

LANGSTANE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

1. Executive Summary

Langstane Housing Association has committed to the following core values:-

Communication: We will consult and communicate with and involve our customers, our partners and our staff in every aspect of our work.

- **People:** We will treat everyone fairly and with dignity and respect.
- **Value for Money:** We will provide and demonstrate value for money in all we do.
- **Equality:** We will ensure that access to our services is open to all and will take positive steps to remove any barriers.
- **Commitment to Customer Care:** We will demonstrate that our commitment to customers is a long term one and will demonstrate high standards of customer care in meeting their changing and developing needs.

In its current Business Plan, the Association has also identified the following aims and objectives.

Aim 4 – To ensure that our customers' needs and concerns are central to the planning and delivery of all our services.

Aim 7 – To demonstrate that the Association is accountable to its members, tenants and other stakeholders and that the governance of the Association is transparent and accessible to all who have an interest in its aims.

In the implementation of these values and aims, the Association has formulated this policy. It seeks to identify its customers, both internal and external, service users such as tenants and applicants, partner organisations such as local authorities, funders and regulators, and its staff. This policy sets down the principles by which we shall identify and respond to their needs and sets a framework against which a series of action plans will put into effect the aspirations and intentions of this policy.

2. Categories of Customer

The Association accepts the general principle that any individual person, corporate body or partnership who requires information or a service from the Association in order to carry out their objectives is a customer of the Association and as such will be dealt with in accordance with this policy. Nonetheless, customers may be broadly categorised as follows:-

- Service Users
- Association tenants and their immediate families, carers and advisors
- Applicants and former tenants
- Partner Organisations
- Funders and Regulators
- Members of the Association
- Staff of the Association

3. General Principles and Specific Needs

Each customer of the Association, internal or external, will be treated by the Association in accordance with its core values. The Association will ensure that it provides information requisite for the customers' needs and response to approaches from the customer within agreed timescales. Some of these timescales are set out later in this policy.

4. Reception and Response

In all of its offices, the Association will provide a comfortable and friendly atmosphere to welcome visitors. At all times, the reception point will be staffed by a member of staff who can advise visitors on the services available to them. Literature setting out the Association's services and explaining the rights of customers to further information etc will be provided. Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that this is in a format which is accessible to those to whom English is not the first language or those who have difficulty reading standard format documents.

All of the Association's buildings are fully accessible and meet all the requisite standards in terms of the Disability Discrimination Act.

5. Responses

All contacts with the Association will be responded to as soon as practical.

Telephone calls to the Association will be handled through the Association's First Response unit. 80% of all calls will be responded to within six rings and passed on if necessary to the appropriate person. Any member of staff answering a call must identify themselves to the caller.

All letters and emails will be acknowledged at least within 72 hours and a full response given within 14 working days.

6. Applicant and Tenant Information

Full details on the Association's Allocations Policy and on the main obligations of tenancy will be made available on request. Any correspondence from the Association on the process of an application or a condition of tenancy will include information on (a) the rights of the recipient to contest or appeal against any decision contained in the letter and (b) the existence of independent advice or support services.

7. Governance

Leaflets explaining the functioning of the Committee of Management and membership of the Association will be available at all of the Association's offices and will be included in the Tenants' Handbook. Any tenant or applicant wishing to know more about this matter will be referred to the Chief Executive.

8. Association Website

The Association is committed to making its website more interactive. The Tenants' Forum has already gone live and the Association website is recognised as a means for allowing tenants to learn more about how the Association operates and to communicate with the Association on ways in which it might improve. Many forms can already be downloaded from the website and it is the intention of this policy to reach a stage where applications for housing or employment can be completed on-line.

To this end, all the Association's offices will in due course have terminals to allow tenants and others access to at least parts of the website.

9. Action Plans

Within three months of the first approval of this policy, the Senior Management Team of the Association will produce action plans on response times and the other matters set out in this policy. These plans will be reviewed at the same time as a review of this policy, every two years.