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1 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS POLICY

The MGHA Customer Service Standards Policy has been approved by the Board of the association, published to our customers and is to be adopted throughout the organisation.

1.1 Statement of purpose

MGHA exists for our customers and is committed to providing high quality & efficient services to all of them. Our customers are our business; we are here because of them and to assist them.

1.2 Our standards

- Our customers are our business
- Each and everyone of us is Mount Green Housing Association
- Our staff will be positive and helpful
- We will help our customers find the right person to deal with their enquiry
- We will give clear information and standards for our services
- We will say when we can and when we can't help. We will tell our customers what action and service can be expected from us. If we can't help, we will say who can.

1.3 How we will meet our standards

All areas of service delivery will be subject to service reviews. We will undertake regular surveys of our customer's views and set performance targets by which to measure our performance.

Where we receive feedback or complaints from our customers we will deal with them promptly and in line with our complaints procedure. We welcome feedback from our customers and will use this to help improve our service.

1.4 Putting our customers first

We recognise that our customers have diverse needs and requirements and we will endeavour to understand these and provide services to meet these wherever we can. We will:

- Treat all people fairly, professionally and with respect
- Provide services that everyone can use.

1.5 Our staff and agents acting on behalf of MGHA will:

- Treat all customers with equal courtesy and respect
- Wear or show a MGHA identity badge
- Make an appointment where possible and keep to it. If we have to cancel, or are running late, we will contact the customer
- Clearly explain the reason for our appointment or visit
- Seek customers' permission to enter their home
- Let customers know what follow up action they can expect from us
- Respond to letters and emails within 10 working days
- Answer the telephone within 5 rings and have voicemail facilities for when staff are not available
- Apologise on behalf of MGHA if a mistake has been made and try to put the situation right

- Provide a clean, tidy and welcoming office reception and provide up to date information on all our services

1.6 What we expect from our customers

- Treat our staff with courtesy and respect
- Report repairs as soon as possible
- Keep appointments that you make with us, or tell us in good time if you need to cancel an appointment
- Give us the information we ask for in order to help you
- Keep to your conditions of tenancy or lease

2 CUSTOMER SERVICE PROCEDURE

This procedure is to assist staff to work to agreed organisational standards.

Whilst some of us spend more time working directly with our customers, we must all remember that customers will associate us all with MGHA and therefore particular attention to how we work, and the organisation we represent is needed on every occasion.

The following procedures outline how the customer service policy will be put into action on a day to day basis by staff.

2.1 Access to Services

MGHA operates in seven local authorities throughout Surrey & LB Bexley. It is a regulatory requirement to provide information on performance indicators each year. These indicators include targets on answering incoming phone calls and correspondence.

In order to give our tenants access to staff we shall:

- Provide phone enquiry service Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm
- Provide out of office hours emergency telephone service Monday – Friday, 5pm – 9am and at weekends
- Where we provide residential and/or mobile warden services to sheltered housing schemes, the operating times will be: Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm; an emergency alarm service will operate Monday – Friday, 5pm – 9am, throughout weekends, and during planned staff absence

2.2 Reception Services

Reception is the first point of call for our customers, and they judge us by what they see or receive.

We will;

- Be clean, tidy and welcoming
- Provide up to date information on all our services

Reception will channel calls through to the relevant person and will not screen calls, unless sales / cold calls.

2.3 Use of the telephone and responding to calls

Do not set your phone on DO NOT DISTURB unless absolutely necessary

When answering the phone:

- Aim to answer all calls within 5 rings (18 seconds)
- Answer with your name and service
- Be polite, friendly, listening carefully and be helpful
- Respond to any answer phone message within 3 hours
- If you can't respond immediately, offer to call back and set date acceptable to both

- If transferring a call, give customer the name of person you are transferring them to
- Ensure the person you're transferring to knows who it is and why you are putting them through
- Keep accurate notes of phone calls, especially for other colleagues including date, time of call
- Where possible set up a system so monitoring of time targets are being met:-
 - Target 90% of calls within 7 rings

In your team:

- Set up clear procedures to ensure all phones in your team/department are answered promptly during office hours and inform reception of duty rota
- Set up a lunch cover rota and use group pick-up or call forwarding facilities
- Take clear, accurate messages giving name, address and phone number of the caller, time and date of call, and what they called about

When away from your phone:

- Set voicemail, make sure that you leave a clear message and identify an alternative if the customer cannot wait for your return
- Leave your name, date and when you should be back at your desk.
- Always pick up your calls at least once a day or change your message to say when you will return.
- This facility can be set remotely

Make sure you know how to make the most of your phone:

- Group pick-up
- Transfer
- Diverting
- Undiverting
- Answerphone

2.4 Responding to letters and emails

MGHA aims to provide a high quality response to letters and emails from the public.

2.4.1 Letters

When received:

- Open and date stamp all letters received
- Send an acknowledgement on receipt
- Check if you need any other information from other parties, if so request information as soon as possible
- A system to allow monitoring of time targets is set

In response:

- For general enquiries full response within 10 working days
- For correspondence from Councillors or MPs respond within 10 working days
- Give name, direct dial number and address of person who is dealing with the matter
- Use clear non technical language, and explain all technical words

- Aim to be as informative and helpful reply attaching further information if relevant
- Make note of original letter, and keep copy of correspondence sent
- If passed to another department, make sure it is clear to who and when it went
- A system to allow monitoring of time targets is set

2.4.2 Emails

Our emails should be written to the same standard of grammar and content as letters and must be polite, helpful and informative.

On receipt:

- Open emails on day they are received. If out of the office, ensure your Out Of Office Assistant is on, and give an alternative contact for urgent responses
- Once back in the office, remember to turn the OOO Assistant off
- If you need to forward an email, do it as soon as possible
- Set up folders relevant to subject matter in Inbox
- Where possible set up a system to monitor if time targets are being met

In response:

- Reply within 3 working days, with full response within 10 working days
- Give your name, email address, and direct dial number
- Use easy to read and understandable language – be professional, use salutations and correct grammar
- Aim to give a full informative reply, attaching further information or links to website if relevant

2.5 Diary and calendar use

- All staff will use the electronic diary/calendar system and give access to all other staff
- All diaries must be kept up to date, and will identify when staff out of the office and where they are

2.6 Visits to customers' homes and other property

Impression is very important; staff must be polite and efficient and present a good image of Mount Green Housing Association.

2.7 New and departing residents

- On welcoming the new resident into their home, we will explain the tenancy agreement
- Residents will receive a tenancy handbook and an induction pack
- Residents will be visited 6 weeks after their tenancy commences to ensure they have settled in
- Residents leaving our properties will be invited to participate in an exit survey

2.8 Estates Services

All residents will receive a written statement of the services they can expect to receive and the frequency and standards to which they will be undertaken:

- Community alarm services

- Caretaking
- Garden maintenance;

2.9 Repairs & Maintenance

Target completions times are:

- Emergency – within 24 hours
- Urgent – within 5 working days
- Routine – within 15 working days

The following areas are subject to specific performance standards;

- Day to day repairs
- Consultation/information timescales for major and planned maintenance

We propose to review the service standard for repairs by March 2010

2.10 Information and communication

If customers need information in a different format (e.g. large print, Braille, etc.) we will provide that.

2.11 Performance monitoring and regulatory compliance

Performance monitoring of services delivering is undertaken by

- The Management Board of MGHA and its Sub Committees
- The Tenant Services Authority
- The Audit Commission
- Our local authority partners
- A Residents Forum

We will monitor our performance from:

- Regular dialogue with residents and stakeholders and surveys of them
- Comparison with peer organisations
- Complaints and feedback

We will publish our performance in:

- Our Annual Report
- Residents' newsletters

2.12 Dealing with complaints and compliments

- We welcome customers' views if they are dissatisfied with any aspect of our services – we will record, respond to and act on any complaints. We will take a complaint in writing, in person or by telephone
- We will follow our complaints policy and procedure

2.13 Confidentiality and access to personal information

- We will arrange a private interview room if customers want to discuss anything confidential
- We will treat all information about customers in confidence and in line with Data Protection legislation