



# CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

Approved/last reviewed by Management Committee: 6 August 2023

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The information in this document is available in other languages or on tape/CD, in large print and also in Braille.

For details contact the Association on 0141 578 0200 or e-mail: [admin@hillheadhousing.org](mailto:admin@hillheadhousing.org)

本文件所載資料備有中文 (廣東話) 版本，也可以製作成錄音帶/光碟，以及利用特大字體和凸字印製，以供索取。  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Management Committee and staff of Hillhead Housing Association 2000 are proud of the positive impact that has been made in the area since 2004. Through large investment we have been able to offer improved housing that much better meets tenants' requirements and which, in many cases, improves their quality of life. Less obvious, but just as important, is the high standard of service we strive to provide to customers at all times.
- 1.2 This policy therefore confirms our commitment to continue to provide the high standards of customer care which have been a part of the Association's overall approach since the Transfer. As well as confirming this commitment, the policy also outlines some key targets against which we can measure our performance.
- 1.3 The policy aims to be compliant with the outcomes included in the Scottish Housing Charter. The Charter expects housing associations to state clearly what tenants and other customers can expect from Hillhead Housing Association and help them to hold the Association to account. The Charter focuses the effort of the Association on achieving outcomes that matter to our tenants and other customers. The Charter was updated in November 2022.

In particular, this policy helps us to ensure that we are meeting the outcomes relating to the customer / landlord relationship specified in the Charter. These are undernoted;

### **Outcome One**

*Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:*

- *they support the right to adequate housing*
- *every tenant and other customer has their individual needs and rights recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.*

### **Outcome Two**

*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 services it provides.*

### **Outcome Three**

*Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy for them to participate in, and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.*

- 1.4 The policy is also guided by our commitment to meet the Standards of Governance & Financial Management for RSLs as set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator. Standard 2 is of particular relevance here and it states;

### **Standard 2**

*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.*

- 1.5 The Association facilitates a Customer Care Working Group which meets every two months. Membership is open to any tenant, owner and applicant who receives or may be a recipient of any number of our services. Awareness of the group and feedback from its meetings are included in the Association's quarterly newsletters. The group is also promoted via social media, text message and in our reception area.
- 1.6. The Association's Welfare Rights Service hosts a Users Forum which meets quarterly and provides input and ideas into future services and ideas for how the service can be improved.

## **2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CUSTOMER CARE**

- 2.1 In implementing this policy, the Association observes the following general principles in relation to customer care:
- 2.2 The Association is also committed to act promptly to rectify matters when made aware of any failure to adhere to this policy, and to advise the customer(s) concerned of the outcomes in this regard.

## **3. SCOPE OF POLICY – WHO ARE OUR CUSTOMERS?**

- 3.1 The Association uses a very broad definition of customer. This includes everyone with whom we deal, for example:
  - Our tenants and owners with whom we have an agreement to provide services
  - Applicants for housing
  - Members of the public, or their representatives, seeking information and advice
  - Suppliers and contractors
  - Other agencies, such as East Dunbartonshire Council, the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Citizen's Advice Bureau or solicitors
- 3.2 The policy covers a broad range of subjects, for example:
  - General enquiries about the services we provide
  - The behaviour of staff, Committee members and contractors/agents acting on our behalf
  - The adequacy of our office facilities

- How customers (or their representatives) feel we treat them during personal visits to the office
- How customers (or their representatives) feel we treat them when making telephone or written enquiries to the office; or when visiting them in their own home

#### 4. VISITING THE OFFICE AND HOME VISITING

4.1 The Association's office will be open at hours which are convenient to a large majority of our customers and to allow the Association to provide the most effective service possible. Our current opening times are publicised on our website, in newsletters and outside the office reception.

4.2 The office has a friendly and customer-focused atmosphere. There is ramp access for those in wheelchairs or with push chairs as well as an assisted door opener/closer. We offer adequate and comfortable seating in the reception area for those who need to wait for a short while. A range of information about the Association is also on display. A hearing Loop system is provided. The reception area is covered by CCTV.

4.3 The following procedure applies where a customer calls into or rings the office:

→ If the person they require to see/speak to is available, they will be dealt with straight away (if the officer is dealing with another customer, the likely waiting time will be advised). We offer an appointment system for tenants who wish to meet with their Housing Officer

**OR**

→ If the person they require to see/speak to is not available, they will be advised when they will be able to see them and another member of staff will offer to help.

Common sense will prevail. For example, if the member of staff the customer wishes to see/speak to is absent on leave, then the staff member available at the time will encourage the customer to speak to someone else.

Whatever the circumstances, customers will not be left without (i) their enquiry being resolved or (ii) being advised of a time and date by which the member of staff will get back to them.

4.4 Where coming to the office would present a difficulty, the Association also offers home visits and because we are based in the community, these can generally be arranged within a few days. Where customers live outside of the Kirkintilloch area (for example, an applicant for housing) separate arrangements will be made, but all reasonable efforts will be made to achieve this within one week.

4.5 Staff will make all reasonable efforts to keep appointments that are made – in the unlikely event that this is not possible, we will contact the customer in advance of the meeting, give the reason why it cannot be kept, and offer another suitable time.

## **5. RESPONDING TO LETTERS OR OTHER WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION AND EMAIL / TEXT CORRESPONDENCE**

5.1 All letters, emails and texts received will be either acknowledged or answered in writing/email/text within one week. Where it is only possible to provide an acknowledgement, a target timescale by which a full response is likely to be available will be provided.

5.2 Completed applications for housing will be acknowledged, assessed and pointed within 10 working days, with the applicant being advised of their points total and how this has been calculated.

5.3 Where a letter/email/text has been submitted on behalf of a customer, for example from a solicitor, councillor/MP/MSP, friend or family member, the above timescales will apply subject to Data Protection legislation requirements.

5.4 We will monitor our social media channels and respond to questions as soon as possible and always within one week.

## **6. CUSTOMER CARE CODE**

6.1 Our staff, Committee members, and consultants/agents will adhere to the following customer care principles at all times when representing the Association.

- Be friendly, courteous and welcoming
- Treat all customers with respect and dignity
- When in a customer's home, respect this fact
- Carry and always show identification when out of the Association's office on business
- Always wear a name badge (staff)
- Provide your name when in contact with a customer
- Respect confidentiality and privacy
- Deal with requests from customers promptly
- Deal with customers objectively and avoid judgement or prejudice
- Observe the Association's equal opportunities policy
- Be sensitive, patient and understanding when dealing with customers
- Be dependable, for example, get back to customers within the agreed timescale
- Never use foul or abusive language

6.2 In return we expect that our visitors, tenants, and other service users will treat our staff with equal respect. The following statement outlines our expectations of visitors, tenants and other services users:-

“Our staff work very hard to provide you with an efficient and high quality service. They deserve to be treated with respect.

We will not tolerate abuse, physical or verbal, of our staff or other service users.

Hillhead Housing Association 2000 will take appropriate action against anyone who assaults, threatens or intimidates any of our employees.”

## **7. CUSTOMER CONSULTATION**

7.1 The views of all customers are important to us. We encourage customers to tell us what they think about our services and the manner in which they are delivered. In relation to consultations we will adopt the following principles;

- Carry out consultations in relation to key service user policies.
- Make sure that consultation timescales allow scope for meaningful engagement.
- Use a variety of consultation methods in order to maximise participation.
- Use the feedback provided to improve our service and influence policy design.
- Publish the results of consultation exercises on our website and elsewhere as appropriate.

## **8. DATA PROTECTION**

8.1 Hillhead Housing Association will treat tenants’ personal data in line with its obligations under the current General Data Protection Regulation and its own Privacy Statement. Information regarding how tenants’ data will be used and the basis for processing data is provided in the Association’s Privacy Notice.

## **9. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

9.1 The Association will seek to ensure that in implementing this policy that no group, organisation or individual will receive less favourable treatment or be discriminated against regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, language, belief, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender realignment, disability, marital status, pregnancy or maternity. We will positively endeavour to achieve fair outcomes for all.

## **10. COMPLAINTS**

10.1 Any tenant who feels aggrieved by their treatment under this policy can ask for a copy of the Association’s Complaints Handling Procedure which is available on the Association’s website or from our office. Any tenant making a complaint will be advised of their right to complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

## **11. POLICY REVIEW**

11.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if legislative, regulatory or best practice changes require this.

**Prepared by :** Catherine McKiernan

**Designation :** Depute Director / Housing Manager

**Date :** 19 July 2023

