



# CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

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# **Customer Care Policy**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Cadder Housing Association ('Association') strives to provide excellent customer service in all that it does. We recognise that our customers have a wide range of needs and our approach, wherever possible, is to meet these needs. We expect our contractors to have the same approach and ethos as they are serving our customers and representing the Association.
- 1.2 This policy sets out our approach to achieving the highest standards of customer service and our drive for continuous improvement.
- 1.3 We are committed to providing high quality customer services and delivering these in such a way that our customers are treated with fairness, courtesy and respect.
- 1.4 We will take account of the views and opinions of customers when delivering our services, and use customer feedback to inform future service provision.
- 1.5 The Customer Services Policy is aligned to our Resident Participation Strategy, Complaints Policy and Equality & Diversity Policy. These policies are central to all of our customer service areas.
- 1.6 The Association has a range of Service Standards, which are detailed at section five of this policy. These advise our tenants and other customers on the level of service that they can expect from us. These will be publicised to all customers and provided to our new tenants.

## **2.0 LEGISLATION & GOOD PRACTICE**

- 2.1 This policy takes account of current legislation and good practice guidance. These are outlined below.
- 2.2 Scottish Social Housing Charter**
  - 2.2.1 The Scottish Social Housing Charter was developed by the Scottish Government and introduced through the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. It sets out the standards and outcomes that all social landlords have to achieve in providing their housing services. It contains sixteen standards and outcomes and covers important areas such as our repairs services, neighbourhood management, how we allocate our homes and tenant participation. Appendix 1 shows the applicable fifteen standards and outcomes for Cadder Housing Association.
  - 2.2.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 requires that all registered social landlords report to the Scottish Regulator annually on their achievements of the Charter Outcomes. The Charter is designed to help tenants and other customers to understand their landlord's performance, enabling them to hold their landlord to account. The Charter is also intended to improve customer service.

2.2.3 The Association's Customer Care Policy is aligned to meeting the Charter outcomes.

## **2.3 Scottish Housing Regulator**

2.3.1 This policy recognises and adheres to the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework, which requires that all Scottish social housing landlords comply with the six standards. These are:

1: The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.

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.

3: The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being and economic effectiveness.

4: The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.

5: The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.

6: The governing body and senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective.

## **2.4 Housing (Scotland) Act 2001**

2.4.1 Section 54 of the 2001 Act provides that both individual tenants and registered tenants organisations be consulted by the Association on issues affecting them. In particular the areas for consultation include: -

- The Association's policies in relation to housing management, repairs or maintenance, where the proposal, if implemented, is likely to significantly affect the tenant;
- The standard of service in relation to housing management, repairs and maintenance which it intends to provide; and
- The tenant participation strategy.

## **2.5 Equality Act 2010**

2.5.1 The Association within the operation of its Customer Care Policy will comply with the Equality Act 2010 which protects persons from being discriminated against.

The characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010 are:

- ◆ age
- ◆ disability
- ◆ gender identity and gender reassignment
- ◆ marriage or civil partnership (in employment only)
- ◆ pregnancy and maternity
- ◆ race
- ◆ religion or belief
- ◆ sex
- ◆ sexual orientation.

2.5.2 Equalities is supported by Section 106 of the Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act, which states that landlords have a duty to encourage equal opportunities and provide services in a way that promotes equality.

## **2.6 Data Protection**

2.6.1 The Association is fully committed to compliance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which came into force on 25 May 2018. The Association will therefore follow procedures that aim to ensure that all employees, Committee members, contractors, agents, consultants, partners or other persons involved in the work of the Association and who have access to any personal data held by or on behalf of the Association, are fully aware of and abide by their duties and responsibilities under GDPR

## **2.7 Guidance**

2.7.1 This policy has taken account of customer care guidance provided through the Chartered Institute of Housing:

- *How to Deliver Excellent Customer Service*
- *Tenant Insight (Toolkit for Landlords)*

## **3.0 VISION, VALUES, AIMS & PURPOSE**

The Customer Care Policy is driven by the Association's vision, values, aims and key purpose areas. These affirm our commitment to customer care and putting customer at the centre of what we do.

### **3.1 Vision**

The Association's vision is to make Cadder an attractive place for people to live with good quality housing and local environment, as well as deliver services that meet their needs.

### 3.2 **Mission**

The Association is committed to providing good quality homes and services, excellent customer service and to further regenerating our area to meet the housing and community needs of Cadder's people. We aim to work in partnership and attract funding for new housing, amenities and continue our employability initiative to further regenerate Cadder.

The Association's overarching mission is to 'Make Cadder Better'.

### 3.3 **Values**

The Association's core values are:

- Customer Focussed
- Communication
- Caring
- Commitment

### 3.4 **Strategic Aims**

The Association's Strategic Aims are:

- I. Provide a high quality housing service that is continually responsive to the expectations of our tenants and other customers;
- II. To engage and build relationships with our customers to ensure our service and activities meet their needs and aspirations of our tenants and other customers;
- III. To invest in our people to ensure they have good knowledge and skills to excel in their role within the Association;
- IV. Pursue development, regeneration and wider role initiatives in close working with key partners with the aim of improving Cadder, as well as the quality of life and living conditions of tenants and residents in Cadder; and
- V. Maintain the financial viability of the Association through sound business planning, control and achievement of best value in all that we do.

### 3.5 **Purpose**

The Association's key purpose areas are:

- to provide good quality affordable housing;
- to provide a high quality and responsive maintenance service to our tenants;

- to provide excellent customer service to excel in attending to the needs and requirements of our tenants and other customers;
- to provide a high quality factoring service to owner-occupiers;
- to drive forward the regeneration of Cadder to improve the quality of life and living conditions of Cadder's people;
- to maximise funding to further improve Cadder and the quality of life and opportunities for its people.
- to raise awareness of the housing and associated needs of Cadder and its people
- to promote and facilitate inter-agency co-operation as a means of meeting the housing, social and economic needs of the people of Cadder.

## **4.0 CUSTOMER CARE PRINCIPLES**

4.1 Our customers are all of the people we come into contact with in the course of our work and include the below. We will work with these stakeholders to make Cadder better and provide quality services to our residents and other customers.

- Tenants & household members
- Owners & household members
- Members of the public
- Glasgow City Council
- Contractors and consultants
- Police Scotland
- Other social housing landlords
- Scottish Housing Regulator
- Elected members
- Lenders
- Other organisations

4.2 Our customer care principles are:

- To put our customers at the heart of all that we do;
- To provide high service standards to all of our customers;
- Regularly monitor service standards to assess performance levels in terms of customer satisfaction and improve upon weaknesses;
- Provide helpful information which is easy to understand and available in alternative formats;
- Ensure that our customers are engaged with in relevant matters and are kept updated;
- To encourage suggestions, complaints and compliments to help inform how we deliver excellent customer service;



- To make a positive difference to individual residents and the Cadder community;
- Continually explore new customer service areas; and
- To have positive and open relationships with our customers

## **5.0 CUSTOMER CARE STANDARDS**

5.1 The following standards will be followed by staff and its contractors to provide first rate services to our customers.

### **At all times we will:**

- ✓ Be polite and helpful.
- ✓ Treat everyone fairly and with respect.
- ✓ Respond to enquiries within set timescales.
- ✓ Listen to customers and encourage views on our services.
- ✓ Provide information in accessible ways and plain formats.
- ✓ Be honest and tell customers when we have got things wrong and try to make things right.
- ✓ Provide information throughout the year to our residents, so that they are aware and informed on our activities and performance. We will do so by publishing this information in our newsletter; leaflets; website; annual report; annual report on the charter.

### **Telephone Calls**

- ✓ We will answer calls quickly and aim to answer within six rings.
- ✓ Identify ourselves to the person calling.
- ✓ Arrange for the staff member you wish to speak to, to phone you back by the next working day at the latest. If that staff member is unavailable and the matter is urgent, another staff member will take attend to the issue.
- ✓ We will ensure that our answering machine provides details of our out of hours emergency repairs services.
- ✓ We will provide translation services if required.

### **Written Communications**

- ✓ We will issue our written communications in a clear and easy to understand format. We will avoid using jargon and explain any technical terms that are required to be used.
- ✓ We will advise customers of any delays against our target timescales for response and advise of the reason for this and the expected timescale.
- ✓ All of our correspondence will contain the staff member's name, position and direct phone number.
- ✓ We will issue correspondence in alternative formats when required.

- ✓ We will date stamp and record all correspondence received.
- ✓ All new tenants and owners will be provided with relevant information and documents (tenancy agreement; written statement of services; handbooks; complaints policy, information leaflets, etc.).

### **Visiting the Association**

- ✓ We will provide comfortable facilities to visiting customers.
- ✓ We will provide accessible facilities to visiting customers.
- ✓ We will welcome you and quickly establish the reason for your visit and who you wish / need to speak to.
- ✓ We will provide a private room for discussions with staff.
- ✓ We will provide customers with an approximate waiting time for the staff member who will be dealing with the enquiry.
- ✓ We will display useful information for our residents and other customers in our reception area.
- ✓ Staff will introduce themselves to visiting customers and have their name badge on display.
- ✓ We will provide translation services if required.

### **Home Visits**

- ✓ Where required / requested, we will arrange to visit residents at their home during office hours.
- ✓ When staff are carrying out home visits, they will have respect to being in a customer's home.
- ✓ Staff will introduce themselves to customers, explain the reason for their visit and show their identification card.
- ✓ Where access to a home visit is not obtained, the visiting staff member will leave a calling card with his/her name and contact details and reason for the visit. We will not record any sensitive information on calling cards.
- ✓ We will provide translation services if required.

### **Complaints**

The Association records all received complaints. Complaints can be made verbally or in writing.

Where possible, we will try to resolve complaints at the time when initial contact is made by the customer. When this is not possible we will:

- ✓ Acknowledge receipt of your letter within 3 working days of receiving it and advise you who is dealing with your complaint
- ✓ Reply to your complaint within 5 days, except where detailed investigation of your complaint is required, we will respond to you within 20 working days
- ✓ Tell you how to take the complaint further if you are not satisfied; and
- ✓ Monitor complaints to help us learn from them and improve our services

If we get it wrong we will:

- ✓ Apologise
- ✓ Make every effort to put matters right
- ✓ Amend our policy / procedures if necessary

### **Customer Feedback**

We will consult with customers on issues that affect them as detailed in our Resident Participation Strategy. When we consult or ask for feedback we will make sure that:

- ✓ We will provide all the information customers need to allow them to make an informed response.
- ✓ Widely publicise the issues being consulted on.
- ✓ Advise of the various ways that comments can be made, making it as convenient as possible.
- ✓ Acknowledge and thank respondents.
- ✓ Inform our Management Committee of the responses and where possible, use the feedback to improve our services and influence our policies.
- ✓ Inform residents and other customers of outcomes.

5.2 Our customer service standards are augmented by the Association's Staff Code of Conduct, which states that:

- ✓ Staff must maintain high standards of professionalism, fairness and courtesy in all your dealings with tenants and other service users;
- ✓ Staff must fulfil their duties responsibly, exercising reasonable skill and care and acting at all times in our best interests and that of our tenants and other customers;
- ✓ As a service organisation, we always aim to put the needs of our tenants and customers first, and we expect all of our staff to do the same in their day to day work, within the framework of our policies and procedures;
- ✓ Staff must maintain high standards of professionalism, fairness and courtesy in all your dealings with tenants and other service users; and
- ✓ Staff must always conduct them self in a courteous and professional manner.

## **6.0 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

- 6.1 We will use a variety of methods to monitor and improve customer satisfaction including:
- An independent resident satisfaction survey every year over a selected range of customers.
  - Providing customers with a range of ways to submit comments on the service received from the Association (questionnaire forms; text messages; phone calls).
  - Holding focus group meetings.
  - Holding community events.
- 6.2 We will review comments made and respond to any issues raised.
- 6.3 We will consider comments in the review of policy and procedure.
- 6.4 We will use the information gained from these surveys to improve our services.
- 6.5 We will report the results of surveys, and what we are doing as a result of these to our customers through our newsletter, letters and website.
- 6.6 We will report customer satisfaction levels to our Management Committee and residents.
- 6.7 We will hold an annual Community Champion event to recognise and celebrate the efforts made by residents for the good of the Cadder community.
- 6.8 The Association will use other methods to improve customer service provision. These area:

### **Customer Services Improvement Group**

The Association has recently established a Customer Services Improvement Group, which is formed by Association staff, with representatives from each front-line department. This formation ensures that all customer service areas have representation and input.

The group's objective is to make service improvement suggestions and critically analyse practices to identify if suggested changes would benefit the customer.

## **Management Committee**

The Management Committee (Committee) acts in the name of the Association in everything it does. The Committee is responsible for directing the affairs of the Association and its business. The Committee is responsible for the leadership, strategic direction and control of the Association with the aim of achieving good outcomes for its tenants and other service users in accordance with Regulatory Standards and Guidance issued by The Scottish Housing Regulator from time to time.

## **Cadder Community Council**

The Community Council mainly consists of Cadder residents and operates independently on behalf of the Cadder community.

The Association has a long-standing relationship with the Community Council and liaises with their board when required. The Association will also receive and consider their comments on our activities and services to customers.

## **Cadder Stakeholder Group**

The Cadder Stakeholder Group is formed by organisations which operate and serve in Cadder. Its aim is to have strong inter-communication and joint working for the betterment of individuals and the Cadder community. The group discusses ways in which issues can be resolved and aid customer service.

## **Self-Assessments**

The Association carries out a range of self-assessments across a range of its service areas. These are carried out objectively so as to gain best knowledge where performance and customer service can be improved upon. The findings of self-assessments are reported to staff and Committee. These are then implemented to improve practices and customer service.

## **Audit**

The Association employs external auditors to review various areas across the Association's business. They have a remit to review and critically analyse identified areas and produce improvement recommendations in terms of performance and customer service.

## **Focus Groups**

Residents can become involved in focus groups, which can review areas of customer service. These are short-life groups and will concentrate on a specific area.

## **Planned Home Visits**

Association staff will aim to carry out planned home visits to all tenants. These are ongoing and have the main objectives of enhancing / improving our relationships with tenants and resolving any issues.

## **Customer Profiling**

Where required, the Association will engage with certain segmentations of its customer base to deliver good customer care. For example, we will engage with senior citizens on certain welfare benefits (Attendance Allowance; Warm Home Discount, etc.) and working aged residents on other types (Universal Credit; Sure Start Grant; Tax Credits, etc.).

## **7.0 MONITORING & REVIEW**

- 7.1 The Association will continually monitor and evaluate its customer care methods and practices and will have a focus on continuous improvement.
- 7.2 We will listen to our residents, other customers and organisations, to inform and shape service delivery and improve customer care and satisfaction.
- 7.3 This policy will be reviewed in February 2022 or earlier to take account of:
- Legislative, regulatory and good practice requirements
  - Association performance
  - The views of tenants, other customers and staff
  - Business Plan considerations

## APPENDIX 1 – THE SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER: STANDARDS AND OUTCOMES

OUTCOME	STANDARD
1: Equalities	Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that 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: Communication	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.
3: Participation	Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.
4: Quality of housing	Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.
5: Repairs, maintenance & improvements	Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.
6: Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes	Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure that tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.
7, 8 and 9: Housing options	Social landlords work together to ensure that people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them; and tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options. Social landlords ensure that people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.
10: Access to social housing	Social landlords ensure that people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and their prospects of being housed.
11: Tenancy sustainment	Social landlords ensure that tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.

12: Homeless people	Local councils perform their duties on homelessness so that homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice; are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency
13: Value for money	Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.
14 and 15: Rents and service charges	Social landlords set rents and service charges in consultation with their tenants and other customers so that a balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services, and how far current and prospective tenants and other customers can afford them; and tenants get clear information on how rent and other money is spent, including any details of individual items of expenditure above thresholds agreed between landlords and tenants.