



home



A guide to filling in our questionnaire



Introduction

At Home Group, we are currently updating the information we have on our customers. Making sure that we have up-to-date information will help us to provide a better, more efficient service to you. It will also mean we can make sure we are treating all of our customers fairly and not discriminating against anyone.

These guidance notes explain what we are asking, why we are asking it, how you should fill in the form and what we will do with the information. Please take time to read the notes with the questionnaire.

The questionnaire should take about 15 minutes to fill in, depending on how many of the questions apply to your household.

If you would like help to fill in the questionnaire, please contact your local Home Group office.

What we will use the information for

We will use some of the information we collect to provide a better service that meets your individual needs. For example, we will arrange to visit you at times that are convenient to you. If you need our letters to be sent in large print, we can arrange for this.

We will also use the information for statistical purposes - to look at the kind of people our customers are. For example, we may find that our customers have more or fewer disabilities than residents in non-housing-association accommodation. Looking at these statistics will help us to see whether or not we need to adapt our properties for residents who have disabilities or problems getting around. It will also help us when we build properties in the future so we can meet our customers' needs.

We will produce reports on our customers, but these will **not** identify any individual customers or addresses. For example, we may produce a report that looks at the number of customers with children, or the number of customers who are single people under the age of 25.

Who we will share the information with

We will not share information with anyone else, other than with our contractors or partners where they are providing a service to you on our behalf or helping us to collect and put together information. On the questionnaire we ask you to sign to give us your permission to share information. We will only share the bare minimum of information and only information which is relevant to the service being provided. For example, if a contractor is due to carry out a repair to your home and you have a hearing problem, it would be relevant for us to tell them to knock loudly. It would not be necessary for us to tell them your sexuality or what you earn. Our contractors and partners cannot give any information to anyone else.

We will keep secure any information you give us. Only a small number of our staff can access sensitive information about our customers.

Questions

Question 1 Your details

We ask for this information so that we can contact you in a way that is most convenient for you. For example, if you work full-time and we need to contact you at short notice, we may ring you after office hours at home. Or, we may ring you during the day at work, as long as you are happy for us to do this.

Please include your area code for phone and textphone numbers.

'Your partner' means your joint tenant or joint leaseholder, or the person you are married to or live with as if you were married to them, or your civil partner or a person you live with as if they were your civil partner ('civil partner' means somebody who has entered into a civil partnership and has the same rights as a married person).

Question 2 Involving someone who supports you

We will use this information to contact you in an emergency, but only if we cannot contact you direct. If you would like to have someone else with you if we need to visit or ring you, or you would like us to contact someone else on your behalf, please give us their details. We will take this information into account if we need to get in touch with you.

Getting in touch

Question 3 The best way to contact you

We would normally contact you by phone or letter. These are not always the best ways for some of our customers, however. For example, if you find it difficult to speak on the phone, you may prefer us to visit you at home. We cannot guarantee to visit every time we need to speak to you, but we will do this if we can. If you prefer a text message rather than a phone call, we can arrange to contact you in this way (we may not be able to do this if we need to contact you about a complicated matter).

Question 4 The best way to give you information

When we send you information, such as telling you about a new housing officer in your area, or sending you a rent statement, we will usually contact you by letter (but sometimes by phone). Please tell us if you would prefer to be contacted in another way, for example by email. If you would like your letters to be in large print, please tell us in question 4.

Sometimes we have to contact you in writing even if that is not your preferred way for us to contact you. For example, we must do this when we tell you we are increasing your rent. Where we have to do this, we can still take account of any specific needs you have. For example, if you have sight problems, we can send the information in large print.

Question 5 The languages you want us to contact you in

We will normally communicate with our customers in English. However, if you find it difficult to read or speak English, we may be able to contact you in your preferred language. We may not be able to translate all of our documents for you, but will try to when we need to give you important information. If we do not have a member of staff who can speak to you in your preferred language, we may use a phone interpreting service.

You and your household

This section will help provide a full picture of who our customers are and help us to develop our services so they meet your needs.

'Household' includes anyone who lives with you, such as children, parents, other family members, lodgers and friends. Please do not include any children who don't live with you, but come and stay. A partner or husband or wife who lives with you should be included under the 'joint tenant or leaseholder' column. It doesn't matter whether or not they are on the tenancy agreement.

Question 6 People who live with you

We would like to know who lives in your home so that we can look at whether your property meets your needs. If for example, your details show that your home is too small for your household, we may be able to help you find a bigger house. Or, if your home is too big for you and you would like to move somewhere smaller, we may be able to help you do this.

We ask for dates of birth of all people in your household so that we can keep our information on our customers' ages up to date. We will use this information to make sure that our services are appropriate for our customers. For example, if we find that a lot of our customers are over 55, we may be able to provide advice on sheltered housing (this is only for people aged 55 and over). Or, if we find that there are large numbers of children and young people in your area, we may be able to give you advice on local children's activities and youth services.

Question 7 Disabilities

So we can try to deal with the barriers people face who have disabilities or long-term illnesses, and to meet our responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005, we need to work out how many of our residents have a disability or long-term illness. We can then make sure all customers have equal access to our services. We can also investigate whether we can adapt our properties to better meet our customers' needs (see question 8 below).

Question 8 Adaptations

If you have a disability or long-term illness, we may be able to make changes to your home to make it easier for you to live there. If your disability or illness makes it difficult for you to get in or out of the bath for example, we may be able to remove the bath and fit a walk-in shower.

'24-hour emergency personal-care call system' means a 24-hour call centre that can help you in an emergency. For example, if you fall in your home and you cannot get up by yourself, the call centre will contact someone on your behalf who can come to your home and help you. The call centre can also call an ambulance for you if you need medical help.

We may not be able to provide all adaptations you ask for, but the information you give us will tell us how many customers want a certain kind of adaptation. This may mean that we can apply to your local authority for funding for these alterations.

Question 9 Your ethnic background

We will use the information you give us to make sure we are not discriminating against anyone because of their race or ethnic background. We will also monitor complaints and antisocial behaviour cases to make sure our customers are not treated differently because of their race or ethnic background. We want to make sure we allocate our properties fairly and provide a consistently good service to all of our customers.

Question 10 Religion

We want to make sure we are not discriminating against any of our customers because of their religion or belief. As well as this, by becoming more aware of our residents' religions and beliefs, we can make sure we take account of cultural beliefs and religious holidays in the services we provide. For example, we will make sure we do not visit, or ask our repairs contractors to visit, a Muslim household during Eid, unless it is an emergency.

Question 11 Any extra needs you or your household have

We want to make sure we take your needs into account when we contact you, or you contact us. For example, if you would prefer to have someone at home with you when we call or our contractors call, we will make sure that we give you an appointment with plenty of notice so that you can arrange this.

Question 12 Sexuality

We will use the information you give us to make sure we do not discriminate against any of our customers because of their sexuality. For example, we want to make sure we allocate our vacant homes fairly and according to housing need. To do this, we need to know the make-up of people who move into our homes. We will also monitor complaints and antisocial behaviour cases to make sure our customers are not treated differently based on their sexuality.

Your work situation

Question 13 You and your household's work situation

We would like to know your and your household's work situation (which members of your household work, study, are retired, in full-time education, and so on) so we can work out whether we need to provide services such as financial advice. If a large number of our customers in a particular area are unemployed for example, we may be able to give them advice on training or state benefits. Or, we may be able to tell people about services other organisations are already providing in their area.

We are asking for details of people over 16 who live with you. This is because we would like to look at any future employment or training needs of young people who are due to leave school or college. In future, we may be able to help to meet these needs, but this will depend how many people want to use these services.

You do not need to give us details of any children under 16.

We may also look at groups of customers with particular problems, such as those who have difficulty paying their rent. We will look at the information they give us to see if they are working and what income and benefits they receive. This means we can give them help and advice early on and help stop debt building up. For example, we might put them in touch with independent debt-advice agencies.

Question 14 Benefits

We will use the information you give us to check that our customers are claiming the benefits they are entitled to. For example, if you are unemployed, sick or disabled or working part-time and not claiming Housing Benefit, we may be able to help you claim it. (Your entitlement will depend on your income and who is in your household).

In the questionnaire, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) replaces Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid on the grounds of incapacity for **new claims only**, from 27 October 2008.

Question 15 Income

We are asking for this information because we want to look at the overall incomes of our customers. This will help us to adapt our services in future. For instance, we may decide in future that we need specialist advisors to help our customers increase their income. We may also find that, for example, we have a large number of customers who are on a low income, but would like to buy their next home. This may mean that we look at providing more shared ownership (part-buy and part-rent) housing in the future.

Question 16 Bank or building society accounts

We would like to know how many of our customers have access to financial services. This is so that we can look at helping our customers access to these services (by, for example, putting customers in touch with credit unions) if they need them. We will compare answers for section 16 to answers for section 15. This is because some households on low incomes find it difficult to get bank accounts. We will use this information to create statistics. We are not asking you to give us any personal account details.

Our future services

Question 17 Housing you would like in the next five years

We will use this information to look at what type of housing we need to provide in future. For example, we may find that many of our customers would like to buy their next home. This may mean that in future, we build more homes for our customers to buy and or we give our customers advice on how to get a mortgage.

You may decide that you would consider any of the options in Question 17, but we would like to know what kind of housing you prefer most.

What are shared ownership, shared equity and leasehold?

Shared ownership involves buying a share in a property and paying rent on the rest. For example, if you buy a 50% share in a property worth £120,000, you would need a mortgage for up to £60,000 and you would pay a reduced rent on the remaining £60,000. You can later buy more shares of the property, until you own 100% of it.

Shared equity involves buying a percentage of the purchase price, but owning 100% of the property. This means that buyers can apply for a mortgage for less than the value of the property.

Leasehold means that you buy a property, with the right to live in it for a given length of time for example, 99 years. Flats are often sold as leasehold.

Question 18 **Services you would like us to provide**

We may want to look at providing new services that we do not currently offer where you live. We may for example, be able to help with gardening or give jobs or careers advice. However, we will only look at this if we find that there is enough demand from our customers for these kinds of services.

We realise that some customers may be interested in all of these possible services. However, for us to realistically be able to provide any of them, we need to know which ones you would consider a priority. Please choose up to three options.

Question 19 **Improvements you would like to see**

We are asking this question because we would like to know if there are any parts of your neighbourhood you think needs to be improved. Please choose up to three options.

Question 20 **Doctors and dentists**

We are asking this question because we would like to know how many of our customers find it difficult to get access to public services such as an NHS dentist. We do not need details of who your doctor or dentist is because we will only use this information to create statistics. We will not contact your doctor or dentist.

Question 21 **Internet access**

We would like to know how many of our current customers have internet access. Using this information, we hope to find out what the future demand for broadband internet may be so that we can look into providing it. We may, for example, start to put broadband in our new properties so that it's already there when people move in.

Question 22 **Getting involved in making decisions about our services**

We are committed to making sure our customers are involved when we develop our services. They can be involved by filling in a questionnaire, going to meetings or becoming a member of our board. If you tick 'yes' to this question, we will send you information on the many different ways that you can be involved in shaping our services. You will not be committing to anything at this stage.



Home Group Limited
2 Gosforth Park Way
Gosforth Business Park
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE12 8ET
Phone: 0845 155 1234
Website: www.homegroup.org.uk

Charitable I & P Society Number: 22981R