

**Clydesdale Housing Association
Customer Scrutiny Panel Report**

**Customer Service
Standards**

March 2019



1.0 The Clydesdale Housing Association Scrutiny Panel

- 1.1. The Clydesdale Housing Association Scrutiny Panel (Scrutiny Panel) formed in May 2016 and forms the central point for scrutiny within the Clydesdale Housing Association which empowers customers to:
 - Oversee a range of scrutiny activities
 - Integrate these activities with the wider self-assessment activities of the landlord
 - Make recommendations to challenge and improve the activities of senior officers and members of governing bodies.
- 1.2. Following a presentation at the Clydesdale Housing Association (the Association) Annual General Meeting in September 2018, 3 tenants joined the Scrutiny Panel and there are currently 7 active members.
- 1.3. The Association commissioned the services of the Tenant Information Service (TIS) to provide Independent Tenant Advice (ITA) and Development Support to the staff and customers involved in the Scrutiny Panel. Lynda Johnstone, Development Director has been supporting the Scrutiny Panel.

2.0. Selecting a Scrutiny Project for the Scrutiny Panel

- 2.1. Scrutiny Panel members agreed to review and assess the Association's Customer Service Standards. This was chosen as a micro scrutiny project which took place over two meetings in October / November 2018.
- 2.2. The Customer Service Standard Scrutiny Project followed an agreed detailed work plan which included a desk top audit to understand:
 - The Scottish Social Housing Charter and its reference to Customer Service through:
 - Outcome 1 - Equalities
 - Outcome 2 – Communication
 - Outcome 3 – Participation
 - The current Clydesdale Housing Association Customer Focus Policy and Standards
 - Comparisons to other RSL Customer Service Standards Policies including Muirhouse Housing Association and Caledonia Housing Association.

3.0. Clydesdale Housing Association Customer Focus Policy and Standards Conclusions

The Customer Scrutiny Panel research raised a number of issues which this report highlights and suggests recommendations for change. The current policy was written

in 2008 and was scheduled for review in 2011. The findings of this scrutiny project inform the review and redraft of the policy in 2019.

- 3.1. It is important that the revised policy is clear about the level of Customer Focus Standards tenants can expect from the Association. This should include a service commitment about how services will be tailored to meet the needs of tenants and customers.
- 3.2. Customer Panel members reflected that they receive a high level of customer service for the Association staff and feel valued in their contact when visiting the office, by phone, by letter and when visited at home.
- 3.3. Customer Panel members reflected that Association staff are courteous and helpful and treat individuals fairly and with respect.
- 3.4. Consideration is given to:
 - Customer Focus Standards – the level of service that tenants and customers can expect when they contact the Association with a query or request.
 - Service Delivery Standards – for the range of key service activities eg tenancy support
- 3.5. The revised policy makes reference to:
 - 3.5.1. The Scottish Social Housing Charter context and relevant outcomes.
 - 3.5.2. The Association's Equality and Diversity Policy Statement. The Customer Focus Standards should recognise that customers are different and an individual in their own right.
 - 3.5.3. An Association Standard relating to "Applications for Housing and Reletting Vacant Properties" and "Mutual Exchanges"
 - 3.5.4. The approach the Association takes to resolving complaints effectively, targets, process, communications etc
- 3.6. Customer Focus Standards and behaviours outlined in the policy should apply equally to staff, agents, contractors, suppliers and anyone who does business in the name of Clydesdale Housing Association.
- 3.7. In achieving the policy objectives, ongoing monitoring could include a review from the Customer Scrutiny Panel.
- 3.8. It is appropriate that the Policy states the expectations regarding behaviour standards from tenants and customers.

- 3.9. Service complaints represent an important source of tenant and customer feedback that can be used to improve levels of customer service. If a customer concern cannot be resolved by speaking to a member of staff, the Association should inform the individual on how to make a complaint. The Complaints Handling Procedure should be readily available to tenants and customers.
- 3.10. The reviewed policy, standards and targets take account and makes reference to the Association's
- Use of social media
 - Approach to digital inclusion
 - Compliance with GDPR in accordance with the Association's Data Protection Policy
- 3.11. Clarification is required to the status of the Association's Access to Information Policy. Any review to this policy is considered alongside the review on the Customer Focus Standards.
- 3.12. An exercise is undertaken by staff to determine customers preferred method of contact. This will also allow the Association to find out or update records regarding an individual's particular needs or vulnerabilities which need to be taken into account when delivering services.
- 3.13. The experience of Customer Panel members is that the Association do not provide the customer with feedback on the outcome of a visit 100% of the time (reference Appendix 1 Target 15)
- 3.14. The following amendments to Customer Focus Standards and Targets are considered:

Customer Focus Standards - When visiting you at home we will:

- Make sure that all staff and contractors visiting your home wear/carry a clearly visible identification card with photo
- Never enter your home uninvited except in circumstances where notice of forced entry intentions have been communicated to the tenant
- Include a statement regarding safeguarding ie when a visit is made without an appointment, the office will attempt to contact the tenant by phone in advance

Customer Focus Standards - Customer Consultation:

- Make reference to the Association's Tenant Participation Strategy

Target – Customer Correspondence

- (13) An immediate automatic response is sent to the customer who has contacted the Association by email explaining that a response will be provided within 10 working days (same as letter)
- (14) change from 95% to 100% of all appointments made to your home will be carried out within the date and time agreed with you.

3.15. The Customer Focus Standards and Targets are combined as one document. A summary version eg leaflet to be made available to tenants and customers in paper and electronic formats.

3.16. The Customer Focus Standards and Target information is made available as part of the information provided to tenants at the sign up to their tenancy.

3.17. Customer Focus Standards should be reviewed every 3 years and should take account of any feedback the Association receives from tenants and customers on what matters most to them.

3.18. Performance updates are provided to customers in the newsletter, website etc and customers are encouraged to work alongside the Association to monitor performance.

4.0. **Next Steps**

The Customer Scrutiny Panel ask that the Association consider this report of the micro scrutiny project into Customer Focus Standards.

The Association note the findings and respond to the Customer Panel with detail of how the conclusions will be taken into account. If any recommendations cannot be accepted, an explanation is provided to the Customer Scrutiny Panel.

The Association consult customers on the reviewed draft Customer Focus Policy and Standards.

5.0. **Monitoring and Evaluation**

It is essential that this scrutiny project is monitored and evaluated to find out if agreed objectives have been met, to recognise what works well and what may need to be adapted to meet the changing needs and priorities of the Association and its customers. This is about evaluating the effectiveness of the scrutiny project itself but also monitoring that the implementation of the agreed action plan has been carried out.