



Customer Service Standards policy

Date Approved by Management Committee:
Due for Review:

November 2017
November 2020

Cernach Housing Association

Customer Service Standards Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Cernach Housing Association Limited is a customer-focused organisation and is committed to providing our customers and prospective customers with quality information and service delivery. We aim to provide appropriate training for our staff members and develop effective methods of seeking customer feedback and appropriate methods of reporting this information.
- 1.2 As we shall ensure treatment of customers is always courteous and helpful it is expected that staff, in return, are treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- 1.3 The Association's contact details and opening hours are as follows: -
 - Address: 79 Airgold Drive, Drumchapel, Glasgow, G15 7AJ
 - Telephone: 0141 944 3860
 - Fax: 0141 944 8925
 - Main E-mail: admin@cernachha.co.uk
 - Website: www.cernachha.co.uk
 - Opening Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 9.00 am – 5.00 pm
 - Wednesday 10.00 am – 5.00 pm

2. Legislative and regulatory framework

- 2.1 Standard 2 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework states: "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." More specifically and in relation to this Customer Service Standards Policy, Standard 2.3 states: "The RSL seeks out the needs, priorities, views and aspirations of tenants, service users and stakeholders. The governing body takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions."

3. Risk management

- 3.1 The Association has considered the potential risks of providing information to customers. We regularly update public access information, such as summary information to housing applicants. In order to ensure correct information is provided at all times, all staff are made aware of information contained within these documents (via informal and formal training). Failure to do so could damage the Association's reputation.
- 3.2 We also ensure consultation is undertaken to include views and feedback from tenants and local residents when reviewing the policy. This is carried out in a

variety of ways such as community events, questionnaires, consultation register and encouraging feedback via newsletters.

4. Equality and diversity

- 4.1 The Association's Equality and Diversity policy, which was approved by the Committee in April 2012 and reviewed in April 2015. following community consultation, outlines our commitment to promote a zero tolerance to unfair treatment or discrimination to any person or group of persons, particularly on the basis of any of the protected characteristics¹. This includes ensuring that everyone has equal access to information and services and, to this end, the Association will make available a copy of this document in a range of alternative formats including large print, translated into another language or by data transferred to voice. The Equality and Diversity policy is programmed for the next review in April 2018.
- 4.2 We are also aware of the potential for policies to inadvertently discriminate against an individual or group of individuals. To help tackle this and ensure that it does not occur, best practice suggests that organisations carry out Equality Impact Assessments to help identify any part of a policy that may be discriminatory so that this can be addressed (please see section 6 of the Equality and Diversity Policy for more information).
- 4.3 In line with section 6.3 of the Equality and Diversity Policy, the Association will apply a screening process based on that recommended by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ascertain whether each policy requires an Impact Assessment to be carried out. The screening process was applied to this policy and it was decided that an impact assessment is required. Please refer to Appendix 1.

5. Core values

- 5.1 Our commitment to customer care is underpinned by the Core Values adopted by both staff and Committee members. These Core Values are at the heart of the level of service our customers can expect.

C ommunity	-	Community involvement is our focus
E ffective	-	We operate in an efficient and effective manner
R esponsive	-	We listen and act on customer views

¹ The Equality Act 2010 identifies the "protected characteristics" as age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

N ever Complacent	-	We are committed to continual improvement
A ccountable	-	We have an accountable, open and transparent local decision-making process
C aring and Supportive	-	We treat everyone with dignity and respect
H appy	-	We aim to please - with a smile

6. Definitions

6.1 The following is a list of who we consider to be our 'customers' and with whom we interact or provide a service to: -

- a) Tenants
- b) Residents (e.g. owners and sharing owners)
- c) Applicants
- d) Staff
- e) Other private, public and voluntary sector organisations and agencies we work with (e.g. the Housing Regulator, local authorities, contractors, consultants and other Housing Associations)
- f) Other members of the public and anyone else who interacts with us

7. Service level objectives

7.1 Overall objectives

- a) We will deliver high quality services making the best use of our resources.
- b) We will keep you advised of our activities and consult with you when major changes to services are planned.
- c) We will use your views to improve the quality of our service.
- d) We will treat you fairly and with respect.
- e) We will respond to your enquiries and complaints.
- f) We will always be approachable and professional.

Specific objectives

- a) We shall ensure all staff receive regular training on customer care throughout their employment period and incorporate the customer service standards within the comprehensive induction programme for staff and Committee members.
- b) We shall prepare and review policies and procedures in consultation with staff, Committee and local residents to maximise opportunities to meet the needs identified as well as working within the Scottish Social Housing Charter's guidance. This policy was revised in consultation with the Resident Scrutiny panel.
- c) We shall undertake a variety of customer satisfaction surveys: -
 - i) **Post-repair** – we shall seek 100% feedback on satisfaction via questionnaire on job line upon completion of repairs
 - ii) **Settling in visit** – we shall visit every new tenant within six weeks of tenancy start date.
 - iii) **Satisfaction Survey** – at least every 3 years we shall undertake a survey of no less than 75% of our tenants to ascertain overall satisfaction with services provided by the Association.
 - iv) The Depute Director shall ensure the Satisfaction Survey is published in the Association's Newsletter, *Cernach News* and the Annual Report. We shall also publish the results on our website, www.cernachha.co.uk.
- d) In order to continually improve the quality of service we provide to you, we shall set realistic, yet challenging targets within the Internal Management Plan. These shall be reported to Management Committee every 6 months.

8. Customer service standards

8.1 In order to ensure that everyone is clear about the acceptable standard of service, the Association has prepared the following Customer Service Standards.

8.2 Visiting the Office: We shall: -

- a) Ensure the office is open during the published hours.
- b) Make sure our office is adequately staffed.

- c) Make sure the staff members have name badges identifying themselves to you.
- d) Wear either a uniform or be dressed in a neat, tidy and business like fashion at all times.
- e) Operate a duty officer system with the name of the duty officer clearly displayed at the reception.
- f) Promptly greet you with a smile.
- g) Provide a translator service if required and requested with reasonable notice.
- h) Deal with your query as quickly as possible to minimise your waiting time.
- i) Arrange an appointment that suits you if you require.
- j) Not keep you waiting when you have arranged an appointment, wherever possible.
- k) Keep you informed if there is a delay in your appointment.
- l) Provide you with a tidy, comfortable and accessible waiting area with tea and coffee made available.
- m) Make sure there is informative information available for you to take away.
- n) 'Sign-post' you to an appropriate agency or person who can help if we cannot.

8.3 Home Visits: We will: -

- a) Never enter your home uninvited except where we have a statutory duty or we have given prior notice of a forced entry in conjunction with sheriff officers.
- b) Always explain the reason for the visit.
- c) Arrange a date and time that suits you.
- d) Contact you if there is a delay or if we cannot attend the appointment, giving you a reason for this.
- e) Wear a name badge to identify ourselves to you.
- f) Ensure a translator is present if required and requested with reasonable notice.

8.4 Telephone Calls: We will: -

- a) Ensure the telephone is answered by a staff member, during the published office opening hours, in a friendly, courteous and professional manner.
- b) Ensure the answer machine is switched on during office closure times and that it clearly indicates that the office is closed with accurate information for reporting a repair or leaving a message.

- c) Ensure that answer machine messages are responded to within 24 hours or the next available working day where the message is left during a public holiday break.
- d) Confirm you have called Cernach Housing Association and let you know who you are speaking to.
- e) Establish the reason for your call and either take appropriate action or pass your call onto the relevant staff member.
- f) Ensure that where the appropriate person is not available to take your call, they will call you back within a reasonable timeframe.

8.5 E-mails & Letters: We will: -

- a) Ensure the 'out of office assistant' is set to inform you when the staff member you have e-mailed will be back in the office (e.g. confirming a period of annual leave). This will inform you to contact another member of staff if the nature of your message is urgent.
- b) Ensure your correspondence is passed to the appropriate person for action.
- c) Contact you within 5 working days (depending on the nature and urgency of your correspondence) to either discuss or provide a written response to your query. This response will set out clearly the explanation about decisions that have been made.
- d) Ensure we write in plain English and avoid jargon.
- e) Where identified, we provide correspondence in varying text size or alternative language formats.
- f) File the correspondence in your electronic Tenancy File on our Housing Management System. This correspondence forms part of the information audit undertaken annually and either retained or disposed of in line with the Association's Data Protection & Access to Personal Information Policy & Procedure.

9. Our expectations of you

9.1 The relationship built between ourselves and our customers is based on trust and respect. We expect that our customers will appreciate the standard of care extended to them and respond in a positive manner.

9.2 With this in mind, we think it is not unreasonable to ask you to: -

- a) Treat our staff with respect.
- b) Not be abusive or threatening in your attitude, words or actions.
- c) Provide information requested within the timescales indicated
- d) Meet the terms of reasonable requests made by our staff

- e) Let us know of any adjustments you require in relation to office accessibility or language formats.
- f) Understand that sometimes we just simply cannot help you. Where this is the case, we will try to direct you to the most appropriate agency.

10. Breaches of the customer service standards policy

- 10.1 Breaches of the Customer Service Standards Policy should be actioned through our Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure. A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Association's actions or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Association. This allows the Association to investigate your concern and where possible take remedial action.
- 10.2 This assists the Association in its strive for continual improvement, which in turn should improve the service delivery to our customers. You can obtain a copy of the Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure upon request or download it from our website, www.cernachha.co.uk.

11. Policy review

- 11.1 This policy shall be reviewed every three years or sooner as deemed necessary by the Management Committee

APPENDIX 1 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is further action required?

Yes ☐

No ☒

Is the action achievable?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Timescale for action

NA

1. Aims of the policy

a) What is the purpose of the policy?

- The policy outlines the Association's standards when providing a service to our customers.

b) Who is affected by the policy/who will benefit from the policy and how?

- Cernach tenants and others who live in our properties
- Owners who use our factoring service
- People who live in our area of operation and housing applicants
- Staff and Management Committee
- Contractors and consultants who are required to observe the policy
- Partner agencies and other organisations who contact us
- Anyone who has any reason to contact us

c) Who is be responsible for delivering the policy?

The entire staff team on a day-to-day basis, the Director and ultimately the Management Committee.

d) How does the policy fit into our wider or related policy initiatives?

The policy directly contributes to two of our strategic objectives:

- Providing a quality service
- Your view is important to us

We may refer to other policies when investigating. These will include: -

- Code of Conduct (Committee Members)

- Code of Conduct (staff)
- Equality and Diversity
- Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure

2. **What do we already know about the diverse needs and/or experiences of our target audience?**

Do we currently have information on:

Age	Yes	✓		
Disability	Yes	✓		
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Yes	✓		
Pregnancy and Maternity	Yes	✓		
Race	Yes	✓		
Religion and Belief			No	✓
Gender	Yes	✓		
Gender Reassignment			No	✓
Sexual Orientation			No	✓

2.1 Whilst we require to update and broaden the information we have on tenants and other residents, we would expect all of the protected characteristics to be represented within this target audience.

2.2 The policy helps us ensure that we are continuing to provide efficient and effective services that are responsive to the requirements of all groups, and allows us to become aware of areas where service improvements may be required.

Owners who use our factoring service

2.3 As at 2.1 and 2.2, above.

People who live in the local area and housing applicants

2.4 As at 2.1 and 2.2, above.

Staff and Management Committee

2.5 All staff and Committee receive training on the Association's Customer Service Expectations and are conversant with the process to be followed.

Contractors and consultants and partner organisations

- 2.6 Any contractors or consultants working for or representing the Association are made aware of our commitment to equality and diversity as well as customer service.
3. **What does the information we have tell us about how this policy might impact positively or negatively on the different groups within the target audience?**

Different groups can expect to receive slightly different service. Whereever information is available to tailor our service to better address the needs of a group then we will endeavor to do so. This may include changes in our communication approach for those who are disabled, language translation services or amended meeting venues to suit needs.

3.1 Age

Anyone can use the associations services regardless of age. Whilst most services are catered towards adults over the age of sixteen, we will continue to provide a professional customer service standards to all customers. If someone believes that they have been unfairly treated because of their age, then not only would we investigate this as a Stage 2 complaint, but we would also seek to invoke action under the terms of our Equality and Diversity policy. We offer help in making complaints to anyone experiencing what could sometimes be considered an age-related condition, such as requiring information in larger typeface owing to deterioration in eyesight.

3.2 Disability

The Association ensures that our Customer Service Standards is accessible to everyone irrespective of any disability that may exist. We actively publicise the availability of the policy, alongside other documents, in alternative formats for people who may have visual impairment or hearing problems, and will visit someone at home to assist them with any part of the process if they have mobility problems or if they would prefer not to come to the office for any reason.

We do not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of someone's disability and anyone who feels that they have been subject to disability discrimination is encouraged to use the Association's complaints procedure. Such complaints would be investigated as a Stage 2 complaint and we would also seek to invoke action under the terms of our Equality and Diversity policy.

3.3 Marriage and Civil Partnership

All individuals contacting the office who happen to have a partner would be treated idenitcally whether they are married, in a civil partnership or are co-habiting.

Equally, we do not treat anyone differently because they are not married, not in a civil partnership or do not have a partner – ie because they are single. We do not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of someone's marital/civil partnership status and anyone who feels that they have been subject to this sort of discrimination is encouraged to use the Association's complaints procedure. Any complaint that we had treated someone differently owing to their marital/civil partnership status would be investigated as a Stage 2 complaint and we would also seek to invoke action under the terms of our Equality and Diversity policy.

3.4 Pregnancy and Maternity

All individuals contacting the office who happen to be pregnant or in a period of maternity would be treated identically to all other complainants.

The procedure is explicit that we do not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of someone's pregnancy or maternity and anyone who feels that they have been subject to this sort of discrimination is encouraged to use the Association's complaints procedure. Any complaint that we had treated someone differently owing to the fact that they are pregnant or in a period of maternity would be investigated as a Stage 2 complaint and we would also seek to invoke action under the terms of our Equality and Diversity policy.

3.5 Race

All individuals contacting the office should be treated in accordance to their needs no matter their race. We will endeavor to make appropriate adjustments where someone has informed us that they require translation services or any other reasonable need. We do not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of someone's race and anyone who feels that they have been subject to this sort of discrimination is encouraged to use the Association's complaints procedure. Any complaint that we had treated someone differently owing to their race would be investigated as a Stage 2 complaint and we would also seek to invoke action under the terms of our Equality and Diversity policy.

3.6 Religion or Belief

We do not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of someone's religion or belief and anyone who feels that they have been subject to this sort of discrimination is encouraged to use the Association's complaints procedure. Any complaint that we had treated someone differently owing to their religion or belief would be investigated as a Stage 2 complaint and we would also seek to invoke action under the terms of our Equality and Diversity policy.

3.7 Gender and Gender Re-assignment

Male, female, non-binary and transgender people are afforded equal access to the procedure and their complaints are handled equally under the terms of the policy.

We do not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of gender, and anyone who feels that they have been subject to gender discrimination is encouraged to use the Association's complaints procedure. Any complaint that we had treated someone differently owing to their gender/gender re-assignment would be investigated as a Stage 2 complaint and we would also seek to invoke action under the terms of our Equality and Diversity policy.

3.8 Sexual Orientation

We intend that everyone is afforded equal access to the procedure irrespective of their sexuality and that their complaints are handled identically under the terms of the policy.

We do not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of someone's sexuality, and anyone who feels that they have been subject to gender discrimination is encouraged to use the Association's complaints procedure. Any complaint that we had treated someone differently owing to their sexuality would be investigated as a Stage 2 complaint and we would also seek to invoke action under the terms of our Equality and Diversity policy.

4. Do we need to carry out a further Impact Assessment?

4.1 No.

5. How will we monitor and evaluate this policy to measure progress?

5.1 The Depute Director is responsible for overseeing performance of key elements of this policy and preparing feedback updates to Director to inform the Committee. Trends and further action will be discussed and implemented by the Management Team on a regular basis. We will also produce articles for Newsletters, website and in the Annual Report which is sent to tenants and members and made available in alternative formats where required.