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**Blue Triangle (Glasgow)
Housing Association Ltd**

**Customer Care Policy
GOV 011 REV 1**

8 December 2016

Our Mission Statement

“Blue Triangle exists to support, accommodate and assist vulnerable people achieve better lives.”

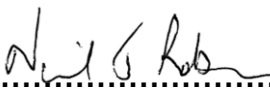
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Revision history

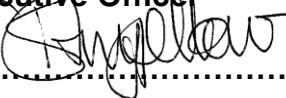
Rev No.	Rev. Date	Consultation Requirements (See Section 4 – Consultation)	Lead Officer	Committee	Approved by MB
0	May 2012	Revision and new template	SM	COM	13 Sept 2012
1	Dec 2016	Updated after consultation with service users	FS	COM	08 Dec 2016

Chairman

Signed: 

Dated: 8 December 2016

Chief Executive Officer

Signed: 

Dated: 8 December 2016

Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale for the Policy

This policy explains our commitments to service users and details how we promote quality customer care standards. Customer care is an important element of our governance policy framework.

1.2 Risk Assessment Statement

This policy relates to a high area of risk within the Association because it is concerned with providing quality services to service users

1.3 Policy Context

This policy is needed to ensure that we comply with law and good practice guidance in respect of customer care services. Customer care is essential to organisational practice by;

- promoting trust and respect between the Association and service users;
- meeting our legal duties and good practice standards;
- ensuring that service provision is tailored to the individual needs of service users and employees, including addressing their accessibility needs.
- Ensuring that all services are delivered in line with the Equality Act and promote and support diversity whilst removing discrimination in all its forms

Section 2 Legal and Regulatory Standards

The standards referred to in this section have been taken directly from each Regulator’s guidance. Each Regulator has written their guidance according to the audience being addressed: service user, staff or board member.

2.1 Legal Framework

Legal requirements are not directly referenced to customer care but commitments to customer care services are contained in a range of Acts. The Equality Act 2010 requires that services are provided so as not to discriminate on a number of grounds known as “protected characteristics.” The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires social landlords to consult with their tenants on a wide range of matters (see Section 4 below). The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 requires providers of care and support services to meet minimum standards that are aligned to customer care.

2.2 Regulatory Standards: The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) (Governance and Financial Management)

Regulatory Standard 1

The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its

tenants and other service users.

Regulatory standard 1.6

Each governing body member always acts in the best interests of the RSL and its tenants and service users, and does not place any personal or other interest ahead of their primary duty to the RSL. The RSL maintains its independence by conducting its affairs without control, undue reference to or influence by any other body (unless it is constituted as the subsidiary of another body).

Regulatory Standard 2

The RSL is open and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.

Regulatory standard 2.1

The RSL gives tenants, service users and other stakeholders information that meets their needs about the RSL, its services, its performance and its future plans.

Regulatory standard 2.3

The RSL seeks out the needs, priorities, views and aspirations of tenants, service users and stakeholders. The governing body takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions.

Regulatory Standard 5

The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.

Regulatory standard 5.6

There are clear procedures for employees and governing body members to raise concerns or whistleblow if they believe there has been fraud, corruption or other wrongdoing within the RSL.

Significant performance failures

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has a duty to consider issues raised with them about “significant performance failures”. A significant performance failure is defined by the SHR as something that the landlord does or fails to do that puts the interests of its tenants at risk, and which the landlord has not resolved. That is something that is a systemic problem that does, or could, affect all of a landlord’s tenants. Examples of a significant performance failure could be if social landlords are not:

- delivering the outcomes and standards in the Scottish Social Housing Charter over a period of time; or

- achieving the regulatory standards on governance or financial management.

2.3 OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator)

The Targeted Regulation Framework

You must act in the interests of the charity (standard 1)

- You must do what is best for the charity and its beneficiaries, not what is best for you, your friends or family or your business interests
- You must put the needs of the charity before the needs of any other organisation that you are involved with, either in a personal way or professional capacity

2.4 The Scottish Social Housing Charter

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Social landlords ensure that:

- tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.

Scottish Social Housing Charter Indicators

- Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord.
- Percentage of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions.
- Percentage of 1st and 2nd stage complaints, including those related to equalities issues, responded to in full in the last year, that were resolved by the landlord and also the percentage upheld.
- Percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision making processes.

2.5 Regulatory Standards: the Care Inspectorate

You have all the information you need to help you decide about using the service **(standard 1)**

You will receive a written agreement which clearly defines the service that will be provided to meet your needs. This will set out the terms and conditions for receiving

the service, and arrangements for changing or ending the agreement **(standard 2)**

You experience good quality housing support. This is provided by management and staff whose professional training and expertise allow them to meet your needs. The service operates in line with all applicable legal requirements and best-practice guidelines **(standard 3)**

You will be fully involved in developing your personal plan and in any later reviews. You will receive copies of these that have been signed and dated by the housing support service provider **(standard 4)**

Your social, cultural and religious belief or faith are respected by the provider in supplying the service. You can live your life in keeping with these beliefs **(standard 5)**

You can be helped by housing support staff to make choices about the service that is provided and how it links to your personal and social life **(standard 6)**

You keep your rights as an individual **(standard 7)**

You are encouraged and helped to make your views known on any aspects of the housing support service **(standard 8)**

You and the housing support service provider will plan and discuss how to end the service **(standard 9)**

Section 3 Policy content

3.1 Content

The Customer Care Policy explains our commitments to treating service users with respect and meeting appropriate quality standards in relation to service provision. The policy is supported by a separate set of comprehensive procedures to implement policy commitments effectively into practice. The aim of the policy is to ensure that customer care is embedded in service delivery and therefore is “mainstreamed”.

3.2 Customer Care Policy Objectives

This section describes the key policy objectives that we implement through our procedures and staff training. These objectives constitute what can be called our “Customer Service Code”.

3.3 Customer Service Code

Legal and Good Practice Framework

We meet all relevant legal and good practice standards in delivering our housing and support services.

Information and Publicity

We provide quality advice and information services that take account of national advice and information service standards. Advice and information is provided to service users through a range of methods such as the Service User’s handbook,

Occupancy Agreement, Support Plan, and Service User meetings which are all designed to meet individual service users' needs in a person-centred way. We provide information in a range of formats that encourages and empowers service users to engage with us and to find out as much as possible about their service, their rights and obligations. We work in partnership with many voluntary and statutory agencies to provide a comprehensive housing support service and which enables access to specialist support which is specific to each service user's unique needs in terms of for example, employment, education and training, health, benefits, and finance.

Accessibility Standards

We have established a comprehensive Accessibility Policy so that our services meet key standards, for example, our documentation is accurate, is written in plain language, and uses appropriate and positive language. Our quality standards relate to written information, information using other formats, and signage. We ensure that we follow best practice in terms of things like font type and size, length of sentences, design and layout of documents, clarity and coherence of information, and type of material used. We will tailor provision of information in line with accessibility requirements and personal preferences where possible.

Work Practices

We use this policy to set out clear standards of work practice so that our services are delivered consistently throughout organisational services and are of the highest possible quality. We understand that how we address people is closely related to the issue of equality in service delivery. We always address individuals according to their wishes and always in ways that are accurate, respectful, professional and clear. We avoid using words that have negative connotations and we are always aware of words that could be seen to be discriminatory and demeaning. We avoid jargon in both use of the written word or verbally to service users as this type of language creates barriers and does not allow co-production of services. It also prevents building trust and rapport with service users so that we can work effectively with them to deliver the best possible service which maximises outcomes for them based on an assessment of their individual needs. In delivering person-centred services we ensure that we review policies taking on board service users' views and comments and also by collecting and listening to service user feedback. We ensure that we have a working environment that is reflective of our professional approach so that our work spaces are organised to protect data and ensure that service users have privacy to speak on issues that are concerning them. We also ensure that our staff adopt professional but approachable standards of dress and appearance.

Staff Development

We provide quality training programmes for all our employees to ensure that they deliver services in line with policy objectives. This commences with recruitment as our practices are designed to only appoint staff who have the correct attitudes and values which includes "going the extra mile" for our service users. We will ensure that all our staff receive initial training and refresher training on a regular basis throughout their time with Blue Triangle on customer care and what it means in practice. This will

include, for example, how to listen effectively, interviewing techniques, body language, the importance of positive attitudes, and how to develop accessible services.

Policy into practice

We monitor our service delivery to ensure quality standards are met. We monitor the customer care policy in practical terms by: checking that any information whether verbal, written or visual, electronic or hard copy is compliant with our Accessibility Policy; seeking feedback from service users through satisfaction surveys or exit interviews; and by monitoring service user complaints.

Partnership Working

We work with partner organisations to promote work practices that focus on providing quality services which is in line with this policy.

Section 4 Consultation

Section 54 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 stipulates a requirement of RSL's to consult their tenants on policies and procedures which significantly affect their tenants. BTHA has no tenants but considers this a right which should be given to its service users. The occupancy agreement that we use, therefore, includes a clause which indicates our commitment to consult with service users.

The regulatory standards (Care and Housing) also stipulate that service providers should have robust consultation processes in place in order to comply. This means that if there are proposals or policies which could significantly impact on service users such as those in relation to housing management, repairs and maintenance or more strategic changes that we endeavour to notify service users of this and listen to any concerns. The main vehicle for this will be our service users' forum.

We also operate a policy on consulting with staff and taking feedback on board. Service users and staff will not be consulted on all policies – an assessment will be made at policy review as to what level of consultation (if any) will take place.

Section 5 Monitoring and Review/link with KPI's

Policies will be reviewed on a three yearly cycle according to a policy programme provided for committees on an annual basis at the start of the financial year. All policy reviews will take into account our Equality Impact Assessment toolkit requirements. Committees will report on performance to Committee of Management at the end of the year. We use a small number of key performance indicators (KPIs) which monitor critical success factors. Our policy monitoring framework tracks any policies which impact on KPIs. Other policies may have indicators which are monitored at departmental level.

The policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Committee of Management.

Section 6 Publishing and availability of policy

This policy is available in electronic format or hardcopy to all staff, service users and other customers, as appropriate.

Section 7 Accessibility

We are committed to promoting accessible services that address the needs of individual service users, as appropriate. For example, our policies can be provided in other formats such as in larger print or in audio-format.

Section 8 Other relevant policies and procedures

The Association has a wide range of policies covering corporate services (covers the entire Association) and operational services (covers only specific operational areas). It is important that this policy is not viewed in isolation but consideration is given to the wider context in which it operates.

Section 9 Complaints

We follow the Model Complaints Handling System that has been developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). This is a comprehensive procedure that allows for complaints to be dealt with in either one of two stages.

Complaints must be dealt with in line with set timescales so that complaints are dealt with quickly.

If still dissatisfied after Stage 2 has been completed, a dissatisfied customer can take their complaint to the SPSO.

Any service user wishing to complain should ask for a copy of our complaints procedure. A service user, alongside their right to complain to the SPSO, can also complain to the Care Inspectorate, the Local Authority or other commissioner of the service, and they may have the right to complain to the Scottish Housing Regulator. To take their complaint further, a service user generally needs to go through our internal complaints procedure in the first instance.

Section 10 Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessments are required when developing, amending or reviewing policies. This is to ensure that the impact of the policy is understood in terms of its EO requirements