanted if major work has to take place to their homes.

Decent Homes

The standard set by the government for all homes owned by Housing Associations and Councils by 2010. This includes such things as homes being completely weather-proof with relatively new kitchens and bathrooms.

Gas Servicing

All housing associations are required to undertake servicing of gas appliances. CORGI registered engineers will complete the servicing to all customers homes. Failure by the customer to let the gas engineer in can ultimately result in court action and even eviction for persistent offenders.

Housing Corporation

This is the public body that funds and regulates housing associations.

National Housing Federation

The trade body for housing associations

ODPM

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. This government department looks after all government policy related to social housing and development of new homes.

Ombudsman

Once people have exhausted a complaints procedure they can go to the housing ombudsman to arbitrate.

Planned Maintenance

Cyclical work such as roofing, kitchen and bathroom replacement, etc that needs doing to keep homes up to standard. Residents are consulted on this work.

Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)

Another name for Housing Associations.

Responsive Repairs

Day to day repairs ranging from urgent to routine.

Shared Ownership

Where a home is partly owned by a housing association with the balance owned by the people living in it who pay a mortgage on the part they own and rent on the part owned by the housing associations. There are strict eligibility requirements as it is a cheaper way to get on the property ladder. People can gradually own more of the property if their circumstances improve (known as "staircasing").

Sheltered Housing

Means homes for older people who maintain their independence. It is not a nursing home.

Social Housing

A term often referring to housing association homes, though the term can include council housing.

Supported Housing

A term that can include specialist accommodation for those with particular needs, e.g. those with mental health problems, those who have other disabilities, those with learning difficulties, those with drug or substance abuse problems, women fleeing violence.

Void

An empty home. Housing associations aim to turn voids round quickly, but often have to undertake a number of repairs. Occasionally the landlord will take the opportunity to upgrade a property (an enhanced void) when it is between lets.