

MAGNA HOUSING ASSOCIATION

CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Our purpose at Magna is to satisfy our customers. One of our most important aims is to treat people properly. This involves providing and delivering a high standard of service and customer care in all areas of our work.
- 1.2 We have many customers, both external and internal. This Customer Care Policy relates to our most important group of customers; our residents. These include tenants, licencees, shared owners, and leaseholders. Reference to “customers” in this policy should be taken to mean all residents.
- 1.3 Customer Care involves putting customers first and respecting their rights, needs and views. Our Service Standards are central to our Customer Care Policy. These lay down the standards our customers can expect from us.
- 1.4 The fundamental message to our staff is: *Treat others as you would wish to be treated. Put yourself in the customer’s shoes.*

OUR SERVICE STANDARDS

2. Our reception areas

- 2.1 We will ensure that:
 - 2.1.1 Our reception areas are non smoking, clean, tidy, welcoming and comfortable
 - 2.1.2 Access is provided, wherever possible, to customers with prams, pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility disabilities
 - 2.1.3 Private interviewing rooms are available where possible
 - 2.1.4 There are clear signs and notices

2.1.5 There is sufficient space for notice boards and information leaflets

2.1.6 There are facilities for children, e.g. toys

2.2 Reception areas are inspected regularly by managers to ensure that they are kept clean and tidy and free from health and safety hazards.

3. Accessibility of our offices and staff

3.1 Our main offices are open, and office appointments are available, between 8.30am and 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and between 8.30am and 4.30pm on Friday.

3.2 Some of our smaller offices have more limited opening hours which are publicised locally.

3.3 When offices are closed due to public holidays or in other circumstances, we will publicise this.

3.4 A member of staff will be available to answer queries when someone a customer has been dealing with is not available.

3.5 Customers should not have to wait longer than 10 minutes before being seen.

3.6 A request to see an individual officer will be responded to within two working days.

4. Contacting us by phone

4.1 Our offices provide a telephone service between 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday.

4.2 We have freephone telephone numbers that can be used.

4.3 Some of our smaller offices have more limited opening hours. When they are closed, an answering machine will operate.

4.4 Answering machines operate at evenings, weekends and bank holidays to give clear information on emergency repairs and telephone numbers.

4.5 We will respond to messages within 1 working day.

- 4.6 Our telephone response is courteous and helpful and the member of staff dealing with a customer will give their name.
- 4.7 We aim to answer calls within 7 rings.

5. **Contacting us by letter and e mail**

- 5.1 We aim to respond to letters and e mails within 5 working days of receipt.
- 5.2 Our letters are on official headed paper and signed by a named officer, giving a direct dial telephone number.
- 5.3 Our letters and e mails are clear, concise and courteous.
- 5.4 Forms and literature requested by customers will be sent out within 5 working days.

6. **Home visits**

- 6.1 We will carry out home visits to customers who are housebound or disabled, or when otherwise required.
- 6.2 We will carry out home visits by giving mutually convenient appointments wherever possible.
- 6.3 We will make home visits out of office hours if necessary.
- 6.4 We will keep to appointments that we have made. If for some unforeseen reason we cannot make an appointment, we will contact customers in advance.
- 6.5 We will leave a calling card if the customer is not at home when we make a home visit.
- 6.6 We ensure that all staff carry official identity badges.

7. **Provision of information**

- 7.1 We will provide customers with a wide range of written information. This includes:

- 7.1.1 **Tenancy/Licence agreement:** All tenants and licencees receive a written agreement setting out theirs and Magna's rights and obligations. The details of these agreements are also explained verbally to all new tenants and licencees when they move into their new home.
- 7.1.2 **Rent and service charge information:** We will write to customers about any changes to their rent and service charges. We will also provide regular rent statements.
- 7.1.3 **Tenants' Handbook:** All tenants are given a copy of the Tenants' Handbook. The handbook explains the tenants' rights and responsibilities and has been written to help tenants live in and look after their homes. It includes information on reporting repairs.
- 7.1.4 **Magazine:** Our "Open Door" magazine is provided for customers four times a year. The magazine updates customers on our activities as well as providing important information such as essential telephone numbers and addresses.
- 7.1.5 **Annual report :** An annual report is included in the autumn edition of "Open Door". This contains specific information on our performance during the previous financial year.
- 7.1.6 **Other information:** Information on specific areas of our work is available in leaflet form. We will provide other information as and when requested. We will not charge for simple requests for information, but we may charge when a request involves significant work in extracting, collating or copying information which will take more than an hour to carry out.
- 7.1.7 **Website:** Information about Magna is available on our website www.magna.org.uk.
- 7.2 We aim to make the written information we send out easy to read and understand. We try to avoid the use of jargon, use clear and concise language, good layout and design, and readable type faces and print sizes.

8. **Special needs**

8.1 Our approach to customers who have special needs is to communicate in a sensitive and non-patronising way. Our approach is guided by the individual needs of the customer. It includes audio cassette versions of our magazine and customer publications, as well as personal visits by specially trained officers sensitive to a range of special needs. Where customers have learning disabilities, we will use their preferred method of communication wherever possible.

9. **Privacy and Confidentiality**

9.1 Interviews and conversations with customers about personal and confidential matters will be carried out in private.

9.2 Memos and correspondence about customers on personal matters will be kept confidential. Access to this information is strictly limited on a need to know basis only.

9.3 We have security arrangements to prevent unauthorised access to computer records.

9.4 Confidential information will only be passed to other sections of the organisation where it is necessary for the provision of a service.

9.5 We will comply with the principles of good practice included in the Data Protection Act 1998.

9.6 We will comply with our Confidentiality Policy and our Access to Personal Information policy.

10. **Right to personal information**

10.1 Customers have the right of access to personal information which we hold on them and their tenancy.

10.2 We will aim to provide information requested within 40 days of receiving the request.

10.3 We may make a charge of £10 for providing this information.

- 10.4 If customers do not agree with the information held about them, they can ask for this information to be corrected or deleted. Usually, we will agree to do this. But if we don't, we will make a note of their views and a statement saying why we disagree. If customers are still unhappy with this, they can use our complaints procedure.
- 10.5 There is some information that is not available to customers. This includes:
- 10.5.1 Personal information relating to a third party, which cannot be released without that person's permission
 - 10.5.2 Information collected for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime
 - 10.5.3 Information which could cause serious harm to the physical or mental health of the customer seeking the information

11. Participation

- 11.1 We are committed to tenant involvement and participation. We do this in a number of ways, including:
- 11.1.1 **Tenant Area Panels:** Tenant representatives serve on our Tenant Area Panels, which are open to all tenants to attend. Tenants are able to place items for discussion on the agendas of these meetings and receive help from staff in presenting these items.
 - 11.1.2 **Boards:** The main Magna Boards include tenant members.
 - 11.1.3 **Other Committees:** Tenant representatives also serve on other Magna committees, helping to shape and influence the future and monitor our performance.
 - 11.1.4 **Tenants' Associations:** We recognise that residents' and tenants' associations are an important way of involving and consulting with customers in the management of their homes. We will provide reasonable support to assist tenants to promote, set up and run tenants' associations.

12. Consultation

- 12.1 We will consult with customers about new policies and changes to existing policies which have a direct impact on them.
- 12.2 The method of consultation will depend on the number of customers affected. Consultation methods include:
 - 12.2.1 Tenant Area Panels
 - 12.2.2 Meetings
 - 12.2.3 Home visits
 - 12.2.4 Tenant Satisfaction Surveys
 - 12.2.5 Other surveys, including a sample telephone survey to gauge satisfaction with repairs
 - 12.2.6 Questionnaires
 - 12.2.7 Focus Groups
 - 12.2.8 Tenants' Conferences
 - 12.2.9 The "Open Door" magazine and other written material
- 12.3 We will assess the results of consultation, review the effectiveness of the methods used and feed back the results to customers.

13. Complaints and compensation

- 13.1 We always aim to give customers the best service possible but sometimes things can go wrong.
- 13.2 If customers have a complaint we will:
 - 13.2.1 Try to put things right and apologise if we have made a mistake
 - 13.2.2 If the customer is still not happy, we will tell them about our formal complaints procedure and support them in making a formal complaint
 - 13.2.3 Pay compensation if appropriate, in line with our Compensation Policy

14. Treating everyone fairly

- 14.1 We will ensure that our services are accessible to everyone.
- 14.2 We will work within our Equalities and Diversity Policy.

14.3 We will have procedures for dealing with racial and other harassment.

14.4 We will treat all customers with respect, consideration and courtesy.

15. **Our staff**

15.1 We expect each employee of Magna to uphold our Code of Conduct for Members, Board Members and Staff.

15.2 We will ensure that our staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge to perform their jobs effectively.

15.3 Our staff will be tidily dressed.

15.4 Trades staff, Caretakers and Sheltered Housing Officers will wear uniforms.

15.5 Our staff will carry and display proof of identity.