
Customer Care Policy

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Customer Care Policy

1. Introduction

This Policy sets out Rykneld Homes' (RH) approach to customer care and the service we deliver.

Knowing who our customers are, what they want from the organisation and how to deliver services effectively is key to achieving excellent customer care. Rykneld Homes has high levels of customer satisfaction and has achieved the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation.

2. Scope

This Policy provides customers with information and applies to all employees of Rykneld Homes.

All staff are expected to comply with this Policy at all times to protect the reputation and interests of RH and its services, employees, partners and customers.

Breach of this Policy may be dealt with under the RH Disciplinary Procedure.

3. The Customer Care Offer

3.1. Customer Care

Great customer experiences leave nothing to chance. To create smooth, consistent customer journeys every interaction needs to be considered, planned and designed.

Rykneld Homes aims to instil customer confidence in all services. We encourage members of staff to look at things from a customer's perspective in order to provide a reliable service which meets or exceeds expectations.

The way RH approaches customer care is to build empathy, embed the right culture throughout the organisation and do all we can to keep our customers happy, satisfied and engaged.

3.2. Service Standards

Rykneld Homes has a commitment towards customer care and publishes Service Standards to communicate the level of service they can expect from us. We consulted with our customers to find out what they think is most important when interacting with us. The results showed the following attributes are at the top of the list:

- Easy to contact
- Getting things right first time
- Professionalism
- Ability to solve problems/complaints
- Being treated fairly.

We used these customer priorities to form our Service Standards. These apply across the organisation and are monitored corporately. The Standards were formulated with the help of our Customer Service Improvement Groups and are as follows:

- We will work and act in a professional manner
- We will listen to your views and make it easy for you to contact us
- We will actively involve you in shaping and improving services
- We will communicate clearly and honestly with you
- We aim to get it right first time to your satisfaction
- We will treat you fairly, taking into account your individual circumstances.

3.3. Local Offers

Our Local Offers are targeted improvements we commit to undertake as a direct response to customer consultation and feedback. The Offers mirror the Regulations of Social Housing (RSH) standards of:

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment
- Home
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Governance and Viability
- Value for Money.

3.4. Communications

Good communication is vital; it gives the customer a voice and is essential to making sure services are accountable. Rykneld Homes aims to stay alert to rapidly changing customer behaviours. We design our communications to suit our customers' expectations on how they are able to communicate with us and us with them. How and what we communicate is crucial to how our customers understand us as an organisation.

A high level of organisational self-awareness is an important factor in getting the communications right. Knowing how our customers perceive the organisation and having the right communication strategies in place to influence service improvement, compliments our ability to offer a consistently high level of customer care.

Clear communication is critical to success and improves efficiency throughout every service area. Rykneld Homes is committed to continuous service improvement. We therefore ensure lines of communication are in place to ensure we keep to our commitments.

4. Stakeholder Analysis and Involvement

4.1. Involvement and Co-regulation

Rykneld Homes are accountable to their customers; listening to customers is therefore paramount to ongoing improvement. A one size fits all approach, in the context of social housing, is never going to be appropriate. The customer voice has increasing power and forms part of the Regulator of Social Housing's regulatory code in the form of customer satisfaction and complaints.

Taking account of customer feedback and empowering them to help us develop and improve our services is central to how RH self-regulates in a transparent manner.

Our services are open to scrutiny by our Tenant Scrutiny Panel, giving us more knowledge and capacity to respond to customers' priorities and views.

Rykneld Homes is committed to offering various opportunities for getting involved at many different levels and actively seeks the views of our customers to continually improve the services we offer.

4.2. **Customer Profile**

The area profile for North East Derbyshire shows an average income less than that of Derbyshire and England.

There are high rates of limiting long-term illness in North East Derbyshire when compared to the rates nationally.

The majority of the District's housing are owner-occupiers, but the amount of Council housing properties is high when compared to other areas nationally. The District has a low percentage of privately rented or Housing Association properties.

Rykneld Homes has a high percentage of tenants aged 61 or over but this percentage is gradually reducing. Our data relating to Choice Move lets indicates we are seeing a gradual change to our customer profile towards a younger age group.

4.3. **Equality**

This Policy is assessed for equality by means of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA helps us make the right decisions to maintain a fair and equitable service whilst taking into account the diverse needs of our customers.

It is essential RH understands and has organisational awareness of the impact a policy decision will have on different groups of people.

Our EIA considers the profile information available to us in relation to this service. The EIA for this Policy is attached as **Appendix 1**.

As a continuing organisational commitment, identified through our EIA process and tenant profile, we deliver training to our staff to ensure they are aware and understand how to make our services flexible towards people suffering with dementia. We are a dementia friendly organisation.

5. Access Methods and Customer Contact

5.1. **Telephone**

Rykneld Homes has a dedicated Customer Advice and Support Team (CAST) to answer calls relating to all aspects of service delivery and is the most popular method of access amongst our customers. Being able to resolve an enquiry or request for service at the first point of contact helps RH to offer a timely response to customers.

CAST aim to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact to avoid call transfers where there is a danger of a customer getting passed from one person to another without finding a resolution.

Rykneld Homes encourages our customers to use CAST as their first point of contact for all enquiries.

CAST opening times are:

- Monday to Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- Bank Holidays Closed
- Between Christmas and New Year..... Closed

Customers can also contact our Out of Hours service for emergency repairs and enquiries when CAST are closed. This service ensures customers are able to speak to a representative of RH 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Staff using their desk phones are given instructions regarding activation of their voicemail and answerphone facilities. This ensures a corporate professional message is given to internal and external customers when staff are unable to answer their desk phone. The process is detailed in **Appendix 2**.

5.2. **Face to Face**

Rykneld Homes takes pride in the services offered by our staff members. Interpersonal skills and a positive attitude are important; we value these qualities in our members of staff.

Rykneld Homes' Service Standards support the delivery of a high-quality customer service and responds to what our customers have said are the most important aspects of customer care.

Rykneld Homes acknowledges face to face customer contact can be challenging and is committed to providing members of staff with the appropriate policies, procedures, training and support. For members of staff who interact with our customers face to face, RH takes all appropriate precautions to safeguard their personal safety and emotional wellbeing. This is the same for members of staff providing services over the telephone.

Area Offices and One Stop Shops are located around the District in Dronfield, Killamarsh, Clay Cross and North Wingfield.

5.3. **Email**

Rykneld Homes has a communal email address for customers to use if they wish to contact us by email (contactus@rykneldhomes.org.uk). This form of contact requires a quick response and should be treated as an instant method of contact.

When RH staff members use their individual emails to correspond with customers it is important that these are professional and in line with our corporate guidelines. Staff are instructed on the use of email signatures and out of office messages to ensure our customers receive a professional corporate response (**Appendix 3**).

5.4. **Letter**

Many customers send letters as a method of communicating with us. This method relies on RH responding quickly to avoid unnecessary delays. Each letter should be acknowledged and responded to in a professional manner.

A uniform approach to letters is in place with all standard letters checked for spelling, grammar and plain English. For letters going to all/a majority of customers, letters are sent to our customer Editorial Panel for comments and improvement suggestions. Instructions regarding our approach to sending letters is detailed in **Appendix 4**.

It is important for staff members to portray a professional image through letters, therefore; each member of staff is responsible for ensuring accuracy and the timeliness of their responses.

5.5. **Website**

Customers can contact us by completing an online form on the RH website www.rykneldhomes.org.uk. This form of contact requires a quick response and should be treated as an instant method of contact.

5.6. **Social Media**

Rykneld Homes has seen a benefit in using social media as it adds more contact choice and makes it easier for some customers to do business with us.

Social customer service via social media goes hand in hand with a commitment to continuous improvement and an ability to react to feedback as quickly as it is received.

Rykneld Homes has joined Twitter and Facebook to give customers the opportunity to use these access channels.

6. Performance

Performance Indicator targets are agreed each year and published through a monthly dashboard performance document and service area reports.

6.1. **Monthly Dashboard Performance**

- Average wait time of answered CAST calls.

6.2. **Management Level**

- Average wait time of answered CAST calls
- Percentage of CAST calls answered
- Satisfaction with the service provided by CAST
- Number of complaint enquiries received
- Number of complaint enquiries resolved at first contact
- Number of Stage 1 complaints received.

6.3. Qualitative Measures

- Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Quality monitoring of CAST calls
- Mystery Shopping
- Customer Services feedback form
- Employee Annual Reviews
- Customer Care Complaint analysis

6.4. Training and Inductions

Rykneld Homes has an ongoing commitment to customer care and the principles contained within this Policy. Customer care training is compulsory for new and existing employees on a regular basis. The training is integrated within the corporate training programme.

All new staff are inducted into the organisation; this includes expectations relating to customer care. Staff also have the opportunity to spend time within the front-line services, depending upon their substantive post, to experience the services offered from different perspectives.

People who apply for positions to work at RH are assessed for their customer care skills and attitude at the interview stage.

7. Communication Plan

This Policy forms part of our customer care training and can be found on the RH website www.rykneldhomes.org.uk.

We communicate any customer care updates to our customers via:

- Your Rykneld Magazine
- Social Media
- Rykneld Homes Website
- Posters at Area Offices and One Stop Shops.

We communicate any customer care updates to our staff via:

- All Officer emails
- Rykneld Homes Staff Website
- Training.

8. Complaints

Rykneld Homes gives our employees the freedom, skills and encouragement to solve problems for customers in the first instance, whenever possible.

The distance between how things are for the customer and how they should be is sometimes easily travelled. However, there are also situations which require additional support. Having a clear route of escalation for complaints provides reassurance for the team members who are unable to solve a complaint at the first point of contact.

The RH Complaints Policy is widely publicised and accessible for all customers and employees. Rykneld Homes aims to:

- Listen to customers
- Solve their complaints in a timely and effective manner
- Identify complaint trends and learn from them to improve our service and level of customer care, whenever possible.

We acknowledge the customer's perception of a problem or complaint may not be the same as our organisational view. It is therefore important to deal with all complaints with empathy, understanding and emotional intelligence (the ability to perceive the emotions of yourself and those of others) in order not to create conflict in already difficult situations. We provide as much information as possible when dealing with a complaint, so the customer is fully informed about any limitations in relation to complaint resolutions.

8.1. **Persistent Complainers**

Persistent complainers are defined as 'unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants' who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with RH, hinder our consideration of their or any other persons complaint.

Actions and behaviours or 'unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants' are as follows:

- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of assistance with this from RH staff
- Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- Refusing to accept that issues are not within the remit of our complaints procedure, despite having been provided with information about the procedures scope
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice
- Making what appear to be groundless complaints about staff dealing with the complaints and seeking to have them replaced
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds and/or denying statements he/she made at an earlier stage
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on or raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting they are all fully answered
- Electronically recording meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved

- Adopting a ‘scattergun’ approach: pursuing a complaint or complaints with RH and a number of RH staff/departments and, at the same time, with a Member of Parliament/Councillor/Independent Auditor/Police/Standards Board/Solicitor/the Housing Ombudsman Service
- Making unnecessarily excessive demands on the time and resources of staff whilst a complaint is being looked into by, for example, excessive telephoning or sending emails to numerous RH staff, writing lengthy, complex letters every few days and expecting immediate responses
- Submitting repeat complaints, after complaints processes have been completed, essentially about the same issues, with additions/variations which the complainant insists make these ‘new’ complaints which should be put through the full complaints procedure
- Refusing to accept the decision – repeatedly arguing the point and complaining about the decision
- Combination of some or all of the above.

Once a decision has been made to consider someone a persistent complainer, possible options for restrictions can be applied. Before applying any restrictions, each case must be approved by the RH Senior Management Team. The complainant will be informed in writing of the decision and restrictions. The options available for restrictions are:

- Placing limits on telephone conversations and personal contact;
- Restricting the number of calls that will be taken; and/or
- Requiring any personal contacts to take place in the presence of a witness.

The key thing is that we use this knowledge to design a customer service that meets their needs to be able to engage with RH.

9. Contact

Rykneld Homes Ltd
 Pioneer House
 Mill Lane
 Wingerworth
 Derbyshire
 S42 6NG

Tel: 01246 217670

Equality Impact Assessment

Service Area Being Assessed:	Customer Care
Section:	Organisational
Date of Assessment:	July 2019
Person Responsible for Assessment:	Lucy Gebbie
Is this a new or existing Policy?	New

1.	Briefly describe the function being assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Care includes all services in contact or providing a service to our customers • The Policy includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Service Standards ○ Communications ○ Complaints ○ Persistent Complainers ○ Involvement and co-regulation ○ Access methods ○ Performance ○ Staffing ○ Resources ○ Training and inductions. 		
2.	Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the function?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants, residents, service users, customers • Neighbourhood Services Service Improvement Group • North East Derbyshire District Council • Board Members/Councillor Members • Partner Contractors • Staff. 		
3.	Who will be consulted as part of this EIA? What types of consultation will be carried out?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee consultation via Senior Management Team • Customer consultation via the Neighbourhood Services Service Improvement Group. 		
4.	<u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact on racial groups ?	Yes	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
			✓	The standard of customer care is consistent irrelevant of race.
5.	<u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact due to gender ?	Yes	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
			✓	The standard of customer care is consistent irrelevant of gender.

6.	<u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact on <u>disabled people</u> ?	Yes	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
			✓	There will be slight alterations and flexibility in the level of service offered in light of an individual's level of disability; however, the principles contained within the Policy remain unchanged when considering disabled people. We consider service flexibility in line with our Vulnerable Person's Policy.
7.	<u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact due to <u>age</u> ?	Yes	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
			✓	The standard of customer care is consistent irrelevant of age. The service offered may require adopting a more flexible approach due to the age of the customer; however, the standard of customer care and the principles contained within the Policy will remain consistent. We consider service flexibility in line with our Vulnerable Person's Policy.
8.	<u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact due to <u>sexuality</u> ?	Yes	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
			✓	The standard of customer care is consistent irrelevant of sexuality.
9.	<u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact due to <u>religion or belief</u> ?	Yes	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
			✓	The service offered may require an amount of flexibility due to the religious belief of the customer; however, the principles and standard of customer care will remain consistent with the principles contained within the Policy.
10.	<u>Does</u> the function have a differential impact due to any other protected or vulnerable characteristics including marriage or civil partnerships, pregnancy or maternity ?	Yes	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
			✓	The standards contained within the Policy are implemented consistently irrelevant of any individual characteristic. Services may require levels of flexibility to attain a high level of customer care but this does not alter the principles contained within this Policy.
<p>If the answer is NO to all questions 4-10 and no differential treatment has been found, there is no requirement for a full Equality Impact Assessment. Please go back regularly and review the cycle.</p> <p>If the answer is YES to any of the questions 4-10, please continue to question 11.</p>				

11.	In what areas could the differential impact identified in 4-9 be considered to be an adverse impact in this function? (Please tick if yes)	Other protected characteristics	Race	Gender	Disability	Age	Sexuality	Religion/belief
12.	What solutions will be introduced to overcome these adverse impacts?							
13.	In what areas does this service mitigate possible differential impacts? (Please tick)	Other protected characteristics	Race	Gender	Disability	Age	Sexuality	Religion/belief
14.	What Strategies are in place to safeguard and spread these impacts?							
15.	Which Action Plans have these solutions/Strategies been transferred into?							

Signed off by Lucy Gebbie:

L. A. Gebbie

Date:

30.07.2019

Consultation Comments

Involved Tenants Group 19.07.19.

Only positive comments have been received back from the Group, the overriding priority is for Rykneld Homes to treat people as individuals, listen to their needs and have Policies which are flexible enough to accommodate different requirements within reason. The group feel that Customer Care continues to improve and the persistent complainer guidance in the Policy supports staff which, in turn, benefits our customers.

Answerphone/Voicemail Instructions

To divert your phone to answerphone/voicemail	-	*553300#
To cancel the divert to answerphone/voicemail	-	#55

To Change Your Greeting:

- To access your answerphone/voicemail – dial 3300
- Enter your passcode
- Key 8 to change your user options
- Key 4 to change your greeting
- After recording your greeting press 9 to return to the main menu
- It will confirm your change is complete.

Wording for your greeting should be one of the following:

Scenario 1 – Away from Desk/On Phone

Thank you for calling Rykneld Homes. This is the voicemail for <NAME, TITLE>. I am not available to take your call at the moment.

If you leave your name, contact number and a brief message, I'll get back to you within one working day. Alternatively, please call 01246 217670 for further assistance if your query is urgent.

Thank you.

Scenario 2 – Away from the Office

Thank you for calling Rykneld Homes. This is the voicemail for <NAME, TITLE>. I am now away from the office and will be back on <DAY and DATE>.

If you leave your name, contact number and a brief message, I'll get back to you on my return. Alternatively, please call 01246 217670 for further assistance.

Thank you.

Email Out of Office Instructions

In MS outlook 2016 go into:

- File / Automatic Replies / Enter the dates and times you would like to send an out of office message
- Type your message in both tabs to ensure messages are in place for inside and outside the organisation. Font should be Arial 11.

Inside My Organisation Tab

I am out of the office on annual leave until <DAY and DATE> and will respond to your enquiry on my return.

For any urgent issues, please contact <NAME> on <TELEPHONE NUMBER>, <EMAIL ADDRESS> or <NAME> on <TELEPHONE NUMBER>, <EMAIL ADDRESS>

Thank you.

Outside My Organisation Tab

I am out of the office on annual leave until <DAY and DATE> and will respond to your enquiry on my return.

For any urgent issues, please contact <NAME> on <TELEPHONE NUMBER>, <EMAIL ADDRESS> or <NAME> on <TELEPHONE NUMBER>, <EMAIL ADDRESS>

Thank you.

Signature

Your signature should already be set up so will automatically be added to the bottom of your out of office message. If it isn't, it should be set up as follows using Arial 11 font:

In MS outlook 2016:

- Open a new email
- Click on Signatures while in the Message tab
- Click New
- Create a signature and type the following into the text box:

Kind Regards

<NAME>

<TITLE>

Rykneld Homes, Pioneer House, Mill Lane, Wingerworth, Chesterfield, S42 6NG.

Tel: <DIRECT TEL NO>

Email:<EMAIL ADDRESS>

Letters and Envelopes

When sending out post to customers, an accompanying letter should always be included. This ensures that a prepaid window envelope can be used which will look professional with a typed name and address.

Letters should include clear information for the customer and state why they are being written to, what is required and by whom. If the customer needs to do anything e.g. return some information, then a reply-paid envelope should be enclosed.

Contact information of the person or department sending the letter should always be included in the letter even if the content is only "Further to our recent telephone conversation, please find enclosed the information you requested."

Letters should start with:

Dear Mr <SURNAME>/Mrs <SURNAME>

And end with:

Yours sincerely

Prepaid window envelopes should be used which clearly show the customer's typed full name and address including post code. C5 envelopes are available from the post room.

Envelopes should not be handwritten and should not be folded and cello-taped.

Reply paid envelopes are available from the post room for any response the customer needs to return to us.

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Review to be Carried out by:	Customer Services Manager

**No English?
No problem**

**If you require this
publication in
large print, braille or on
audio CD please call us on
01246 217670**

Rykneld
HOMES
at the heart of communities

TALKBACK **EITI**

☎ **01246 217670** (ENGLISH)

We care. We want all of our customers to be able to access all of our services. To talk to someone in English, ring this number.

You will not be charged for the TALKBACK service.

☎ **01430 457421** (CANTONESE) 廣東話

☎ **01430 457423** (MANDARIN) 國語

本市政府關心閣下，我們希望區內所有的市民都能夠使用我們所有的服務。請致電上列這一號碼，可用廣東話或國語和我們交談。

免費為你提供此項服務。

免費為你提供此項服務。

☎ **01430 457422** (ITALIAN)

Noi ci prendiamo cura di voi. Il nostro obiettivo è quello di dare a tutti i nostri clienti la possibilità di accedere ai nostri servizi. Per parlare in **italiano**, chiamate questo numero

Questo servizio è senza spese o commissioni

☎ **01430 457426** (URDU) اُردو

ہم احساس کرتے ہیں۔ ہم چاہتے ہیں کہ ہمارے صارفین ہماری تمام سروسز سے استفادہ حاصل کریں۔ اگر آپ کسی سے اُردو میں بات کرنا چاہیں تو اس ٹیلیفون نمبر پر رابطہ کریں اس سروس کو استعمال کرنے کے لیے آپ سے کوئی معاوضہ نہیں لیا جائے گا۔

☎ **01430 457424** (POLISH)

Dbamy o naszych klientów. Pragniemy, by wszyscy mogli skorzystać z całości oferowanych przez nas usług. Aby porozmawiać w języku **polskim**, wybierz ten numer telefonu.

Korzystanie z tej usługi jest bezpłatne.

☎ **01430 457425** (PUNJABI)

ਅਸੀਂ ਦੇਖ-ਭਾਲ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਅਸੀਂ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਸਾਡੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਗਾਹਕ ਸਾਡੀਆਂ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ ਤੱਕ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਕਰ ਸਕਣ। ਕਿਸੇ ਨਾਲ **ਪੰਜਾਬੀ** ਵਿਚ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਸਤੇ, ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

ਇਸ ਸੇਵਾ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਲਈ ਭੁਗਾਡੇ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਪੈਸੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਲਏ ਜਾਣਗੇ।

☎ **0800 731 7878** (OTHER LANGUAGES)