

HOMES FOR LIFE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Customer Service Policy

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Objective:	To ensure that all of our staff and customers are aware of the high standards of service we aim to provide.
Responsible:	Customer Service Manager

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to delivering an excellent service to all of our customers.
- 1.2 This policy sets out our approach to achieving the highest standards of Customer Service and we will use it consistently in the delivery of our services.
- 1.3 We will aim to achieve the relevant Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes, particularly outcome 1 which states “every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect and receives fair access to housing and housing services”

2.0 Our Customers

- 2.1 Our customers are all of the people we come into contact with in the course of our work and include:
 - Tenants
 - Sharing Owners
 - Owners
 - Homehunt applicants
 - Members of the public
 - Local Authorities
 - Contractors and Consultants
 - Other organisations that we work with
- 2.2 Although this policy is mainly aimed at external customers, the standards set will also be applied to dealings between staff within the organisation and Board members.

3.0 General Principles of Customer Care

- 3.1 In delivering this policy we will ensure that the following general principles are followed at all times:
 - We will put our customers first and respect their rights, needs and opinions
 - Our staff will always give their names when in contact with customers
 - We will be friendly, professional, polite, open, honest and truthful
 - We will provide relevant, accurate information in Plain English or other formats such as audio cd if necessary
 - We will listen to our customers, find out what they want and try to provide it
 - We will comply with our Privacy Policy
 - If we cannot help, we will explain why and, wherever possible, suggest someone who can
 - For those customers who cannot come to our office, we will visit them at home

4.0 Visiting Our Office

- 4.1 Our office and web office will be open at times to suit our customers. Opening hours will be well publicised on our website, at the office, in our Tenants Newsletter.
- 4.2 Our office will be friendly, welcoming, comfortable, clean and tidy. We will provide adequate seating, private interview space and a range of information leaflets.
- 4.3 Where customers have special requirements, we will make any arrangements necessary including providing an induction hearing loop and interpreting services. Information about these services will be displayed in our office reception.
- 4.4 Customers will be encouraged to make appointments to see the person they need to see and avoid having to wait. Where an appointment has been made the customer will not be kept waiting. If a delay is unavoidable, we will tell the customer the reason for any delay and keep them informed about the likely waiting time.
- 4.5 Where an appointment has not been made, we will try to ensure that the customer sees the person they need to see and will tell the customer how long they may have to wait. If the staff member is not available or the customer is unable to wait, we will offer an appointment or the services of another staff member.
- 4.6 If we cannot help, we will always try to direct the customer to someone who can and make a referral where we have arrangements in place to do so.

5.0 Written Communication

- 5.1 All letters and e-mails sent to customers will be clear, easy to understand and read, and will be written in Plain English.
- 5.2 Where we are unable to respond fully within the target response time, we will write explaining the reason for the delay and say when we expect to make a full response.
- 5.3 All letters will be sent in the name of the person dealing with the matter and will contain clear and accurate explanations about decisions that have been made. E-mails and SMS text messages will be sent from a central mailbox but will contain clear contact information.

6.0 Telephone Calls

- 6.1 All telephone calls will be answered as quickly as possible. Staff will greet callers in a polite and courteous manner stating their name and department.
- 6.2 During opening hours, we will only use Voicemail when staff are unavailable. Recorded messages will be audible and accurate and callers will be offered the option of leaving a voicemail message or being called back when the staff member is available.
- 6.3 We use answer phones when the office is closed. Recorded messages will be clear, audible and accurate and will always give the caller the option of leaving a message. Messages will also inform callers of who they should contact in case of an emergency.
- 6.4 We will respond to answer phone messages at the earliest possible opportunity.

7.0 Home Visits

- 7.1 Where required, we will arrange appointments to visit customers at home during office hours. The customer will always be offered the option of changing the appointment to a time more suited to them.
- 7.2 If we are unable to keep an appointment, for example due to staff absence, we will notify the customer as soon as possible, explain why we cannot keep the appointment and arrange another appointment at a mutually convenient time.
- 7.3 All staff will carry identification and will show it to customers before entering their home.
- 7.4 We will explain the reason for visiting and what, if any, action will be taken following the home visit.
- 7.5 If the customer is not at home, staff will leave a calling card detailing who visited and why with contact information. Sensitive information will not be noted on calling cards.

7.6 We will not normally visit without an appointment but there will be times when we have to, for example if the customer has repeatedly failed to allow access for visits.

8.0 Customer Feedback

8.1 We will consult with customers on issues that affect them as detailed in our Tenant Participation Strategy.

8.2 When we consult or ask for feedback we will make sure that:

- We provide all the information customers need to allow them to make an informed response
- We provide reply paid envelopes
- Customers can respond on line if they prefer to
- We use the feedback to improve our services and influence our policies
- We report the results to our customers

9.0 Customer Satisfaction

9.1 We will use a variety of methods to measure customer satisfaction including:

- A full Tenant Satisfaction Survey every two years
- Repair Satisfaction slips for every repair we arrange
- Post contract satisfaction surveys
- Post allocation feedback surveys
- Periodic surveys on specific services such as stair cleaning or garden care
- Short surveys on specific topics issued with our Newsletter

9.2 We will use the information gained from these surveys to improve our services and influence our policies.

9.3 We will report the results of these surveys, and what we are doing as a result, to our customers through our Newsletter and website.

10.0 When We Get Things Wrong

10.1 Although we will always strive to deliver excellent service, we acknowledge that we will sometimes make mistakes and will not always get things right first time.

10.2 We will make it easy for Customers to complain, formally or informally, by publicising our complaints policy and making it readily available to anyone who wants to use it. Our website includes various ways for customers to give feedback, such as contact forms, "praise or grumble" and the Live Help service, as well as giving on-line access to, and information about, our comments and complaints service.

10.3 When we make mistakes we will apologise, put things right as quickly as possible and use the experience to improve our service in the future.

11.0 Monitoring and Review

11.1 In consultation with staff we will set targets for all aspects of Customer Care and these targets will be reviewed annually.

11.2 We will report our performance against these targets

11.3 We will publish our performance results in our Tenants Newsletter and Annual Report.

11.4 The Business Manager will ensure that this policy is reviewed every five years.

Customer Service Charter

We want to be the best landlord we can be, offering high quality services to all of our customers. This Charter sets out what you can expect from us when you use one of our services, how you can help us to provide you with an excellent service and what to do if we don't meet your expectations.

Our Staff Will

- Treat you fairly and equally with respect and dignity
- Be friendly, polite and professional at all times
- Be fully trained to do their jobs
- Give you the best advice and help that we can
- Always maintain confidentiality
- Listen to you and respond to your needs as quickly and efficiently as possible
- Tell you if we cannot help and try to direct you to someone who can
- Always tell you who you are speaking to and, out of the office, show you identification
- Do what they say they will and keep you informed
- Try to meet the targets set for them in relation to Customer Care

When You Visit Our Office

We Will

- Deal with your enquiry as quickly as possible
- Encourage you to make an appointment with the person you need to see so that you don't have a wasted journey
- Try not to keep you waiting if you have an appointment
- Keep you informed if there is any unavoidable delay
- Tell you how long you may have to wait if you don't have an appointment and offer alternatives such as a home visit or seeing another staff member
- See you in an interview room if you wish so that you can speak in private

When You Visit Our Web Office

We Will

- Provide all our core services on-line
- Deal with your enquiry as quickly as possible
- Help you to find relevant information relating to your enquiry
- Give you a written record of the advice you have been given if you want one

When You Phone Us We Will

- Answer the phone as quickly as possible
- Tell you who you are speaking to
- Listen to you
- Let you speak to the person who can help you or, if they are not available, offer to get them to phone you back
- Phone you back when we say we will
- Give you the option of leaving a voicemail message and, if you do, get back to you as soon as possible

When You Write To Us

We Will

- Write back to you as soon as we can, almost always within response targets that we will publish
- If we cannot respond within our published target times, explain to you why not
- Give you clear and accurate explanations about any decisions we have made
- Write to you in Plain English without using jargon

When We Visit You at Home

We Will

- Arrange an appointment in advance unless there is a good reason not to
- Give you the opportunity of re-arranging the appointment
- Show you identification
- Fully explain the reason for visiting you and what, if anything, will happen after the visit

When You Report a Repair

We Will

- Pass it on to the right contractor immediately
- Tell you if the repair is a qualifying repair under the Right to Repair Scheme
- Arrange access to suit you wherever possible
- Complete the work within our published target response times
- Ask you for your views on the quality of our service

Equal Opportunities

We will

- Not discriminate against you because of your race, sex, marital status, age, disability, sexuality, religion or political beliefs
- We will do all we can to make our services available to all
- We will provide information in different formats such as large print, audio tape or other languages if you need it

Rents and Service Charges

We will

- Provide a range of ways to pay to make it as easy as possible for you to do so
- Consult you about our proposals to increase the rent each year
- Give you a months notice before applying any increases
- Deal with rent arrears sympathetically but firmly and refer you to sources of help if you need it

Consultation

We will

- Consult with you about policies and procedures that directly affect you if we are going to make significant changes
- Offer you the choice of responding on-line or by post
- Make sure we give you enough time to respond
- Give you enough information to allow you to make an informed response
- Use the feedback you provide to improve our services and influence our policies
- Publish the results so that you know what others said and what we did as a result

What We Expect of You

We need your help to provide an excellent service and we think that it's reasonable to ask you to:

- Be polite and courteous to our staff and contractors, treat them with respect
- Never shout at, abuse or threaten our staff or contractors
- Be prepared and have any documents or information you may need close at hand
- Let us know if you can't keep an appointment
- Give us the information we ask for so that we can help you
- Comply with all reasonable requests made by our staff
- Appreciate that there will be times when we are unable to help you
- Let us know when we get it wrong and help us to put things right to your satisfaction