



Halton
Housing

Procedure

Title:

Customer Code of Conduct

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Introduction

Halton Housing (HH) appreciates that occasionally employees will have to deal with difficult customers. In such circumstances, employees are expected to maintain high standards of professionalism and fairness. Rudeness to customers is not acceptable in any circumstances.

This Customer Code of Conduct procedure clearly outlines the standards of behaviour that HH expects of its customers. It also looks to spell out the type of behaviour that will not be tolerated.

The code covers any type of interaction, including day to day contact of an informal nature, as well as any meetings which customers attend which are usually more structured and formal.

This procedure is applicable to all employees and to all customers.

Aims / Objectives

The main aim of the code is to set out clear standards of behaviour that HH employees may expect to receive when interacting with customers. It sets out options for employees in dealing with situations where customer's behaviour has become or is deemed to be no longer acceptable.

It has also been produced so that customers can see and be aware of types of behaviour which will not be tolerated by HH and what action(s) may be taken.

Scope

This code covers all dealings and interactions between HH employees and customers on an informal or formal basis.

For the purposes of this procedure a 'customer' can include tenants, leaseholders, licensees, prospective customers such as applicants for housing, external agencies, partners and any other persons or organisations wishing to access HH services. Members of staff can include individuals employed directly by HH and approved contractors.

Procedure Description

Day to day contact

When customers contact us by telephone, by live chat, in person, in writing, by email, or via social media or the customer App we expect them to:

- Show respect and courtesy to staff, always

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- Treat staff as you would like to be treated yourself
 - Assist HH by providing as much information as possible so that we can make a prompt response or decision
 - Allow employees reasonable time to respond to your request
 - Answer any appropriate correspondence received from HH
 - Respond to any contact made or messages left HH employees when requested to do

Conduct at meetings

When attending meetings with HH, we expect customers to:

- Ensure that they are prepared for the meeting by reading all the relevant papers and bringing them to the meeting
- Keep to time and meeting subject
- Follow the agenda, and the guidance of the Chair in the conduct of the meeting
- Being courteous to each other, allowing each other the opportunity to speak one at a time, and comment
- Support and assist other customers and employees to seek effective outcomes for items being discussed
- Respect each other's opinions and views
- Be reasonable and honest
- Observe the principles of confidentiality listed in this leaflet

General Conduct (applicable always)

HH will not tolerate customers:

- Using foul, abusive, or offensive language (for example swearing, or remarks that are discriminatory)
- Making threats or unreasonable demands towards other customers or members of staff
- Criticising any individual, whether they are a tenant, resident, or member of staff
- Discriminating against any member of staff or other customer on the grounds of race, colour, age, religion, political beliefs, disability, illness, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, class, learning difficulty, appearance, or employment status
- Engaging in any form of harassment

Breach of this Code of Conduct

If a customer breaches this Code of Conduct, HH will (depending on how serious the breach is)

- End the telephone conversation, meeting or live chat

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- Talk to the customer to advise that their behaviour is breaching the code and ask them to stop
 - Write to the customer, confirming the code has been breached and explain why
 - Refuse to carry out interviews, visits or enter further interactions or correspondence with the customer until the behaviour stops
 - Record the incident on our computer system and/or add a warning flag onto the customer's tenancy file
 - Reserve the right to remove any postings on social media and other websites
 - Exclude customers from any or all customer involved groups
 - Take appropriate legal action

This list of possible sanctions given above is not exhaustive and each case will be judged and dealt with on its merits with an appropriate measure or range of measures being decided upon in each case. For example, if the breach of the code is because the behaviour of the customer is deemed to be vexatious or unusually persistent in nature, HH will reserve the right to act against them in line with the guidelines contained within HH Complaints Procedure for dealing with such cases.

Review

It will never be HH's intention to impose any sanctions/actions under this policy upon any individual for an indefinite period. The main reason for taking any action from HH's point of view will be to ensure that members of staff are not subject to inappropriate behaviour, while at the same time trying to maintain customers' access to services.

Any Manager acting against a customer due to breach of this code, will:

- In the first instance, highlight that their behaviour is unacceptable and unless immediately corrected by the customer, that the code is likely to be the next step. The Manager will explain the reasons why
- If the need subsequently arises, implement the customer Code of Conduct; the Manager will ensure that the customer is made aware of the reasons why the implementation is happening. When implementing, the Manager will clearly outline to the customer in writing how they are able to contact us. If we provide a specific person to contact, we will provide details of what that customer should do if/when that person is absent from work. The Manager will also include details of when the customer's conduct will next be reviewed
- Ensure that this implementation is recorded and shown on our Computer System, currently QL
- Advise colleagues when the customer contacts any colleague by any method, that colleague must ensure the contact is entered in QL to support the conduct review

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- Review the actions taken against the customer and provide a full account of the Code of Conduct review to the customer explaining if their behaviour since implementation is or is not acceptable and subsequent actions, e.g. continue with implementation and set a second review date or take further action against the customer.

Confidentiality

We will treat any information provided to us regarding customers' personal or financial situation / data with care and respect and process all personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

If a customer wants HH to discuss their tenancy with a third party, they must give us written consent. This includes any partner, spouse, relative or agency who is not named on the tenancy agreement.

Political affiliation

Customers may be affiliated to/or be a member of political groups, but they must not represent such groups while interacting with HH or attending meetings with HH.

Staff conduct

We have a code of conduct for all HH employees. Our complaints procedure supports any alleged breaches of staff conduct.

Responsibility

The Director of Customer Experience has overall responsibility for the implementation of this procedure.

All managers have a day-to-day responsibility for making sure that the employees they manage have a working knowledge of the code, and in what circumstances the sanctions mentioned in it may be applied. Managers have a further responsibility for ensuring the Customer Code of Conduct Procedure is followed in instances where the code is breached.

Service Standards

Right of Appeal

If a customer receives notification from HH that action is to be taken against them because of a breach of the Code and they believe that the decision taken is either unfair and/or disproportionate, they will be able to submit an appeal.

Any appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the notification; and should clearly state the reason(s) why the customer believes the decision is unfair and/or disproportionate.

The appeal will be considered by the Director of Customer Experience or a Senior Manager in their absence, and a decision regarding the appeal will normally be sent to the appellant within 10 working days.

Alternatively, where the customer feels that this procedure has not been applied properly in their case, they will have the option to register their dissatisfaction via HH formal Complaints Procedure.

Performance Measures / Monitoring

It is not felt necessary to measure or monitor performance against this code. Any breaches will always be dealt with on an individual basis.

Consultation Arrangements

This procedure was reviewed by HH Customer Forum March 2022.

Benchmark Analysis

It is not felt necessary to carry out any benchmarking activity in relation to this policy.

Link to Policy

This procedure is not directly linked to a HH Policy. There is a Customer Code of Conduct leaflet which supports this procedure.



Translations available on request by phoning 0303 333 0101 or
via email at info@haltonhousing.org

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