

Customer Care Policy

Customer Service

GENERAL - EXTERNAL

Policy Reference:

Policy Version:

V0.1



1. Purpose

Riverside aims to deliver high quality customer service across all business streams, operating areas and subsidiaries, and within all activities whilst meeting all legal and regulatory requirements. This involves putting the customer first, respecting their rights, needs and views. This policy applies to all services and subsidiaries in delivering all elements of the corporate plan and business plan needs.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy is owned by the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Directors. It is subject to approval via the Riverside Customer Voice Executive and Customer Experience Committee.

2.2 The Customer Care Policy will be utilised by all employees who have customer contact responsibilities to ensure we are delivering the right level of service to our customers.

3. Principles

In order to do this Riverside will:

- Manage performance by:
 - Adhering to our values, “We Care, We are Trusted and We are Courageous”.
 - Setting clear and meaningful performance and service standards in consultation with customers.
 - Publicising those standards and our performance against them utilising the corporate plan and annual reports produced.
 - Working with customers to scrutinise service areas utilising transactional and perception-based feedback as well as customer scrutiny through our recognised customer involvement body and other forms where appropriate.
 - Tell customers about our services, the help that is available and how they can get the most out of what we provide in line with our corporate plan and the Charter for Social Housing Residents
 - So far as is possible, aim to deal with queries at the first point of contact and ensure that services are delivered “right first time”

GENERAL - EXTERNAL

Policy Reference:		Policy Version:	V0.1
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- Continuing to develop systems that measure performance and provide useful service intelligence against the requirements of the corporate plan and the Charter for Social Housing Residents.
- Facilitate ease and equality of access by:
 - Treating all customers with fairness and respect, respecting their privacy and servicing their needs through their channel of choice.
 - Publicising and ensuring that access to services is available in a variety of formats and media's including telephone, face-to-face, and via digital communications.
 - Providing choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of customers. This includes but is not limited to customers requiring service options when communicating with us such as language line, screen reader and providing guidance around software capability to support accessibility needs.
 - Making additional services available if required, such as hearing enhancements and translation services for both contact by phone and digital content.
 - Continuously improving our systems to make customer service preferences easily accessible for colleagues and contractors
- Deliver services through a workforce that:
 - Is informed, well trained, caring, and polite, does not make assumptions, and acknowledges customers' needs; delivering services in a way that is convenient to the customer whilst respecting equality and diversity.
 - Is positive in their responses, takes ownership of issues and provides solutions or options for resolution which are best fitting for the customer, their situation and needs.
- When communicating and consulting with our customers, we will:
 - keep them informed of progress with their query, whilst being honest, clear and realistic about time frames, confirming service level agreements and remaining within their channel of choice

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- engage with our recognised customer involvement body in relation to business decisions that impact upon them and explain the reasons for our actions, providing opportunities to express their views and listening to them where a change is proposed that has a significant impact on services
- Encourage feedback by:
 - Telling customers how they can communicate with Riverside and provide feedback, which includes comments, compliments and complaints
 - Making it easy for people to provide their views about our services and use this feedback as a tool for service improvement.
- Shape our services by:
 - using customer insight information to better understand customers' behaviours, needs and aspirations
 - giving value for money by budgeting carefully and using affordable resources efficiently and effectively
 - continually seeking ways of improving the quality of the services we provide
 - respecting customers' privacy and handle all data in accordance with data protection requirements
 - working with other relevant external agencies to ensure a continuous improvement approach for our customers' "end to end journey"

4. Further Information & Support

Guidance

Riverside Business Plan

Riverside Corporate Plan

Complaints Policy

Data Protection & Privacy Policy

GENERAL - EXTERNAL

Policy Reference:		Policy Version:	V0.1
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5. Roles and Responsibilities

Executive Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsor business change activity as appropriate.
All Colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhere to the policy at all times when engaging with customers
Business Information & Insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the relevant data in order for us to identify trends in customer behaviour and help drive efficiencies.
Customer Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage and support customer scrutiny
Customer Experience Squad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use knowledge gained from working with the customer to improve processes.
Business Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out reviews to obtain assurance that services are meeting quality standards

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6. Risk Thresholds

Customer experience

6.2 We acknowledge that there are some gaps in our delivery of consistent high quality service that customers trust. However, our risk appetite for adverse customer experience is reducing and therefore our focus on closing those gaps is increasing. We will be less tolerant of service failure and/or any actions that negatively impact customer satisfaction and trust. We will only accept changes that have a temporary adverse service impact where there is a clear articulation of the potential impact and an agreed action plan to return to acceptable levels.

6.3 We are well aware of increasing customer expectations regarding service levels, which are further encouraged and strengthened by the Social Housing Charter, and we want to respond positively to those higher expectations. We are also mindful of the potential for greater visibility of any service failure and the associated reputational risks, partly as a result of greater use of social media (which we are actively promoting both as a service channel and a route to improved engagement) and also due to the imminent industry wide publication of service performance results.

6.4 We acknowledge that we don't always get things right first time for customers; whilst doing so will always remain our aim, we will also seek to put things right at the earliest opportunity through our complaints handling process and have a zero tolerance of adverse finding by the Housing Ombudsman Service,

6.5 We have a full suite of customer experience KPIs which are scrutinised by Executive Directors, Boards and both our Care & Support and Customer Experience Committees.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Riverside is committed to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. We strive to be fair in our dealings with all people, communities and organisations, taking into account the diverse nature of their culture and background and actively promoting inclusion. This policy aligns with Riverside's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) and has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

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