SCOTTISH BORDERS HOUSING ASSOCIATION

CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA) aims to provide a consistent and high standard of customer care throughout the Association. To develop and maintain a courteous and efficient service for Tenants, customers, and other service users, SBHA must outline the primary objectives of the Association in regard to Customer Care.

1.2 Defined Customer Service Standards attached at ***Appendix 1*** were developed jointly with SBHA Tenants and introduced in 2016 and reviewed in 2021. These will ensure that all Tenants, customers, and other service users receive consistently high standards of customer service and that the diverse communities are able to access SBHA services.

1.3 A Customer Care Code of Practice for SBHA's Planned Maintenance Contractors was developed in conjunction with Scottish Borders Tenants Organisation in 2016 and has been updated and included as part of SBHA's revised Customer Care Standards.

2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 The Customer Care Policy and Standards support SBHA's Strategic Plan 2020-25. The Great Customer Experience objective is intended to drive up customer satisfaction to new levels through increased engagement, a high-quality customer experience and flexible services that meet a range of needs.

2.1 Core values underpin this Policy and are:

- Putting our Tenants and their communities at the heart of all we do
- Taking pride in delivering excellent quality services, with courtesy and respect
- Earning the trust of all people we deal with
- Striving to give value for money, whilst being focused on accountability, transparency and honest

2.2 The Policy also seeks to contribute to the following regulatory customer/landlord relationship outcomes contained within the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

- **Outcome 1: Equalities** - Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised and is treated fairly and with respect and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

- **Outcome 2: Communication** - Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

- **Outcome 3: Participation -** Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

- **Outcome 4: Repairs, Maintenance, and Improvements** - Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants' homes are well maintained with improvements carried out when required and tenants are given reasonable choices when works are done.

2.3 This Policy should be read in conjunction with SBHA's Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy; Complaints Handling Policy; Unacceptable Behaviour Policy; Data Protection, Information Management and Retention Policy; Equalities Policy; and Staff Charter and Code of Conduct.

3.0 POLICY PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The key principles of this Policy are:

- To listen to Tenants, customers, and other service users, be polite, approachable, and helpful
- Communicate clearly, and honestly, at all times
- Use language that is easy to read and understand and is free of jargon and abbreviations
- Aim to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact and where this is not achievable, advise the Tenant, customer or service user of timescales and keep them informed of progress
- Acknowledge when SBHA has made a mistake and put things right
- Welcome, listen to, and value comments, compliments and complaints and follow SBHA's corporate complaints procedure to address dissatisfaction and continuously improve our services

3.2 The following objectives of this Policy are to:

- Provide a robust Customer Care "culture" within SBHA and to embed the culture of Customer Care into every aspect of SBHA's business
- Encourage a high standard of professionalism within all teams
- Enable clear, measurable standards and guidelines to be set for teams
- Assist Tenants, customers, and other service users to gain access easily and efficiently to the correct parts of SBHA for the services they require
- Allow consistency across the service regarding team members' conduct, service and communication with Tenants, other customers, and colleagues
- Ensure all Tenants, customers and other service users are treated fairly, equally and with respect

4.0 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

4.1 ***Appendix 1*** of this Policy details the Customer Service Standards. These Standards aim to support the delivery of the above outlined objectives and explain the level of service a Tenant, customer or other service user can expect to receive from SBHA upon contact.

4.2 The delivery of these Standards is the responsibility of all SBHA teams, to encourage everyone in SBHA to put Tenants at the heart of all that SBHA does. The Standards seek to promote practices and conduct which are in line with SBHA's core values, which are integrated into working practices and approach to interacting and dealing with people.

5.0 APPROACH AND DELIVERY

5.1 ***Learning and Development:*** SBHA is committed to an ongoing Learning and Development framework for employees which includes the delivery of customer service training to ensure teams are aware of their responsibilities in relation to Customer Care and expected standards of service. SBHA will continue to use the Investors in People performance management framework to ensure teams are being developed to provide the best possible service.

5.2 ***Service Standards:*** The Customer Service Standards which support the delivery of this Policy are attached at ***Appendix 1*** to ensure consistency in the delivery of customer service across SBHA and that Tenants', customers' and other service users' expectations are met.

5.3 ***Culture:*** This Policy and attached Service Standards seek to ensure that delivering excellent customer service remains at the heart of service delivery and encourages feedback from Tenants, customers, and other service users to enable SBHA to continuously improve service delivery to meet the evolving needs and expectations.

Leaders are required to promote Customer Care as part of their day-to-day management, via regular individual team members and team meetings and as part of the annual Development Review process.

The Customer Services Manager is responsible for implementing the Customer Care Policy and Standards, and monitoring progress. This will include providing regular trends analysis and appropriate training, coaching and mentoring to Team Leaders and frontline officers.

6.0 TENANT CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

6.1 SBHA has consulted with Tenants when formulating the Customer Service Standards and feedback from Tenants, customers and other service users will allow SBHA to gauge the effectiveness of this Policy and the delivery of the Service Standards. A variety of methods will be used for this purpose e.g. surveys, questionnaires, Tenant suggestion schemes etc.

6.2 SBHA will involve Tenants, customers, and other service users to develop initiatives to deal with areas of concern and make any required future improvements to customer service provision. This may take the form of focus groups, mystery shoppers etc.

7.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

7.1 SBHA aims to treat all customers with respect and professionalism and will ensure that this service is fair and accessible to all. SBHA will publish information that is easy to read and understand in a range of appropriate languages and formats. Where Tenants have any particular needs or requirements, SBHA will do all that it can to ensure that its services are tailored to these needs.

7.2 This Policy will not be used to discriminate against any individual or household on grounds of age, race, religion or belief, marital status, sex, disability, health, poverty, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy, or maternity. SBHA aims to promote equal opportunities and comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

7.3 SBHA will promote customer service activities through social media and its newsletter, website publications and leaflets to keep Tenants and customers informed and involved.

8.0 MONITORING, PERFORMANCE, MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

8.2 The Customer Service Manager will report to the Board of Management or any relevant designated Sub-Committee with the submission of quarterly reports to make sure the aims of this Policy are being achieved including:

- Complaints Handling performance
- Levels of customer satisfaction relating to the delivery of the Customer Service Standards
- Compliments received
- Any relevant scrutiny projects conducted by SBTO and its Customer Audit Team

9.0 COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

9.1 SBHA values feedback on all its services, including the level of customer service provided and the Customer Service Manager will be responsible for using this to shape the future delivery of the service. Tenants, customers, and other service users are encouraged to provide SBHA with any comments they have regarding this and can do so in person, telephone, email, via the website/social media or in writing.

9.2 **Compliments and Expression of Appreciation**: Compliments and expressions of appreciation are valued by all SBHA teams, encouraging them to continue to provide excellent customer service. Positive feedback and satisfaction of this nature received from Tenants, customers and other service users will be conveyed to the teams concerned and also as a useful learning point and example of good practice shared throughout SBHA.

If a Tenant, customer, or other service user feels they have received an excellent service from teams, SBHA would like to hear about this. This can be done by any means of contact with SBHA such as email, telephone, website/social media, in writing or in person.

9.3 **Complaints**: SBHA will always try to get things right the first time. However, from time-to-time things may go wrong. SBHA will always investigate problems and try to resolve them. If a Tenant, customer, or other service user feels that the standards set out in this policy or any other service standard has not been met, they may make a complaint using SBHA's complaints procedure. Copies of the Complaints Procedure are available on request. Complaints may be submitted over the telephone, in writing, by e-mail or in person.

10.0 POLICY REVIEW

10.1 This Policy will be reviewed in 3 years or earlier if legislative, performance or other changes necessitate this. Any necessary amendments will be made following full consultation with Tenants and other service users**.**