

# Caring For Our Customers



We can supply this information in large print, on audio tape or in your language. Please call 01202 264444 to discuss your requirements.

*Quality Homes In Strong Communities*



It is Poole Housing Partnership's (PHP) priority to achieve excellence in our standard of customer care and to enable the communities we serve to have more control over the decisions that affect their lives. We are committed to continuously improving our services to residents.

Our aim is to ensure that whenever customers phone, visit or contact PHP in any way, they receive consistently excellent standards of customer service. All our staff have a responsibility to follow this guide whenever we deal with residents.

Our staff have a responsibility to ensure that services are delivered in accordance with our mission statement:

**“To provide the people of Poole with decent homes and high quality housing management services through striving for excellence and continuous improvement”**

We expect every member of staff within our organisation to meet the standards of this policy and we ensure that our staff receive regular customer care training to make sure they can give you excellent customer service.

## Why do we have a Customer Care Policy?

- To provide our staff with a framework to deliver excellent customer services
- To ensure that our staff provide full information and communicate clearly with residents and colleagues
- To ensure all residents are aware of the standards of service they can expect from PHP and how their issues will be dealt with
- To involve our residents and staff, seek their views and use this information to improve services
- To encourage access and promote choice to the services we offer
- To ensure we treat everyone fairly, whilst paying attention to people's individual needs
- To ensure that our staff understand the need to use resources efficiently to provide value for money services
- To ensure that excellent customer care is at the heart of our organisation

This Policy seeks to ensure we offer the best possible, customer focused services, at all times. It covers:

- What all residents can expect when we deal with your enquiry
- What all residents can expect when we meet you face to face
- What all residents can expect when we speak to you on the phone
- What all residents can expect when we visit you at home
- What all residents can expect if we e-mail or write to you

- What all residents can expect if you contact us about a complaint, compliment, comment or suggestion
- How PHP deal with abusive customers
- How PHP share information with residents
- How we monitor the standards in this guide

## **What can all residents expect when we deal with your enquiry?**

We will:

- Conduct ourselves in a professional manner as representatives of PHP
- Listen carefully to your enquiry
- Address any support needs you may have with sensitivity, tact and diplomacy
- Adopt a helpful attitude in dealing with your query
- Make sure we record your details correctly
- Ensure that we understand your enquiry correctly
- Maintain confidentiality where appropriate
- Greet you in a polite and courteous manner, and always give you our name and the team we work in
- Give you our full attention at all times
- Be helpful and aim to deal with your enquiry at the first point of contact
- Arrange an interpreter for the language of your choice through Language Line if your first language is not English, and ensure we record your preference for the future

- Ask you for your ethnicity (if we do not already have it recorded) to make sure that we are delivering our services in a fair way to meet the needs of all our customers
- Treat you professionally and courteously at all times
- Not enter into heated discussions with you
- Seek the assistance of a manager or colleague where we are unable to reach an agreement with you
- Put you in touch with an appropriate person to represent your point of view if you find it difficult to communicate with PHP

## **What can all residents expect when we meet you face-to-face?**

We will:

- Ensure our reception area is kept clean and tidy
- Ensure our main reception displays are up to date and relevant
- Be neatly dressed and wear visible identity badges saying our name and job role
- Ensure that if we are unable to resolve your enquiry straight away, you are asked to take a seat while the appropriate member of staff is contacted, and we agree with you how and when we will respond to your enquiry
- Ask you to take a seat if you call without an appointment while the appropriate member of staff is contacted, and agree how and when we will respond to your enquiry
- Take appropriate action if any member of the public visiting the reception becomes verbally or physically abusive
- Ensure access to a hearing loop is available

- Note the time you are initially seen in reception if we ask you to wait. If an appointment has been booked, you should be seen within 5 minutes of the appointment time by an officer
- Ensure that if you do not have an appointment, but would like to talk to an officer, and an officer is unavailable to see you straight away, we agree with you within 10 minutes how you would prefer to proceed, for example asking an officer to phone you

## **What all residents can expect when we speak to you on the phone?**

We will:

- Answer the call within 5 rings
- Not leave our phones unattended during office hours (Monday to Thursday 08.30-17:15, Friday 08.30-16:45)
- Ensure that you speak to a person, not a machine, during office hours
- Check your contact details with you and ensure your phone number is logged onto our computer system
- Ensure that if you want to speak to a named officer, we try their extension number. If there is no response, we will go back to you, and offer to take a message to pass on and tell you that you will receive a call back, where possible, within 1 working day. We will always e-mail the officer with your message
- Announce your call and briefly describe the nature of your call if we transfer your call to another member of staff
- Agree with you your preferred method of communication, for example, using textphone, or text messaging if you cannot use a standard phone
- Ensure you can contact us 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year in the case of an emergency, by an answer phone, e-mail or other ways

## **What can all residents expect when we visit you at home?**

We will:

- Always show you our identification before entering your home
- Ask you if it is convenient to talk to you inside your home before entering if we do not have an appointment with you
- Treat your home, and household members with respect and politeness at all times
- Work with you to meet any cultural, or similar requests you may have

## **What all residents can expect if we e-mail or write to you?**

We will:

- Ensure we log all written correspondence from you including faxes
- Respond to you as quickly as we can but, as a minimum, within 10 working days
- Ensure that when we write or e-mail you, our letters and e-mails are clear, easy to understand, accurate and jargon free. We will always include a contact person and their telephone number
- Ensure that all the issues you raise in letters are acknowledged and responded to
- Provide you with an e-mail address on our letters to you

## **What all residents can expect if you contact us about a complaint, compliment, comment or suggestion?**

We will:

- Aim to resolve your concerns informally and straight away
- Tell you, if the informal resolution is not to your satisfaction, how you may make a formal complaint, and how you can expect this to be dealt with
- Be aware of the complaints procedure and be aware of how it operates
- Learn from complaints and use what we learn to improve the services we provide
- Encourage comments and suggestions from you, through a wide range of ways, including providing a 'Suggestion Box' in reception, surveys and questionnaires, focus groups, and many more, and where possible, let you know the outcome of your suggestion

## **How do PHP deal with abusive customers?**

This course of action will only be used in exceptional circumstances, as this type of behaviour is very rare in Poole.

We will:

- Advise that the call, interview or visit will be terminated if the abusive behaviour or language continues
- End the call, interview or visit if the abuse continues
- Notify an appropriate manager of the action that has been taken
- Make a note on the resident's file recording the abusive behaviour

- Write to advise that abusive behaviour is not acceptable, and is a breach of Tenancy Conditions
- Consider serving a Notice of Seeking Possession if a second abusive incident occurs. This is the first step in legal action to prevent this type of abusive behaviour
- In exceptional circumstances, we could bar a resident from contacting us direct, if they have threatened to be or have been violent

## **How will we share information with all residents?**

We will:

- Promote and advertise the Standards of Service you can expect from PHP
- Actively promote and publicise the services we provide to you
- Encourage a wide range of resident participation at all times, in a variety of ways, to meet all needs
- Ensure any written information we give you is correct and up-to-date
- Ensure that both you and our staff work from the same policy information
- Ensure our staff are knowledgeable about relevant policies in their area of work, through regular training
- Ensure all leaflets about our policies are available on our website, [www.poolehousingpartnership.org.uk](http://www.poolehousingpartnership.org.uk)
- Carry out regular satisfaction surveys across all of our services
- Provide relevant performance information to you on an annual basis

## How do we make sure we do this?

We will:

- Ensure all our staff receive regular customer care training
- Carry out surveys. We may contact you and ask about the customer service you have received from us
- Consider any complaints, comments, compliments or suggestions we receive and use the information to further develop services
- Monitor our customer care standards and report how well we are doing to our Board of Directors (which is our governing body), and to tenant and leaseholder representatives of the Housing Strategy & Policy Panel (HSPP)
- Report back to you in the *At Home* magazine and on our website

If you are unhappy with any aspect of the service you have received from us, you may wish to follow our complaints procedure. Please ask for our leaflet about making a complaint, e-mail us at: [comments.php@poole.gov.uk](mailto:comments.php@poole.gov.uk) or refer to your copy of the Tenant or Leaseholder Handbook for full details.

We are very grateful for the support we receive from the tenants and leaseholders of Poole, and welcome residents getting involved and working with us to improve services.

If you would like more information about ways that you can get involved, please phone our Tenant Participation Officer on 01202 264422.

