

Housing@21

Residents' Choice and Consensus Guide



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Welcome

At Housing 21, we are committed to enabling our residents to live the life they choose by promoting independence and choice.

Residents need to have a good understanding of all the options, along with the consequences of any decision(s), to be able to make an informed choice.

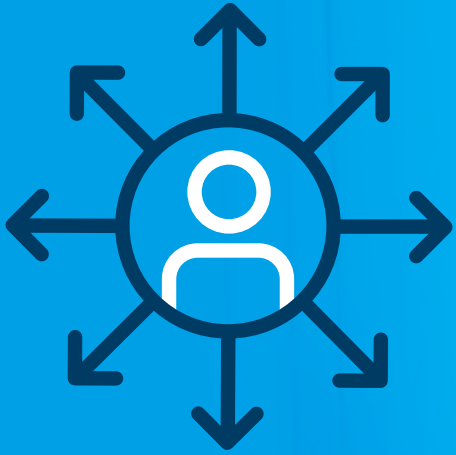
This guide has been created to assist residents and employees in identifying and actioning decisions, depending on whether they can be made by individual residents, residents working collectively as part of a scheme or by Housing 21.

- **Individual choices**
- **Scheme choices**
- **Housing 21 decisions**

Decisions and choices, whether made by an individual, the scheme or by Housing 21, are more likely to be successful if they are discussed first. Sometimes the terms of the lease or tenancy agreement may mean our permission is required before actioning any decisions as we may need to consider certain conditions.



The Housing 21 symbol is used to indicate where Housing 21's permission is needed to enable this choice.



Individual choices

These are choices that a resident can make themselves. They are encouraged to discuss these choices with friends, family and their Local Housing Manager, to ensure they have explored all outcomes to reach an informed decision.

Individual choices may sometimes refer to support needs and could be recorded within the resident's personal file or Support Plan which will remain confidential (subject to the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulations).



Choosing the right home for you

We offer two types of housing; Retirement Living and Extra Care and it's important you choose the home that's right for you, based upon your needs.

Retirement Living

Retirement Living offers you the opportunity to live independently within your own property but with the added benefit of an on-site Local Housing Manager during the week.

Residents often enjoy the benefit of communal facilities, such as a shared lounge and gardens, and there is the chance to enjoy being part of a wider community with your neighbours.

Extra Care

In our Extra Care properties you continue to live independently in your own property, but with the peace of mind from having Care Workers on site to help if and when you need it. You'll also have a range of communal facilities, which typically include a café / bistro, lounge, hair salon and gardens.

In Extra Care, couples with differing care needs can continue to live together with support from Care Workers, unlike in a care home, where you would need to live separately.

Rent or home ownership?

Depending upon the scheme you choose, Housing 21 has properties available for rent, shared ownership, shared equity or outright ownership.

- **Rent:** Our properties are either allocated from our waiting lists or through nominations from your local authority.
- **Outright ownership:** This is where you buy the lease for a property at full market value.
- **Shared ownership:** This allows you to own your home by purchasing as little as a 10 percent share and then pay rent on the outstanding amount. You can increase the share you own up to 75 percent. At 75 percent, you will no longer pay rent on the outstanding 25 percent.
- **Shared equity:** Shared equity is where you buy the lease for a property at 70 percent of the full market value but do not pay rent on the remaining 30 percent share.
- You can find out more in our [Guide to Renting With Us](#) and [Guide to Purchasing With Us \(Leasehold\)](#) on the [Housing 21 website](#).

Living in your home

Keeping a pet

We know that for many people, a pet is not just an animal, it's a companion, which is why we have a 'pet friendly' approach. However, we must ensure that your welfare and that of other residents, employees, visitors and the animal itself, are prioritised. We therefore ask all current and future residents to submit an application form for consideration before bringing any pets onto the scheme and make themselves aware of the scheme-specific criteria relating to animals in communal areas.

Support services

The support service available at your scheme is set out in the Court Service Agreement and the cost is divided amongst residents as part of your service charge. Some residents may be eligible for benefits to meet these costs.

You can choose the level of support you require, such as regular calls or visits, with your manager and this will be recorded in your Support Plan, which is reviewed at least annually. You can change the level of support at any time.

Smoking at home

Residents can smoke in their own homes but it is not lawful to smoke inside communal areas. If you do decide to smoke at home, we ask you to be careful of fire risks and be understanding of employees who may request to have meetings with them in smoke-free areas such as the office or communal lounge.

Emergency alarm system

We know how important it is to feel safe at home which is why all of our properties have a 24-hour emergency call system, managed by Appello.

In Retirement Living, the system is linked to the on-call Appello Team whilst in Extra Care, you will be connected straight to the on-site Care Team in the first instance, or Appello thereafter.

The call systems in our newer schemes have a built-in video door entry system so you can see and hear visitors before opening your front door.

Some schemes still provide an emergency alarm system (pull cords) connecting to a 24-hour on-call service. Residents can choose to disconnect the cords; we will respect the choice made by residents whilst discussing the implications of disconnecting the cord. If the system allows, residents can also choose to have a portable pendant or wrist button.

Telecare services

To help maintain independence, sensors can be installed which generate automatic alarms when various hazards are detected, such as flooding, falls, extreme temperatures, open doors etc.

The additional charges associated with installing and running these aids would need to be met by residents. These options can be discussed as part of your Support Plan.

Care provision

Individual residents can decide upon the following aspects of care provision:

- **Private care:** whether to apply for, or privately fund, help with tasks such as washing, dressing or preparing meals. We can assist with information and access to personal care. Our Extra Care schemes will have an on-site care provider but residents can choose to use another. This will be discussed and recorded in the Support Plan
- **Care assessment:** we can arrange for social services (Adult Social Care) to conduct an assessment of care needs and give residents the choice as to how to meet those needs through domiciliary care services
- **Additions to care packages:** Local social services will conduct an individual assessment to decide how much care is required and what the local authority will fund / change

Home improvements and adaptations

It's part of your tenancy or lease to keep your home in good condition so it's up to you how you decorate your home. You don't need our permission when choosing decor but we do ask that you're mindful of neighbours when undertaking any noisy work.

21 Home improvements

You can choose to update your home with a new kitchen, bathroom or flooring but please do speak with us first so we can confirm if any work may affect the structure of the property or require planning or building approval. We can also provide guidance about preventing noise disturbance to residents.

If you do decide to fit additional locks, your manager will discuss this with you part of the Support Plan review but please consider:

- Additional locks could delay access in an emergency
- If entry needs to be forced, you will be required to pay the costs of repairing any damage to the door and frame

21 Adding additional security

Every Housing 21 front door and lock has been installed with security in mind to prevent intruders accessing the property. The standard locks are part of a 'suited' set for which the Local Housing Manager has a master key so they can access your home in an emergency; if additional locks are fitted, they will not have keys for these.

21 Adapting homes (to help with a disability)

If you require aids or adaptations, such as grab rails, to assist with your independence, your Local Housing Manager will be able to support and signpost you to access suitable aids, equipment and assisted technology.

You will need to get permission before starting any work as we will need to consider the suitability of the building and availability of grants or funding.

Choice of repairs contractors in your home

Through scheme decisions, residents may be able to choose and agree their choice of preferred repairs contractors to include in the Court Service Agreement, which is regularly updated.

When undertaking work in their own homes, residents in rented accommodation can select their preferred contractor from the Court Service Agreement. As homeowners fund any contract work themselves, they can choose a contractor from the Court Service Agreement or source their own.

Employees can assist all residents when considering their choice of contractor, taking into consideration the standard or work, timeframes and cost.

Kitchen and bathroom replacements (rented only)

Where there is a planned programme of upgrades to either kitchens or bathrooms, residents can choose from a selection of finishes. Our Technical Surveyors will lead the process and we would recommend replacing baths with contemporary showers.

If residents want to choose a finish that is more expensive than the options provided we will try and facilitate this, provided they pay the difference in the purchase and installation costs directly to the contractor.



Communal spaces

Mobility scooters

Lots of residents choose to use mobility scooters but unfortunately, many schemes have limited space to store them. We also have to consider the availability of power supply, possible fire risks and obstruction of corridors and communal areas.

Your Local Housing Manager will be able to advise on capacity. Some schemes operate a waiting list whilst others allow residents to store them in their home (subject to safety and space assessments).

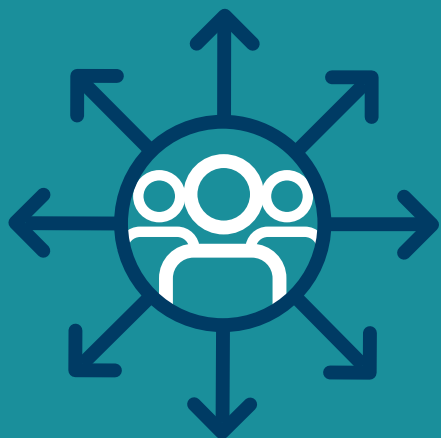
Participating in social events

Many schemes frequently host social events; it is an entirely individual choice whether you would like to join in. Speak to your Local Housing Manager if you need more information or additional support with attending.

Organising social events

We are always looking for new ways to tackle isolation and promote inclusivity. Residents are encouraged to share ideas for activities with their Local Housing Manager, Social Committee / Resident Group or proceed with organising themselves.





Scheme choices

Each scheme is a small community so any decisions need to consider the impact on all residents by inviting everyone to be involved. Residents will need to discuss these choices with each other, the Local Housing Manager and other relevant employees (e.g. Technical Surveyor) before reaching any decisions.

Your local manager will be trained in facilitating meetings to help you reach a majority decision. As with all community living, it may be necessary to make some compromises but once a consensus is reached, everyone should follow it. All decisions made by the scheme will be recorded in the Court Service Agreement.



Resident engagement

Making decisions

There are several different ways to make a decision at a scheme; the chosen method will depend upon the subject but it is important to try and reach a consensus with as many residents as possible.

A lot of decisions can be made informally through a newsletter survey or scheme meeting. However, some will need to be decided more formally, for example if it will result in additional costs to the service charge or a change to a service or lease. These decisions may be made by a ballot and in some cases, follow a prescribed process.

Residents' Association

Forming a Residents' Association is a good way to share opinions about the scheme and organise social events. Housing 21 has a minimum constitutional standard for formally recognising such groups and can advise about how to set one up.

Things to consider include:

- Are there people willing to take the lead?
- How will everyone be encouraged to join?
- Where will they meet?
- How will they raise funds?
- Understanding financial accountability

Due to the legal status of a Residents' Association, it is necessary to conduct a ballot to satisfy the rules around recognising the association.

Scheme newsletters

We want to keep residents informed of what is happening across your scheme and the wider organisation. Your Local Housing Manager is expected to provide a regular newsletter but it is up to the residents to decide on the:

- Format
- Choice and type of articles
- How it should be made available (in communal areas only or to every resident who wants one)

Residents are encouraged to get involved in the production of the newsletter in an editing or contributing capacity.

Communal spaces

Use of communal areas

Some schemes have the benefit of a communal lounge and / or other shared spaces, including the gardens.

Residents can decide how these facilities are used and the charges for private or external use. For those residents who find it difficult to leave the scheme, bringing in activities can make a big difference to their social calendar. In deciding how the areas are used, the needs of all residents should be considered to ensure it is inclusive. Occasionally, Housing 21 employees may request to use the space for meetings.

The gardens are for communal use by everyone but some residents may wish to undertake some gardening, particularly in the areas bordering their home. Speak to your Local Housing Manager about the arrangements in place at your scheme.

Car parking

Unless in exceptional circumstances, car parking is not allocated or reserved. Residents can collectively decide how best to use the car park, taking into consideration residents, employees, Care Workers and tradespeople. This excludes parking spaces designated within individual leases or employee bays.

Guest rooms

Many schemes have a guest room. Residents can decide whether it is used just by family and friends or is open to others, including visitors from other schemes. They can also decide whether to prioritise use for Care Workers who are tending to residents who are unwell. Residents also determine the nightly charges, factoring in the cost of laundry and cleaning, allowing any profit to be credited to the service charge.

Communal water taps

Some schemes have external water taps. Residents can decide whether these can be used by residents for errands such as gardens or washing cars. A consensus should be reached regarding the impact on service charges and the criteria for any health and safety or nuisance issues.

Communal room furniture

Furniture is provided for the communal spaces that meets fire safety standards. Often, communal furniture is funded through the scheme's sinking fund. When a makeover is due, residents will be asked to collectively agree the new style, design, comfort and durability of new furniture, ensuring the space remains attractive.

Court signage

All schemes have signs to direct and inform visitors. When they are due for replacement, residents can decide the need, wording, style and position of the signs, in keeping with the Housing 21 brand.

Pets

Whilst individuals are welcome to keep a pet (subject to meeting the terms of the pet policy), residents can collectively agree where pets are allowed in communal spaces such as the lounge and gardens. Details will be in the Court Service Agreement.



Repairs and contractors

Maintenance contractors

Schemes will discuss the use of locally-appointed contractors for maintaining and cleaning communal areas, including the gardens, along with the specification of work. This may also include the clearance of snow and ice in bad weather.

Employees will help residents consider the scope, quality and timeframe for work along with the costs for their preferred contractor (who must meet Housing 21's minimum requirements for liability insurance and safe working practices). The cost of these services form part of the service charge, which is paid by all residents.

Repairs contractors

Schemes can choose their preferred contractors, subject to meeting accreditation by Housing 21. Local Housing Managers will then regularly review value for money with residents to help inform decisions about ongoing use. Preferred / accredited contractor details are in the Court Service Agreement.



Resident services and facilities

Local Housing Manager absence (Retirement Living only)

Occasionally Local Housing Managers may be absent due to holidays or unplanned sickness. Residents can collectively choose how cover is provided, either:

- By a reciprocal agreement with another scheme (usually a weekly visit)
- Through agency use
- Other employees

The needs of all residents should be considered as well as:

- The availability of reciprocal cover
- Cost to the service charge
- Maintaining the minimum service level

The minimum level of housing management cover will be decided by Housing 21.

Hairdresser (certain schemes only)

Some schemes have a dedicated salon or hairdressing room. Residents can decide:

- Whether to have a regular or choice of hairdresser(s)
- Whether to charge for use of the facility
- How often the service should be available
- How much residents will be prepared to pay
- Whether the hairdresser has appropriate qualifications and insurance

Schemes without facilities may wish to share details of mobile hairdressers and whether other areas within the scheme could accommodate the service.

Catering services (schemes with commercial kitchens only)

Residents can collectively assist on helping to decide certain aspects of their scheme's catering service including:

- Choice of provider
- Menu choices with the chosen provider (subject to the terms of the contract)
- Meal times



Housing 21 choices

As a responsible landlord and employer, sometimes Housing 21 has to make decisions to meet legal, regulation or health and safety standards. In these instances, where decisions cannot be given to individuals or schemes as a collective, we will aim, wherever possible to consult with residents through Service Improvement Groups, local focus groups, resident conferences or local scheme meetings.



Living with us

Lettings and allocations policy

We will determine the lettings policy and will consider the needs of:

- Potential/future residents
- Nomination agreements with local authorities
- Conditions of any original funding
- Residents wishing to transfer homes

Age criteria

We can review the minimum age to rent a retirement property to 65 years. On leasehold properties the age requirement is normally part of the qualifying criteria written into the lease.

Management and employees

Employee pay, terms and conditions

Housing 21 invests in its employees to provide a high quality service to residents. We will benchmark pay, terms and conditions against those offered by other employers to ensure we remain competitive and able to recruit – and retain – high quality employees.

We will decide the minimum level of hours necessary to do each job depending on the nature of the scheme required by residents.

Resident Local Housing Managers

Some schemes have a resident Local Housing Manager but this is often reviewed when appointing a new Local Housing Manager.

When recruiting, will be make our decision based on the best applicant. If they do not require on-site accommodation, we will inform residents about the outcome.

At home ownership schemes, we normally only make changes to services after considering the terms of the lease and following consultation with residents, which has to be done in accordance with a Government-approved Association of Retirement Housing Managers Code of Practice.

Changing from a resident to a non-resident Local Housing Manager may also impact on service charge costs and the provision of an office and toilet facilities. All of this will be explained to residents.

Cover for Local Housing Manager absences

We will determine the amount of service a Local Housing Manager needs to provide in order to ensure a suitable standard of service to Retirement Living residents. In each case, we will consider the availability of suitable employees, the cost and any other contractual requirements.

Charges

Charges (e.g. rent, service charges, management fees and rechargeable repairs)

When determining charges, we will consider the following:

- Cost
- Quality of service provision
- Legal / contractual requirements
- Good practice
- Competitor benchmarks

Apportionment of service charge costs between residents

We will oversee how costs are apportioned within the lease or tenancy agreement and decide which costs are charged to all. On mixed tenure schemes where there are properties available for rent and homeownership, we will determine how costs are shared across different tenures.

Building management

Health and safety

We will always prioritise the safety of residents, employees and visitors by taking a responsible approach through regular risk assessments and consideration about what action to take.

Asset management decisions (investment)

We have a long term strategy to ensure our buildings are well maintained to meet current and future standards. In making any decisions about investment, we will seek Board approval, obtain any necessary planning permission, comply with building regulations and ensure residents are not disadvantaged.

Emergency alarm response service provider

Our 24-hour alarm service is provided by Appello and we will continue to retain control over this service. Awarding and managing the contract in this way ensures residents get excellent value for money. Due to the importance of this contract in ensuring resident wellbeing, it is crucial we work closely with the provider which would not be possible if we appointed multiple contractors nationwide.

Planned works

We consider the requirement of each scheme by maintaining up-to-date stock information and producing a business plan for each scheme outlining the five year plan. This will allow local employees to manage their budgets and provide accurate information to residents.

- **Planned works programme (including decoration of communal areas):** Our planned works programme gives consideration to the condition of the build and availability of funds. To ensure the sinking fund remains sufficient to undertake the required works over the building's lifetime, homeowners (including those on mixed tenure schemes) will discuss contributions with their Local Housing Manager and Technical Surveyor. Residents will be consulted under section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (as amended) for application service charge works.

Residents on rented schemes can discuss priorities within the planned work programme with their Local Housing Manager and Technical Surveyor and will be given choices when the programme is delivered.

We will replace bathrooms and kitchens as outlined in the business plans; there is not an option to swap a kitchen replacement for a bathroom (or vice versa). Residents who want to replace a kitchen or bathroom ahead of schedule can request our permission to do so.

- **Contractors:** There are some existing long term contractual arrangements where we have agreed to give certain work to specific contractors in order to provide value for money. Sometimes we organise work regionally or nationally to provide efficiency and savings and for these reasons, it is not possible for individual schemes to choose their own contractors for major works.

Homeowners have a statutory right to nominate contractors to be invited to tender.

Contractors

Contractors

We will determine the specification and appoint contractors for servicing and works that fall within a legal or regulatory framework such as:

- Lifts
- Emergency alarm
- Fire detection
- Testing of portable electrical equipment in communal areas
- Gas appliances
- Catering equipment
- Radon management
- Complex water management
- Asbestos management

We will retain central control over these high risk (and specialist) contracts; where we are legally required to consult, we will do so to seek residents' views on specifications and the appointment of contractors.

Our employees or contractors may need to access residents' properties to undertake checks; allowing access is a condition of the leases of tenancy agreement and will be enforced if access is denied.

Accreditation of repairs and maintenance contractors

Whilst we offer local choice over the use of contractors, we have to ensure they meet our minimum standards by going through our accreditation process. We will not put unnecessary obstacles in the way of a contractor achieving accreditation.

Scheme contractor accreditation (gardeners, cleaners etc)

As with the accreditation of local repairs contractors, we will decide on certain criteria for locally engaged contractors such as:

- Minimum levels of indemnity insurance
- Assurance of competency
- Safety of working practices

This brochure can be provided in a different format, such as large print, Braille or another language. Please contact communications@housing21.org.uk if you would like this in an alternative format.



Give us your views on living with Housing 21 and score us on Trustpilot at

<https://www.trustpilot.com/review/www.housing21.org.uk>

Housing The Housing 21 logo, where the number "21" is enclosed in a green circle.

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