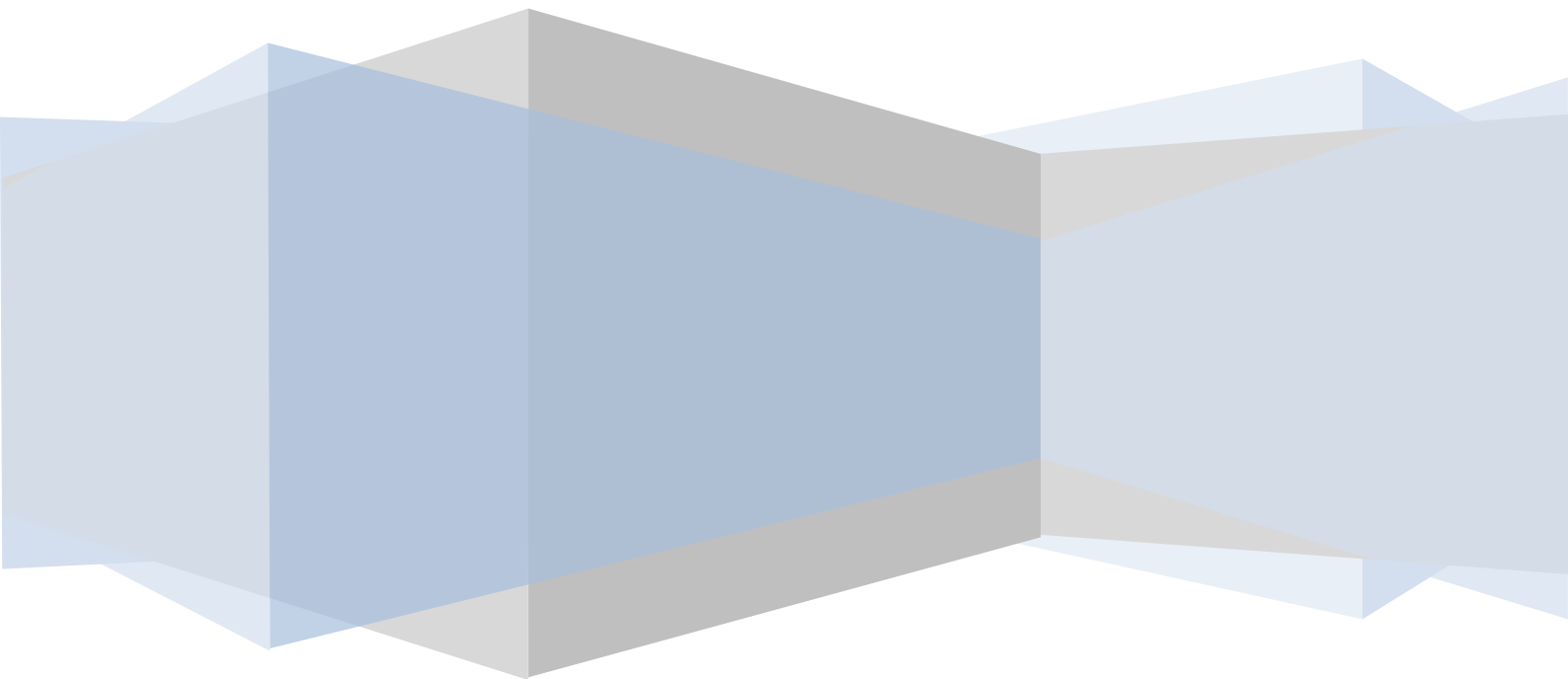




# **CUSTOMER CARE POLICY**

**February 2023**



All Policies are available on tape, in braille, and in translation into most languages. Please ask a member of staff if you would like this policy in a different format.

Date of Policy Review: February 2023  
 Date of Committee Approval: 28 February 2023  
 Date of Next Review: February 2026

<p><b>SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR STANDARDS</b></p>	<p>STANDARD 1: The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.</p> <p>STANDARD 2: The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users, and stakeholders. Its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.</p> <p>STANDARD 4: The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.</p> <p>STANDARD 5: The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.</p> <p>STANDARD 6: The governing body and senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective.</p>
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Our purpose at Cathcart & District 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, shared owners, and private landlords. 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.*
- 1.5 This policy aims to fulfil the principles outlined in the 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. Its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.

## Our Service Standards

### 2. Reception Area

- 2.1 We will ensure that:
  - Our reception areas are non-smoking, clean, tidy, welcoming, and comfortable
  - Access is provided, wherever possible, to customers with prams, pushchairs, wheelchairs, and mobility disabilities
  - Private interviewing rooms are available where possible
  - There are clear signs and notices
  - There is sufficient space for notice boards and information leaflets

### 3. Accessibility of our Offices and Staff

- 3.1 Our main offices are open, and office appointments are available, between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm Monday to Thursday and between 8.30 am and 3.30 pm on Friday.

- 3.2 When offices are closed due to public holidays, staff meetings, staff training, or in other circumstances, we will publicise this.
- 3.3 We will deal with your query as quickly as possible to minimise your waiting time.
- 3.4 When you have an appointment arranged, we will keep you informed of any delays. If for some unforeseen reason, we cannot make an appointment, we will contact customers in advance.
- 3.5 A request to see an individual officer will be responded to within two working days.

#### **4. Contacting us by Telephone**

- 4.1 Our offices provide a telephone service between 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30 am to 3.30 pm on Friday.
- 4.2 Answering machines operate at evenings, weekends, and public holidays to give clear information on emergency repairs and telephone numbers.
- 4.3 We will respond to voicemail messages within 1 working day.
- 4.4 Our telephone response is courteous and helpful and the member of staff dealing with a customer will give their name.
- 4.5 We aim to answer calls within 7 rings.
- 4.6 Customers can correspond with us by text message.
- 4.7 We aim to respond to text messages within 5 working days of receipt.

#### **5. Contacting us by Letter and Email**

- 5.1 An acknowledgement email will be sent out within 24 hours of receipt.
- 5.2 We aim to respond to letters and emails within 5 working days of receipt.
- 5.3 Our letters are on official headed paper and signed by a named officer.
- 5.4 Our letters and emails are clear, concise, and courteous.
- 5.5 Forms and literature requested by customers will be sent out within 5 working days.

- 5.6 Our staff will set up an automatic reply on their emails to notify customers and other staff members that they are out of the office, on annual leave, or unavailable to respond to email messages.
- 5.7 Our staff will add their direct dial number to emails and letters as part of their signature.

## **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 the 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 an official identity badge.

## **7. Provision of Information**

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

This includes:

- **Tenancy Agreement:** All tenants receive a written agreement setting out their and Cathcart & District Housing Associations' rights and obligations. The details of these agreements are also explained verbally to all new tenants when they move into their new homes.
- **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.
- **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.

- **Newsletter:** Our “Cathcart Standard” newsletter is provided to customers four times a year. The newsletter updates customers on our activities as well as providing important information such as essential telephone numbers and addresses.
- **Annual Report:** An annual report is included with the autumn/winter edition of “Cathcart Standard”. This contains specific information on our performance during the previous financial year.
- **Website:** Information about Cathcart & District Housing Association is available on our website at [www.cathcarttha.co.uk](http://www.cathcarttha.co.uk). CDHA’s Guide to Information can also be accessed via our website.
- **Social Media:** Information about Cathcart & District Housing Association is available on our Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/cathcartdistricttha>
- **Other Information:** Information on specific areas of our work is available in leaflet form. We will provide other information as and when requested. Customers may request information held by Cathcart & District Housing Association by completing an FOI/EIR Request Form.
- **Charges for Other Information:** In responding to requests for information under the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (EIRS), we are entitled to charge a reasonable amount towards making the information available. This includes information that may have been requested under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA). The costs for EIRS requests are based on estimated costs of staff time to locate and retrieve information, plus any costs associated with putting the information into a particular format, copying, and postage costs. We do not charge for the time taken to decide if we hold the information requested, or the time it takes to decide whether the information can be released. Customers can request our Information Charging Guide for further information.

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. Customers with Additional Needs

8.1 Our approach to customers who have additional needs is to communicate in a sensitive and non-patronising way. Our approach is

guided by the individual needs of the customer. It includes personal visits by specially trained officers sensitive to a range of additional 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 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation.
- 9.6 We will comply with our Privacy Policy.

## **10. Right to Personal Information**

- 10.1 Customers have the right of access to any personal information Cathcart & District Housing Association holds on them.
- 10.2 Customers can request to view any of their personal data Cathcart & District Housing Association holds by completing a Data Subject Access Request Form.
- 10.3 The Association must provide the data subject with an electronic or hard copy of the personal data requested unless any exemption to the provision of that data applies in law.
- 10.4 Upon receipt of a request by a data subject, the Association must respond to the Subject Access Request within one month of the date of receipt of the request.
- 10.5 The Association may charge a “reasonable fee” for the administrative costs of complying with a Subject Access Request.
- 10.6 Incorrect or incomplete data can be rectified upon request.

- 10.7 There is also a right to request that your data be deleted if it is no longer necessary for the purpose for which it was collected. This is known as the “right to be forgotten”.

## 11. Participation

- 11.1 We are committed to tenant and owner involvement and participation.

We do this in a number of ways, including:

- **Management Committee:** Cathcart & District Housing Association Management Committee includes tenant members and owner occupiers.
- **Sub Committees:** Tenant and owner occupier representatives also serve on other Cathcart & District Housing Association Committees such as the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee and Staffing Sub-Committee, helping to shape and influence the future and monitor our performance.
- **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 that have a direct impact on them.

- 12.2 The method of consultation will depend on the number of customers affected. Consultation methods include:

- Meetings
- Home visits
- Email
- Text messaging
- Tenant Satisfaction Surveys
- Other surveys, including a sample telephone survey to gauge satisfaction with repairs
- Questionnaires
- The “Cathcart Standard” newsletter and other written material

- 12.3 We will assess the results of the consultation, review the effectiveness of the methods used, and feedback on the results to customers.



### **13. Complaints and Compensation**

13.1 Cathcart & District Housing Association aims to provide a first class service in all aspects of our service delivery. Despite our best efforts, errors and therefore, complaints are inevitable. If you feel we have let you down, the complaints procedure serves as a safety valve for you to tell us about it and try to put it right.

13.2 If customers have a complaint, we will:

- Try to put things right and apologise if we have made a mistake
- If the customer is still not happy, we will tell them about our formal complaints procedure and support them in making a formal complaint. A copy of our Complaints Policy is available upon request.
- Pay compensation if appropriate, in line with our Tenants Right to 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 Cathcart & District Housing Association to uphold our Code of Conduct for Members, Committee Members, and Staff.

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

15.3 Our staff will be professionally dressed.

15.4 Our staff and contractors will carry and display proof of identity.

**Cathcart & District Housing Association  
Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment**

<b>Name of policy to be assessed</b>	Customer Care Policy	<b>Is this a new policy or a review?</b>	Review
<b>Person completing the assessment</b>	Emma Connelly, Corporate Services Officer	<b>Date of Assessment</b>	20/01/2023

1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives, and purpose of the policy	The policy outlines the Association's standards when providing a service to our customers.
2. Who is intended to benefit from the policy? (e.g. staff, applicants, tenants, staff, contractors)	Customers, tenants, owners, applicants, and anyone who contacts the Association
3. What outcomes are wanted from this policy? (e.g., benefits to customers)	To ensure that our service standards are consistent, and all customers receive the same level of customer care
4. Which protected characteristics could be affected by the policy (tick all that apply)	
Minority Ethnic: X Gender: Disability: X Sexual Orientation: Marriage/civil partnership:	Age: Religion/belief: Transgender: Maternity/Pregnancy: Socio-economic status:

5. If the policy is not relevant to any of the protected characteristics listed in part 4. State why and end the process here.

The standard of customer care is consistent irrelevant of the protected characteristics, however, there may be slight alterations and flexibility in the level of service offered in light of an individual’s level of disability or where English is not the persons first language; however, the principles contained within the policy remain unchanged when considering disabled people or those where English is not their first language.

<p>6. Describe the likely positive or negative impacts the policy could have on the groups identified in part 4.</p>	<p><b>Positive Impacts</b></p>	<p><b>Negative Impacts</b></p>
		<p>Minority Ethnic – All of our communications are written in English and could be restrictive for those where English is not the persons first language.</p> <p>Disability – All of our communications are written in English and usually in Arial font size 12 and could be restrictive for those with learning disabilities or visual impairments.</p>
<p>7. What actions are required to address the impacts arising from this assessment?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Offer translated versions or other formats of communications where needed</li> <li>2. Offer interpreter and translation services where needed</li> <li>3. Add customers preferred method of contact to our housing management system e.g., telephone call, email, post, text message, home visit etc.</li> <li>4. Communications will be written in plain English</li> <li>5. Offer assistive technology on our website e.g., accessibility toolbar which offers a screen reading tool, translation and language tools and ability to change font size etc.</li> <li>6. Offer a variety of appointments e.g. telephone, in person, home visits</li> </ol>	

Signed: Emma Connelly

Date: 24/01/23