

Customer Service Policy – Hightown House	
Approved by Chief Executive	Issue number 1
Approved date May 2025	Review date May 2027
Previous Version N/A	Responsible Officer Head of Housing

1.	<p>Aims and Objectives</p> <p>Hightown aims to provide customers with the highest quality of customer service possible. This policy sets out the standards and quality of service customers can expect to receive.</p> <p>This policy has been developed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all customers are treated with fairness and respect • Promote awareness of Hightown's service standards so that residents have criteria to measure performance • Maintain and continuously improve our services • Provide relevant, accurate and accessible information • Ensure that customers are clear about the response timescale for dealing with their enquiries • To ensure that staff members are clear about the level service they are expected to provide <p>The purpose of this policy is to ensure that staff communicate with our residents and other customers in a respectful, helpful and efficient way.</p> <p>Where customers contact us with complicated or multiple queries, one member of staff will take responsibility for collating replies from each department involved.</p> <p>Where there is a delay in resolving an issue or answering a query, the customer should be kept informed of the reason for the delay and of progress.</p>
2.	<p>Definitions and Scope</p> <p>This policy applies to all teams delivering customer service based at Hightown House. For the purposes of this policy, the term "customer" refers to tenants, shared owners, leaseholders and people we support.</p>

3.

Policy Statement

Staff and Contractors:

Staff and contractors working on behalf of Hightown will wear identity cards to identify themselves when dealing with customers and will always produce these when calling at residents' homes.

Hightown will ensure that all staff members understand our Customer Service Policy and Customer Charter.

Hightown will ensure that external contractors adhere to the Contractors' Code of Conduct.

Staff will provide a polite, helpful and courteous service at all times and customer focused roles will undertake customer service training.

Communication

Hightown acknowledges that effective communication is key to delivering excellent customer service.

Hightown offers a variety of ways for customers to get in touch including letter, telephone, in-person, text and email.

Hightown will provide an efficient and informed response to all forms of communication. The target timescales for responses are:

- Answering incoming calls – 15 seconds
- Telephone message/voicemail – 2 working days
- Email/Letter – 10 working days
- Stage 1 Complaints – 5 days acknowledgement, 10 days response
- Stage 2 Complaints – 5 days acknowledgement, 20 days response

Visitors to Hightown House

Customers are welcome to attend Hightown's central office, Hightown House.

Reception is staffed from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.

Residents can use the computers available in our reception area, for example to access information on the services we provide and paper copies can be provided by reception staff upon request.

Private meeting rooms can also be made available to talk to staff in confidence.

Home Visits

During home visits, Hightown staff will:

- Arrive at the agreed time and let the customer know as soon as possible if they are running late.
- Respect our customers' homes.
- Take an accurate record of the meeting, including agreed actions or next steps.

Incoming Calls

All calls will be answered in a professional manner.

Managers should make appropriate arrangements for calls to be managed within their team. This may include answering calls on a loop system or use of voicemail when a member of staff is away from their desk.

If the person the caller needs to speak to is not the person who answers the phone, the call handler should offer to take a message or transfer the call.

If the caller leaves a message with the call handler, details of the message should be emailed to the appropriate staff member immediately. In periods of staff absence, the details should be passed to the line manager.

All contact with Hightown residents should be recorded on the system.

Call handlers must familiarise themselves with the Complaint Policy and Procedure and be able to distinguish between a service request and a complaint. If the caller is making a complaint, the call handler must log the complaint and follow the Complaints Policy.

Call Monitoring

Managers will monitor the call logging reports monthly to keep abreast of:

- The number of incoming calls to the main switchboard
- The number of voicemails received and responded to
- Whether the required service standards are being achieved

The Premises Officer may periodically ask Reception staff to monitor:

- the types of calls being received
- whether staff are using the presence settings on their phones when absent from their desks

Where Reception staff identify that a member of staff is not setting their phone correctly when they are absent from their desk, the Premises Officer will pass the details on to the appropriate manager.

General Service Standards

Reception will only screen calls for Directors and the Chief Executive. Calls for any other staff member will not be screened. Where possible, Reception will introduce calls through a warm transfer.

Where return contact is required, the call handler will obtain all the relevant contact details, confirm the customer's preferred method for reply and agree a timescale for reply.

The target response time for responding to a telephone query is no later than two working days after the message has been left.

Voicemail

All staff must familiarise themselves with the telephone system and record their voicemail messages as required.

	<p>Staff must have their phones set to be available for incoming calls if they are at their desk or working from home unless otherwise agreed with their line manager.</p> <p>Staff members should update their voicemail message when they go on annual leave confirming the date they will return and advising the caller to contact Reception if the matter cannot wait for their return.</p> <p>If a staff member is absent for a prolonged period or unexpectedly absent, the manager should make arrangements for their voicemail message to be updated or for the line to be diverted to Reception as appropriate.</p> <p>Staff should check their voicemails at least once per working day when in the office and regularly delete voicemails which are no longer needed.</p> <p>Voicemails should be returned within two working days of the staff member's next working day.</p> <p>If a member of staff leaves, the manager must arrange for the direct number to be forwarded to Reception. Where this is done, the manager should advise Reception of this.</p> <p>When to use Voicemail</p> <p>Managers are responsible for agreeing protocols for the use of voicemail for their team, to suit the needs of their customers.</p> <p>Managers must keep Reception informed of their policy, and they will keep a record to ensure that callers are directed appropriately.</p> <p>Challenging Customers</p> <p>Hightown understands that some customers may express frustration or demonstrate challenging behaviour. Staff delivering customer service will receive training on dealing with challenging customer service situations.</p> <p>Hightown will not tolerate abusive or offensive behaviour towards staff. Abusive, threatening and offensive behaviour from customers will be managed under the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.</p>
4.	<p>Legal/Regulatory Background</p> <p>The Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards</p>
5.	<p>Other considerations:</p> <p>This policy has been co-produced with residents through the Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel.</p>
6.	<p>Role and Responsibilities/Authority</p> <p>This Policy applies to all staff at Hightown House.</p>
7.	<p>Policy/document References:</p> <p>Customer Charter</p>

	Complaints Policy Complaints Procedure All other general needs housing policies and procedures
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