

Date Issued	June 2009
Last Reviewed	August 2024
Department	Corporate
Title	Customer Care Policy
Objective	To ensure that all of our staff and customers are aware of the high standards of service we aim to provide.
Responsible	Director of Housing
Next Review Date	August 2029

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to delivering an excellent service to all of our customers.
- 1.2 This policy sets out our approach to achieving the highest standards of Customer Service and we will use it consistently in the delivery of our services.
- 1.3 We provide detailed procedures for staff to follow and ensure that our staff are trained to deliver an excellent service.
- 1.3 We will aim to achieve the relevant Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes, particularly outcome 1 which states “every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect and receives fair access to housing and housing services”

2.0 Our Customers

- 2.1 Our customers are all of the people we come into contact with, in the course of our work and include:
 - Tenants
 - Sharing Owners
 - Owners
 - These Homes applicants
 - Members of the public
 - Local Authorities

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- Contractors and Consultants
- Other organisations that we work with

2.2 Although this policy is mainly aimed at external customers, the standards set will also be applied to dealings between staff within the organisation and Management Committee members.

3.0 Legal & Regulatory Framework

3.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 sets out the foundations for the regulatory system that formally takes account of tenant's views, and in April 2012 the Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter) was launched.

The purpose of the Scottish Social Housing Charter is to help improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords in Scotland provide and to set out who is responsible for meeting the 16 Charter Standards and Outcomes. There are several outcomes and standards applicable to this policy:

Equalities	Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that: They support the right to adequate housing, and 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
Communication	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 decision and the services it provides
Participation	Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with

3.2 This policy takes account of the following legislation

- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Action 2018

3.3 This policy also takes account of the following:

- Communication Strategy

- Tenant Participation Strategy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Comments & Complaints Policy
- Information and Advice Policy
- Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- Vulnerable Persons Policy
- Openness & Confidentiality Policy

4.0 Equal Opportunities

- 4.1 We will not discriminate in the operation of this policy on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We aim to promote equal opportunities and comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.2 When we are communicating with or about someone whose gender is unknown, we will not use gendered language, e.g. we will use 'they' rather than s/he'.

5.0 General Principles of Customer Care

- 5.1 In delivering this policy we will ensure that we adhere to our values:

professional, honest, reliable and friendly;

and that the following general principles are followed at all times:

- We will put our customers first and respect their rights, needs and opinions
- Our staff will always give their names when in contact with customers
- We will be polite, open, and truthful
- We will provide relevant, accurate information in Plain English or other formats such as audio cd or in larger print
- We are members of Happy to Translate and can provide translation / interpreting services in the office or at home
- We will listen to our customers, find out what they want and try to provide it
- We will comply with our Openness and Confidentiality Policy

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- If we cannot help, we will explain why and, wherever possible, suggest someone who can
- For those customers who cannot come to our office, we will visit them at home

6.0 Customer Care Standards

6.1 We are committed to providing an excellent, effective, and cost efficient customer service to all our existing and future customers and have developed a Customer Service Standard Leaflet which is published on elha.com and can be downloaded – See Appendix 1. This information details how we will interact with customers and our expectations.

7.0 Visiting Our Office

7.1 Our office and web office will be open at times to suit our customers. Opening hours will be publicised on our website, at the office, and, periodically, in our e-news and Talkback newsletter. We will carry out adhoc surveys to ask for tenants' views on our opening hours to make sure that we continue to meet customers' needs.

7.2 Our office will be friendly, welcoming, comfortable, clean and tidy. We will provide adequate seating, private interview space and a range of information leaflets.

7.3 Where customers have special requirements, we will make any arrangements necessary including providing an induction hearing loop and interpreting services. Information about these services will be displayed in our office reception.

7.4 Customers will be encouraged to make appointments to see the person they need to see and avoid having to wait. Where an appointment has been made the customer will not be kept waiting. If a delay is unavoidable, we will tell the customer the reason for any delay and keep them informed about the likely waiting time.

7.5 Where an appointment has not been made, we will try to ensure that the customer sees the person they need to see and will tell the customer how long they may have to wait. If the staff member is not available or the customer is unable to wait, we will offer an appointment or the services of another staff member.

7.6 If we cannot help, we will always try to direct the customer to someone who can and make a referral where we have arrangements in place to do so.

8.0 Our Online Office and elha.com

- 8.1 Our web office will normally be staffed during the same opening hours as our head office.
- 8.2 The Live Help Service is the equivalent of a telephone call for people who cannot, or prefer not to, use the telephone. The Service provides tenants and other customers with instant access to an online adviser who can provide them with a range of information and advice. Customers using the Live Help facility have the option of being provided with a written record of the advice given to them.
- 8.3 All information on elha.com will be clear, up to date and accurate.
- 8.4 Our aim is to provide 100% of services online, so that customers can access our services at times to suit them.
- 8.5 We will do all we can to ensure that anyone who wants to, can use elha.com by using software designed to help people with particular needs, for example by subscribing to services such as “Readspeaker”, providing text resizing, translation tools, etc.
- 8.6 For people who may not be able to manage their tenancy or communicate effectively online, we offer a Friends & Family service, which can be enabled by default where a Power of Attorney is in place, or on request from a tenant, allowing a friend or family member to manager the tenants My Home account on their behalf. We maintain a robust audit trail of all changes through this service.

9.0 Written Communication

- 9.1 All letters and e-mails sent to customers will be clear, easy to understand and read, and will be written in Plain English.
- 9.2 Where we are unable to respond fully within the target response time, we will write explaining the reason for the delay and say when we expect to make a full response.
- 9.3 All letters will be sent in the name of the person dealing with the matter and will contain clear and accurate explanations about decisions that have been made. E-mails and SMS text messages will be sent from a central mailbox but will contain clear contact information.

10.0 Telephone Calls

- 10.1 We operate an automated telephone system which provides a range of options customers can select to get through to the department they want to speak to.

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- 10.2 All telephone calls will be answered as quickly as possible. Staff will greet callers in a polite and courteous manner stating their name, and will advise that we may record telephone calls for training and quality purposes.
- 10.3 During opening hours, we will only use Voicemail when staff are unavailable. Recorded messages will be audible and accurate, and callers will be offered the option of leaving a voicemail message or being called back when the staff member is available.
- 10.4 We use answer phones when the office is closed. Recorded messages will be clear, audible and accurate, and will always give the caller the option of leaving a message. Messages will also inform callers of who they should contact in case of an emergency.
- 10.5 We will respond to answer phone messages at the earliest possible opportunity.

11.0 Home Visits

- 11.1 Where required, we will arrange appointments to visit customers at home during office hours. The customer will always be offered the option of changing the appointment to a time more suited to them.
- 11.2 If we are unable to keep an appointment, for example due to staff absence, we will notify the customer as soon as possible, explain why we cannot keep the appointment and arrange another appointment at a mutually convenient time.
- 11.3 All staff, contractors and agents acting on our behalf, will carry identification and will show it to customers before entering their home.
- 11.4 We will explain the reason for visiting and what, if any, action will be taken following the home visit.
- 11.5 If the customer is not at home, staff will leave a calling card detailing who visited and why with contact information. Sensitive information will not be noted on calling cards.
- 11.6 We will usually make an appointment before visiting customers. However, there are occasions when staff may visit without prior notice, for example if they notice an issue with a property whilst passing by, or if they have had difficulty contacting a customer.

12.0 Customer Feedback

- 12.1 Our customers views are important to us, and we will encourage them to share these. We will consult with customers on issues that affect them as detailed in our Tenant Participation Strategy.
- 12.2 When we consult or ask for feedback, we will make sure that:

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- We provide all the information customers need to allow them to make an informed response
- We make it easy for our customers to respond. Our tenants can provide feedback via their My Home account (except for the rent increase consultation which is via a microsite)
- We provide our offline tenants and other customers with a paper form and reply paid envelope
- We use the feedback to improve our services and influence our policies
- We report the results to our customers

13.0 Customer Satisfaction

13.1 We will use a variety of methods to measure customer satisfaction including:

- A full, independent, Tenant Satisfaction Survey every three years
- Repair satisfaction surveys for every repair we arrange
- Defect repair satisfaction surveys, the results which are passed to our developing agents
- Post contract satisfaction surveys
- New development feedback surveys
- My New Home feedback surveys
- Money & Home Energy Advice feedback surveys
- Periodic surveys on specific services such as stair cleaning or garden care
- Short surveys on specific topics issued with our e-news and Talkback newsletter

13.2 We will use the information gained from these surveys to improve our services and influence our policies.

13.3 We will report the results of these surveys, and what we are doing as a result, to our customers through our e-news, Talkback newsletter and on elha.com.

14.0 When We Get Things Wrong

- 14.1 Although we will always strive to deliver excellent service, we acknowledge that we will sometimes make mistakes and will not always get things right first time.
- 14.2 We will make it easy for customers to complain, formally or informally, by publicising our Comments and Complaints Policy and making it readily available to anyone who wants to use it. Our website includes various ways for customers to give feedback, such as contact forms, “praise or grumble” and the Live Help service, as well as giving on-line access to, and information about, our comments and complaints service.
- 14.3 If a customer complains on any of our social media platforms, we will always strive to signpost them to our Complaints Handling Procedure and to support available.
- 14.4 When we make mistakes we will apologise, put things right as quickly as possible and use the experience to improve our service in the future.

15.0 Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 15.1 All communications with our customers will be treated in confidence and personal data about our customers will only be made available on a need to know basis to staff within the Association.
- 15.2 Customers must understand that if their communication with the Association involves another customer or staff member of the Association, it may be very difficult to consider their communication (e.g. if it is a complaint), without the Association communicating with those other individuals. If the customer asks the Association not to do so, then that will be respected, although it may mean that it is not possible for the Association to take any action in response to the customer’s communication.
- 15.3 We recognise the importance of data protection legislation in protecting the rights of individuals in relation to personal data that we may handle and use about them. We will ensure that our practices in the handling and use of personal data as part of the processes outlined in this Customer Care Policy comply fully with data protection legislation.

16.0 Conflict of Interest

- 16.1 There may be occasions when the best advice for the customer is not in the best interests of ELHA or we are approached by two parties seeking help with an issue that is common to both, but where the parties are in opposition. In these circumstances staff will always advise the customer that there is or may be a conflict of interest and refer the customer to another source of appropriate advice.

17.0 Monitoring and Review

- 17.1 In consultation with staff we will set targets for all aspects of Customer Care and these targets will be reviewed annually. These targets are published on elha.com.
- 17.2 We will report our performance against these targets to the Audit & Assurance Committee annually; and on the P365 microsite on elha.com. We will also publish performance results in our annual Performance 365 report.
- 17.3 The Director of Housing will ensure that this policy is reviewed by the Management Committee every five years.

Customer Service Standards

For our quickest service - Use My Home and go Paper Free!

You can access your My Home account 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Most services In My Home are self-service, so there's no waiting for working hours, for phones to be picked up or for a letter to be delivered. Don't forget to go paper free too, so if we do write to you, you receive our letter receive letters instantly (and you'll receive a £10 discount off your rent).

The response times set out on elha.com on our Customer Service Timescales page are the times we aim to meet after we receive your enquiry. So, if you can, don't send things through the post as that takes time and costs you (and us) money - simply send it directly from your My Home account and we'll receive it there and then if our office is open, if not, we'll get it as soon as we open on the next working day.

Using My Home and going paper free can reduce the time from when you send us your enquiry to receiving our response by several days.

Our Staff will:

- Always tell you who you are speaking to and, out of the office, show you identification
- Be friendly, polite and professional at all times
- Treat you fairly and with respect
- Be fully trained to do their jobs
- Always maintain confidentiality
- Arrange appointment times to suit you wherever possible and not keep you waiting
- Listen to you and respond to your needs as quickly and efficiently as possible
- Do what they say they will and keep you informed
- Give you clear and accurate explanations about any decisions we have made
- Tell you if we cannot help and try to direct you to someone who can
- Do their best to meet our Customer Care targets
- Provide a range of ways for you to access our services, including digital services

What We Expect of You:

We need your help to provide an excellent service and we think that it's reasonable to ask you to:

- Use your My Home account for day to day enquiries and services if you can
- Go paper free if you can – it saves time and money
- Be polite and courteous to our staff and treat them with respect
- Never shout at, abuse or threaten our staff
- Be prepared and have any documents or information you may need close at hand
- Make an appointment before visiting the office if you wish to speak with a specific member of staff
- Let us know if you can't keep an appointment
- Give us the information we ask for so that we can help you
- Comply with all reasonable requests made by our staff
- Appreciate that there will be times when we are unable to help you
- Let us know when we get it wrong and help us to put things right to your satisfaction

What to Do if We Don't Meet Your Expectations:

If you are not satisfied with the service you have received from us, you can:

- Make a formal or informal complaint via My Home, our Live Help service or by telephone, letter, e-mail or in person

- If you have made a formal complaint and have gone through our Complaints Procedure, and still feel your complaint has not been resolved, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. For more information see our Complaints leaflet