

# Policy

Title: **Customer Satisfaction**

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A policy should be a short statement which describes in general terms or objectives what a service area's principles and key objectives are on a particular subject and should be no longer than a 2 pages in length. The aim of the policy is to give practical effect of the strategy it supports.

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## **Introduction**

Halton Housing Trust (the Trust) is committed to enabling customers to become directly involved in the management of their homes, and in determining the existing and future shape of services.

The Trust recognises that not all customers will wish to be involved in the same way. Some customers will wish to be informed only, others will wish to be consulted whilst others will want to be actively involved in the decision making process. The Trust respects all of these views and it will be up to the individual and groups of customers to determine their own level and preferred mechanism of involvement.

Customer surveys are recognised across both the public and private sectors as an important tool for organisations to understand how their services are perceived by customers in order to improve the customer experience and drive service performance. Having good levels of information and understanding on the views of customers and using the information to effect change is an essential component for becoming an excellent organisation and a key component of an effective performance management framework

It is therefore essential that the Trust has in place a robust and systematic framework for gaining, analysing, using and reporting customer feedback

## **Aims / Objectives**

The key aim of the Customer Satisfaction Policy is to develop a framework which enables the Trust to regularly monitor, report on, review and respond to customer satisfaction levels for all of our services with the purpose of driving up customer satisfaction to best practice levels

This Policy formalises the Trust's approach to Customer Satisfaction following the adoption of the Customer Satisfaction Measurement Strategy by Board in December 2007 and the approval of the Customer Satisfaction Feedback Framework by Customer services Committee in May 2009.

## **Scope**

The Trust views customer involvement as one of the key areas of activity. This is reflected in the fact that one of the themes in the Trust's Corporate Plan is "customer culture". One of the priorities attached to this theme is "enhancing the role for customers at all levels, to shape and determine the services they receive".

The "inclusive and open" theme also has a priority attached in relation to "seeking and using the views of all customers on an ongoing basis".

In view of this, customer satisfaction potentially can affect all service areas, but it is especially important for those employees working in front line services which includes Housing Management, Construction Services and Regeneration and Investment

## Policy Statement

Surveys provide customers with an opportunity to comment on the existing services and identify areas where service improvements can be made, as part of the Trust's drive for continuous improvement.

The Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey (STATUS) allows customers to determine the existing and future shape of services that they receive.

This Policy concentrates on making best use of the information gained through the completion of the STATUS Survey by drilling down behind the results and by analysis of complaints, outcomes and results from the ASB, gas maintenance, repairs and rents surveys

The STATUS Survey findings are used to:

- Gauge customer satisfaction and identify where improvements can be made.
- Provide some useful demographic and household composition information.
- Provide an opportunity to gather data to support the Trust's wider performance management framework and benchmark against other RSLs

The results of the survey feed into the Customer Satisfaction Framework

The following methods are currently used to carry out the surveys:

- STATUS – postal survey
- Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) – postal survey
- Enquiries, Compliments and Complaints – postal survey
- Gas Servicing – telephone survey
- Repairs – SMS text messaging
- Rents – postal survey
- Investment works – face to face survey

These methods are not set in stone and where required the methods are reviewed and revised, in consultation with customers, to ensure the maximum return of completed survey forms.

The Policy advocates a Customer Satisfaction Framework which consists of four steps that include a range of methods for capturing customer feedback at different points in time. The four steps are:

- *Step one:* Developing a baseline assessment each year from the STATUS results
- *Step two:* Identifying reasons for areas of low satisfaction and inviting suggestions for improvement.

- *Step Three:* Improvement planning - the Service Improvement Team use the findings to draw up improvement plans
- *Step four:* Implementation, monitoring and feedback arrangements

The STATUS results are publicised as follows:

- Customers will be informed of the outcomes via the customer newsletter, web pages twitter, facebook, customer notice boards and a presentation to the Customer Forum
- Employees will receive the information via Briefit and team meetings
- By issuing a general press release to the local newspapers and the housing press
- On one of the Trust's a pop up promotional stands which are used at community and partnering events.

## **Responsibility**

The Director of Customer Services will have overall responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy.

Day to day responsibility of implementing this policy will lie with the Customer Involvement Manager

## **Service Standards**

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) requires the Trust to carry out the survey, every three years, of a statistically valid proportion of customers. The Trust has decided to carry out an annual survey of all its customers to:

- Embed customer involvement as a central part of its business; and
- Act as a driver for continuous improvement

STATUS is carried out quarterly and all customers are invited once per year to take part in the Customer Satisfaction Survey. One quarter is used to report on the Performance Indicators and the four quarters are used to inform several of the Company Score Indicators (CSIs) and seven out of the Top 10 Customer Services Standards.

Quarterly surveys allow us to track service delivery and regularly chart how successful any changes in service provision have been

## **Performance Measures / Monitoring**

The Trust is required to report on a statutory basis against two Performance Indicators (PIs). These relate to satisfaction with the overall services provided by the Trust as a landlord, with repairs / maintenance; and taking customers' views into account. This data is collected using STATUS and reported to Board annually. A half yearly report is also considered by Customer Services Committee on progress with the Customer Satisfaction Framework

In addition to these, a number of other performance measures have been developed by the Trust in relation to customer satisfaction. These include customer satisfaction with:

- The Grounds Maintenance service
- The quality of customers' home
- The way repairs and maintenance is dealt with
- Being kept informed about things that affect customers
- Rent offering value for money
- The Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) service in the past 12 months
- Neighbourhoods as a place to live

All of the above are reported monthly / quarterly as part of the Trust's Balance Scorecard process.

The service specific surveys are monitored accordingly:

- Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) – Balance Scorecard and quarterly ASB Customer Focus Group
- Gas Servicing – monthly Gas Contractor meetings
- Repairs – Stock Investment Customer Focus Group
- Rents – Income Management Group
- Investment works – Core Working Group

The Enquiries, Compliments and Complaints (ECC) survey has recently had a very poor response rate making the results not statistically robust enough to provide valid conclusions. Therefore the method of collecting ECC customer satisfaction is currently being reviewed and revised in consultation with customers.

## **Consultation arrangements**

The Customer Satisfaction Framework was considered by the Customer Forum and their views and comments have been incorporated into this policy.

## **Benchmark Analysis**

In line with the Trust's Benchmarking Policy specific service areas will benchmark their performance as part of the annual business planning process.

## **Regulatory and/or Legal Compliance**

The Tenant Services Authority's Involvement and Empowerment Standard outlines the following:

### ***“Required outcomes***

*Registered providers shall support co-regulation with their customers by:*

- offering all customers a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing-related policies and the delivery of housing-related services*
- consulting with their customers and acting reasonably in providing them with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery*
- providing customers with a range of opportunities to influence how providers meet all the TSA's standards and to scrutinise their performance against all standards and in the development of the annual report*
- providing support to customers to build their capacity to be more effectively involved*

### ***Specific expectations***

*Registered providers shall consult with the customers on the desirability and scope of local offers in relation to services to meet the following TSA standards: Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, Home and Neighbourhood and Community. In providing opportunities for customers to agree local offers by no later than 1 April 2011 they shall offer commitments on:*

- local standards for performance*
- how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by customers*
- what happens if local offers are not met (including procedures of redress)*
- arrangements for reviewing the local offers on a periodic basis*

*Registered providers shall enable customers' opportunities to scrutinise the effectiveness of their policies in relation to customer involvement.*

*Registered providers shall inform customers about the results of their consultations on issues related to the standards.*

*Registered providers shall consult with their customers, setting out clearly the costs and benefits of relevant options, if they are proposing to change their landlord or when proposing a significant change in their management arrangements.*

*Registered providers shall consult customers at least once every three years on the best way of involving customers in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service. They shall ensure that any changes to customer involvement in*

*governance and scrutiny leads to an enhancement of the overall effectiveness of their approach.*

### ***Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of customers***

#### ***Required outcomes***

*Registered providers shall:*

- treat all customers with fairness and respect*
- demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their customers, including in relation to the seven equality strands and customers with additional support needs*

#### ***Specific expectations***

*Registered providers shall demonstrate how they respond to customers' needs in the way they provide services and communicate with tenants."*

## **KLOEs Affected**

The Audit Commission Housing Inspectorate has produced a Landlord Services KLOE on Resident Involvement, which has a direct impact on this policy.

It asks a variety of questions on topics such as:

- Communication and consultation with customers / stakeholders about resident involvement
- Compliance with statutory requirement and good practice in resident involvement
- Accessibility for all user / potential users to resident involvement opportunities
- Impact of resident involvement which shows improved services and outcomes for service users

## **Equality and Diversity Considerations**

An Equality Impact Assessment was carried on this policy in September 2010. The findings from this assessment centred on the need for action to be taken in relation to offering customers alternative ways to register their views.

An action plan has been developed to address the required action and all actions have a target date for completion of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010.

## **Links to Strategies, Procedures and Associated Documents**

Customer Satisfaction Strategy  
Customer Involvement Strategy  
Customer Satisfaction Measurement Strategy  
Benchmarking Policy  
Customer Satisfaction Feedback Framework

## **Business Impact**

Customer involvement plays a key role in the Trust's business planning process. In the Trust's revised Corporate Plan 2009 – 12, four themes were identified which formed the basis against which resources are allocated. It states in the plan that these themes will be reflected as forming the basis for the budget and business planning process.

All corporate priorities listed under the first of these themes, "Customer Culture", show the importance of customer involvement. These priorities are:

- Understanding our customers (current and future) and tailoring services to meet their individual needs and aspiration
- Working with our people to embed a clear customer culture across all aspects of our work
- Delivering services against a clear set of service standards
- Enhancing the role for customers at all levels, to shape and determine the services they receive

By implementing this policy effectively, the Trust will look to achieve these priorities and provide the best possible and efficient service for its customers, which has been shaped by them.

## **Self Assessment Compliance Statement (SACS) Considerations**

It is not envisaged that any changes or amendments are required to the SACS document as a result of the drafting of this policy.