

# Customer Service Standards





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## Introduction

Wishaw and District Housing Association is a non profit making organisation operating within defined boundaries in Wishaw and surrounding areas to provide high quality, affordable social rented housing. As a landlord and property manager the Association provides a range of services to residents but it also offers advice and information on housing options to members of the public.

In all its activities the Association is committed to providing the highest possible standard to customers both in the quality of the services and their delivery. The Customer Services Charter sets out these standards so that everyone knows what they can expect from the Association and what to do if we fail to achieve these.

## Our commitment to you

### At all times we will endeavour to:

- Treat you with courtesy and respect and in a warm and friendly manner that will make you feel at ease.
- Give you confidence in our ability to deal with your enquiry efficiently and in a professional way.
- Ensure that our staff are fully trained in order to provide you with the highest possible service.
- Speak to you in a way you understand and avoid the use of jargon.
- Treat you fairly, irrespective of your race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin, gender, age, sexuality or sexual orientation, marital status, family circumstances or responsibilities, illness or disability, political affiliations.

- View you as an individual and, where necessary, will provide the assistance you need to communicate effectively with us, including a loop system for people with impaired hearing and interpretation and translation services where required.
- Make our offices and our services accessible to everyone.
- Treat all information you provide us with in the strictest confidence.
- Fulfil any commitment we make to you.
- Not keep you waiting unnecessarily or without explanation.

## Getting in touch with us

### The Association's offices are open:

Monday - Thursday: 9.00am - 12.30pm and 1.30pm - 4.30pm  
 Friday: 9.00am - 12.30pm and 1.30pm - 4.00pm

### You can contact us by:

Writing to: 55 Kirk Road, Wishaw, North Lanarkshire  
 ML2 7BL  
 Telephone on: 01698 377200  
 Fax on: 01698 358712  
 Email at: [assoc@wishawdha.org.uk](mailto:assoc@wishawdha.org.uk)  
 Via our website at: [www.wishawdha.org.uk](http://www.wishawdha.org.uk)

Outwith office opening hours, contact details and a message can be left on the Association's voicemail service. All messages will be dealt with either that afternoon (if the message is left at lunchtime) or the next day of business (if the message is left overnight).

### When you phone us we will endeavour to:

- Answer the phone quickly.
- Greet you in a friendly and professional manner.
- Speak clearly.
- Identify the Association and ourselves.
- If we cannot immediately answer your enquiry we will give you a timescale for getting back to you or identify the most appropriate person within the organisation for you to talk to.

## Getting in touch with us...continued

- If the person you need to speak to is not available, you will be given the choice of:
  - *Speaking to another officer.*
  - *Leaving your contact details and the officer you wish to speak to will call you by the close of business unless you have been told otherwise.*
  - *Leaving a message that will be attended to as soon as possible.*
  - *Arranging an appointment to speak to the officer.*
- Keep the time your call is put on hold to a minimum and advise you of any delays in dealing with your enquiry.

### When you call into the office we will endeavour to:

- Immediately acknowledge you, identify ourselves and ask you the nature of your enquiry or who it is you wish to speak to.
- If the reception staff cannot deal with your enquiry we will identify the most appropriate person for you to talk to and, if they are not available, we will give you the choice of:
  - *Speaking to another member of staff.*
  - *Leaving your contact details and the appropriate officer will contact you by the close of business unless you have been told otherwise.*
  - *Leaving a message that will be attended to as soon as possible.*
  - *Arranging an appointment to speak to the officer.*
- Not keep you waiting unnecessarily and to keep you informed of what is happening and the reason for any delays.
- Offer you the opportunity to speak to someone in private by providing interview rooms.
- Clearly display information.
- Make the reception area and interview rooms comfortable and inviting.

**When we meet you either at home or in the office we will endeavour to:**

- Be appropriately and tidily dressed and conduct ourselves professionally at all times.
- Be polite and courteous and never use bad or offensive language.
- Introduce ourselves clearly and show you proof of identity (contractors acting on behalf of the Association should also provide proof of their identity, preferably I.D. cards issued by their company). *If you are in any doubt if a caller to your home claiming to be from the Association is genuine please do not hesitate to call the office before letting them into your house.*
- Not be under the influence of alcohol.
- Refrain from smoking in your house.
- Not use the facilities within your house without your permission.
- As far as possible, be adequately prepared for the meeting.
- Explain ourselves clearly and in a manner that you understand, avoiding the use of jargon or unnecessary legal terms.
- Offer to help you with any forms that you need to fill in that are directly connected with your tenancy or your application for housing.
- Respect your right to confidentiality and to seek your permission to discuss personal tenancy issues in front of anyone else present.
- Give you accurate and relevant information and advice.
- Make sure your enquiry is dealt with as quickly as possible and, where appropriate, keep you updated on what is happening.
- Contractors are expected, as far as possible, to leave your home in a clean and tidy way.

**When you have an appointment to meet an officer we will:**

- Try to make an appointment that is, as far as possible, convenient to you. Where necessary this can be arranged outwith normal office hours.

- Be punctual for the meeting.
- Let you know as early as possible if, for any reason, the officer is unable to make the appointment.

**When you write to us or email us we will:**

- Acknowledge receipt of your letter or email within 5 working days.
- Deal with your enquiry and send you a written response within 10 working days or, if there is a delay, write to you with an explanation.
- Provide you with a clear, understandable written response to your enquiry.
- Where appropriate, advise you of your right to appeal if you are not happy with the response.
- Give you a contact name and number for further information or discussion.
- Where appropriate, provide you with a pre-paid envelope if you are required to return paperwork to the office.

**Your responsibilities**

**It is important to remember that, as a customer of the Association, you are also expected to conduct yourself correctly. The Association has a policy of zero tolerance of verbal or physical abuse of staff and when talking to staff you are therefore respectively asked:**

- Not to use bad or offensive language or to be verbally abusive or aggressive.
- Not to threaten staff either verbally or physically.
- To treat staff courteously and with respect.
- To be patient and allow staff time to get the information you require.

You are also asked to recognise staffs' legal right to work in a safe environment and you are therefore asked to respect and co-operate with any request from staff not to smoke in their presence during any meeting in your home.

## Keeping you informed

The Association wants to make sure that you are able to make informed choices and decisions on all matters relating to your housing and your housing options. To this end we will:

- Aim to provide you with the information and advice you may need to make your decision. If we are not able to do this ourselves we will seek to assist you in finding appropriate agencies to help you.
- Clearly display our own information leaflets as well as those provided by other relevant organisations and services.
- Make available for viewing non-confidential agendas and minutes of meetings of the Board of Directors.
- On request, make available copies and/or summaries of all policies directly relating to the services provided by the Association to the public.
- Publish details of our performance in meeting both internal and external standards and targets.
- Maintain a relevant, informative and up-to-date website.
- Produce an Annual Review of our activities.
- Produce newsletters for both residents and applicants for the waiting list.

## Listening to you

We recognise that we may not always get things right either in terms of the range of services we provide or how we provide them. The Association is committed to providing the best service it can and welcomes the opinions and comments of service users on how we can make improvements. We will therefore:

- Carry out surveys of service users on various aspects of the services and information we provide.
- Encourage people to submit their comments, opinions and views about the service(s) they receive.
- Make service users aware of their right to appeal decisions made by the office.
- Make service users aware of their right to complain about the service they have received.
- Carry out consultation exercises on all policies that directly affect the services and the service delivery provided to residents, applicants and other members of the public.

- Make use of the information we gather in surveys, consultation exercises or via submitted comments and suggestions to improve the range and standards of services we provide.
- Encourage residents to actively participate in the shaping of the services provided by the Association.
- Where possible, hold regular surgeries in areas further away from the Association's offices.

## **Submitting comments and/or suggestions**

**If you wish to make any comment about the services provided by the Association or make a suggestion on how we can improve the services we offer you can do so by:**

- Placing your written comments and/or suggestions in the Suggestions Box that is kept on the reception counter.
- Phoning the office.
- E-mailing or writing to the office direct.
- Using the website link.
- Talking directly with a member of staff.

**You can make your comments and/or suggestions anonymously but this means that we will not be able to respond to you to let you know what action we are taking. If you do provide your name and address we will endeavour to:**

- Acknowledge receipt of your comment within 3 working days.
- Respond to you in full within 2 weeks advising you how we intend to action your proposal.

**All comments and/or suggestions submitted will be:**

- Treated confidentially.
- Treated with respect and given proper consideration.
- Where appropriate, presented to the Association's Board of Directors for consideration.

## Making an appeal or complaint



Unfortunately, there may be times when we get things wrong and you do not agree with a decision made or feel aggrieved at the way you have been dealt with by a member of staff. On these, hopefully rare, occasions the Association wants to be given the opportunity to investigate what went wrong and, if necessary, take steps to put it right.

**The Association can provide you with a leaflet that details the procedure you should follow. If you submit an appeal or complaint we will endeavour to:**

- Investigate all appeals and complaints thoroughly.
- Deal with appeals and complaints professionally and fairly.
- Provide you with a full and detailed written response to your appeal or complaint.
- Keep you fully advised of your options for pursuing your appeal or complaint if you remain unsatisfied with the Associations findings.

## Resident consultation

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Association is obliged to consult with tenants on any new or reviewed policies that directly affect their housing and/or the services they get from the Association. However, the Association has voluntarily extended that right to all of its residents regardless of tenure and, where appropriate, to other service users such as applicants for housing.

**The Association will therefore aim to:**

- Consult with service users on any new or reviewed policies that deal with the services they receive from the Association.
- Work directly with any Registered Tenants' Groups within our stock on the development of services.
- Present all comments or suggestions received as part of the consultation exercise to the Association's Board of Directors for consideration.
- Consider all comments or suggestions professionally and fairly before final approval and implementation.
- Where appropriate, to incorporate the comment or suggestion into the Association's policy and/or procedures.

## Resident participation

The Association is committed to working with residents in defining and shaping the services we provide. We will therefore:

- Promote and encourage resident participation.
- Provide information on setting up a residents' group and how to become a Registered Tenants' Organisation.
- Support residents' groups and Registered Tenant Organisations.
- Maintain a budget for participation and provide start up funding and administrative support.
- Arrange for interested parties to get further independent advice, guidance and training from external organisations.

## Confidentiality and data protection

During the course of your dealings with the Association it is likely that you will provide us with personal and private information about yourself. The Association makes the commitment to:

- Treat personal and private information in the strictest of confidence.
- To abide by the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Not pass your details and personal information on to any other individual, organisation or agency without your specific written consent unless that individual, organisation or agency has a legal entitlement to the information under the Data Protection Act.

The Association's information leaflet on *Data Protection, Confidentiality and Freedom of Information* is available from the office and gives more details on how the Association deals with your personal information.



## Access to your personal files

Under the Data Protection Act you have a right to ask to view any files we may hold on you. The Association will endeavour to:

- Respond to your request within 20 working days.
- Provide you with all computer and paper files relating directly to yourself.
- Amend any proven incorrect or out-of-date information held in your file.

The Association's information leaflet on *Data Protection, Confidentiality and Freedom of Information* outlines the procedure for getting access to your files and the costs involved.

## Equal opportunities

Wishaw and District Housing Association is committed to the principals of Equal Opportunities and ensuring that everyone has equal access to the services it provides. Specifically, the Association opposes discrimination on any grounds including those of race, colour, culture, age, gender or transgender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, political affiliations or beliefs, disability, marital status or social background and medical conditions (including those with AIDS or are HIV positive).

Contractors or consultants employed by the Association will also be asked to provide evidence of their commitment to equalities and non-discrimination and to have procedures in place for dealing with incidents of discrimination or harassment by their staff toward the Association's service users.

## Equal access to services and information

In order to ensure that every individual has access to the information and services provided by the Association, we will where required:

- Provide translation and interpretation services.
- Where appropriate, make information available in other formats including tape, Braille and large print.
- Provide these services free of charge.

The Association will also endeavour to ensure that public meetings will be arranged, as far as possible, to meet the needs of those attending. Where appropriate practical assistance such as transport and childcare, may be provided to assist interested parties to attend meetings.

### **Equal access to the Association's office**

The front access and the ground floor of the Association's office in Kirk Road are designed to be wheelchair accessible and there is provision of a disabled toilet. Although the office meets the standards of the Disability Discrimination Act, the upper floor of the office is unfortunately not accessible or suitable for wheelchair users. However, wherever possible the Association will endeavour to meet the needs of individuals using the Association's facilities.

### **English not your first language? Visually impaired?**

As with all the Association's information leaflets, application forms and other documentation available to the public, this leaflet can be translated into other languages and can be produced in other formats such as larger print and Braille if required. This service is provided free of charge and in line with the Association's Translating and Interpreting Policy.

### **Further information**

**Wishaw & District Housing Association Limited**  
55 Kirk Road, Wishaw ML2 7BL  
Tel: 01698 377200 • Fax: 01698 358712  
E-mail: [assoc@wishawdha.org.uk](mailto:assoc@wishawdha.org.uk)  
Web: [www.wishawdha.org.uk](http://www.wishawdha.org.uk)



Open: Monday – Thursday: 9.00am – 4.30pm and  
Friday: 9.00am – 4.00pm  
Closed for lunch: 12.30pm – 1.30pm