



# Everyone Matters

Listening Locally. Understanding Diversity. Delivering Excellence.



## Everyone Matters: Customer Care Policy

### INTRODUCTION

At Southway Housing Trust we are committed to delivering excellent customer care. As a not-for-profit, community based housing provider, it is central to our purpose and key to our success. We were formed to support our customers by providing excellent services and to work with them to improve their homes and strengthen local communities. We rely on their continued trust and support to achieve our vision, which is supported by our 5 core values.

### VISION AND VALUES

Our commitment to delivering excellent customer care is reflected within our corporate vision.

#### **Our Vision**

We will work in partnership with others to make south Manchester a place that people are proud of. A safe place where people choose to live, work and play.

#### **Our Purpose**

Our primary purpose is to provide high quality affordable homes in desirable neighbourhoods where people are happy to live and have the opportunity to achieve their potential.

We also have a wider purpose which is to make best use of our resources to achieve our social and community objectives.

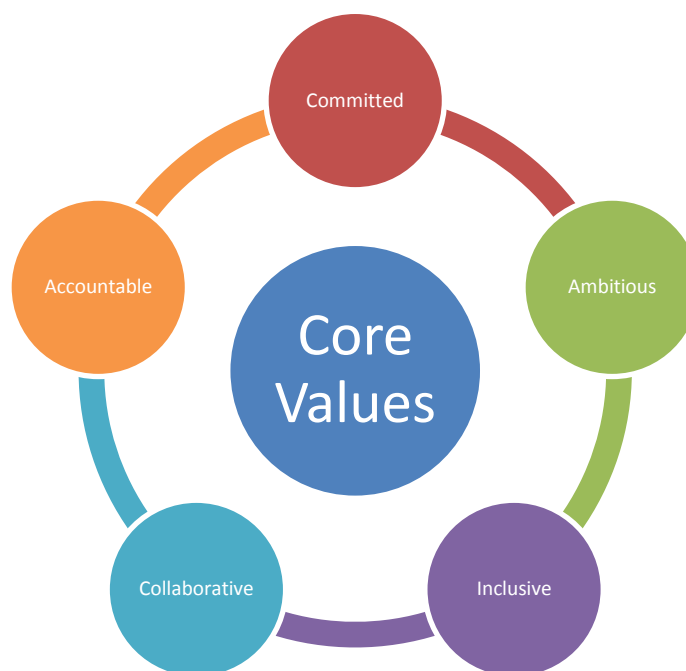
As a housing provider, and the largest landlord in our area, we listen to our tenants and other residents and provide flexible, quality services that balance expectations and needs with costs and benefits. We will provide good quality landlord services that are accessible and cost effective, and target our extra added value services at those who will benefit from them the most.



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### Our Values

We have 5 values which influence and shape the way we do things. These represent the qualities we need across our workforce in order to achieve our goals. These values are used in our recruitment and appraisal processes.



#### **COMMITTED**

We are committed to achieving our goals and delivering excellent services, and care about our customers and their communities.

#### **AMBITIOUS**

We are forward thinking and innovative and make a big impact in our neighbourhoods.

#### **INCLUSIVE**

We operate with fairness and respect for diversity at our core.

#### **COLLABORATIVE**

We work together with our customers, our local communities and our partners to improve the area and the lives of those people and communities who are less well off.

#### **ACCOUNTABLE**

We take responsibility for our actions, are open with our stakeholders and can be trusted to do the right thing.



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### CUSTOMER STANDARDS

Whenever and however our customers choose to contact us, we want them to have a good experience. We developed our customer care standards with the help of our customers to make sure they accurately reflected their priorities. These are summarised in our 'Customer Charter', which is included in our tenancy starter packs and is also available via our website. We review our standards regularly to make sure they are still relevant. The broad service standards that our customers can expect are set out below.

#### **We will respond to your enquiry promptly**

This means we will:

- Aim to answer your call within 20 seconds
- Try to deal with your enquiry immediately.
- If the person you need to speak to is NOT available you will receive a call back within 1 working day

#### **Our Staff will be friendly and polite**

This means we will:

- Tell you our names
- Show you identification when visiting you at home.
- Offer you appropriate help and advice

#### **We will treat you with care and sensitivity**

This means we will:

- Communicate in a way that is appropriate to your needs
- We will listen to what you have to say
- Ensure that we fully understand your situation
- Work with you to resolve it
- Use your feedback to improve our services

**WE AIM TO PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT SERVICE AT ALL TIMES, AND DEAL WITH ALL CUSTOMERS IN THE WAY THEY WISH TO BE TREATED**



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We measure performance around these standards to make sure we are getting things right. We worked with developers to configure our systems to support an auditable trail of accountability for every enquiry. We monitor and 'police' performance across all teams at responding to these enquiries, and we have developed various processes to support this.

Examples:

- Target for a back office staff member to return customers call is 1 working day. This target is allocated to every referral raised by the Connect Team.
- Daily summaries of outstanding calls are produced and used to chase and/or escalate issues to ensure that this target is met.
- Every staff member has a part to play in achieving our service levels and this information is regularly shared at team meetings and appraisals.

To find out how well we are performing, visit the Performance Section of our website: <http://www.southwayhousing.co.uk/performance/customer-care-performance.aspx>

## OUR CULTURE

To ensure that we meet and exceed the expectations of our customers, we have created our own customer care framework called 'Everyone Matters'. It was put in place to make sure that a high quality of customer care is consistently delivered across the organisation, based around our Vision and Values.. It was created by our staff and reflects feedback from customers; because we wanted something meaningful that would really make a difference to our customers and improve the way that we work together. The framework is used as a tool to develop and support the various processes and systems referred to throughout this policy.

We aim to be open and transparent in our approach to customer care and welcome questions and enquiries around this subject. If you would be interested in learning more about our framework please contact our Head of Customers and Communication , Luke Benfield for more information.

[Connect2southway@southwayhousing.co.uk](mailto:Connect2southway@southwayhousing.co.uk)



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### OUR STAFF

Staff will be trained and supported to ensure that they provide excellent customer services. As part of our framework, staff designed an induction programme that is completed by EVERY new starter and places a high focus on Customer Care.

This includes:

- 1 Day Customer Care Workshop
- 1 Day volunteering at a community event
- A session listening to inbound enquiries within the Customer Hub
- E - Learning module around the Everyone Matters framework

### CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

We actively seek feedback from our customers and make it easy for them to give us their views and get involved. We won't know if we're getting things right unless we take the time to listen to, and learn from, what they have to say. We rely on this information to both improve and develop our services. With feedback we can see just how well, or badly, we're doing. We can find out what our customers expect from us, understand their priorities and revisit our own if need be.

We generally try to collect feedback following any 'interaction' with our customers. The majority of feedback received can be tracked back to a specific officer and feedback (both positive and negative) is regularly discussed during team meetings and individual appraisals.

To find out more about what our customers are saying and how we use this feedback, read our quarterly feedback reports which are located in the Publications section of our website:

<http://www.southwayhousing.co.uk/about-us/publications.aspx>



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### EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Southway's Single Equality Scheme, 'Southway – the Fair Way', sets out our commitment to promoting equality and valuing diversity. Some of the Strategic Objectives are:

#### **Fair Access**

- For fairness in the way our services are allocated and delivered
- To provide facilities and information which all our customers can access
- For our communication and correspondence to be easy for our customers to understand

#### **Fair Treatment**

- For customers to feel they are treated with respect
- For customers to feel that our services meet their individual needs

The Single Equality Scheme is available on our website. It contains further detail, including examples of the ways in which we ensure these strategic objectives are met.

### CUSTOMER INSIGHT

Our communities are made up of individuals and we recognise this. To make sure our services are suitable for everybody it is important that we understand everyone's different needs and priorities. We actively research the customer groups that exist within our community on an on-going basis and use this information to make sure our services suit the needs of everyone. It is also used to plan our priorities for the future. A number of specific roles within Southway have been put in place to meet the needs of particular customer groups within our community.



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### DATA PROTECTION

Southway needs to collect and use information about current and prospective tenants, and other customers, in order to provide quality customer service. We are committed to doing this in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act (1998). Southway is not legally obliged to comply with the Freedom of Information Act (2000), but we operate within the spirit of the Act. See our Data Protection and Information Sharing Policy for more details.

Operating in line with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts is part of excellent customer service. It helps to ensure that our customers, and their personal information, are treated with respect and fairness, and that we are transparent and accountable for the decisions that affect them. Personal information is treated as confidential and access only granted in accordance with relevant regulations

### GOVERNANCE AND LEGISLATION

Standards are monitored across all areas of service by our tenants and Board through co-regulation and this includes our approach to customer care. We also use benchmarking to see how well we compare with similar organisations.

Southway Housing Trust was awarded the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation in February 2012 and was fully compliant when re-assessed in 2015.





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<b>POLICY REVIEW HISTORY</b>	
<i>To be completed during each review</i>	
<p><b>Previous versions</b> (version number – approved by – approval date – title if different)</p> <p>v1.0 – Board – June 2007 – Customer Care Policy and Standards v2.0 – Board – Nov 2009 – Customer Care Policy – Valuing Customers v3.0 – Board – Jun 2013 – Everyone Matters: Customer Care Policy</p>	
<b>Date of last EIA:</b>	October 2011
<b>Review lead by:</b>	Luke Benfield, Head of Customers and Communication
<b>Main points or amendments made and reasons</b>	
<p>V4.0 – People and Places Committee – 06/09/2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The main change is that the 10 Staff Behaviours have been replaced by the five Values. The Values were reviewed when the Futures Strategy 2015 to 2020 was approved and launched in March 2015. Whilst the Behaviours were useful in changing the culture to be more customer-focused, the principles of the Behaviours are now seen as being inherent within the Values. The Values clearly set out how staff are expected to behave and are shorter, easier to remember, and flexible enough to be applied to all roles.</li> </ul>	
<b>Next review due:</b>	<b>Q2 2019/20</b>
<b>Approval level:</b>	<b>People and Places Committee</b>