



CUSTOMER CARE,

COMPLAINTS

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to present a general policy on customer care and in particular the complaints procedure within housing.
- 1.2. The policy has been prepared having regard to Medway Councils Housing Services agreed vision and values and reference to good practice.

2. Statement of Intent

“Housing Services recognises good customer care is fundamental to its business. Good customer care will be based on respect for customers and their views and wishes. However, the Council recognises that mistakes may be made and it will deal with complaints seriously and with sensitivity, allowing proper redress when appropriate.

Housing Services operates a complaints procedure that compares with the Corporate procedure.

3. General Policy - Customer Care

- 3.1. The Housing Services customers include not only its tenants but also all other residents in the Council's homes, or applicants for housing and partner organisations. Customer care policies will apply to anyone having dealings with the Housing Services staff.
- 3.2. This policy describes how the Council goes about its work and the overlaps with other policy areas.

- 3.3. The Council's objectives in providing good customer care will be to:
- Promote the delivery of high quality services
 - Listen to the views of customers
 - Respect customers at all times
 - Respond to customers individual needs
 - Ensure staff behave courteously at all times
 - Provide clear information about our services
 - Ensure our offices are accessible to all people
 - Respect your home
- 3.4. Our service standards are published on our website and in leaflets at key customer contact points. These seek to achieve its customer care objectives.

4. General Policy - Complaints

- 4.1. Housing Services will operate a complaints procedure for dealing with expressions of dissatisfaction. The formal procedure is co-ordinated through the Performance Management Team.
- 4.2. The complaints procedure will not be used for first reports of new concerns as the Council requires the opportunity to put things right. These will be termed "Service Enquiries". The Complaints process cannot also be used as a vehicle for complainants to seek a course of action outside Council policy. e.g. seeking additional points for re-housing.
- 4.3. The Council will widely publish material about its complaints procedure and will treat all complaints as confidential. Complainants will be kept informed about the progress and outcome of their complaint and complaints will be recorded and monitored.
- 4.4. Housing Services will use the complaints system to learn from its mistakes and to improve levels of customer satisfaction. Where mistakes have been made Housing Services will not only apologise, but will offer compensation if this is appropriate, including meeting all statutory obligations.
- 4.5. The Council's formal complaints procedure will be in 2 stages as follows:

4.5.1. Stage 1: Investigation

Customers making a first complaint should either put the complaint in writing themselves or ask the officer to whom they are reporting it to write it down. They can also use the Complaints Leaflet or make a complaint via e-mail/website too.

On receipt of the complaint an acknowledgement will be sent within three working days of receiving it. This will also including the name of the Officer who will be dealing with the complaint and the date by which a full reply will be provided.

The matter will then be referred to the officer or team dealing with the matter for a direct written response within 10 working days. The complaint will be recorded, acknowledged, investigated and responded to. If the customer is not satisfied with the outcome, they can opt to move to Stage 2 of the procedure.

(If the complaint represents a potential disciplinary issue with a staff member it will go direct to the line manager.)

4.5.2. Stage 2: Director / Senior Manager Review

If the customer remains unhappy with the outcome of stage one, they can take the matter further and complain to the Chief Executive's Complaints Officer (ceco@medway.gov.uk), telephone **01634 332456**, or by letter to the address below. The complaint will be fully reviewed and the Council will aim to send a full response within 10 working days. Again, the Council will let the Customer know if it is going to take any longer.

4.5.3. Independent Housing Ombudsman:

The Council Housing Team will advise complainants of their right to progress the issue to the Independent Housing Ombudsman. The Council will have regard to the decisions of the Independent Housing Ombudsman as required.

5. How will Housing Services Monitor this policy.

The complaints procedure will be reviewed and performance monitoring information analysed and published on a regular basis.

Specifically the Performance and Information Team will report upon:-

- The number of stage 1 complaints received each month and the % responded to within ten working days.
- The number of stage 2 complaints received each month and the % responded to within ten working days.
- Implement regular customer satisfaction monitoring of this service and report on findings to customers
- Ensure areas for improvements and adjustments in relation to staff training, policy or procedural reviews are implemented

