

Policy on:	Customer Service
Compliant with Charter Outcomes and Standards:	Yes
Compliant with Equalities:	Yes – Equalities Impact Assessment complete
Compliant with Business Plan:	Yes
Compliant with Risk:	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.
Date for Approval:	April 2022
Date for Review:	April 2025
Responsible Officers:	Ann Black, Housing Manager



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This policy is available, on request, in different languages and in other formats such as large print, audio format and braille as required



1. Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out the service standards our customers can expect from us. 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.

Shire Housing Association will always treat our customers with respect and courtesy and strive to work in partnership with our customers to continually improve the quality of service that is delivered to them. We have specific core values in respect of how we interact with others and these values reflect how we wish to conduct relationships and interact with all customers, employees, partners and suppliers.

We believe that a 'high quality service' means that:

- We are accessible (can be easily contacted) by all sections of the community.
- We are accountable for the decisions we make and the actions we take.
- We will keep those we are in contact with informed, as appropriate.
- We will ensure that the information we provide, whether verbally or in written form, is easily understood, accurate and up to date.
- We will consult with our customers and other users on the standards of service they receive, and we encourage customers to have a say (to participate) in the decisions we make.
- We will listen and respond to the needs of our customers.
- We will treat those we contact honestly, with respect and courtesy.
- We are reliable and we will do what we say we will do.

We will comply with our statutory duties and regulatory requirements such as the Scottish Social Housing Charter and Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 and have a number of key documents and supporting policies as follows:

- Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Employers in Voluntary Housing Terms & Conditions of Employment
- Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- Equalities & Diversity Policy
- Tenancy Sustainment and Vulnerabilities Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

2. 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 and to support our aims to:



- To deliver a personal, caring and high-quality service to all customers
- To have enquiries resolved at the First Point of Contact where possible
- We will make it our goal to exceed the expectations of our customers
- To effectively monitor and evaluate your satisfaction with the services you receive
- To listen to your views and feedback and use this to improve our services
- To treat you fairly and with respect
- To ensure equal opportunities of access for all in everything that we do
- To ensure our contractors and those who provide services on our behalf sign up to these aims
- To include customer services delivery as a key element in the recruitment and development of our staff.

Shire Customer Service Standards details exactly how we will operate our business to provide a high level of customer care at all times. These standards are shown at Appendix 1.

Our standards cover how we will contact our customers, interact with customers, keep customers informed, give access to information, provide a quality of service and manage all complaints and feedback. The Customer Service Standards will be made available to all tenants and owners who receive a service from us to show them the standard of service that they should expect.

3. Staff Training and Code of Conduct

Shire Housing Association has a Staff Code of Conduct which outlines the standards of behaviour and conduct we expect from our employees. Central to this code is the need to provide the highest standards of customer care attainable.

We will ensure that our staff have the skills and capacity to carry out the requirements of this policy effectively with staff receiving regular training on customer service. Staff also have the opportunity to influence and comment on the policy through regular review.

4. Equality and Diversity

We are mindful of our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to make sure people are treated fairly and are given equal access to services. The Equality Act 2010 introduced the term “Protected Characteristics” to describe groups against whom any sort of discrimination is unlawful. Section 4 of the Act specifies nine protected characteristics: Race, Sex, Disability, Age, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Religion or belief and Sexual orientation. Shire will seek to promote and to achieve equality of treatment and opportunity for all groups in society without discrimination or prejudice on any ground.



We carry out Equality Impact Assessments when we review our policies and check policies and associated procedures regularly to ensure accessibility for all. We take appropriate action to address inequalities likely to result or resulting from the implementation of the policy and procedures.

5. Feedback and Complaints

Shire Housing Association strives to provide an excellent customer service at all times and welcomes feedback and comments from our customers. We will seek feedback via our website, e-mail, in writing and verbally to learn from service users experiences, using them to shape and develop our service.

We operate a Complaints Policy that is open and transparent, should any customer or service user feel the need to make a complaint against an individual or the organisation, the complaints policy and procedure will be implemented. All complaints will be recorded and dealt with under Complaints Policy and Procedures, which meet the requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

6. Performance Monitoring and Review

In addition to the annual submission of performance against the Annual Return on the Charter to the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Management Board review and approve agreed Key Performance Indicators and targets on an annual basis and outcomes are monitored at quarterly meetings.

We demonstrate and evidence our commitment to excellent customer service by monitoring our performance in line with our Business Plan.

External accreditations are undertaken every 3 years to ensure our commitment to customers continues to meet these challenging standards. Our customer service standards have also been recognised by accreditations for Investors in People and the prestigious Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier if deemed necessary due to legislative, best practice or other changes



Appendix 1. Shire Customer Service Standards

Our Aims

- To deliver a personal, caring and high-quality service to all customers
- To have enquiries resolved at the First Point of Contact where possible
- We will make it our goal to exceed the expectations of our customers
- To effectively monitor and evaluate your satisfaction with the services you receive
- To listen to your views and feedback and use this to improve our services • To treat you fairly and with respect
- To ensure equal opportunities of access for all in everything that we do
- To ensure our contractors and those who provide services on our behalf sign up to these aims
- To include customer services delivery as a key element in the recruitment and development of our staff

Our service standards

- We will communicate in a professional manner and style that suits your needs
- We have a complaints policy with clear timescales
- We will keep you informed if there is a delay with your appointment
- We will let you know how long things will take
- We will listen to your requests and take the necessary actions to assist you as much as possible
- We will respect your rights to confidentiality
- We will always treat you in a courteous, friendly and professional way
- We may not always be able to give you the answer you are looking for, but we will assist you as much as we can
- If we cancel a service or request for any reason, we will contact you as soon as possible and look to re-arrange at the earliest convenience.

Telephone communication

- Our staff are available to answer calls between 8.45am and 4.45 pm Monday to Thursday and from 8.45am and 4pm on Fridays.
- Outside of normal working hours, at weekends and holidays, we will provide an answering service for emergency repairs.
- We aim answer your call within 5 rings when available.
- We will give our name when we answer a call
- We will respond to all telephone messages by next working day
- We will always ask your permission before putting you on hold or transferring your call
- At the end of the call we will thank you and ask if there is anything else, we can assist you with.
- Our staff team will return calls within 2 working days.
- We may have to call you back. When we do, we will give you an estimated time for when you can expect the call.
- 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.



Our written communication

- We will issue four newsletters each year
- We will respond initially to acknowledge any email received within 1 working day and provide a response with 3 working days
- We will respond to website questions/requests within 2 working days
- We will ensure we write in plain English and avoid jargon
- We will provide a Tenant Handbook to all our new tenants and revise it every 5 years or sooner if legislation or best practise changes. This sets out information and advice on a range and quick guides on the rights and responsibilities of being a tenant.

Meeting us at our office or your home

- We will make practical efforts to ensure that our office is accessible to everyone, with facilities provided for personal or confidential discussions.
- If English is not your preferred language, we can arrange an interpretation service
- We will see you within 5 minutes of your pre-arranged appointment time
- We will let you know approximately how long you must wait to see a member of staff if you do not have an appointment
- We will carry out a home visit at your request within 3 working days.
- We will ensure staff members and contractors have name badges identifying themselves to you.
- We will contact you if we must cancel an appointment or we are unable to make an appointment as soon as we are made aware
- We will always respect your home and your privacy during any home visit or appointment

We require that you:

- Be polite and treat our staff with respect and courtesy
- Let us know if you are unable to keep an appointment
- Tell us about any change in circumstances e.g. A change of address or name
- Pay your rent regularly and on time
- Take reasonable care of your property and surrounding areas
- Behave in a responsible manner towards neighbours, visitors and others
- Live in your property as your main home
- Be open and honest when engaging with our staff team and representatives
- Understand that we may not always be able to help you but that we will try to offer solutions or signpost you to others who may help.

