



# Policy: Customer service standards

<b>Title of Policy:</b>	Customer Service Standards
<b>Date of Adoption or Last Review:</b>	12 August 2019
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Ainan Groat
<b>Date of Next Review:</b>	August 2022
<b>Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes &amp; Standards:</b>	2: Communication <i>“Social Landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the service it provides.”</i>
<b>Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management:</b>	Standard 2: 2.1, 2.2 <i>“The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.”</i>

# Customer Service Standards Policy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Muirhouse Housing Association and Muirhouse Homes aim to provide the highest possible standards of customer care to our tenants and others who receive or seek a service from us. The standards and behaviours stated in this policy will apply equally to staff, agents, contractors, suppliers and anyone who does business in our name.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 We aim to ensure that customers receive a consistently high standard of service and aim to excel in customer service excellence across all our areas of service delivery.

- 2.2 Our customers are at the forefront of everything we do, and we are committed to dealing with all customers in a way which is honest, open and fair, responsive, professional and approachable in keeping with MHA's values:

- **Excellence:** we focus on providing high quality services to our customers and welcome feedback so we can continually improve
- **Accountable:** We are open and honest and do what we say we'll do, putting our customers first. We look after and protect our tenants' homes and rights.
- **Partnership Working:** We work with the local community to improve the lives of people in Muirhouse by investing money in projects and bringing new ideas.

## 3. Customer service standards

- 3.1 We will always:

- Put customers at the heart of everything we do
- Listen to customers' needs
- Treat customers with dignity and respect
- Be friendly, knowledgeable and approachable
- Take pride in getting the job done
- Keep the customer informed
- Use professional judgement to provide creative solutions and deliver great outcomes for our customers.

- 3.2 We will ensure good quality information and a highly responsive service is available in a way which suits the needs and aspirations of our customers, whether providing access to information online, dealing with enquiries over the phone, or being available for expert help or advice in interviews at home or in the office.

- 3.3 If a customer needs an appointment with a specific member of staff we will make every effort to arrange a time and location convenient and suitable for them.
- 3.4 We will let our customers know how to complain if they are not satisfied with our service.
- 3.5 Our staff, agents, contractors and suppliers will always carry official identification when working outside the office.
- 3.6 We will publicise our office opening hours and any closures due to public holidays in our newsletters, in our office, and on our website.
- 3.7 We will help any customer to fill in forms for our use or to complete applications for housing or for benefits.
- 3.8 We will give advice about housing and housing options as agreed in our Edindex membership and to improve the outcomes for applicants who want to be housed in the Muirhouse area.
- 3.9 We will communicate with customers in the way they prefer, whether this is by phone, letter, email, in person at our office, or in person at the customer's home.
- 3.10 Our customers can contact their Housing Officer personally and directly by text, WhatsApp, mobile, landline or email.
- 3.11 When we cannot help a customer with their query or concern, we will let them know who they should contact and provide details wherever possible.
- 3.12 We aim to visit all our tenants in their home at least once a year. This is a courtesy visit by the Housing Officers and an opportunity for customers to raise any issues and discuss our services. All visits will be arranged in advance and will be meaningful and proportionate.
- 3.13 When writing or emailing our customers we will:
  - Address the customer by name
  - Provide a contact name, email address and telephone number
  - Use language which is easy to read and understand
  - Acknowledge correspondence within 3 working days
  - Provide a full response within 10 working days, or if not possible, let our customers know the reason for the delay and when we will give a full response.
- 3.14 When we are dealing with customers by telephone we will:

- Answer the telephone within 5 rings
- Use a polite, warm standard greeting
- Tell the customer which member of staff they are speaking to
- Return calls within 1 working day where the member of staff is not immediately available
- Use an answer-machine service only at those times when the office is closed.
- When a call has to be transferred, the caller will be told who they are being put through to
- Resolve enquiries at the first point of contact where possible.

3.15 To provide a good service to customers visiting our office we will:

- Make every effort to make our reception area and interview room accessible to disabled people. When necessary we will offer assistance or visit the customer at home.
- Make sure there is always a member of staff at our reception.
- Greet each customer when they arrive and attend to each customer as soon as possible
- Make every effort to honour appointment times, seeing customers within 5 minutes of their appointment time, and keeping customers informed if there is an unavoidable delay
- Try to help customers who have not made an appointment, but wish to see a particular member of staff. If the member of staff is available we will try to see the customer within 5 minutes. If they are not available we will make an appointment with the customer.
- Make sure that our reception area is clean, tidy and welcoming with comfortable seating
- Discuss private and confidential matters in our private interview room
- Where possible, make our interview room available for customers to use the computer or phone to apply for benefits, contact the Council, utilities etc.

3.16 When visiting customers at home, our staff, agents, contractors and suppliers will:

- Be on time, but if delayed, contact the customer to explain the delay and when we expect to arrive
- Show identification and introduce ourselves
- Explain the reason for visiting
- Respect the customer's home, privacy and customs
- Discuss sensitive issues in the presence of the tenant only
- Let the customer know what will happen following the visit
- Confirm what was agreed during the visit within 5 working days, in writing (or in the form of communication the customer prefers).

3.17 When a customer makes a complaint we will:

- Aim to resolve it quickly, face to face, with the member of staff who first dealt with it within 5 working days in line with our Complaints policy and procedure.
- If the complaint needs investigated, we will acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days, and aim to provide a full response within 20 working days
- In complex cases, where further investigation is necessary, we will explain the reason for the delay and agree an extension to the response time with the customer.
- If a customer remains dissatisfied, we will give them information about how to raise their complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

#### **4. Learning from customer feedback**

- 4.1 We will measure our performance against the commitments set out in this policy by asking the opinions of our customers through customer satisfaction surveys.
- 4.2 We will use feedback from complaints received about our service to learn and improve our performance.
- 4.4 We will consult with customers on all our key policies and plans.

#### **5. Keeping customers informed**

- 5.1 We will send customers our newsletter at least 4 times a year.
- 5.2 We will make our annual report and performance reports available on our website and paper copies made available on request.
- 5.3 We will keep our website up to date with information which is useful to customers and also send out useful information on Facebook and twitter.

#### **6. Equality, diversity and inclusion**

- 6.1 We promote equality and diversity and operate equal opportunities policies which inform all aspects of our business. We will keep to the Equality Act 2010 by being committed to equal and fair treatment for all and opposed to any form of unlawful discrimination.

6.2 When we deal with customers no one will be treated differently or less favourably than others because of any of the protected characteristics as listed in the Equality Act 2010:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

6.3 If needed, we will make information available in large print, audio, Braille, and community languages.

## **7. Confidentiality and Data Protection**

7.1 All information provided to us by individuals will be treated in strict confidence and will only be discussed with other parties with the individual's (or their appointed representative's) prior consent.

7.2 We will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 when holding personal information of any kind on our computer systems.

## **8. Consultation**

8.1 This policy was reviewed following a report from a scrutiny exercise carried out by our Tenant Improvement Group and all recommendations have been included. We also took on board staff views from our staff training day on customer service. We consulted tenants through our website, newsletter and a consultation meeting. We will always consult our tenants about any changes to policies which affect the services they receive.

## **9. Policy review**

9.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless key changes are required earlier to comply with legislation, guidance or new learning.

## **Customer Service Standards**

### **Telephone Calls**

1. You will be treated in a friendly, professional and courteous manner 100% of the time
2. We will answer 90% of all telephone calls within 5 rings
3. We will resolve 75% of all telephone enquiries at the first point of contact
4. We will return 90% of calls to customers will within 24 hours
5. We will reply to answer phone or voice mail messages within 24 hours or the next available working day where the message is left on a public holiday 100% of the time.

### **Attending the Office**

6. We will not keep customers waiting more than 5 minutes for their enquiry to be dealt with 90% of the time
7. We will not keep customers who have made a prior appointment waiting more than 5 minutes 90% of the time.
8. We will endeavor to see 50% of our customers who have not made a prior appointment.

### **Customer Correspondence**

9. We will acknowledge 100% of all customer correspondence within 5 working days.

### **Visiting your Home**

10. We will conduct ourselves in a professional, helpful and courteous manner 100% of the time
11. We will follow up any other issues raised with you during the visit within 5 working days.