



Gardeen Housing Association Ltd
Building a Better Future

GARDEEN HOUSING ASSOCIATION

CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

Implemented	2021
Next Review	2024 – unless there is a change in legislation or change in Scottish Housing Regulators, changes in the Law of Association procedures or best practice

A: GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Introduction

Gardeen Housing Association is committed to providing a high quality and responsive service to anyone who receives or requests a service from the Association. It has a strong commitment to providing the best customer care and supports this through training for staff and feedback from tenants and customers.

Charter Outcomes and Standards

1. Equalities - Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect and receives fair access to housing and housing services.
2. Communication - Social Landlords manage their businesses so that: Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their new landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.
3. Repairs, maintenance and improvements - Tenants homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required and tenants given reasonable choices about when work is done.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CUSTOMER CARE

- 2.1 Gardeen Housing Association is committed to achieving high standards of customer care and satisfaction, and highlights the level of service that a customer can expect to receive at all times.

We will:

- Be professional, honest, courteous and efficient at all times
- Provide fair and equal service to all customers
- Provide information that is relevant, accurate and up-to-date and easy to understand
- Provide information in plain language that is easily understood. We will avoid the use of technical terms, abbreviations and jargons.
- Provide information in large print, on tape or in an alternative language or format on request
- Respect customers' rights to privacy and confidentiality
- Provide timely responses to all requests
- Provide access to appropriate members of staff
- Provide well-managed quality homes at affordable rents
- Provide a prompt and efficient repairs and maintenance service, and set performance targets ensuring work is completed on time
- Consult customers and consider opinions before making decisions that affect the services we provide and/or their home environment
- Regularly seek feedback on the range and quality of services provided

- Care about the customers experience in dealing with the Association by listening to comments, suggestions and complaints
- Ensure that customers are clear about the response timescales for dealing with their enquiry

2.2 Gardeen Housing Association is also committed to act promptly to rectify matters when made aware of any failure to adhere to this policy, and to advise the customer(s) concerned of the outcomes in this regard. Complaints will be taken seriously and responded to quickly and appropriately as detailed in the Association's Model Complaints Handling Procedure. Tenants will also be advised of the opportunity to report a Significant Performance Failure to the Scottish Housing Regulator. Complaints can also be sent to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Staff and Committee members also access a whistleblowing policy and are aware of this procedure.

We will use complaints to say sorry, put things right and change or improve our service.

3. SCOPE OF POLICY – WHO ARE OUR CUSTOMERS?

3.1 Gardeen Housing Association uses a very broad definition of customer. This includes everyone with whom we deal, and includes:

- our tenants and owners
- applicants for housing
- members of the public, or their representatives, seeking information and advice
- suppliers contractors and consultants
- Local authorities
- Other housing associations
- The Scottish Housing Regulator
- The Scottish Government
- Lenders
- other agencies, such as the Council, Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Police and solicitors

3.2 The policy covers a broad range of subjects, for example:

- general enquiries about the services we provide
- the behaviour of staff, Committee members and contractors/agents acting on our behalf
- the adequacy of our office facilities
- how customers (or their representatives) feel we treat them during personal visits to the office
- how customers (or their representatives) feel we treat them when making telephone enquiries to the office
- how customers (or their representatives) feel we treat them when making written enquiries to the office
- how customers (or their representatives) feel we treat them when visiting them in their own home.

4. VISITING THE OFFICE AND HOME VISITING

- 4.1 Gardeen Housing Association's office will be open at hours to suit our customers. We have consulted on opening times and these are publicised in newsletters, website and Facebook. Gardeen Housing Association's office. Our opening hours are: Monday to Friday 9.30am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm to 4.30pm. Our office is closed every Thursday morning for staff training. All staff will wear name badges and carry identification and will provide their name and job title if requested.
- 4.2 The office has a friendly and customer-focused atmosphere. The adapted office provides greater accessibility for visitors with accessibility issues. There is adequate and comfortable seating available in the reception area for those who need to wait for a short while and a range of information about Gardeen Housing Association is also on display. Leaflets providing information and advice on a wide range of topics are available to take away free of charge. There is also a suggestion box situated in reception where customers are encouraged to submit their views on any aspect of the Association.
- 4.3 The following procedure applies where a customer visits or telephones the office:
- If the person they require to see/speak to is available, they will be dealt with straight away (if the member of staff is dealing with another customer, the likely waiting time will be advised).
- OR**
- If the person they require to see/speak to is not available, they will be advised when they will be able to see them and another member of staff will offer to help.

Whatever the circumstances, customers will not be left without:

- (i) their enquiry being resolved, or
- (ii) being advised of a time and date by which the member of staff will get back to them.

Whenever our offices are closed, we will ensure that our answer-phone service provides clear instructions on who customers should contact in an emergency. The website, social media and newsletter will also provide this information.

- 4.4 Gardeen Housing Association also offers home visits where customers prefer this. Because Gardeen Housing Association is based within the community, home visits can be arranged for the vast majority of customers on the same or the following day. Where customers live outside the Gardeen area separate arrangements will be made, but all reasonable efforts will be made to achieve this within one week. All staff and contractors will wear and show identity badges when calling to a home. If you are not in we will leave a card and tell you how to contact us. We can also visit you in the evening as required.

- 4.5 Staff will make all reasonable efforts to keep appointments that are made – in the unlikely event that this is not possible, the customer will be contacted in advance of the meeting, given the reason why it cannot be kept, and offered another suitable time.

Due to COVID -19, our office is currently closed and all staff are working from home.

5. RESPONDING TO LETTERS OR OTHER WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION

- 5.1 All letters or emails received will be either acknowledged or answered in writing within one week. Where it is only possible to provide an acknowledgement, a target timescale by which a full response is likely to be available will be provided.
- 5.2 Completed applications for housing will be pointed within seven working days with the applicant being advised of their points total and how this has been calculated.
- 5.3 When you give us information we shall treat all information sensitively and in confidence and we shall work within the rules of the Data Protection Act.

6. MEASURING LEVELS OF CUSTOMER CARE

In order to measure our performance we shall work to agreed targets that are set out in the Customer Care Policy. The Association will also carry out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey at least once every three years and publish the outcome of this to Association customers and act upon the results of this survey and any suggestions arising from it. Every tenant will be issued with a Handbook which will contain useful information and advice in relation to their home.

The Association will demonstrate its commitment to continuous improvement by working towards the Scottish Executive's Accreditation Framework for the National Standards for Information and Advice. The Association will also maintain its Investors in People Accreditation and

Any complaints received by the Association are reported to the Management Committee on a quarterly basis. Complaints are monitored by staff at monthly staff meetings and the Management Committee discuss and review complaints on a quarterly basis to monitor trends and thereby take any necessary action. Repair satisfaction surveys are also issued with every tenant repair for tenants to complete and return. The Association will reply promptly if a satisfaction survey shows a tenant was not happy with our performance, with the contractor or the standard of the job. The Association will also ensure that our contractors adhere to our Code of Conduct. At the end of a tenancy we will carry out a survey to find out how we can improve the service.

We will also undertake regular surveys to find out tenant views.

7. WHAT DOES GARDEEN DO WITH THE INFORMATION THAT WE GATHER

There are three main reasons for measuring standards of customer care:

- To let all customer know how we are performing
- To identify areas where we may be falling short and taking action to remedy these
- To report accurate information as part of the ARC report to tenants and the Scottish Housing Regulator

We will publish the information in our Performance Report.

Personal information about tenants, owners, applicants and customers will only be kept on file, and/or disclosed to other agencies in line with our Openness & Confidentiality Policy and with Data Protection legislation.

If you wish to see the information we hold about you, we will make arrangements for you to be given access to your file upon request.

8. DISRUPTION TO SERVICE COVID-19

In exceptional circumstances, for example due to extremely poor weather conditions, staff may be unable to travel into the office. However, in such circumstances there will still be a service available.

All staff can work from home and services are provided as lockdowns allow.

An announcement will also be made on Gardeen's website, Facebook page and Twitter to update on the services that we can provide. . Details of emergency numbers for contractors are also detailed on the website.

9. POLICY REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed in 2024 or sooner if legislative, regulatory or best practice changes require this.

All customers are welcome to participate in policy reviews through a variety of methods including being on the Association's Consultation Register where a copy of any policy being reviewed will be sent out to that customer for their comments and/or suggestions to improve.

The Association also produces consultation leaflets and posters welcoming customer's views regarding policy reviews. Reviews are also publicised through the Association's quarterly Newsletter and website.