

# **RAILWAY HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS**

The Association is committed to delivering high quality services, that provide value for money to our customers at all times. We have consulted with residents and staff to set standards for our services. These standards are about meeting the needs and expectations of our customers and creating a service of which we can all be proud.

If we fall below these standards we will apologise and try to put things right.

This leaflet sets out the main service standards that customers can expect. We will monitor the key standards and publish the results in our residents' newsletter.

### **1. Equality & Diversity**

All customers will be treated fairly and equally irrespective of nationality or ethnic origin, gender or gender orientation, disability, age, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

We can provide information in large print, Braille, on audio tape and language translations on request. An interpretation service is also available.

We will ensure that our public offices meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

### **2. Customer Care**

We will: -

- Aim to be easy to contact, helpful, responsive and efficient.
- Provide a clean, safe, accessible, comfortable, user friendly office environment providing appropriate levels of information and service.
- Treat all customers with courtesy and respect at all times.
- Treat all enquiries and information confidentially, in accordance with our Data Protection policy.
- Clearly and honestly explain the reason(s) if unable to help a customer
- Ensure that all staff carry photographic identification to show when visiting residents
- Offer a range of methods for customers to contact us including face to face, by letter, fax, email, telephone, text and via website
- Provide telephone lines open between 8.30 am and 4.30 pm Monday to Friday with an out of office hours service for reporting of emergency repairs. Occasionally, it may be necessary to use an answer-phone during office hours. However, this will only be used during exceptional circumstances and will be checked within the next working day for messages.
- Answer telephone calls within 5 rings
- Reply to letters within 10 working days

## **RAILWAY HOUSING ASSOCIATION CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS**

### **2. Customer Care continued**

We will: -

- Acknowledge emails within one working day and reply in full within 10 working days
- Ask all residents for their preferred method of contact and find out if they have any particular needs or vulnerabilities that need to be taken into account when delivering services

### **3. Applications for Housing & Re-letting Vacant Properties**

We will let vacant properties to those applicants in greatest housing need from the client group for which the property is designated; making best possible use of available stock and where possible creating balanced communities. We will: -

- Aim to assess new applications for housing within 14 days.
- Contact all applicants twice each year to check if their circumstances have changed.
- Provide an annual summary to each applicant about our waiting lists and lettings
- Set and monitor a target time for the re-letting of vacant properties.
- Set and monitor a target for the number of vacant properties that are re-let each year to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) applicants.
- Aim to visit each new resident within 6 weeks of the start of their tenancy

### **4. Mutual Exchanges**

In response to a request to carry out a mutual exchange, we will reach a decision and notify the applicant(s) within 42 days of receiving the application.

### **5. Contact with Residents**

To keep residents informed we will: -

- Issue an information handbook to new tenants and leaseholders
- Offer each resident a twice yearly home visit
- Hold twice yearly residents' meetings at each sheltered scheme
- Hold leaseholders' meetings twice a year at each leasehold scheme
- Invite residents to join staff on twice yearly estate inspections at schemes with more than 6 properties
- Send a newsletter to tenants four times each year, including an annual report

## **RAILWAY HOUSING ASSOCIATION CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS**

### **5. Contact with Residents continued**

To keep residents informed we will: -

- Send a newsletter to leaseholders twice each year
- Include details of our policies and other useful information on our website and in the residents' newsletter

### **6. Complaints**

We will try to resolve complaints effectively and as quickly as possible. We aim to: -

- Acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 2 working days
- Reply to a complaint within 10 working days of receipt
- Monitor the level of satisfaction with our complaints procedure
- Inform residents of any changes that are made to policies and procedures as a result of a complaint

### **7. Disabled Adaptations**

We are committed to the provision of adaptations in order to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families. We aim to: -

- Provide minor adaptations (for example, grab rails or lever taps) within 4 weeks of receiving a request
- Make a referral to the appropriate local council within 4 weeks of receiving a request for a major adaptations (for example, level access showers or stair-lifts)
- Monitor resident's satisfaction with newly installed adaptations

### **8. Anti Social Behaviour**

We aim to ensure that all residents enjoy their right to peace, quiet and security in their homes. We will: -

- Respond to complaints of anti social behaviour within 10 working days (in exceptional circumstances where the complainant may be at serious risk, we aim to respond within one working day)
- Contact complainants each month (or weekly if the complaint is of a more serious nature) until the case is resolved or closed
- Monitor resident's level of satisfaction with our response to complaints of anti social behaviour

## **9. Harassment, Hate Crime & Domestic Violence**

The Association will not tolerate any form of harassment, hate crime or domestic violence and will take prompt and effective action. We aim to: -

- Respond to complaints of harassment, hate crime or domestic violence within 5 working days (if the complainant may be at serious risk, we aim to respond within one working day)
- Monitor resident's level of satisfaction with our response to complaints of harassment, hate crime and domestic violence

## **10. Repairs & Maintenance**

We are committed to providing safe, comfortable homes that are well maintained. We will aim to: -

- Complete emergency repairs within 24 hours
- Complete urgent repairs within 7 days
- Complete routine repairs within 31 days
- Carry out annual safety inspections of all gas appliances that are owned by the Association.
- Consult with residents before carrying out any planned maintenance or improvement work
- Survey residents after every repair and improvement works to find out their opinion of the work
- Visit to check 10% of repairs that are completed

## **11. Debt Recovery**

We aim to avoid rent arrears and other debts arising by taking preventative action, providing good advice on benefits and reinforcing the importance of prompt payment. We will: -

- Offer a number of different ways for residents to pay their rent and other charges
- Send quarterly rent statements
- Collect 100% of the rent due
- Minimise rent arrears and recover all debts including service charges, court costs and rechargeable repairs by taking prompt, effective and sympathetic but firm action.

## **12. Access to Information**

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 customers have the right to ask to see information held about them by the Association. We aim to respond to requests for access to personal information within 40 days, in accordance with the legislation.

### **13. Resident Involvement**

We are committed to the rights of residents to be involved in the management of their homes. Opportunities will be promoted to encourage involvement in all aspects of service delivery to a level that is appropriate to the wishes of both individuals and residents' groups. We will: -

- Consult with residents about any major changes to our services.
- Regularly survey residents for feedback on the quality of our services and use this information to ensure that we are meeting the aspirations of current and future residents.
- Monitor the level of resident's satisfaction with the types of activity we offer for involvement in the management of their homes. These currently include surveys and questionnaires, residents' associations, editorial panel, focus groups, armchair monitoring and Board membership.
- Encourage involvement by offering practical support such as child care costs, travel expenses, interpretation and translation services, hearing loops, accessible venues and refreshments.
- Inform residents how their views have been taken into account and used to improve our services

**April 2010**