

# ***FORTH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED***

## ***CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE POLICY***

Code: GOV06

Approval: Jan 23

Review Date: Jan 26

Cross Reference: Complaints – GOV 05  
Equalities – GOV 09  
Staff safety - HR 20  
Texting - PRGOV12



This document can be made available in alternative languages or formats (such as large print, audio etc). Please contact staff as required.

## **Policy Summary**

This policy has been developed to show how Forth Housing Association delivers its customer care service in accordance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

## **Equalities**

No equalities issues have been identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Questions and there is therefore no requirement to do a full Equality Impact Assessment.

## **Privacy**

Data Protection legislation applies to customer records which will be managed accordingly. There is no requirement to do a full Privacy Impact Assessment.

## **Policy Owner**

Name: Angela Laley

Date of Next Review: Jan 26

# **FORTH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED**

## **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE POLICY**

### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **1.1 Our Commitment**







We are committed to providing a high standard of service to our customers. This policy sets out the ways in which we will provide an excellent customer experience.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter (Outcome 1) states the following: '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. This outcome describes what social landlords, by complying with equalities legislation, should achieve for all tenants and other customers regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. It includes landlords' responsibility for finding ways of understanding the rights and needs of different customers and delivering services that recognise and meet these.'

Our Customer Experience standards explain what you can expect when you use our services. It has been developed in consultation with staff and customers.

#### **1.2 Our Customers**

We use a broad definition of customer. This includes everyone with whom we deal with and includes:

-  Tenants
-  Owners
-  Applicants
-  Members of the public seeking information and advice
-  Suppliers and contractors
-  Other agencies such as Stirling Council, other Housing Associations and the Police.

Our customers will be directed to the appropriate staff member, by determining the nature of the enquiry.

## **2.0 Principles**

The following principles govern the operation of this policy:

- Putting our tenants and their communities at the heart of all we do
- Listening to tenants and customers to continually improve and develop our services
- Taking pride in delivering excellent quality services, with courtesy and respect and professionalism
- Earning the trust of all people we deal with and respecting people's rights to privacy and confidentiality
- Striving to give value for money, whilst being focused on accountability, transparency and honest

## **3.0 Aims and Objectives**

3.1 We want our customers to have an excellent experience every time they contact us or we contact them.

We will:

3.2 Treat everyone with respect, understanding and courtesy, fairly and equally.

3.3 Always be professional and helpful.

3.4 Deal with enquiries within our response times and provide a variety of communication methods to suit individual needs.

3.5 Find out what our customers want and will take their views into account in decision making.

3.6 Provide relevant, accurate and accessible information in plain English.

3.7 Respect your confidentiality and protect your personal information.

## **4.0 Framework - Our Customer Experience Standards:**

### **4.1 Visiting Our Office**

4.1.1 Our office reception area will be comfortable, clean and staffed.

- 4.1.2 We will have opening times clearly displayed.
- 4.1.3 We have an interview room so that customers can discuss personal and confidential matters in private. Where the appointment is pre-arranged, this will be available. There may be a wait for the room for ad hoc appointments.
- 4.1.4 Reception and interviewing areas will be accessible to customers with pushchairs/prams, in wheelchairs or with mobility problems. For customers who are unable to access our offices we will make suitable alternative arrangements.
- 4.1.5 Toilet facilities will be available with disabled access.
- 4.1.6 Where customers have special requirements, we will make any arrangements required, including providing Happy to Translate system, an interpreter, a British Sign Language signer or providing a mini loop system, to assist with interviewing deaf and partially hearing customers.
- 4.1.7 Will make sure customers queries are dealt with as quickly as possible to minimise waiting time. A queuing system will operate for customers visiting the office without an appointment. If staff are unavailable, a return appointment will be made, at a time that is acceptable to the customer. Should the query be an emergency, the customer will be seen by an alternative member of staff.
- 4.1.8 If there is a pre-arranged appointment with a staff member, staff will be available at the agreed time.
- 4.1.9 If there is an unavoidable delay to their appointment staff will keep the customer updated and if suitable to the customer an alternative appointment made. If a specific staff member is not available, staff will let the customer know why and when they are available again.
- 4.1.1 If a customer is unable to come into the office, we will arrange for a member of staff to visit them at home to deal with their enquiry.

## **4.2 Home Visits**

We will:

- 4.2.1 Wherever possible arrange appointments in advance, and at the convenience of customers. Such appointments will normally take place by staff within 5 working days of a request. Home visits by Contractors/Consultants will be by agreed appointment in accordance with our Repairs and Maintenance Policy.
- 4.2.2 Arrive on time for pre-arranged time slot, or telephone to advise of any delay.

- 4.2.3 Notify the customer in advance with reasons for a cancellation and rearrange the appointment if staff are unable to keep an appointment.
- 4.2.4 Make sure that all members of staff carry and show an identification card, and explain the reason for the visit.
- 4.2.5 Be sensitive in all of our discussions which are always treated in the strictest confidence.
- 4.2.6 Let the customer know what will happen following on from the visit. We will confirm in writing (letter or email depending on customer's preference) agreed actions timescale agreed at the visit.
- 4.2.7 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.
- 4.2.8 We will support staff who request that customers do not smoke during visits from staff. (This is in line with legislation banning smoking in the workplace).

### **4.3 Telephone Calls**

- 4.3.1 Telephone calls will be answered as quickly as possible, and where appropriate direct numbers given.
- 4.3.2 Staff will greet callers in a polite and courteous manner, stating the organisations name and the staff member's name. This includes staff's voicemail message which will also have the organisation's and staff member's name.
- 4.3.3 If the call has to be transferred, staff will pass on the customer's name and details of their enquiry, to avoid customers repeating themselves, to the appropriate staff member by determining the nature of the call.
- 4.3.4 When a call is diverted to voicemail, the call will be returned within next working day. If on annual leave a message should be left confirming when returning to work.
- 4.3.5 When messages are taken from a customer, the relevant officer will return the call within next working day.
- 4.3.6 The answering machine should only be activated when it is out of office hours, or, to allow for staff meetings, public holidays and specific events such as training days.

4.3.7 Customers will be informed of the emergency repair out of office telephone numbers via the website, the quarterly tenants' newsletter, the Tenant Handbook and the reception answering machine.

#### **4.4 Letters, E Mails, Texts and Website Correspondence**

4.4.1 We will ensure all letters and e mails have the name, address, job title of the person sending the letter and their contact details, including direct dial number.

4.4.2 Customers will receive an acknowledgement response to all correspondence within 3 working days, confirming the timescale of the detailed response. (the date of receipt of correspondence is included within the timescale). This includes 'E Mail, text and website enquiries. If staff are out of the office for more than 24 hours they will use their e mail out of office message to indicate when they will return.

4.4.3 Customers will receive a full reply to correspondence within 5 working days this will depend upon the nature of the communication. When the target timescale of 5 working days is not possible, an interim letter or email will be sent out at the end of 5 working days, explaining the cause for delay, and indicating the revised timescale.

4.4.4 Clear and accurate explanations will be provided about decisions which have been made.

4.4.5 All correspondence will be sent in the name of the person dealing with the matter.

4.4.6 Information will be provided which is written in plain English and is jargon free.

4.4.7 Translations will be provided upon request and in an appropriate format e.g., another language, audio or large print. Every effort will be made to provide documentation within four weeks, although this may be subject to availability of specialist suppliers.

#### **4.5 Social Media**

4.5.1 Social media offers the potential for building relationships and improving the services that we provide.

4.5.2 We will promote the effective and innovative use of social media as part of our activities. Where appropriate, the use of social media will become an integrated part of communications and engagement plans for projects, campaigns, and consultations.

4.5.3 Social media will be about enhancing our communications with our customers and will not replace other communication formats.

## **4.6. My Forth – our on-line Portal**





- 4.6.1 We will continue to promote and update our free on-line portal which enables customers to pay rent, report repairs, read regular updates, access forms etc
- 4.6.2 Staff will use My Forth when in tenants' homes to assist with tenancy matters.
- 4.6.3 Staff will assist customers to sign-up and log-on to portal as required.

## **4.7 What We Ask from Our Customers**

- 4.7.1 To provide the information we need and also our Contractors need, to assist you when requested and within agreed timescales.
- 4.7.2 To keep all appointments, you make with us.
- 4.7.3 To treat staff with respect and politeness. Where this is not the case; we will revert to our Staff Safety Policy.

## **4.8 Information Services**

4.8.1 We will:

-  Publish all printed information in a print size of 12 and font style of arial. We will make it available in larger print on request.
-  Offer versions in other languages, CD and Braille to meet individuals' particular requirements. (audio tape deleted)
-  Regularly update the website.
-  Issue a Tenant Handbook to each tenant when signing up for a new tenancy.

## **5.0 Measuring Customer Experience**

- 5.1 We will seek feedback from customers through our E Group, Tenants View Forum, Focus groups, satisfaction surveys, post allocation visits, general home visits and website. We will use any other suitable mechanism for feedback that suits our customers' needs.



- 5.2 A fully independent Tenants' Satisfaction survey will be commissioned every 3 years, with interim surveys being carried out on a regular basis.
- 5.3 Reports summarising performance will be published on our website, in the quarterly newsletter and Annual Report.

## **6.0 Data Protection**

- 6.1 We recognise the importance of data protection legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation, in protecting the rights of individuals in relation to personal information that we may handle, use and disclose about them, whether on computer or in paper format. We will ensure that our practices in the handling, use and disclosure of personal information as part of the processes and procedures outlined in this policy comply fully with data protection legislation. More information is available from our Data Protection Officer.

## **7.0 Monitoring of the Policy**

- 7.1 This policy is monitored by the Management Committee through the measurements noted at 5.0 and will enable us to analyse the feedback, including complaints and make improvements to services as required.

## **8.0 Complaints and Appeals**

- 8.1 We will deal with all Complaints in line with the timescales stipulated by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Service (SPSO). Full details of our Complaints Policy can be found on our website [www.forthha.org.uk](http://www.forthha.org.uk) or obtained from our office.
- 8.2 Owners initial complaints will be answered as a frontline response and answered within 5 working days. If still dissatisfied and in line with our complaints handling policy the complaint will be escalated to a manager and responded to in writing within 20 working days. If still dissatisfied an owner can appeal to the First-tier Tribunal.
- 8.3 Complaints will be monitored on a quarterly basis based on our Complaints Policy. This is reported to our Committee through the quarterly Annual Return on the Charter Report. We also publish a SPSO Annual Complaints Report, which is available in hard copy and on our website. Feedback will be taken into account when reviewing services, policies, and procedures.

- 8.4 Significant performance failure complaints are reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator. More information is available at [www.housingregulator.gov.scot](http://www.housingregulator.gov.scot) or by telephoning 0141 242 5642.

## **9.0 Equalities**

- 9.1 Equality and diversity underpin all our activities and services. When delivering our services, we never discriminate on the basis of sex or marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language, social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions. Full details of our Equalities Policy can be found on our website [www.forthha.org.uk](http://www.forthha.org.uk) or can be obtained from our office.

## **10.0 Availability**

- 10.1 The policy is available on our website in downloads: <https://www.forthha.org.uk/downloads/>. A copy of the standards is displayed in reception.

## **11.0 Review**

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years by the Management Committee and staff are responsible for ensuring that it meets legal and good practice requirements.

## Appendix 1 - Customer Experience Standards



# Forth Housing Association - Customer Experience Standards

## We will:

- Treat everyone with respect, understanding and courtesy, fairly and equally.
- Always be professional and helpful.
- Deal with enquiries within our response times and provide a variety of communication methods to suit individual needs.
- Listen to what you have to say and take your views into account in decision making to improve and develop our services.
- Provide relevant, accurate and accessible information in plain English.
- Provide and promote a variety of opportunities to get involved with us and to give us feedback on our services.
- Give you information at least annually on our overall performance.
- Respect your confidentiality and protect your personal information.

## What We Ask from Our Customers:

- Pay your rent on time, look after your property and respect your neighbours.
- To treat staff with respect and politeness.
- To provide the information we need to and our Contractors' need, to assist you when requested and within agreed timescales.
- To keep all appointments, you make with us.
- Let us know when you are not happy with the service, so that we can try to put things right and improve our service.

## Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment Screening Questions

Will the implementation of this policy have an impact on any of the following protected characteristics?

- |                                   |                              |  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Age                            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Disability                     | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Gender reassignment            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Marriage and Civil Partnership | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Pregnancy and Maternity        | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Race                           | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Religion or belief             | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Sex                            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Sexual orientation             | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

*If you have answered 'Yes' to any of these points, please complete a full Equality Impact Assessment. If you have answered 'No', you need take no further action in completing an Equality Impact Assessment*

### Appendix 3 - Privacy Impact Assessment questions

1. A substantial change to an existing policy, process or system that involves personal information

Yes  No

2. A new collection of personal information

Yes  No

3.. A new way of collecting personal information (for example collecting it online)

Yes  No

4. A change in the way personal information is stored or secured

Yes  No

5. A change to how sensitive information is managed

Yes  No

6. Transferring personal information outside the EEA or using a third-party contractor

Yes  No

7. A decision to keep personal information for longer than you have previously

Yes  No

8. A new use or disclosure of personal information you already hold

Yes  No

9. A change of policy that results in people having less access to information you hold about them

Yes  No

10. Surveillance, tracking or monitoring of movements, behaviour or communications

Yes  No

11. Changes to your premises involving private spaces where clients or customers may disclose their personal information (reception areas, for example)

Yes  No

*If you have answered 'Yes' to any of these points, please complete a full Privacy Impact Assessment. If you have answered 'No', you need take no further action in completing a Privacy Impact Assessment.*

