

WESSEX CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

OBJECTIVE:

To identify for customers and staff what standards of Care customers can expect across the range of services provided by Wessex Partnership staff.

UK legislation relating to this policy:



The Town and Country Planning Act 1990, s106

Additional documents/policies referred to in this policy:



Resident Involvement Strategy – KHA

Resident Involvement Policy and Strategy - HVHS

Aim of Policy Statement:

1. Wessex Housing Partnership is committed to provide excellent standards of Customer Care for all our customers. This policy identifies for customers and staff what standards of Care customers can expect across a range of services provided by Wessex Housing Partnership.
2. This policy should be read in conjunction with the operational procedures listed above.

Policy Statement:

3. The Group is committed to providing the best possible service to our customers.
4. Customer Service forms the basis of all our activities and is embedded within the culture of the partnership.
5. We believe that everyone is entitled to receive the best service and to be dealt with respect and integrity and that no one be disadvantaged by the services provided.
6. We will apply these principles throughout the operation of the Group, including seeking to apply them to work undertaken by external contractors, suppliers and organisations working with us.
7. We recognise that there will be times when, despite our best efforts, we will not be able to achieve all expectations. We will ensure that on such occasions we explain in detail why we are not able to meet the expectations.
8. The Group will develop and publish service standards against which its customer service may be monitored. These standards will set out expectations and targets in terms of response times and levels of service across a range of customer contacts each of which is set out in greater detail in operational procedures.

9. Performance against these standards will be monitored and reported, and the information arising will be used to target service areas and procedures for improvement.

10. The Group reviews its policies annually.

Our Strategy and how it will be achieved:

11. We will review annually our key areas of customer care and where we need to will draw up an action plan to tackle those areas that need to be improved.

12. We will seek to develop our customer satisfaction levels to the performance level of the top quartile of our peer group.

13. We will ensure that all our services and related information is accessible to all our customers.

14. We will publish service performance information quarterly to our boards in a form that is easily understandable and compares us with other like organisations.

15. We will aim to develop our customer insight by holding a 100% database of all our customers by 2009 with this reviewed annually.

16. We will have a Customer Care Champion for the Group and ensure that this champion has the time, commitment, knowledge and resources to undertake this role.

17. We will ensure that there is a diverse range of mechanisms and opportunities through which our customers can become involved in the delivery and development of our services.

18. We will develop and implement an on going customer care training programme for all the staff to include contractors working within the group.

19. We will monitor the success of this strategy through a number of methods including

- 100% status survey every three years
- 100% survey of all new developments
- 100% survey of all planned works carried out
- 100% survey on all responsive repairs works
- Sample surveys quarterly on services such as grounds maintenance, cleaning etc
- Ad hoc surveys and customer focus groups as required

Responsible Manager:

20. Operational Managers

Policy Audit Trail:	
Details of any policy superseded by this document:	This document replaces the following: Kingfisher Housing Association Customer Care Policy HVHS Customer Care Policy
Author:	Managing Director
Date of approval by Board:	12 September 2007 11 February 2009
Date of review:	September 2007
Date of review:	November 2008
Date of review:	February 2009
Date of review:	

WESSEX CUSTOMER CARE STANDARDS

Service/Activity	Standard or Target to Be Achieved	Staff Responsible	Method of Monitoring
1. General			
	<p>a) We will provide a friendly, helpful polite and effective service at all times.</p> <p>b) Staff will take ownership of any problems they are dealing with identify the best way they can be dealt with and solve them.</p> <p>c) We will introduce ourselves by name and department, wear a name badge both in the office and when visiting, and carry photo identification.</p> <p>d) We will have front-line staff who are capable of handling enquiries from all types of customers (tenants, applicants, shared owners, home-owners, stakeholders) and who can handle all areas of enquiry, including income advice and welfare issues.</p> <p>e) Where they cannot provide the advice they will be capable of directing enquiries to the relevant person.</p>	Operational Managers	<p>Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public.</p> <p>This area of work will be reviewed annually by residents.</p> <p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.</p>

2. Accessibility			
	<p>a) All offices, as far as practical, will comply with the Disability Discrimination Act requirement, and will be accessible to other groups, such as those with children.</p> <p>b) <i>We will provide details of our standard opening hours at our offices, on our leaflets and on our website.</i></p> <p>c) We will offer a staffed 24-hour emergency standby service; Non-emergency calls received out of hours are taken by an answering service.</p> <p>d) We will know our residents and adapt our services and methods of communication to meet their needs.</p> <p>e) We will maintain a website with information relevant to all areas of the association for easy access by our customers.</p>		<p>Mystery shopping forms will be available at offices and will be offered by all staff who meet the public.</p> <p>Satisfaction surveys; mystery shopping.</p> <p>Satisfaction surveys.</p> <p>On-line questionnaire.</p>
3. Confidentiality			
	<p>a) We will take all possible steps to maintain confidentiality, always offering private interview rooms, or meetings away from offices or properties if requested.</p>	Operational Managers	Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public.

4. Information			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) We will issue a handbook explaining residents rights and responsibilities b) We will supply information on all areas of our activities, and advice related to our services by leaflets, by a handbook for our residents on a website, and by newsletters. c) We will offer information on Right to Buy, Right-to-Acquire and other home ownership options d) We will supply advice and assistance on how to access support and other Services in residents' neighbourhood. 	Operational Managers	<p>Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public.</p> <p>Specific satisfaction surveys to residents requesting this information.</p>
5. Handling Enquiries and Correspondence			
a. Personal callers to office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) We will arrange appointments in the office where requested within a maximum of 10 working days, or within one or five working days for more serious matters such as harassment, as outlined in our procedures. ii) If an appointment is made, we will endeavour to see the customer on time, but will not keep them waiting in the office for longer than a maximum of 5 minutes. 	Operational Managers	<p>Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public. Responses reviewed at team meetings monthly and quarterly by EMT and Board.</p> <p>This area of work will be reviewed annually by residents.</p> <p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii) If an appointment has not been made, we will aim for them to be seen (after speaking to reception) within a maximum of 10 minutes. iv) We make arrangements to assist residents with translation facilities. v) We expect staff and customers to be mutually respectful and they must not be aggressive, abusive or commit any form of harassment towards each other. 		
b. Telephone enquiries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) We aim to answer calls within 5 rings, and ensure 95% are answered in this time. ii) We will state what person and department has been contacted, give our first name and ask how we may help. If the first person who takes the call can not help, they will find a person who can. iii) If the person required is not available, we will offer a choice of leaving a message on that person's voicemail (if available), speaking to another person, or take a message. iv) If a message or voicemail has been left, someone will call back within 1 working day. 	Operational Managers	<p>Monthly telephone statistics (where available) considered at team meetings and quarterly to OMT and Board.</p> <p>Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public.</p> <p>This area of work will be reviewed annually by residents.</p>

<p>c. Responding to correspondence (i.e. letters, faxes and emails)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. We will acknowledge receipt of correspondence relating to our residents and applicants within 1 working day, and aim to respond fully within a maximum of 10 working days; ii. If it is not possible to provide a full response within 10 working days of receipt, we will inform the customer of the reason for this, and will tell them when we expect to be able to answer them in full. iii. Will avoid the use of jargon, and ensure all correspondence is designed to be easily understood. iv. If we are away from the office for more than 1 day, other than over a weekend, we will initiate an “Out of Office” response on our e-mail. This will use the following format “I am away from the office until (date). If your query is urgent please contact (name and number) or (e-mail address) otherwise I will deal with your e-mail on my return.” 	<p>Operational Managers</p>	<p>Monthly post statistics</p> <p>Satisfaction Surveys</p> <p>This area of work will be reviewed annually by residents.</p>
<p>d. Visits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. We will arrange visits to homes or to an agreed venue within a maximum of 10 working days of the request, or 1 or 5 days for serious matters such as harassment. 	<p>Operational Managers</p>	<p>Satisfaction Surveys.</p> <p>This area of work will be reviewed annually by residents.</p>

6. Resident Involvement			
a. General	<p>i. We will regularly seek residents' opinions and ideas on how to improve our services by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -forming local area groups -holding regular meetings of the Residents' Federation/ Panel -undertaking surveys and questionnaires -providing training, advice and support (admin/financial) to help them participate fully <p>attending regular residents' meetings in the neighbourhoods affected, not just at offices;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -asking the Residents Federation / Panel to provide its comments on Policy reports before they are presented to the Board -briefing residents on changes to policy, regulation or services at residents' meetings, and in the Partnership's newsletters. 	Operational Managers	<p>Board reports by officers</p> <p>Board reports by the Residents' Federation/ Panel quarterly.</p> <p>Satisfaction Surveys</p> <p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.</p>
7. Information to residents			
	a) In addition to any formal notices, we will consult at least one calendar month before any major building	Head of Property Asset Management	<p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.</p> <p>We will monitor satisfaction when work is</p>

	<p>work, telling them what is proposed and exhibit the choice of finishes available.</p> <p>b) We will keep them informed as work progresses, by letter or in person.</p> <p>c) We will contact residents directly when any major changes to services are proposed.</p>	Head of Property Asset Management	<p>completed, through surveys.</p>
8. Applying for accommodation and changes to tenancies			
a. Applying for accommodation	<p>i. We will provide clear information about applying for a home and obtaining social and medical priority.</p> <p>ii. We will provide application forms, including those for social and medical priority, both for our own waiting lists where applicable and for the Joint Housing Register.</p> <p>iii. We will supply social and medical priority application forms</p>	Allocations Section Manager	<p>Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public.</p> <p>This area of work will be reviewed annually by residents.</p> <p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.</p>
b. Offers of accommodation	<p>i. We will provide viewing services for prospective new tenants.</p> <p>ii. If they claim Housing Benefit (HB) our Officers are trained to verify their claim (KHA only)</p>	Allocations Section Manager and Housing Management Managers	<p>Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public.</p> <p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.</p>

	iii. A follow up home visit will be organised within a maximum of 3 months of the tenancy start date.		
c. Transferring	i. When a transfer application is received, we will respond within a maximum of 10 working days explaining the process. When a transfer has been arranged, we will visit to discuss whether the tenant is required to carry out any work.	Allocations Section Manager and Housing Management Managers	Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public. We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.
d. Mutual exchange requests	i. We will aim to provide a decision concerning an application to exchange within a maximum of 10 days of receipt of the application, This will not affect the requirement to reach a decision within 42 days..	Allocations Section Manager and Housing Management Managers	Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public. We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.
e. Requests for assignments/succession of tenancy	i) We will acknowledge receipt of correspondence within 1 working day. We will send a reply to our residents within a maximum of 10 days. ii) When sent a notification of the death of a tenant, we will reply to this within a maximum of 5 days, and issue a succession application form to be completed and returned if applicable	Allocations Section Manager and Housing Management Managers	Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public. We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year
f. Termination of tenancy	i. We will process a tenancy termination notification within a maximum of 5 days of receipt informing residents of any outstanding money due.	Allocations Section Manager and Housing Management Managers	Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public. We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year

9. Repair Requests			
	<p>a) We will ensure that repairs can be reported by telephone, email, or letter or by visiting our office. This will be either to a member of staff during office hours, or by calling our 24 hour Repairs Hotline out of office hours.</p> <p>b) We will tell tenants when the repair will be completed and will carry out the repair within an agreed period for that type of repair.</p> <p>c) We will send a repairs advice slip, to tell them when the order has been raised.</p> <p>d) We, or the contractor, will contact them to make an appointment for the contractor to call at a time to suit the tenant.</p> <p>e) If they are responsible for the cost of the repair, we will tell them when they report it, and give them an estimate of the charge.</p>	<p>Repairs & Hotline Staff & Managers</p>	<p>Satisfaction Survey forms will be available at offices, and will be offered by all staff who meet the public.</p> <p>This area of work will be reviewed annually by residents.</p> <p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.</p> <p>Satisfaction reply slips/telephone surveys results considered monthly at team meetings and quarterly by EMT and Board.</p>

10. Rent Collection			
Rent payments process	<p>a) We will provide a variety of means of payment.</p> <p>b) We will ensure that any payment made by Direct Debit, Standing Order, Switch, cash, cheque or postal order, is credited to the account within a maximum of 3 working days of the payment.</p>	Finance managers	Internal monitoring
Assistance with financial budgeting	c) We will make budgeting, debt and welfare benefits advice services available.	Arrears Managers	We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.
Action to recover arrears	<p>d) We will let residents know if their account falls into arrears after two weeks, and offer private interviews to resolve the issue, either at the offices or in their home.</p> <p>e) We will adopt a sympathetic and supportive approach. Cases will be judged individually in order to give appropriate support.</p>	Arrears Managers	<p>Internal monitoring</p> <p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.</p>
11. Void Management			
	<p>a) We will ensure that, when let, properties are safe and at an agreed standard which is published.</p> <p>b) We will check gas, electric, solid fuel or oil fuel appliances and flues to ensure they are in good</p>	Allocations Managers and Voids Maintenance Managers	<p>Internal monitoring.</p> <p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.</p> <p>New resident surveys</p>

	<p>working order, repairing replacing or rewiring any faulty fittings.</p> <p>c) We will provide decorating vouchers where needed to help tenants improve the decorative order of their home.</p>		
12. Property Adaptation			
Advice on adapting property for disability	<p>a) We will advise on the process for adapting the property for disability within a maximum of 10 days of receipt of a request.</p> <p>b) We will pass the details to the Social Services Department within a maximum of 2 working days for assessment</p> <p>c) Where appropriate, we will issue an order for the work to the Contractor within a maximum of 2 working days of receipt of an Occupational Therapist's recommendation.</p> <p>a) We will monitor that contractor's progress and check the work on completion to ensure it has been done to the resident's need and satisfaction.</p>	Tenancy Support Officer	Internal monitoring

13. Supported Housing			
	<p>a) Support plans will be devised with tenants within six weeks of taking up a tenancy to reflect assessed support needs incorporating personal aims and objectives. Support plans will be evaluated regularly, formally reviewed at least annually with revision dependent upon the outcomes of the support. Support will be provided within the remit of legislative frameworks and funding eg Supporting People, Social Services etc.</p>	<p>Support Manager</p>	<p>Internal monitoring</p> <p>Tenant satisfaction data (new tenant enquiry forms, exit satisfaction questionnaires etc) tenant participation in the support process.</p> <p>External monitoring</p> <p>Assessment/review by funding authorities, stakeholder questionnaires.</p>
14. Nuisance			
<p>Nuisance and harassment</p>	<p>a) We take very seriously, and thoroughly investigate, complaints about a resident (or a member of a resident's family) who harasses other residents in line with our published policy. In certain circumstances the Association will seek an order from the court to evict a tenant, or seek possession from a leaseholder.</p> <p>b) We work with residents, and the local Police, to issue and enforce Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, as well as other legal action, if considered appropriate.</p>	<p>Operations Manager</p>	<p>Quarterly Board reporting.</p> <p>Monthly at team meetings to learn lessons from complaints.</p>

	c) We will deal with such matters, and with others such as reports of Domestic Abuse quickly, sensitively and efficiently.	Operations Manager	Quarterly Board reporting
	d) We will deal with reports of illegal occupiers quickly and efficiently.	Operations Manager and the Legal Department	Quarterly Board reporting
Environment	<p>e) We will work closely with the Council to ensure that:</p> <p>f) Litter and rubbish are picked up</p> <p>g) Abandoned vehicles are removed from estates;</p> <p>h) Residents tidy their overgrown garden and common parts of their property, and store rubbish in secure containers to prevent littering.</p>	Operations Manager	<p>Regular inspections of our estates</p> <p>Internal monitoring and information in Newsletters.</p> <p>This area of work will be reviewed annually by residents.</p> <p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year.</p>
15. Complaints and Compensation			
	<p>a) We will operate a publicised complaints procedure and respond to complaints within agreed time-scales</p> <p>b) We will operate a publicised compensation procedure to deal with situations where a service failure has occurred.</p>	Operational Managers	<p>Internal monitoring monthly by team meetings and quarterly by EMT and Board.</p> <p>This area of work will be reviewed annually by residents.</p> <p>We will send a questionnaire to a random sample of customers every year</p>

Any queries concerning the contents of this document please contact: -

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