

FORTH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

Code: GOV06

Approval: May 2016

Review Date: May 2019

Cross Reference: Complaints – GOV 05
Equalities – GOV 09
Staff safety - HR 20



This document can be made available in alternative languages or formats (such as large print, audio etc). Please contact staff as required.

FORTH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to providing a high standard of service to our customers.

This policy sets out the ways in which we will provide high standards of customer care. It also outlines some key targets against which we can measure performance. It has been developed in consultation with staff and customers.

2.0 Aims and Objectives







- 2.1 We want our customers to be satisfied every time they contact us or we contact them.

We will:

- 2.2 Treat everyone with respect, understanding and courtesy, fairly and equally.
- 2.3 Deal with enquiries within our response times and provide a variety of communication methods to suit their needs.
- 2.4 Find out what our customers want and will take their views into account in decision making.
- 2.5 Provide relevant accurate and accessible information.
- 2.6 Set targets in relation to customer care and monitor progress against these targets.

3.0 Our Customers

3.1 We use a broad definition of customer. This includes everyone with whom we deal with and includes:

-  Tenants
-  Owners
-  Applicants
-  Members of the public seeking information and advice
-  Suppliers and contractors
-  Other agencies such as Stirling Council, other Housing Associations and the Police.

4.0 Visiting Our Office

4.1 Our office reception area will be comfortable, clean and adequately staffed.

4.2 Have opening times clearly displayed.

4.3 Have an interview room available so that customers can discuss personal and confidential matters in private, for pre-arranged appointments.

4.4 Reception and interviewing areas will be accessible to customers with pushchairs/prams, in wheelchairs or with mobility problems. For customers who are unable to access our offices we will make suitable alternative arrangements.

4.5 Where customers have special requirements, we will make any arrangements required, including providing Happy to Translate system, an interpreter, a British Sign Language signer or providing a mini loop system, to assist with interviewing deaf and partially hearing customers.

4.6 Will make sure customers queries are dealt with as quickly as possible to minimise waiting time and disruption. A queuing system will operate for customers visiting the office without an appointment.

4.7 If there is a pre-arranged appointment with a staff member, staff will meet the customer within 5 minutes of the agreed time.

4.8 If there is not a pre-arranged appointment customers will be seen within 15 minutes or invited to make a convenient appointment for another time.

4.9 Staff will keep customers informed if there is a delay to their appointment.

If a specific staff member is not available, staff will let the customer know why and when they are available again.

- 4.10 If a customer is unable to come into the office we will arrange for a member of staff to visit them at home to deal with their enquiry.

5.0 Home Visits

We will:

- 5.1 Wherever possible arrange appointments in advance, and at the convenience of customers. Such appointments will normally take place within 5 working days of a request.
- 5.2 Arrive within 15 minutes of a pre-arranged time slot, or telephone to advise of any delay.
- 5.3 Notify the customer in advance with reasons for a cancellation and rearrange the appointment, if staff are unable to keep an appointment.
- 5.4 Make sure that all members of staff carry an identification card with them.
- 5.5 Be sensitive if we are discussing issues such as rent arrears or neighbour disputes, and treat these matters in the strictest confidence.
- 5.6 Always introduce ourselves and explain the reason for visiting a customer.
- 5.7 Let the customer know what will happen following on from the visit. We will confirm in writing any agreed actions from the meeting within 5 working days.
- 5.8 Leave a calling card when a home visit is made and the customer is not at home. This will provide details of the staff members name and telephone number, to enable the customer to arrange another visit.
- 5.9 We will support staff who request that customers do not smoke during visits from staff. (This is in line with legislation banning smoking in the workplace).

6.0 Telephone Calls

- 6.1 Telephone calls will be answered as quickly as possible.
- 6.2 Staff will greet callers in a polite and courteous manner, stating the organisations name.
- 6.3 If the call has to be transferred, staff will pass on the customer's name and details of their enquiry, to avoid customers repeating themselves.
- 6.4 When staff leave the office they will ensure they have diverted their calls to an appropriate colleague or voicemail.
- 6.5 When a call is diverted to voicemail, the call will be returned by the end of the next working day.
- 6.6 When messages are taken from a customer, the relevant officer will return the call as far as possible within 24 hours, or on their next working day.
- 6.7 The answering machine should only be activated when it is out of office hours, or, to allow for staff meetings, public holidays and specific events such as training days.
- 6.8 Customers will be informed of the emergency repair out of office telephone numbers via the website, the quarterly tenants' newsletter, the Tenant Handbook and the reception answering machine.

7.0 Letters, E Mails and Website Correspondence

- 7.1 We will ensure all letters have the name, address, job title of the person sending the letter and their contact details.
- 7.2 Customers will receive an acknowledgement response to all correspondence within target response times.
- 7.3 Customers will receive a full reply to correspondence within target response times and this will depend upon the nature of the communication. For 'E' mail and website enquiries an initial response from the relevant officer will be made within 24 hours, or on their next working day. When the target timescales are not possible, an interim letter will be sent out at the end of 10 working days, explaining the cause for delay and indicating the revised timescale.
- 7.4 Clear and accurate explanations will be provided about decisions which have been made.

- 7.5 All correspondence will be sent in the name of the person dealing with the matter.
- 7.6 Information will be provided which is written in plain English and is jargon free.
- 7.7 Translations will be provided upon request and in an appropriate format e.g. another language, audio or large print. Every effort will be made to provide documentation within four weeks, although this may be subject to availability of specialist suppliers.

8.0 What We Expect from Our Customers

- 8.1 We expect customers to treat staff with respect and politeness.
- 8.2 We will not tolerate abusive or threatening behaviour towards staff.
- 8.3 Staff may terminate any conversation or interview with a customer who is behaving in an abusive or threatening manner.
- 8.4 Threats made against staff will be reported to the Police and legal action taken.
- 8.5 In extreme circumstances we may seek to restrict individual's access to our office and/or access to individual staff members.





9.0 Customer Feedback and Complaints

- 9.1 We will seek feedback from customers through our E Group, Focus groups, satisfaction surveys, post allocation visits, general home visits and website. We will use any other suitable mechanism for feedback that suits our customers' needs.
- 9.2 A fully independent Tenants' Satisfaction survey will be commissioned every 3 years, with interim surveys being carried out on a regular basis.
- 9.3 Reports summarising performance will be published on our website, in the quarterly newsletter and Annual Report.
- 9.4 Complaints will be monitored on a quarterly basis based on our Complaints Policy and reported to our Committee through the quarterly Tenant Participation Report. Feedback will be taken into account when reviewing services, policies and procedures.

- 9.5 We will deal with all Complaints in line with the timescales stipulated by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Service Full details of our Complaints Policy, can be found on our website www.forthha.org.uk or obtained from our office.

10.0 Information Services

- 10.1 We will:

-  Publish all printed information in a print size of 12 and font style of aerial. We will make it available in larger print on request.
-  Offer versions in other languages, CD, Braille and audio tape to meet individuals particular requirements.
-  Regularly update the website.
-  Issue a Tenant Handbook to each tenant when signing up for a new tenancy.

11.0 Equal Opportunities

- 11.1 Equality and diversity underpin all our activities and services. When delivering our services, we never discriminate on the basis of sex or marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language, social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions. Full details of our Equalities Policy can be found on our website www.forthha.org.uk or can be obtained from our office.

12.0 Review

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years by the Management Committee and staff are responsible for ensuring that it meets legal and good practice requirements.

