



CUSTOMER CARE POLICY: COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Customer Care Policy: Compliments, Comments and Complaints

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1 Definitions

- 1.1 For the purpose of this policy and accompanying procedures the following definitions apply: -
- 1.2 A "complaint" is an expression of dissatisfaction by a tenant, a resident, a councillor, the local MP and any partner or Board member about the Association's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the Association itself or anyone acting on behalf of the Association.
- 1.3 A "compliment" is an expression of satisfaction with a service that we, or anyone acting on behalf of the Association, have provided. This could be satisfaction with an individual member of staff, a team or a particular service area.
- 1.4 A "comment" is a remark about a service, including the quality of the service or the means by which it is delivered.

2 Commitments

- 2.1 Cestria Community Housing Association will commit to:
1. Delivering excellent customer services
 2. Listening to the views of our customers in order to improve the services we provide
 3. Treating our customers respectfully and courteously
 4. Responding to all service requests promptly and efficiently
 5. Providing written responses to all complaints
 6. Learning from our mistakes, from complaints, comments and compliments received and publishing the lessons learnt
 7. Offering appointments for customers either at home or in the office when requested to do so
 8. All staff will carry identification and will show it to customers on contact
 9. Making sure all our customers have equal and fair access to the services we provide
 10. Providing information in appropriate formats and languages, and show cultural awareness and sensitivity when delivering services and responding to contact from customers
 11. Providing information about how to complain to us about the services we provide and challenge the decisions we make. Complaints received will be treated in the strictest confidence

12. Resolving complaints effectively and within agreed time targets at the first point of contact whenever possible
13. Providing a wide variety in communication channels for customers to contact us with their views. We will measure satisfaction levels, record and monitor all complaints, comments and compliments, and use all contact as a positive method of monitoring performance and improving our services
14. Ensuring all written replies to complaints are in plain language.

3 Key Points of the Policy

- 3.1 The Director of Finance and Corporate Services will be responsible for the implementation of the Customer Care Policy.
- 3.2 The Association will continue to work with customers to develop and review customer care standards.
- 3.3 All compliments received will be recorded and forwarded to the staff responsible. Incidents of good practice and innovation will be communicated to all service teams for consideration in their own service delivery.
- 3.4 All compliments, comments and complaints will be recorded the day they are received and acknowledged within 3 working days.
- 3.5 The Association aims to resolve complaints informally in the first instance with the responsible service team responding to the complainant within 10 working days. If it is not possible to resolve the matter, the complainant has recourse to the Association's formal complaints procedures.
- 3.6 The Association will have a three stage formal complaints system for investigating and responding to complaints as set out below. Specific target response times are set for each stage of the complaints policy.

Stage 1 Service Manager

If the complaint cannot be resolved by the frontline staff, the complainant can request that the matter be referred to the relevant Service Manager. The Service Manager will:

1. Acknowledge in writing our receipt of the formal complaint within 3 working days.
2. Formally respond to the complaint in writing within 10 working days.

Stage 2 Director

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1, the complainant can request that the matter be referred to the relevant Director. The Director will:

1. Acknowledge the receipt in writing within 3 working days.
2. Formally respond to the complaint in writing within 10 working days.

Stage 3 Board Review

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 2, then the complainant can request that the matter be referred for a 'Board Review'.

1. Arrangements will be made for a Chair and Vice Chair plus one other Board member to act as the Complaints Panel for the purposes of this policy.
2. The Association will write to the complainant with the outcome of the Board Review within 30 days of the matter being referred to Stage 3.

3.7 Independent Housing Ombudsman Scheme

If complaints cannot be resolved at Stage 3 then the complainant will be encouraged to report the matter to the Independent Housing Ombudsman service if the complainant believes that:

1. The Association has not conducted an appropriate investigation into their complaint, or
2. There is the possibility that the Association has not administered its policy and procedures correctly.

The Association, as a member of the Scheme, will be bound by any decision made by the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

3.8 At any stage in the formal complaints procedures, the Association may consider whether mediation between the Association and the complainant may help to resolve the complaint.

3.9 Where the complaint or allegation is of a criminal nature, it shall go straight to Stage 2 of the complaints process.

3.10 Complaints or allegations of misconduct by officers or Board members will be investigated under the relevant Code of Conduct and disciplinary policies.

3.11 The Association will receive monitoring reports on this policy on a quarterly basis to the Performances and Resources Committee.

3.12 Where a complaint is upheld, the Association will make an appropriate and proportionate remedy which fits the harm or injustice suffered by the complainant. This may be in the form of remedial action or compensation payment.

- 3.13 Directors will be responsible for making decisions on remedies. However, where the complaint is low level in nature, the individual Service Team will be delegated authority to offer remedies at the point of contact with the complainant.
- 3.14 The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the board will decide on relevant compensation payments to tenants. Such payments will be reported to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Service Standards

- 3.15 The Service Standards we are committing to meeting in connection with our Customer Care Policy are as follows;
1. Answer all telephone calls to our offices within 30 seconds
 2. Acknowledge all written correspondence requiring a response, within three working days of receiving them and send you a detailed reply within 10 working days. If we are not able to do this, we will let you know and tell you when you can expect a full reply
 3. Acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 3 working days
 4. Formally respond to your complaint within 10 working days
 5. Forward all e mails received to a generic mail box within one working day of receipt
 6. Provide our tenants and leaseholders with a newsletter, the Cestria Courier, four times each year.

4 Monitoring and Review

- 4.1 The Performance and Resources Committee will receive quarterly monitoring reports which will include the following;
- a) Summary of complaints and compliments received by Service Team
 - b) Complaints and Compliments Profile
 - c) Sources and nature of Complaints/Compliments
 - d) Average and Maximum Response Times
 - e) Learning from Complaints
 - f) Information relating to the type and level of complaint and outcome and whether the complaint was successfully resolved within agreed timescales
 - g) A comprehensive profile analysis by gender, disability, religion, ethnicity, age and sexuality.
- 4.2 This policy will be reviewed by the Performance and Resources Committee at least every two years.

Approval by Committee: 28th April 2010
Date for Review: April 2012