

CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

AS WITH ALL OF THE CO-OPERATIVE'S POLICIES and PROCEDURES, THIS GUIDE, IN FULL AND IN PART, IS
AVAILABLE IN SUMMARY, ON TAPE, IN BRAILLE,
AND IN TRANSLATION INTO MOST OTHER LANGUAGES –

PLEASE ASK A MEMBER OF STAFF IF YOU WOULD LIKE
A VERSION IN A DIFFERENT FORMAT

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FORGEWOOD HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE LTD. CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Management Committee and staff of Forgewood Housing Co-operative are proud of the positive impact that has been made in the area over the years. This is most evident in the physical regeneration of the area. Less obvious, but just as important in many ways, is the high standard of service we strive to provide to customers at all times – put simply, poor standards will not be tolerated by the Management Committee.
- 1.2 This policy therefore formalises the unwritten commitment to continue to provide the high standards of customer care which have long been a part of the Co-operative's overall approach. As well as formalising this commitment, the policy also outlines some key targets against which we can measure our performance.
- 1.3 The policy aims to be consistent with the principles outlined in sections GS1.3 and GS3.1 of *Performance Standards for Registered Social Landlords*.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CUSTOMER CARE

- 2.1 In implementing this policy, the Co-operative observes the following general principles in relation to customer care:
 - to treat our internal customers as we would treat our external customers
 - to put our customers first by respecting their rights, needs and views
 - to treat our customers with dignity
 - to find out what our customers want and respond to these wishes
 - to set standards in relation to customer care and monitor progress against these standards
 - to provide relevant, accurate and accessible information
 - to be open, honest and truthful at all times
 - to ensure equality in the relationship between the Co-operative and its customers at all times

Please refer to our Dignity at Work Policy

3. DRESS CODE

- 3.1 STAFF - All staff will be dressed formally and businesslike, with identification badges worn at all times.
- 3.2 IDENTIFICATION - All staff will carry and show photographic identification when visiting residents at home.
- 3.3 **TARGET**
To ensure that all staff members will be identifiable as employees of Forgewood Housing Co-operative Ltd.

4. RECEPTION

- 4.1 All persons entering the office will be greeted with a smile and in a courteous and prompt manner. Staff members will immediately make eye contact, if the staff member is on a call then the call shall be put on hold and the visitor advised to take a seat, if this procedure is not practical then polite indication towards the seating area should be gestured.
- 4.2 The office has a friendly and customer focused atmosphere. There is adequate and comfortable seating available in the reception area for those who need to wait a short while and a range of information about the Co-operative and other relevant issues are also on display. The office provides a hearing loop system for the benefit of those with hearing impairments.
- 4.3 Front line staff will politely ascertain the intended business of the person and contact the appropriate member of staff if required. If the person they require to see is available, they will be dealt with straight away (if the officer is dealing with another customer, the likely waiting time will be advised).

OR

If the person they require to see is not available, they will be advised when they will be able to see them and another member of staff will offer help if available. Common sense will prevail. For example, if the member of staff the customer wishes to see is absent or on leave, then the staff member available at the time will encourage the customer to speak to someone else.

Whatever the circumstances the customer will not be left without:-

- (i) their enquiry being resolved or
- (ii) being advised of a time and date by which a member of staff will get back to them.

- 4.4 At no point should staff at reception relay information to a service user on behalf of another member of staff if they are unclear of the specific subject matter.
- 4.5 Matters of a sensitive nature will always be discussed privately in the interview room. These rooms have been designed to ensure that they are accessible to customers with pushchairs/prams, in wheelchairs or with mobility problems.
- 4.6 Staff will not divulge names and addresses of tenants, other members of staff or committee members under any circumstances (Data Protection Act 1998.) See our Data Protection Policy.
- 4.7 Any staff member leaving the office within office hours **MUST** sign the sheet located near reception providing details of their whereabouts i.e. annual leave or time of leaving the office, destination and approx time of arrival back at the office. This allows other staff to monitor calls more efficiently.
- 4.8 **TARGETS**
- **To immediately acknowledge visitor in warm friendly manner**
 - **Ascertain nature of business.**
 - **Appropriate member of staff Resolve/Deal with enquiry.**
 - **Adhere to Data Protection Act 1998.**
 - **To ensure levels of communication are of the highest standard by informing remaining staff of movements when leaving the office.**

5. TELEPHONE ANSWERING

- 5.1 The telephone will normally be answered within three rings.
- 5.2 Whilst it is imperative that every member of staff is courteous and professional when answering the 'phone, it is essential that the front line members of staff conduct themselves in an exemplary manner.
- 5.3 All persons answering the telephone will reply with an enthusiastic tone "Good morning, good afternoon" etc "Forgewood Housing Co-operative, can I help you".
- 5.4 When answering the phone the staff member will clearly and precisely establish the caller's name, address, telephone number and where appropriate, person who they are trying to contact and the business to be discussed.

Calls to Managers/Directors will only be passed through where either no other officer is capable of dealing with the enquiry or the subject matter is of a personal or sensitive nature.

Where the person is not available a note of the caller's name and telephone number will be taken, and they will be told that the call will be returned that day or the earliest opportunity.

Where a reasonable request for clarification on the caller's business is met with abuse of any kind, when carrying out this duty the Housing Manager or Depute Director will back up the staff member and take issue with the caller.

- 5.5 Calls will not be transferred where business has not been established.
- 5.6 Where the staff member is off sick or on annual leave the caller will be advised of this and asked if they wish to discuss their business with another staff member.
- 5.7 Callers will not be left waiting for unreasonable periods of time therefore the staff member should note clear details and get the relevant colleague to call back where there is an expected delay in tracing that member of staff. Calls will not be put on hold without the caller being firstly informed.
- 5.8 Messages will be left for the staff member in the call register located near reception or in the form of an email. It is the responsibility of staff members to check for any messages that may be left for them.
- 5.9 Where confidential information is required over the phone the member of staff will take note of the callers name and phone number and will not immediately divulge information requested. Requests will be processed through senior members of staff. This is to conform to the Data Protection Act 1998 but also to prevent bogus callers. See our Data Protection Policy.

5.10 **TARGETS**

- **To answer telephone calls within 3 rings.**
- **To answer telephone calls using specified protocol.**
- **To identify nature of the call and deal with accordingly.**
- **To deal with enquiries promptly and professionally.**
- **To adhere to Data Protection Act 1998.**

6. **MAIL**

- 6.1 The daily incoming mail will be opened each day by an administration officer/assistant and distributed to each relevant staff member after being logged onto a central electronic database.
- 6.2 Any formal written complaints will be recorded in the register then passed to the appropriate manager/director to prepare a draft reply for the Director's attention. The Co-operative operates a complaints procedure through which persons who are dissatisfied with any aspect of the Co-operative's services can pursue a complaint. Please refer to our Complaints Policy and procedure.

6.3 **TARGETS**

- **To open and distribute mail within 30-45 minutes of arriving in office.**
- **To identify relevant staff members responsibility with regards to mail opening, recording and distribution.**
- **To adhere to our complaints procedure.**

7. WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

7.1 All correspondence received in the office which requires a response will be acknowledged within 2 days of being received advising that a detailed response will be sent within 5 days.

7.2 Where a letter has been submitted on behalf of a customer, for example from a Solicitor, Councillor/MP/MSP, friend or family member, the above timescales will apply subject to our Data Protection Policy requirements. Information of a confidential nature will only be divulged where a signed mandate is enclosed. Signatures will be compared to those kept on file.

7.3 TARGETS

- **To respond to mail received within 2 days of receipt, advising further response will be sent within 5 days if required.**
- **To adhere to the Data protection Act 1998**

8. OFFICE MEETINGS

8.1 All visitors arriving for a meeting within the office, will sign the visitor's book prior to being escorted to their meeting destination.

8.2 When the person arrives at the office they will be warmly welcomed and told to take a seat until the appropriate staff member has been told of their arrival and is ready to see them.

8.3 It will be the responsibility of the member of staff co-ordinating the meeting to ensure refreshments are available.

8.4 After the meeting is finished those holding the meeting will clear the committee room of any discarded paperwork and ensure that the room is prepared for any subsequent meeting. "Meeting in progress" and "room available" signs will be used for the benefit of colleagues.

8.5 Where a manager/director is holding a section meeting or a member of staff uses the committee room for collation or other purposes it will be the Manager's or individual's responsibility to ensure that the room is left tidy and any paperwork is removed.

8.6 After the monthly Management Committee meeting all staff taking part will ensure that the room is cleared and the individual committee member's papers left are removed and placed in confidential waste facilities provided..

8.7 TARGETS

- **To warmly welcome visitors to the office.**
- **To ensure that all visitors sign the visitor's book.**
- **To identify staff responsibilities with regards to meetings.**

9. INFORMATION

- 9.1 Copies of all Co-operative's Policies are available on request from the Co-operative's office. Policies will be translated into appropriate ethnic languages or formats where this is requested. Please refer to our Openness and Accountability Policy.
- 9.2 Copies of the Co-operative's handbook, newsletter, annual report (where available) and summary of the Regulatory Inspection Report will be displayed in the reception area.
- 9.3 Newsletters will be produced on a quarterly basis to update residents on any changes that have taken place but also to allow residents to express their views through the promoting feedback.
- 9.4 The Co-op's website will provide all relevant key documents necessary for including newsletters, annual reports, tenant handbook and up to date information. The website will also provide a feedback section for anyone wishing to make comments, complaints or reporting repairs
- 9.5 A suggestion box will be made available within the front office area, to enable direct feedback from service users.
- 9.6 The contents of this box will be read by the housing manager/depute director on a monthly basis and any relevant suggestions will be advised to committee at the next monthly meeting.
- 9.7 The office opening hours are Monday to Friday 9am until 4.30pm. The office does not close during lunch times.

TARGETS

- **To ensure all relevant Co-operative literature is available on request.**
- **To ensure that Newsletters are distributed on a quarterly basis.**
- **To ensure that a process is available for service users to provide feedback.**

10. ASSISTANCE

- 10.1 Where callers to the office require assistance to complete forms etc, through being elderly or infirm etc, staff will assist the individual.
- 10.2 The Co-operative also offers home visits where customers require this on the basis of disability or medical condition, and where the issue merits a visit (ie. a home visit would not be organised to take details of a routine repair, but may be appropriate to discuss a neighbourhood nuisance issue).
- 10.3 Staff will make all reasonable efforts to keep appointments that are made – in the unlikely event that this is not possible the customer will be contacted in advance of the meeting, given the reason why it cannot be kept and offered another suitable time.

10.4 Staff will employ the use of interpretation services where residents do not speak English.

10.5 The Co-op also has an established website and is recognised as a means for allowing our customers to learn more about the Co-op and to communicate effectively.

10.4 **TARGETS**

- **To ensure that every service user is offered assistance where required, to enable them to make full use of the services we offer.**

11 11.1 **EXPECTATIONS OF CUSTOMERS**

The relationship between staff and the customer is a two way process built in on mutual trust and respect. We expect that our customers will appreciate the standard of care extended to them and respond in a positive manner. We think it is reasonable to ask our customers to be polite, courteous, non threatening and non abusive at all times as well as treating staff with respect

12. **OFFICE HOURS**

12.1 Monday to Friday 9.00am – 4.30pm

12.3 The Co-operative has an out of hours emergency service for repairs, residents should simply contact the numbers provided where an out of hours emergency occurs. These numbers are continuously provided in our quarterly newsletters, website and also on our answer machine.

13. **REVIEW**

13.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to take account of customer comments and the Co-operative's objective of constantly improving services.