

INTRODUCTION

Grand Union Housing Group (GUHG) aims to ensure that its customers always come first by encouraging them to offer their feedback. All, customer feedback, suggestions, comments and complaints are welcomed in an effort to improve services and to ensure the best use of resources. Sometimes we make mistakes, but we are committed to providing a positive and understanding approach when receiving and handling complaints. The aim of this policy is to set out our philosophy towards handling customer feedback, and when that feedback results in a complaint, resolving it as effectively as possible.

Examples of complaints can include:

- Where a customer believes we have done something wrong
- Where a customer believes we have failed to do something we should have done
- Where a customer believes we have acted too slowly to resolve a matter
- Where a customer believes we have acted against our policies

It is also important to be clear about what would not be classed as a complaint:

- Where a customer contacts us asking for a window to be replaced, this would be treated as an enquiry.
- Where a customer contacts us to say that their heating is not working, this would be treated as a request for a repair.

GUHG also encourages comments, compliments, suggestions and feedback. Examples could include:

- A tenant writes to express gratitude for the respect shown to him/her and/or his/her home during a period of major refurbishment.
- A tenant suggests that a contractor contacts him/her the day before they are due to attend his/her home to ensure that the appointment is still convenient.

POLICY STATEMENT

When our customers express a level of dissatisfaction with any of the services we provide within the group, we will welcome and value the opportunity to address their concerns and aim to resolve their complaint with minimum formality.

We recognise that effective resolution of complaints will help GUHG to:

- Maintain its credibility and image with customers
- Learn from complaints to improve customer satisfaction and confidence

- Identify strengths and weaknesses in all areas of service delivery and help to prevent repeat problems
- Better target resources and improve service delivery

Additionally, when our customers offer their suggestions and comments, we will, wherever practical, endeavour to incorporate these in future processes and procedures. We will encourage and value their suggestions and comments as they provide the Group with an opportunity to:

- Learn more about the impact that our processes and services have on our customers
- Provide our customers with a real opportunity to influence change
- Enhance the awareness of our customers' needs

All changes made to the Group's services and/or policies, as a result of customer feedback, will be reported to our tenants in the quarterly newsletter.

OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of the Customer Feedback Policy are to ensure that:

- Complaints and appeals are dealt with as quickly as possible and certainly within timescales listed in the Customer Feedback procedure
- The Customer Feedback Policy and procedures are easily accessible, well publicised, easy to use and that support is provided to help customers through the process
- Where appropriate, compensation is considered in accordance with the Compensation Policy
- The customer is kept fully informed of progress in writing, and where appropriate, verbally
- GUHG ensures it allocates sufficient resources to deal with all customer feedback and staff are fully trained in the Customer Feedback procedures and operate them properly
- Responsibilities are delegated so that front-line staff can make decisions and resolve issues as quickly as possible
- All compliments, comments and suggestions are monitored and recorded to enable regular reporting on outcomes to the relevant Customer Committee, Management Team and to the Group Executive Management Team
- Follow-up action is taken so that GUHG learns from customer feedback to ensure services are improved accordingly
- Customers' desire for confidentiality is respected
- Customers are treated fairly throughout the process and feel confident that their feedback, complaints and appeals are being dealt with fully
- GUHG meets its legal and regulatory requirements

The Housing Act 1996, Section 51 and Schedule 2, states that all registered providers have a duty to become members of any Ombudsman scheme approved by the Secretary of State.

Grand Union and its subsidiary associations are all members of the Independent Housing Ombudsman Scheme.

KEY LINES OF ENQUIRY

KLOE 1 – Prospects for Improvement
KLOE 5 – Resident Involvement
KLOE 30 – Access and Customer Care
KLOE 31 – Diversity

OTHER RELATED POLICIES

Compensation Policy
Equality and Diversity Strategy
Access and Customer Care Strategy

COMPLAINTS CONCERNING HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES

Where a tenant/service user is in receipt of a service funded either in part or in full through the Supported People programme, they (or a member of staff on their behalf) may wish to refer their complaint to the relevant Local Authority Supporting People Team if they are not satisfied with the service they are receiving. This process should be recommended to a tenant/service user when the internal complaints procedure has been fully exhausted or when an external/independent investigation would better suit the circumstances (including incidences of abuse or other factors which may cause significant harm to the tenant/service user).

TRAINING

GUHG will ensure that all employees across the group know about the Customer Feedback Policy and procedures, and how to deal with customer feedback. Customer feedback will be included as part of the Corporate Induction training programme.

MONITORING

This policy will be monitored through the Customer Feedback procedures and an annual report at the end of the financial year made to the relevant Customer Committee, Management Team and Group Executive Management Team. The report will include the number and types of feedback, complaints and appeals, achievements of target response times, a summary of service improvements made as a result of the processes and details of compensation payments made.

DISCRETION

Staff are expected to exercise discretion within the context of this policy. If you then act, using discretion, it should be recorded as to the reason(s) why.

Equality Impact Assessment carried out: Initial screen

Customer consultation: May 2010

Person responsible for review: Governance & Performance Manager

Date of review: May 2010

Date of next review: May 2011