

Tenant First Housing Co-operative

Customer Care Policy

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1. Introduction

Tenants First Housing Co-operative (the Co-operative) is committed to providing responsive, inclusive and effective services which meet the needs and wishes of our customers. We are committed to ensuring that excellent customer service is an integral part of the planning, resourcing and delivery of all the services we provide to current and future members, and other service users.

2. Policy Aims

The aims of the Customer Care Policy are:

- To ensure the Co-operative carries out its duties as landlord;
- To provide an efficient, effective, quality service for all users of the Co-operative's services;
- To ensure that services are responsive to customer needs and wishes;
- To ensure that services are of the highest possible quality within the resources available;

To maintain and continually improve our service to ensure that both customers and the Co-operative are receiving best value at all times.

3. Objectives

The policy links with the following objectives in the Co-operative's Business Plan

"To provide, manage and maintain quality affordable housing across a range of tenures"

"To manage and develop the business innovatively whilst maintaining financial viability"

"To continue to be recognised as an organisation which pursues excellence and inspires our people to be the best they can be"

4. Delivery of our Customer Care Policy

4.1 General

We will provide a service which is easily accessed by all our customers.

We will deal with customers promptly and treat them with courtesy and respect at all times. We will deliver services in a friendly fair and professional manner and will do all we can to ensure that enquiries, concerns or problems are resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

We will ensure that all our staff are trained to provide a high quality service to all our customers. We will collect and monitor equalities information from our customers to assess if they are being treated fairly in accordance with the Co-operative's Equality and Diversity Policy.

We will encourage comments from our customers on our services, monitor and review our performance and respond appropriately. We will use feedback to improve services.

4.2 Confidentiality

The Co-operative will strictly control access to information it holds about customers. Personal information on customers will be held securely with arrangements in place to prevent unauthorised access to paper or computer files.

All information will be held and managed in accordance with the Co-operative's Data Protection and Access to Personal Information Policy.

A copy of the Data Protection and Access to Personal Information Policy can be obtained from the Co-operative's offices, or from our website at www.tenantsfirst.com

4.3 When you Visit our Offices

We will make every effort to ensure that our office opening hours offer the greatest possible convenience to our customers. Office opening hours will be displayed in reception areas and we will give adequate notice to any changes to these.

We will take all reasonable steps to make sure our offices are accessible to all our customers. For customers who are unable to access our offices we will make suitable alternative arrangements.

Where customers have special requirements, we will make any arrangements required, including providing an interpreter, a British Sign Language signer or

a loop system. We will display information on these services in reception areas.

Reception areas will be staffed at all times during opening hours.

All our offices will have private interview areas.

4.4 When you Write to us

We will respond to all letters and e-mails promptly and within target response times where these apply. Where we are unable to give a full response immediately we will advise the customer in writing about the reason for the delay and advise when we expect to make a full response.

We will ensure that our correspondence is clear and easy to understand, written in plain English and free of jargon. We will always provide a contact name and telephone number.

Where necessary, we will make arrangements for correspondence to customers to be sent in relevant community languages.

4.5 When you Telephone us

Telephone calls to the Co-operative's offices will be answered as quickly as possible. Co-operative staff will greet callers in a polite and courteous manner, stating their name and department. They will give their full attention to the customer for the duration of the call and remain professional at all times.

Every effort will be made to resolve customers' enquiries or requests immediately. Where this is not possible, customers will be telephoned back on the same day or at a time which is mutually convenient.

Answer phones will be used when the office is closed, during staff training, on Wednesdays from 9.30am-10.30am and when the main phone line is engaged. Voice Mail will only be used when staff are unavailable to take telephone calls. Recorded messages will be audible and accurate, and will give the caller an option to leave a message. Messages will also advise callers what they should do in case of emergency.

All messages on answer phones and voice mail will be responded to at the earliest possible opportunity.

4.6 When we Visit you at Home

Wherever possible we will arrange home visits in advance and at the convenience of customers. If Co-operative staff are unable to keep appointments they will notify the customer in advance with reasons for the cancellation and re-arrange the appointment.

We will ensure that all our staff and contractors have identification which they will present to customers if they visit them in their homes. We will encourage our customers to check the identification of all callers before allowing them into their homes.

Co-operative staff will 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. Confidential information will not be noted on calling cards

4.7 Repairs

We will ensure that all repairs are properly categorised and make every effort to ensure that they are carried out within target times set out in our Property Management Policy.

We will ensure that repair requests are recorded accurately and all relevant information noted. We will make every effort to ensure that visits to members' homes to carry out repairs or inspections are carried out at the member's convenience.

We will ensure that all Co-operative members are given information on how to report an emergency repair outside office hours. If there are any changes to emergency repairs contacts we will advise those members affected promptly.

We will ensure that contractors working on behalf of the Co-operative have signed and adhere to the Contractor Code of Conduct which is available on request.

We will issue Repairs Satisfaction Slips for all repairs. All comments received will be followed up and reported to Property Management and Development Sub Committee, in accordance with our Property Management Policy.

A copy of the Property Management Policy can be obtained from the Co-operatives' offices, or from our web site at www.tenantsfirst.com

4.8 Major Works and Improvements

Major works will be carried out in accordance with the Co-operative's Whole Life Costing programme. The annual programme for major works will be agreed in consultation with members, through the Sub Committees and Committee of Management.

We will consult with members and give them a choice when installing new kitchens, bathrooms and front doors.

We will give adequate notice to members of any major works to their homes. We will at all times respect our members' property and right to privacy.

We will make every effort to minimise the inconvenience caused to members when carrying out works to their homes.

We will issue Post Contract Questionnaires for all major works contracts. All comments received will be followed up and reported to the Property Management Sub Committee, in accordance with our Property Management Policy.

A copy of the Property Management Policy can be obtained from the Co-operatives' offices, or from our web site at www.tenantsfirst.com

4.9 Rent payments

For our members' convenience, we will maintain a wide range of methods for making rent payments. Members will be given full information on what these methods are and how to use them.

4.10 Anti Social Behaviour and Harassment

We will respond promptly to reports of anti-social behaviour within the time targets set out in our Anti Social Behaviour and Harassment Policy.

We will not tolerate any form of harassment and we will take appropriate action against perpetrators of such behaviour. We will respond to incidents of serious harassment within the time targets set out in our Anti Social Behaviour and Harassment policy.

A copy of the Anti Social Behaviour and Harassment Policy can be obtained from the Co-operatives' offices, or from our web site at www.tenantsfirst.com

4.11 Waiting Lists and Allocations

Tenants First Housing Co-operative owns rented properties in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Glasgow. Approximately 10% of the properties become vacant each year and are allocated by the terms of the Co-operative's Allocation Policy. homehunt[®] NES is the organisation which has been set up jointly with Castlehill Housing Association to manage access to, and allocation of, its properties via a choice based lettings system.

Properties will be allocated on the following principles in the following order:

- Best Use *
- Level of Priority Pass
- Length of time in housing need

*Best use is normally applied where applicants make best use of the bedrooms available or the attributes (such as disabled adaptations) of a property.

4.12 House Sales

We aim to provide an efficient and prompt service to those members who have a right to buy their home and wish to exercise it.

While there may be some parts of the house sales process which are not within our control, we will do all we can to ensure the time targets set out in the House Sales Policy are met. We will monitor the progress of all house sales applications against these targets.

A copy of the House Sales Policy can be obtained from the Co-operatives' offices, or from our web site at www.tenantsfirst.com

4.13 Formal Complaints

The Co-operative has a comprehensive Complaints Policy and associated procedures. We will ensure that all our customers are aware of this and have the information they need to allow them to complain about any aspect of the Co-operative's services or policies which they are dissatisfied with.

We will ensure that all staff receive training on the Complaints Policy and are able to advise any customer who wishes to make a complaint against the Co-operative.

We aim to ensure that all complaints are dealt with within the time targets set out in the Complaints Policy.

A copy of the Complaints Policy can be obtained from the Co-operatives' offices, or from our web site at www.tenantsfirst.com

4.14 Consultation

The Co-operative is committed to seeking the views of its customers and to taking account of these views. The issues on which the Co-operative will consult with customers are set out in our Participation Strategy.

When we are consulting with customers we will:

- Provide all the information customers need to allow them to make an informed response;
- Record and analyse the results of consultation exercises;
- Report on the outcome of consultation exercises to the relevant Sub Committee or the Committee of Management;
- Feedback the result of consultation exercises to customers.

A copy of the Participation Strategy can be obtained from the Co-operatives' offices, or from our web site at www.tenantsfirst.com

4.15 Customer Satisfaction

The Co-operative is committed to measuring customer satisfaction. Methods for doing this include:

- Full member satisfaction surveys carried out every 3 years;
- Repairs satisfaction slips;
- Post contract satisfaction questionnaires;
- Satisfaction surveys of members of new developments;
- Programme of planned visits during the first year of tenancy for all members;
- Tenancy termination forms

4.16 Continuous Improvement

The Co-operative is committed to improving its services to customers and we will

- Set targets and standards to achieve continuous improvement;
- Compare our performance with that of other housing organisations;
- Monitor and analyse all information received concerning customer satisfaction;
- Take appropriate action to remedy any problems identified through the mechanisms we have put in place to measure customer satisfaction.

5. Training

The Co-operative, through its Business Plan, is committed to training and developing staff and committee members to their full potential in order to deliver a high quality of service in all areas of its business to its customers.

6. Equal Opportunities

The Co-operative will ensure that, in implementing this Policy it will not unfairly discriminate against any individual, household or group on the grounds of gender, gender identity or marital status, on race grounds, or on the grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

7. Standards of Behaviour

We are committed to ensuring that all of our staff and our representatives are able to carry out their work in a safe and civil environment.

We do not expect our staff and our representatives to tolerate behaviour from customers which is unacceptable, for example, abusive, offensive, threatening, demeaning, intimidating or violent.

8. Monitoring and Reporting

While responsibility for the Customer Care policy rests with the Customer Relations and Staffing Sub Committee, the policy covers all of the services delivered by the Co-operative. Reporting and monitoring of customer care in relation to the delivery of specific services is therefore the responsibility of the relevant staff section and Sub Committee.

9. Review

This policy has been written in consultation with staff and customers and approved by the Co-operative's Committee of Management. It will be reviewed every three years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, or monitoring and reporting reveals that a change in policy is required sooner.

10. Legal Framework

When implementing this policy the Co-operative will ensure that it acts within the following legislation:

Data Protection Act 1998
The Equality Act 2010

The various services delivered by the Co-operative are covered by specific legal requirements. These are outlined in the relevant policies relating to the service.

11. References

Scottish Housing Regulator Performance Standards

12. Related Policies

Allocations Policy
Anti Social Behaviour and Harassment Policy

Complaints Policy
Equality and Diversity Policy
Estate Management – Physical Environment Policy
House Sales Policy
Data Protection and Access to Personal Information Policy
Property Management Policy
Participation Strategy
Business Plan