



Policy Outline

CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY November 2009

OVERALL PURPOSE

This policy aims to ensure that West North West homes Leeds delivers excellent services to all customers, both directly and through our contractors and partners, on a consistent basis and ensure performance is monitored and managed effectively.

For the purposes of this policy, and all related documents, a customer is defined as any person who uses, or requests a service from West North West homes Leeds. This includes tenants and residents, leaseholders, people applying for a home, external organisations, partners and contractors. This includes formal representatives who act on behalf of customers and who have their consent to do so.

INTRODUCTION

West North West homes Leeds will ensure that:

- Our policies and procedures are focussed on delivering services which meet the needs of our customers in a flexible and efficient manner.
- We establish a culture of excellent customer service and customer care amongst our staff, and those of our partner organisations, and focus on meeting the needs of our customers when delivering services.
- We treat all customers fairly and take into account the needs of our diverse and vulnerable customers in the way we deliver services and communicate with them.
- We will provide an interpretation and translation service for customers whose first language is not English and provide information in alternative formats for those who require it.
- We work with our customers through our various involvement mechanisms to ensure that we understand customers views and opinions.
- We focus on recruiting staff with a positive approach to customer service throughout the organisation and work with partners to ensure they do the same.
- We provide relevant customer service training to all our staff.
- We keep our customers fully informed of issues and developments affecting them and their homes in a proactive manner.
- We report back to our customers on a regular basis on our performance against

agreed Services Standards and Local Performance Indicators.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

We will monitor the implementation and delivery of services of this Policy through:

- Self Assessment against Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE 30) Access to Services & Customer Care
- Performance will be measured by our Status Customer Satisfaction survey specifically against the question “Satisfaction with the overall housing services provided by the landlord”
- Performance will also be measured against our Access and Customer Care Service Standards, assuring the quality of our service by:
 - Ensuring customer satisfaction with access to our services
 - Dealing with our customers politely and with courtesy
 - Dealing with face to face enquiries within 15 minutes of entering a One Stop Centre
 - Acknowledge letters and electronic enquiries within one working day
 - Answer your telephone calls within 20 seconds
 - Dealing with customers enquiries first time at the first point of contact
 - Respond fully to letters and electronic enquiries within 10 working days
 - We will visit all of our customers in their home once every two years.
 - Ensure our services meet ‘mystery shopping’ standards

CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

1.0 Statement of Intent

- 1.1 West North West homes Leeds (WNWhL) understands that high quality customer service is crucial to our customers and our commitment to ‘Putting Customers First’
- 1.2 This policy seeks to develop a robust approach to the delivery of services, with a focus on customer care and the way services are delivered.
- 1.3 Our primary aim is to understand the needs of our customers and deliver effective and efficient customer-focused services which are accessible to everyone and meet these expectations.
- 1.4 To achieve this, we are committed to providing our customers with a professional, efficient and high quality service.
- 1.5 West North West homes Leeds will ensure that our staff and those of our partner organisations work with customers to adopt the principle that “customer service is about knowing that you are being looked after and valued”.

- 1.6 We will deal with all enquiries quickly, politely and effectively.
- 1.7 West North West homes Leeds will provide customer services of the highest standards ensuring:
- Choice
 - Accessibility
 - Respect for the diversity of our communities
 - Consistency in service delivery
 - A positive, friendly and welcoming environment at our Neighbourhood Housing Offices
 - An effective and efficient complaints procedure
 - Value for Money
- 1.8 To ensure we are able to continually improve the way we deliver customer services, West North West homes Leeds will ensure that effective and meaningful customer involvement and consultation is embedded throughout our operations and activities.
- 1.9 West North West homes Leeds will ensure that customer confidentiality is maintained at all times and that all personal information of customers or third parties will be handled in accordance with the requirements of the Data protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act and the Housing Act.

2.0 Outline of Service

- 2.1 West North West homes Leeds will work closely with customers, contractors and partners to ensure that the service delivery maintains a strong customer focus and is based on the needs of our customers.
- 2.2 West North West homes Leeds believes that its entire staff and those of contractors and partners have a role to play in delivering excellent customer service and that their efforts can affect the service provided.

It will ensure that:

- Recruitment processes focus on finding staff with the necessary attitudes and behaviours to deliver high quality customer service
 - Employees are properly trained to do their job skilfully, competently and considerately
 - Staff are polite, friendly and courteous to customers at all times
 - A culture of quality customer service and customer care runs throughout the Organisation and performance is monitored and effectively managed
 - Employees receive appropriate support and guidance to allow them to deliver high quality services
 - We communicate pro-actively and regularly with customers so that they are aware of issues that affect them or their homes.
- 2.3 West North West homes Leeds will have customer service and customer involvement at the heart of all services and use these mechanisms to review the Customer Service Standards to ensure they remain relevant and drive the way we deliver services.

- 2.4 We will publish Service Standards widely and in a range of formats and these will be reviewed with customers on an annual basis.
- 2.5 West North West homes Leeds will deal with complaints as a positive source of feedback and as learning opportunities that will enable us to be more responsive to customers. Staff will receive training to enable them to deal quickly and effectively with complaints.
- 2.6 West North West homes Leeds will keep customers informed of issues and developments affecting the housing service through regular newsletters and other publications.
- 2.7 West North West homes Leeds will offer quality, choice and opportunity, working with all our partners and stakeholders to maximise involvement, consultation and participation to achieve its aim of providing services that customers want, and need.
- 2.8 We will work with customers to ensure we are providing services through locally based, accessible and convenient Neighbourhood Housing Offices, council One Stop Centres and through a Contact Centre provided by our partners, Leeds City Council Customer Services. This includes when our offices are open and the hours that services are available through the contact centre.
- 2.9 West North West homes Leeds will work with customers to provide as many of its services as possible electronically, developing website information to provide electronic access to our policies, services and forms.
- 2.10 West North West homes Leeds will provide a customer centred service, tailoring this to include diversity and community cohesion.

To make sure this is achieved West North West homes Leeds will:

- Ensure that all representatives, including staff and contractors carry or wear official identification at all times
- Ensure that written information can be made available in community languages, large print, Braille and on audio tape
- Provide interpretation and translation services and BSL signers upon request
- Ensure the housing needs of diverse and vulnerable communities are taken into account when developing services in the future
- Work in partnership with Leeds City Council and other agencies to ensure that homeless, vulnerable and excluded groups are able to access the accommodation and services they need.
- Carry out customer satisfaction surveys for all our services. Ensure that all our Service Outlets are wheelchair accessible and have induction loops

3.0 Specific Needs

- 3.1 West North West homes Leeds will take into account the specific needs, which may arise, of older and vulnerable people, disabled people, and black and minority ethnic groups, in a manner that promotes equality and inclusiveness.
- 3.2 We will ensure that we adopt a flexible approach to communication and service delivery, offering use of British Sign Language, text messaging, interpretation and translation services as required.
- 3.3 We will offer home visits upon request especially for older, disabled or vulnerable customers and others who require us to visit them at home and we will provide an appointment system.
- 3.4 We will offer the option of either a male or female member of staff, where possible, especially relating to home visits or meetings.
- 3.5 We will engage and work with support or care workers especially when meeting with customers or arranging home visits.
- 3.6 Details of our approach to meeting specific customer needs can be found in our Vulnerability Policy and Strategy.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 West North West homes Leeds will seek the views of customers on this policy at least annually in a variety of different ways through our customer involvement mechanisms, Service Improvement Groups and Customer Sounding Boards

5.0 Implementation

- 5.1 It is the responsibility of all West North West homes Leeds' Managers and staff to ensure that their work is carried out in line with this policy and procedures relating to it.
- 5.2 Members of West North West homes Leeds Board, the Chief Executive and Heads Of Services are responsible for developing this policy and ensuring that this policy is implemented and monitored effectively.
- 5.3 All our staff will be trained in customer service at induction and at regular intervals to ensure they are aware of the requirements of this policy.
- 5.4 We will work with partner organisations such as Leeds City Council Customer Services and contractors, to ensure that the principles of this policy are followed whenever services are delivered to customers on our behalf.

6.0 Monitoring

- 6.1 Our customer's views are fundamental to our policy. We will engage in customer research, asking for feedback on standards and costs. Through this,

we will feed ideas forward and achieve continuous improvement and Value for Money.

- 6.2 West North West homes Leeds will monitor the effectiveness of its policy by reviewing our performance against Services Standards, Local Performance Indicators and Audit Commission KLOE 30. We will also review our performance annually by assessing customer satisfaction with our services through a comprehensive Satisfaction Survey in line with the STATUS customer satisfaction survey.
- 6.3 West North West homes Leeds will publish the results of this monitoring and use the results to identify, and act on, areas for improvement.

7.0 Review

- 7.1 In preparation for delivering this policy during 2010 West North West homes Leeds has reviewed and taken into account new or emerging government legislation and government and council policies.

As a result, this policy now fully reflects, and is inclusive of the issues arising from those policies and legislation, and has considered the impacts arising.

- 7.2 This policy will be reviewed at least annually or whenever there are any relevant changes to legislation or good practice that would impact on this policy, and in the light of comments received from service users.
- 7.3 The 2009 review followed the following timetable. Annual Review and first draft completed in October 2009
- 7.4 Annual review was completed jointly with tenants at a Service Improvement Group meeting 4/11/09 and a Customer Sounding Board on 10/11/09
- 7.5 Reviewed Policy for approval by Services and Investment sub committee on 19th January 2010
- 7.6 The next review will be completed in October 2010

8.0 Legislation

New or emerging legislation and new policy for 2009 and existing policy include:

- 8.1 National Consumer Council guidance
 - Data Protection Act 1998
 - Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
 - Disability Discrimination Act 1995
 - Sex Discrimination Act 1975
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Equality Act 2006
 - New Equality Framework for Local Government