

Customer Service Policy

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Customer Services Policy

Equal Opportunities: We are mindful of the definition of equal opportunities set out within the Scotland Act 1998 which states that “equal opportunities” means the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinion.” As a Housing Association we are work towards building equalities considerations into all areas of our work.

Risk Management and Assessment : Low - If the policy is followed, the management of Risk will be reduced in terms of delivering effective Customer Service which achieves a high level of customer satisfaction.

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out the service standards our customers can expect from us to help them to hold us to account. We aim to deliver excellent customer service through professional and committed staff enabling customer needs to be met with positive results. We have developed a good understanding of our customers through a range of consultation and engagement methods.

We will comply with our statutory duties and regulatory requirements in accordance with;

The Scottish Social Housing Charter
The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

1.1 Customer Service Standards

Our Customer Service Standards are widely available and accessible to customers. We encourage customers to share their views on the range of services we offer to help us provide services which our customers value.

Contacting Us

We will treat every tenant and other customer fairly and with respect to ensure all customers receive fair access to our services.

If you write to us we will:-

- acknowledge your letter or e-mail on receipt
- respond to your written request within 5 working days. If we cannot provide a reply within this time we will let you know why and specify a reasonable date by which you can expect our response.
- use plain English, avoid using jargon, technical descriptions or abbreviations
- ensure that all letters are signed by the person sending the reply and provide contact details in the response.

If you telephone us:-

- staff are available to answer calls between 8.45am and 4.45pm Monday to Thursday and from 8.45am to 4.00pm on Fridays.
- we will answer your call within 5 rings
- staff will greet you in a friendly manner and tell you their name
- If the person you want to speak to is not available, we will try to deal with your enquiry or take a message for the person to return your call.
- staff will return calls within one working day
- outside normal office hours, at weekends and holidays, we will provide an answering service for emergency repairs.

If you visit our office:-

- we will practical efforts to make our offices accessible to everyone
- facilities will be provided for personal or confidential discussions.
- Should interview room be in use, visitors will be asked if they wish to make alternative arrangements e.g. a home visit or appointment
- all visitors will be dealt with promptly, visitors with an appointment will be seen within 5 minutes of the specified time
- appointments for staff who are not immediately available will be made within 5 working days

If you wish a home visit from us:-

- home visits can be arranged for any staff member to call
- home visits will be made within 5 working days of the request
- should we need to cancel a meeting at short notice e.g. due to weather conditions, another appointment will be made within 5 working days
- where we visit you and your not at home, we will leave a 'no access' calling card to let you know we visited and request that you contact us to make suitable arrangements.

Tenant Participation And Consultation

In line with our Tenant Participation & Consultation Strategy we will:

- provide opportunities for consultation and engagement with customers
- communicate regularly with tenant members by providing a quarterly tenants newsletter and other information as appropriate
- provide a range of information leaflets on services
- promote the formation of representative groups
- provide help and financial support to set-up and maintain customer groups

To help us achieve better services, tenants are encouraged to make full use of the opportunities we offer to feedback on our range of services

Housing Management Services

Rent Collection

We will:-

- offer a range of ways for customers to pay their rent conveniently
- provide advice on maximising income and budgeting
- provide help or assistance to complete Housing Benefit applications
- notify tenants early if they fail to pay their rent
- deal with arrear cases in a sensitive but firm manner in accordance with our Rent Arrear policy
- send customers a rent statement every year

To help achieve a better service tenants are asked to:-

- pay rent or complete Housing Benefit applications on time
- seek our advice immediately if there is a problem paying rent.

Antisocial Behaviour

We will:-

- respond to all reports of antisocial behaviour within 5 working days
- respond to incidents involving threats or actual violence or racial harassment on the day on which the complaint is made
- offer mediation services where both parties are willing to engage and reach a mutually acceptable solution.
- where necessary, liaise with our partners to bring about a solution to severe or emergency cases

To help achieve a better service tenants are asked to:-

- report incidents of antisocial behaviour to the Association
- show respect for neighbours by behaving in a responsible and considerate manner in accordance with conditions of tenancy

Environmental Services

We will:-

- inspect gardens and open spaces within our estates regularly
- carry out regular maintenance to all open spaces under our ownership
- ensure that the communities we serve are as safe as possible and remain pleasant places to live

To help achieve a better service tenants are asked to:-

- keep gardens neat and tidy in accordance with conditions of tenancy
- report any issues of safety or concern to us

Applying for a House

We will:-

- participate in a Common Housing Register in partnership with the local council and other Registered Social Landlords.
- operate a system of allocating houses in accordance with the Common Allocation Policy

- assess applications for housing within 10 days and advise the applicant accordingly
- widely publicise
- issue a satisfaction survey to all new tenants to allow us to monitor our allocation performance.

To help achieve a better service all applicants are asked to

- ensure that they provide all information requested by us
- advise of any changes which will affect the application

Repairs Services

We will:-

- carry out repairs within stated timescales
 - ⇒ Emergency repairs within 2 hours (to repair or make safe)
 - ⇒ Urgent repairs within 3 working days
 - ⇒ Routine repairs within 5 working days
 - ⇒ Pre-inspection within 2 working days
- operate the statutory right to repair scheme
- operate a compensation for improvement scheme for tenants
- carry out satisfaction surveys for all repair and contract work
- recharge for repairs which are necessary due to acts of neglect or wilful damage which are proven to be the fault of the tenant, their family or visitors.

To help achieve a better service tenants are asked to:-

- report any repairs as soon as they are aware of a problem
- look after the property and avoid unnecessary repairs work

House Sales

We will:-

- process house sales within the statutory timescales.
- provide advice and assistance on the sales process to customers who qualify to buy their home
- keep purchasers informed of progress with their application to buy

To help achieve a better service applicants are asked to:-

- ensure that all information requested by us relating to the application to purchase is supplied

Contract Improvement Works

We will:-

- provide customers with our improvement work plans for the following 2 years as part of our annual rent consultation.
- Promote customer choice when undertaking specific work such as kitchen replacement

- Notify customers of the programme of work and provide a detailed contract bulletin advising of roles & responsibilities, the timescale, access and general advice on how to prepare for work
- Give customers at least 5 days notice of when work will start
- Employ suitable contractors with a track record in delivering excellent customer service
- Inspect completed work to ensure it meets our high quality standards
- Provide a satisfaction survey for feedback when work is complete

To help achieve a better service applicants are asked to:-

- Allow access for work to be completed and follow our advice to prepare for work
- Return the satisfaction survey to help us monitor performance and identify service improvements

Enquiries, complaints, compliments & suggestions

We encourage and welcome all enquiries, complaints and suggestions to enable us to assess our services and help identify service improvements. We use a wide range of methods to allow our customers to engage with us and give feedback on the services they receive.

Compliments from customers are a great morale boost for staff and contractors. We very much appreciate it when customers take the time to compliment us or our contractors on great service. We make sure we share these with staff, contractors and other customers and use customer testimonials regularly when promoting our services.

We will:-

- respond to all enquires, complaints & suggestions within 5 working days
- respond fully to customer complaints in accordance with our Complaint Handling Procedure and comply with requests from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
- acknowledge receipt of complaints within 1 working day issue a full response within 5 working days
- review suggestions on receipt and respond to them

To achieve a better service complainants are asked to:-

- return service satisfaction surveys, participate in consultation opportunities
- let us try to resolve complaints within the stated timescales
- clearly identify the complaint and how they would like us to resolve it

1.2 - Tenants Handbook

We provide a Tenants Handbook to all new tenants. This sets out information and advice on a range of services and quick guides of the rights and responsibilities of being a tenant.

The Handbook is formatted in such a way to allow periodic update to its contents. We will comprehensively review the content of the Handbook every 3 years or sooner if legislative or policy changes occur.

2.0 External Accreditations

We demonstrate and evidence our commitment to excellent customer service by monitoring our performance in line with our Internal Management Plan. Our customer service standards have also been recognised by accreditations for Investors in People and the prestigious Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard.

External accreditations are undertaken every three years to ensure our commitment to customers continues to meet these challenging standards.

3.0 Staff and Service Delivery

We will ensure that our staff have the skills and capacity to carry out the requirements of this policy effectively.

Staff will receive regular training on customer service to ensure our tenants and customers receive great customer service. Staff will have the opportunity to influence and comment on the policy through regular review.

4.0 Availability of Policy

As with all of the Associations policies, this document can be made available to anyone who requests it, in full or in part, on tape, in large print, in Braille or in another language at no cost to the individual.

5.0 Review

The policy will be reviewed and re-considered by Board at least every three years. The Policy may also be reviewed out-with the review cycle if legislative changes occur, good practice recommendations or by recommendations from customers or external accreditations.

6.0 Regulatory Standards of Governance & Financial Management

In carrying out this policy we aim to demonstrate compliance with the following standards:-

1. The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other customers.
 - 1.1 The governing body sets the RSL's strategic direction. It agrees and oversees the organisation's strategic and financial plans to achieve its purpose and intended outcomes for its tenants and other customers.
2. The RSL is open and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, customers and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.
 - 2.1 The RSL gives tenants, customers and other stakeholders information that meets their needs about the RSL, its services, its performance and its future plans.

2.3 The RSL seeks out the needs, priorities, views and aspirations of tenants, customers and stakeholders. The governing body takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions.

4. The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.

4.1 The governing body ensures it receives good quality information and advice from staff and, where necessary, expert independent advisers, that is timely and appropriate to its strategic role and decisions. The governing body is able to evidence any of its decisions.

4.2 The governing body challenges and holds senior officers to account for their performance in achieving the RSL's purpose and objectives.

5. The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.

5.1 The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity and, through the actions of the governing body and staff, upholds the good reputation of the RSL and the sector.

6. The governing body and senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective.

6.5 The governing body is satisfied that the senior officer has the necessary skills and knowledge to do his/her job.