



Williamsburgh

HOUSING ASSOCIATION

• L i m i t e d •

Customer Care Charter
(A Service Level Agreement for Existing Residents and
Housing Applicants)

We will do what is reasonable to provide this information in alternative formats on request, including tape, Braille, large print and translations.

If we encounter difficulties in meeting your request, we will discuss the best solution with you.

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Williamsburgh Housing Association : Customer Charter

1. Introduction

A number of social landlords have recently launched innovative schemes aimed at rewarding those tenants who keep to the terms of their tenancy agreement with, for example, a faster repair service. The converse of this, is that tenants with rent arrears or who show anti-social behaviour, cannot enjoy the benefits. While Williamsburgh Housing Association can understand the thinking behind such schemes, we believe that it is iniquitous. We wish to ensure that we provide the best possible service to all our tenants.

As such, we propose to introduce a Customer Care Charter for all who receive services from Williamsburgh Housing Association.

2. What Is The Charter For?

The Charter is important. Customers can use the Charter to find out what they can expect, and check that they are receiving the service they should be getting from Williamsburgh Housing Association.

It also advises customers what they can do, if they think the Association is not honouring the Charter.

3. Who Is The Charter For?

The Charter applies to all Williamsburgh Housing Association customers, whether they are applying for a house, or are already a tenant or factored owner.

4. Why Has The Charter Been Produced?

Williamsburgh Housing Association is registered with Communities Scotland, which acts as the regulator for the sector. Communities Scotland has published regulatory requirements, with which, all registered housing associations must comply.

In producing this Charter, Williamsburgh Housing Association is setting out not only what we will do in order to comply with the published 'performance standards' and 'raising standards', but those additional standards which we have adopted which we consider to be good practice.

By adhering to the service levels as set out in our Charter, we would hope to evoke a positive response, not only from our customers, but from Communities Scotland when their inspectors visit us to determine how, for example:

- we let and maintain our properties,
- involve our tenants,
- deal with complaints, and
- determine what our customers think of the services we provide.

5. What Can Customers Expect?

Williamsburgh Housing Association will comply with the law, performance standards and good practice.

Our customers rights are contained in their tenancy agreement or the common factoring authority, which they sign when they move into their home. They may also have additional rights that are set out in legislation. The Charter does not try to cover all these legal rights, but to highlight the most important issues that affect our customers' relationship with us. If anyone is unsure of their rights and responsibilities they should ask the Association for help or consult a solicitor or an advice centre, such as a citizens advice bureau.

The rights of our customers will vary depending on whether they are at the point of applying for a house or whether they are already a tenant or owner and, if so, what type of agreement they have. It is important that tenants and owners remember that they have responsibilities which, if they fail to meet, will affect their rights.

In addition to the information about rights and responsibilities contained in the tenancy or factoring agreement, the Association also issues a resident handbook which provides comprehensive information about Williamsburgh Housing Association, our policies and practices.

6. What Is In The Charter?

The Charter is set out in seven sections as follows:

- (i) The Way Things Are Run : this tells our residents who is in charge and how things should be run.
- (ii) Getting A New Home : this explains the rights of applicants and what they can expect when applying for a house.
- (iii) The Relationship With Our Customers : this explains our customers rights in respect of living in their homes, the relationship with their neighbours, their responsibilities to pay for rent and services and what to expect with regard to repairs and maintenance.
- (iv) Information : this explains the quality of service customers can expect to receive from Williamsburgh Housing Association, what information should be made available and what information is held about them by the Association.

6. What Is In The Charter? Contd.

- (v) Consultation and Involvement : this tells our customers how they can have their say and get more involved in the running of the Association.
- (vi) Making A Complaint : this explains what our customers can do if they think the Association is not doing things properly.
- (vii) Finding Out More : this provides useful contacts should customers wish to seek more help and advice.

Williamsburgh Housing Association's Customer Contract

(i) The Ways Things Are Run

- Management Committee

Williamsburgh Housing Association is run by a Management Committee which makes sure the Association abides by the law and acts according to the published performance standards. It makes the key decisions about the policies that govern how the Association works. It ensures that Williamsburgh Housing Association remains financially sound.

- Continuous Improvement

Williamsburgh Housing Association aims to deliver continuous improvement and value for money in the services we deliver. As such, we will review our services on a regular basis and take into account the needs and wishes of residents.

Our customers will be given information on how Williamsburgh Housing Association is performing and the results of any inspections.

- Equality and Diversity

Williamsburgh Housing Association is committed to equal opportunities in all that we do and works to eliminate discrimination. We will seek to be fair in our dealings with people, communities and organisations and take a fair approach to the rights and responsibilities of individuals. We will promote good relations between people of different racial groups and take into account the diverse nature of their culture and backgrounds.

- Equality and Diversity Contd.

We have an equal opportunities policy that covers all aspects of equalities encompassing sex or marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language, or social origin, or other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

As a customer you can expect to be treated fairly and without discrimination, and services will be accessible to all residents.

If you need certain care or support services, we shall provide the appropriate assistance required to obtain them.

(ii) Getting A New Home

- Applying

When applying to Williamsburgh Housing Association for a house, you can ask to see the details of the type of services we provide, who can apply and how we will consider your application.

When applying for a house to rent, you can apply directly to Williamsburgh Housing Association or seek a nomination through Renfrewshire Council. The locally-based housing associations in Renfrewshire work together with Renfrewshire Council to provide more choice and offer a joint housing list, called a common housing register (CHR). You can ask Williamsburgh Housing Association to explain how this works.

If required, Williamsburgh Housing Association will explain the forms and associated information, and will help you to fill in the application form.

<p>If you have difficulty with the forms and information and need help, or need them in another language, the Association will provide a translation, interpreter and any other appropriate forms of assistance.</p>
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Your application may not be considered in certain circumstances, for example, if your previous behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and serious enough to make you unsuitable as a tenant. You will be told about these rules when you apply.

If you are accepted onto the housing list, the Association will offer you a choice of suitable accommodation, if we are able to do so.

- Applying Contd.

You must give accurate information on your application form. If you deliberately provide false information, the Association can take action against you which could result in you losing your home.

You will be given information about the rights and responsibilities that you will be signing up to and any other leaflets or information about the agreement you will be asked to sign. You should read these carefully and consider if you want to take on this commitment. If you are not sure, you should seek advice from a solicitor or a local advice centre.

The Association will advise you with regard to the Right to Buy your home and carefully explain the implications relating to your particular circumstances and responsibilities. You should consider carefully whether you want to make this commitment. You should seek advice from a solicitor or your local advice centre if you are not sure.

(iii) Williamsburgh Housing Association's Relationship With our Customers

- Moving In

All new tenants are given a written copy of the tenancy agreement which they are invited to sign. Before you sign the agreement, however, what it means, will be explained to you.

The agreement, which is a legally binding contract between you and the Association, clearly sets out:

- ◀ what you are responsible for and your rights,
- ◀ Williamsburgh Housing Association's rights and responsibilities, and
- ◀ The rent, service charges and any other charges you may pay, including the way they will be reviewed.

Should you need support to live in your new home, you should let us know and we will provide you with information about services that could help you, and wherever reasonable, help you obtain these services. These may be provided by Williamsburgh Housing Association or by other agencies or organisations. Information about the standard of service you can expect, the cost and any help that may be available towards the cost, will be provided.

If you share amenities with other people, such as closes/stairs and backgardens, your rights and responsibilities will be explained to you.

- Living In your Home

You have a right to live peacefully and quietly in your home and so do your neighbours. You have a right to stay in your home as long as you keep to the conditions set out in your tenancy agreement.

In the event of your death, it may be possible for your tenancy to be passed on to someone else who has been living with you as your partner or spouse. The Association can provide you with information on succession and our policy on joint tenancies.

In certain circumstances, you may have to leave your home. You will normally be given written notice and the Association will have to apply to the Courts to evict you. If you no longer occupy the property as your main home, you may lose your security and the Association may apply to the Courts to evict you. Your tenancy agreement sets out the circumstances by which your tenancy may come to an end. Examples include, if you have broken any of the conditions in your agreement such as not paying the rent or service charges or knowingly made false statements.

The Association will only take action to evict you from your home as a last resort, when there is no reasonable alternative. Details on Williamsburgh Housing Association's policies and how eviction is dealt with, are available to you.

If the Association takes action to evict you while you receive support and care, you will be offered advice and assistance. Williamsburgh Housing Association will inform the agencies and organisations that provide the care about the action that is being taken.

- Living In your Home Contd.

The Association has strategies in place to tackle anti-social behaviour. Our tenancy agreements have conditions in them about noise and nuisance. These apply to you, and to people living with you and visiting you. You could be at risk of losing your home if your behaviour, the behaviour of a member of your family or a visitor to your home, causes serious nuisance to people living around you.

If you suffer from noise, nuisance or anti-social behaviour, we are here to help. You should contact your housing officer to seek advice and assistance.

If you are an owner, the common factoring authority will set out your obligations not to cause nuisance or behave in an anti-social manner.

- Paying For Your Home

- ◀ Rent. In most cases the Association itself will set your rent although, in a small number of cases, rents will be registered with the Rent Officer. Your tenancy agreement indicates how often your rent can be changed and how much notice you will be given. Should you be unclear, your housing officer will be able to advise you. If you have transferred from Renfrewshire Council and were given a rent guarantee, the Association will honour that guarantee.

Rent is payable one month in advance but you will not be charged 'key money' or asked for a deposit.

- Paying For Your Home Contd.

Williamsburgh Housing Association will give you information about:

- ◇ the way your rent is set,
- ◇ the level of rents across all of our houses, and
- ◇ how good we are at collecting the rent.

You will be informed in writing, in advance, about any changes in your rent. Rent will not be increased more than once a year unless by mutual agreement. Where an annual rent review applies, this will be scheduled in order that you are given at least one month's notice, from the effective date of implementation, which will be the 28th March.

Williamsburgh Housing Association will consult tenants on any change to rent levels and provide the opportunity to comment on such proposals.

- ◀ Service Charges. You may be asked to pay other charges as well as rent, such as for close cleaning or the upkeep of communal areas. These services may be provided by the Association or by other agencies or organisations.

The Association will provide you with details about the type of charges, what costs you pay for and how they are set. You may be able to inspect the details of the accounts that this information is based on. You will be given written notice of any changes and increases to your service charge.

- Paying For Your Home Contd.

If you are having difficulty paying for rent or service charges, you will be given information and assistance to find out about benefits that may be available to help you.

- ◀ Rights of Appeal. Williamsburgh Housing Association will advise you of your right to appeal about your rent and to challenge service charges. This information will (usually) be given to you when you are told about the increase. Your rights will depend on the type of agreement you have signed. You should examine your agreement and ask the Association for information about your rights. You can also ask your local advice centre or a solicitor.

If you want to appeal about your rent, you may have the right to go to the Rent Officer or an independent body known as the Rent Assessment Committee, which will look at how your rent is set, whether it has been set properly and consider if it is fair. The Association will abide by what the Committee says, but you should be aware that, while this process may result in your rent going down, it could also result in your rent being increased.

A similar right of appeal exists for some charges made for services. Ask the Association for details or check with an advice centre.

If you believe that the Association is charging for a service it is not entitled to charge, or that the level of charge is unreasonable, or that the service has not been provided to a reasonable standard, you should, in the first instance, raise your concerns with the Association and ask for a detailed explanation in response.

- Paying For Your Home Contd.

You are at risk of losing your home if you do not keep up payments of rent or other charges.

- Repairs and Improvements

The Association will make sure your home is in a suitable condition, in good repair, that it is safe and fit to live in. We have policies for maintaining your home and making sure it meets set standards. These, like all of the Association's policies are available for you to examine and comment on.

You have some responsibility for keeping your home in good condition. Your tenancy agreement and handbook explain your responsibilities and those of the Association. For example, while the Association will keep the structure of your home in good repair and make sure it is well maintained, you are responsible for making good any damage you cause and for the decoration of your home. If unsure, you should ask your housing officer.

The Association has a system for dealing with repairs, aimed at meeting the needs of residents. You should know how to report a repair; our deadlines for responding to emergency repairs (4 hours), urgent repairs (48 hours) and routine repairs (10 working days); and how well the Association is meeting the targets set (annual report).

You should report repairs as soon as they are needed and you must allow reasonable access for the Association to inspect and carry out repairs (based on our appointment system).

The Association will provide details of long-term plans for maintenance work such as external decoration, double-glazing, re-roofing and will consult you as to how these proposals affect you.

- Repairs and Improvements Contd.

You may be able to make certain improvements to your home yourself. Your tenancy agreement and handbook will tell you what you can do. In most cases, the Association's permission should be sought. This will not be withheld unreasonably.

You may be entitled for compensation if the Association fails to carry out a reported repair within a set timescale.

Should you be required to leave your home temporarily while repairs or improvements are undertaken, you will be offered alternative accommodation and may also be able to claim a disturbance allowance. If you have to move out permanently, you may have the right to a homeless payment.

If you have carried out improvements, with the Association's permission, you may be able to claim compensation for the work you have done when you give up your tenancy. The Association will give you information about what you can claim and how.

- Repairs and Improvements Contd.

Williamsburgh Housing Association will ensure:

- ◇ your home is in a suitable condition, in good repair and fit to live in,
- ◇ that it responds within the set response times to repairs – emergency (4 hours), urgent (48 hours) and routine (10 working days),
- ◇ tenants are advised of our performance in respect of target response times for repairs,
- ◇ that you are consulted on long-term plans for the maintenance of your home,
- ◇ you receive appropriate compensation for any delays to specified repairs undertaken outwith set response times, or appropriate improvements you have undertaken within your home,
- ◇ that, where appropriate, you are provided with suitable alternative temporary accommodation and any compensation for disruption (disturbance or homeless payment).

- Owners

Owners' responsibilities for repair and improvements are set out in the deed of conditions. This document outlines the rights and responsibilities of proprietors in respect of the common areas of their properties. The common factoring authority and handbook provide further guidance.

The Association will normally maintain the outside, the shared areas and the structure of our flatted properties, while owners must maintain the inside of their home.

- Owners Contd.

Owners have the right to be consulted about major works which they will have to pay for through factoring charges. Owners will be consulted regarding long-term plans for major maintenance work such as re-roofing or external redecoration. The Association will advise on costs, charges, grants and loans.

(iv) Information

Williamsburgh Housing Association is committed to providing good quality services for existing residents and those people applying for a house. In addition to offering high standards of customer care, we will be open, honest and transparent in the way that we operate.

We will issue information about the way we do things and the policies we apply. This will be provided by means of a handbook, newsletters, annual reports, leaflets, promotional material etc. This material will be widely distributed and made available on request.

The Association will be accountable to our residents and will thereby issue information not only about what we are doing but how well we are performing. Our annual reports and performance and inspection reports will be a source for this data.

The information issued will be in clear language, easy to read and will be available in different ways to make sure it is meaningful and can be understood by all residents.

Should you want information about your rights and how to exercise them, you should initially consult your tenancy agreement, resident handbook or other material provided by Williamsburgh Housing Association. Your rights will depend on the type of agreement you have and the type of accommodation you live in. The Association is happy to provide advice.

(iv) Information Contd.

The information held about you by the Association will be kept safe and secure. It will be kept up to date and deleted when no longer required. The Association can advise on the process by which you can see information held about your tenancy. Such information will be provided free of charge. The Association may not give you access to certain information. For example, where the supplier of sensitive data does not provide authority to disclose its contents. If the Association refuses to give the information asked for, you can contact the office of the Information Commissioner for advice. If you disagree with any of the information, you have the right to correct it or to record your disagreement.

The Association will only pass on information about you to other people or organisations, if you have consented or where the law permits us to do so.

Your rights as contained within your tenancy agreement can only be changed after consultation and with your agreement.

The Association is committed:

- ◇ to providing a high quality of customer service to existing residents and applicants,
- ◇ to operating in an open, honest and transparent fashion,
- ◇ to providing information in various forms about what we are doing and how we are performing,
- ◇ to ensuring the information held about you is accurate and available for your review,
- ◇ keeping your information secure and only releasing it to appropriate persons with your approval.

(v) Consultation and Involvement

Williamsburgh Housing Association is committed to ensuring that our services are shaped around our customers' needs. We will seek to obtain the views of our residents as widely as possible, utilising a number of methods and we will seek to respond to the views received. We will consult you if we are considering changes, particularly if these affect the arrangements for providing the housing management and maintenance service to your home.

All residents will be given the opportunity to play a part in decision-making, how services are run and how standards are set.

We offer a range of ways in which residents can be consulted and give feedback. We will provide details about the issue under review in a way that is clear, easy to understand and accessible to all residents. The Association will give you information about how you can get involved and what we do with the feedback.

The Association will provide details on our tenant participation strategy. This strategy explains:

- the arrangements by which residents can get more Involved,
- how residents will be consulted,
- the way this will work, and
- how the arrangements will be monitored and reviewed to keep them up to date.

The Association will encourage, support and advise on the options to help you obtain the knowledge and skills to play an effective part in the running of your home and the local community.

(v) Consultation and Involvement Contd.

The Association is committed:

- ◇ to tenant participation; effective consultation and real involvement,
- ◇ offering a range of ways by which residents can influence the Association's activities,
- ◇ supporting those who wish to play an active part in the work of Williamsburgh Housing Association.

(vi) Making A Complaint

If you are not satisfied with the way you have been treated or the service you have received, you should make a complaint to the Association.

The Association will seek to respond to complaints in a positive way, viewing an effective complaints systems as an essential element of a quality management system.

The Association's complaints procedure is both simple and effective, outlining how to complain, who to complain to and what is involved. Details on how to complain are available both in your handbook or in a leaflet that you can get from the Association's office.

The policy and procedure is clear and easy to follow and should allow you to take your complaint to the people who manage the Association at a senior level, including the Management Committee (governing body).

If you have been through the stages of the Association's complaints procedure and are still not satisfied, you can take certain complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman can consider different ways to deal with complaints and disputes, and make orders or recommendations when shortcomings are found. The Ombudsman also has discretion to intervene when, it is deemed that a housing association is taking an unreasonable length of time to deal with a complaint.

The Association acknowledges the role of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and will act on the Ombudsman's decisions.

You can get more information on the role of the Ombudsman from the Association or your local advice centre or you can contact the Ombudsman direct.

(vi) Making A Complaint Contd.

If your complaint is about racial or sexual discrimination, you can also go to the Commission for Racial Equality or Equal Opportunities Commission for help.

The Association is committed:

- ◇ to responding to complaints in a positive way,
- ◇ to ensuring our complaints procedures are both simple and effective,
- ◇ to ensuring our customers know how to complain,
- ◇ advertising the role of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and acting on the Ombudsman's decisions,
- ◇ to ensuring that our service provision does not discriminate on the grounds of sex or marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other personal attributes including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

(vii) Finding Out More

Useful contact details, should you wish to find out more about the information contained in this document.

Name	Address	Tel. No. / Etc.
Communities Scotland	St. James House, 25 St. James Street, PAISLEY, PA3 2HQ.	Tel.: 0141 889 8896 Fax: 0141 887 1918 Website: www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations	Pegasus House, 375 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 4LW.	Tel.: 0141 332 8113 Fax: 0141 332 9684 Email: sfha@sfha.co.uk Website: www.sfha.co.uk
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman	4 Melville Street, EDINBURGH, EH3 7NS.	Tel.: 0870 011 5378 Fax: 0870 011 5379 Email: enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk Website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk
Commission for Racial Equality	CRE Scotland, The Tun, 12 Jackson's Entry, off Holyrood Road, EDINBURGH, EH8 8PJ.	Tel.: 0131 524 2000 Fax: 0131 524 2001 Textphone: 0131 524 2018 Email: scotland@cre.gov.uk Website: www.cre.gov.uk
Equal Opportunities Commission	St. Stephens House, 279 Bath Street, GLASGOW, G2 4JL.	Tel.: 0845 601 5901 Fax: 0141 248 5834 Email: scotland@eoc.org.uk Website: www.eoc.org.uk
Office of the Information Commissioner	28 Thistle Street, EDINBURGH, EH2 1EN.	Tel./Fax: 0131 225 6341 Email: scotland@ico.gsi.gov.uk Website: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux	Myddelton House, 115-123 Pentonville Road, LONDON, N1 9LZ.	Tel.: 020 7833 2181 Fax: 020 7833 4371 Website: www.nacab.org.uk

7. Williamsburgh Housing Association's Customer Care Charter

Williamsburgh Housing Association's Customer Care Charter seeks to identify, in a demonstrable way, our commitment to our residents. It sets out clearly what they can expect and provides them with a method of checking that they are getting the service they should be receiving from the Association. It also advises customers what to do if they think the Association is not honouring the contract.

The Charter covers seven sections:

1. The Way Things Are Run

- Our customers will be given information on how Williamsburgh Housing Association is performing and the results of any inspections.
- Our customers can expect to be treated fairly and without discrimination. Services will be accessible to all residents.
- The Association will provide the appropriate assistance to obtain care and support services, for those customers who require them.

2. Getting A New Home

- Applicants facing difficulty with forms and information, will be provided with the appropriate assistance including, where necessary, the translation of materials or the services of a translator.

3. Williamsburgh Housing Association's Relationship With Our Customers

- The Association will provide information on how rents are set; the levels of rents across all our houses and our performance in respect of rent collection.
- The Association will consult on any proposed changes to rent levels and provide tenants with the opportunity to comment on such proposals.
- The Association will ensure all of the houses we provide are in good repair and in a suitable condition in which to live.
- The Association will respond within the response times for repairs and advise on our performance, in relation to the response times set : emergency (4 hours); urgent (48 hours) and routine (10 working days).
- The Association will consult with tenants on long-term plans for the maintenance of their homes.
- Customers will receive appropriate compensation for any delays to 'specified' repairs completed outwith set response times; or in response to appropriate improvements they have undertaken within their homes.
- Customers will be provided, where necessary, with suitable alternative temporary accommodation and any compensation for disruption (disturbance or homeless payments).

4. Information

- The Association will provide a high quality of customer service to existing residents and applicants. This commitment is illustrated in our expectations as to the treatment our customers can expect from Williamsburgh Housing Association (Appendix No.1).
- In addition to operating in an open, honest and transparent fashion, we are committed to providing information, in various forms, about what we are doing and how we are performing.
- The Association will ensure that information held about customers is accurate and held securely. While this information will be made available to the individual on request, it will only be released to appropriate third parties with the approval of the customer concerned.

5. Consultation And Involvement

- The Association is committed to tenant participation, effective consultation and real involvement.
- We will offer a range of ways by which residents can influence the Association's activities and support those who wish to play an active part in the work of Williamsburgh Housing Association.

6. Making A Complaint

- The Association will ensure that our complaints procedure is both simple and effective. Our customers will be advised of how to complain and we will respond to complaints in a positive way.
- We will advertise the role of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and act on the Ombudsman's decisions.

6. Making A Complaint Contd.

- The Association will ensure that our service provision does not discriminate on the grounds of sex or marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin or other personal attributes including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

7. Finding Out More

Williamsburgh Housing Association will be a source of help and assistance to customers. Where comprehensive advice cannot be provided in-house, we will seek to provide contact details for the most relevant agencies or organisations assessed as likely to be able to assist customers.

8. Evaluation and Monitoring

As indicated throughout this document, Williamsburgh Housing Association wishes to introduce a Customer Care Charter, aimed at promoting the best possible standards of service for all, whether they be applicants for housing, tenants or factored owners.

We believe that the Charter will be important in that customers can use it to:

- identify what they can expect,
- check the quality of the service received to that which they were promised and
- take the appropriate action if the Association fails to honour the commitments made.

The Association will, on an ongoing basis, and at least annually, seek feedback from our customers (through area committees/tenants register/specific operational measures) as to their assessment of the Association's performance against the service level commitments made, within the Customer Care Charter.

Our comprehensive resident satisfaction survey, undertaken on a three-yearly basis, will include questions relating to our customers' perceptions of the service levels identified in the Charter.

8. Evaluation and Monitoring Contd.

A report will be prepared for the Management Committee's consideration on an annual basis, to consider:

- resident satisfaction levels with customer care,
- whether the target level of 90% satisfaction is being met
- whether it needs adjustment, or
- whether more effective measures require to be introduced.

Details of the feedback received, in the area of delivering a quality service to our customers, will be incorporated into our performance indicators and presented to our residents in the Association's annual report.

9. Review

The Management Committee will receive feedback on the Association's performance, in respect of the Customer Care Charter, each year. Any revisions deemed necessary can be considered at that time, otherwise the Charter will be reviewed by the Management Committee every three years to ensure that it responds to any changing circumstances.

This review will take place following the appropriate consultation with residents, as outlined in our Tenant Participation Strategy.

Treatment of Customers

Williamsburgh Housing Association is a customer-focused organisation. Aiming to provide a high standard of service to meet the needs and expectations of our customers, our staff are trained to ensure needs are identified promptly, clearly and sensitively and that a positive image to customers is presented at all times.

While we expect our staff to be courteous and helpful, we hope in return, that staff are treated with dignity and respect. (Appendix No.2)

Our commitment to our customers is illustrated in our expectation that Williamsburgh Housing Association staff:

- will be courteous, friendly, polite and efficient at all times. Visitors to our office will be greeted with a smile and referred to by name, as soon as possible, after it is known,
- will wear a name badge and introduce themselves by name and position within the organisation,
- will see a visitor within 5 minutes of any appointment time and apologise if a visitor is kept waiting. If there is a delay, a reason will be provided and advice given as to how long they may have to wait. An alternative appointment will be offered, if this is more convenient to the visitor,
- will ask questions in a fair and polite way,
- will cover reception during office opening hours,
- will cover telephones during office opening hours. Answer calls within 5 rings. Explain the reasons for any delay. A telephone answer machine will be in use outwith office hours. Emergency numbers will be regularly updated and issued.

Treatment of Customers Contd.

- will answer telephone calls politely, give their name, establish the reason for the call and take the appropriate action to deal with the contact,
- will respond to enquiries as soon as possible, providing an explanation of any reasons causing delay in our response. An indication will be given as to when the appropriate information will be available and arrangements for contact agreed,
- will wear their identity badge when making home visits,
- will dress in a neat, tidy and business-like fashion at all times,
- will offer private interview facilities or a home visit, as appropriate,
- will keep our reception area, interview rooms and public toilet clean, free of debris and unnecessary clutter, at all times,
- will ensure that our notice boards display current and up to date information. Information leaflets on our service provision, welfare benefits, policies and procedures will be made available on request,
- will encourage visitors to the office to complete suggestion/comment forms,
- will make it easy for customers to make a complaint if unhappy about any aspect of the service provided. Respond within the prescribed times as contained within the complaints policy,
- will invite comments on the services provided. Suggestions as to improvements will be welcomed.

How Customers Can Help Williamsburgh Housing Association

Just as Williamsburgh Housing Association has sought to establish a customer focus, by promoting our expectations as to how we expect our staff to treat our customers, we, in turn, expect that our staff will be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Just as we have indicated how we propose to ensure the delivery of a high quality service, customers can help us by:

- providing complete and accurate information,
- responding to requests for information as quickly as possible,
- providing access to their homes for maintenance work, safety checks etc.,
- keeping appointments and arriving on time,
- advising us in advance, if appointments cannot be kept,
- working with us to resolve issues. Recognising that while we are here to help, we may need to investigate matters or discuss issues with other parties, before we are in a position to provide comprehensive responses to enquiries.
- treat and talk to staff with civility.

