

Housing & Communities Directorate	
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1. Customer Care & Access to Services Policy

2. Reference Number 3.9.1

3. Statement of intent including cross-reference to bdht's Directorate and corporate objectives

- 3.1 A "very satisfied" customer is six times more likely to support and promote an organisation than a "satisfied" customer. A customer who remains loyal to bdht for 10 years as a tenant generates £34,000 of rental income. Loyal tenants help build sustainable communities and reduce operating costs. Delivering excellent services will help bdht attract new customers, enhance the organisation's reputation, and develop new opportunities.
- 3.2 bdht is committed to ensuring that all customers have tailored access to bdht services. In accessing bdht services customers will receive excellent customer service. Customer service involves putting customers at the heart of everything we do, respecting them as individuals, and understanding their needs and views.
- 3.3 This policy will aid bdht to achieve its corporate objective of achieving 95% customer satisfaction.

4. Legal and Regulatory Requirements

4.1 Regulatory Requirements

- RSH – Regulatory Consumer Standards

5. Policy Statement

- 5.1 bdht will ensure that services delivered are effective, user friendly, and provide good value for money. They will increasingly be offered digitally.
- 5.2 Customers will experience best practice customer service as a result of their contact with bdht. This will be done via a variety of

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means to ensure that the needs of all bdht customers are addressed and that no group becomes disenfranchised or socially excluded as a result of changes to frontline service delivery.

- 5.3 There are three main determinants of customer service excellence – people, processes, and technology. This policy will ensure that all three operate in harmony with the customers' preferred method of doing business.
- 5.4 So we can meet the needs of our customers we need to improve our knowledge of them and their requirements from us. Whilst 81% of our customers are satisfied with bdht as a landlord in 22/23 we recognise that we need to know our customers better. We are looking to improve our data which will provide insight into our customers to allow further opportunity to understand and personalise the relationship with our customers to better meet their needs.

Customer Charter

- 5.4 The following Customer Charter has been introduced and embedded within the organisation:

- We will listen to you.
- We will be honest with you.
- If we make a mistake we will apologise & learn from it
- We will appreciate difference.
- We will keep our promises.
- We will never judge you.
- We will respect you and we ask you to respect us.

Confidentiality

- 5.5 bdht will protect the customer's privacy and security, in their transactions with us, and in the processing and storage of their information, in accordance with bdht registration under the Data Protection Act legislation.

Customer Care

- 5.6 bdht will make every effort to understand who our customers are, their individual needs and priorities.
- 5.7 bdht will endeavour to adjust our service/ processes to meet the needs of that individual based on the information we have.

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- 5.8 bdht will work to increase knowledge we have on our customers and ensure it is kept current and relevant.
- 5.7 bdht will consult with customers to ensure that bdht delivers services in accordance with these needs and priorities and feedback to customers what we have done in response.
- 5.8 bdht will consult with customers in the development and review of service standards to ensure that these standards reflect what is important to customers.
- 5.9 bdht will involve customers in the review of policies and procedures using techniques such as Customer Journey Mapping to ensure that processes are customer focused.

Staff

- 5.10 bdht will recognise staff demonstrating commitment to customer service excellence.
- 5.11 bdht will ensure that staff are provided with the correct training, access to information and technology required to solve the customers' problem delivering high quality consistent services.

Accessing services

- 5.12 bdht will look to ensure customers can access services at a time convenient to themselves. The addition of new digital channels will allow access to services outside of conventional office hours.
- 5.13 bdht offices will offer welcoming private meeting facilities.
- 5.14 bdht will provide a variety of ways for customers to access services including by telephone, text, letter, e-mail, internet, and face to face, at bdht offices, customers' homes, or other agreed locations, as appropriate.
- 5.15 bdht will review access arrangements every three years and identify new ways of conducting business required by customers emerging needs and demands.
- 5.16 bdht will record customers preferred method of contact and use that method wherever appropriate.
- 5.17 bdht recognises that customers preferred method of contact will vary with the type of enquiry being made so that response will also be flexible.

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- 5.18 bdht will seek to understand through customer profiling surveys customers' specific communication needs and will offer:
- Interpretation services
 - "signing" services.
 - Translation services
 - Large print documents (all leaflets will be produced in Font 14)
 - Audio recordings
- 5.19 Customers identified needs will be easily accessed by staff, including through our housing management systems, with a single version of information.
- 5.20 Flags added to customer records will be reviewed to ensure remain current.
- 5.21 Undertake customer 'census' to capture missing customer data.
- 5.22 Information on new customers' needs, will be relevant and will understand how to adjust services based on those needs.
- 5.23 Customers will be able to request adjustments via any method of contact.
- 5.24 bdht will provide customers with a range of accurate and up to date information about the services provided by bdht and partner organisations accessible from bdht offices and online.
- 5.25 Customers and prospective customers are welcome to bring advocates, representatives, or support workers along to any interactions they have with bdht.

Complaints

- 5.23 bdht will only promise what can be delivered. Where promises are not kept or where customers express dissatisfaction with the service received, they will be easily able to access a thorough and robust complaints system.
- 5.24 bdht culture will welcome complaints and acknowledge service failures. Learning from complaints will be systematically used to improve customer services for all customers.

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6. Summary of Service Standards

These will be published in leaflet form to give easy-to-read information to tenants.

7. Priorities

- 7.1 All aspects of this policy are given equal priority and weighting.

8 Policy Implementation

8.1 Responsibility of all officers

- 8.1.1 All officers must attend relevant training sessions and familiarise themselves with bdht customer service policy. Team managers will ensure that everyone within their teams is aware of how to respond to customers.
- 8.1.2 All staff will familiarise themselves with how to access information about customers on our housing management system.

8.2 Board member's responsibility

- 8.2.1 All board members must ensure that the policy is implemented thoroughly. bdht will provide board members with reports and monitoring data on customer service.

8.3 Third party responsibility

- 8.3.1 All contractors, including sub-contractors of bdht have as part of their contract an agreement to meet service standards set by bdht.

8.4 Staffing

- 8.4.1 Managers will ensure targets and objectives are met by maintaining sufficient staff resources, support, training, and technology.

8.5 Procedure

- 8.5.1 bdht will develop procedures to ensure that staff are able to deliver customer services, free from stigma, inline with our Charter, in accordance with this policy and to the standard required.

8.6 Training

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- 8.6.1 bdht will provide training for staff in understanding customers' needs so that they can provide a sensitive, responsive, and effective service to customers. bdht will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of all relevant legislation and regulatory guidance when dealing with customers. bdht will also support frontline staff to ensure that they have the resources to deliver customer services to the standard required.

8.7 Monitoring of the policy

- 8.7.1 In order to improve services to our customers bdht will deploy a range of quality assurance methods to assess performance against policy including:
- Performance Indicators (against challenging targets)
 - customer perception surveys (against challenging targets)
 - Service specific surveys
 - Tenant Mystery Shopping
 - Tenant Inspection
 - Analysis of customer complaints
 - Resident Panel Enquiry Group
- 8.7.2 The Annual Report to Tenants developed by the Tenants Panel and approved by Board will set out performance against customer excellence targets.
- 8.7.3 Performance in delivery of customer service excellence will be a central theme in scrutiny work undertaken by the Tenants Panel.
- 8.7.4 bdht's policy's relating to customers will refer to this Customer Care and Access to Services policy and making reasonable adjustments for our services based on customer needs.

9 Links to associated external Document.

- The Regulators Standards

10 Link to associated internal Documents.

- Customer Charter
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Tenants Handbook
- Mission Statement & Core Values

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- Complaints & Compensation Policy & Procedures
- Resident Involvement Policy
- Service Standards

11 Consultation arrangements

- 11.1 Before adopting this policy bdht has consulted with customers, via the Read and Review Panel, over the policy and its effectiveness.

12 Board/EMT Approval

- 12.1 This policy was approved by Board on 18th March 2024.

13 Review Date

- 13.1 This Policy shall next be reviewed in 2027.

14 Responsibility for implementing the policy

- 14.1 The Director of Housing & Communities is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

15 Date Issued

24th September 2009
Reviewed February 2011, September 2015, February 2022,
February 2024

16 Equality Policy Statement

- 16.1 At bdht, we are proud to serve and work within a diverse society. We recognise that some individuals and communities face systemic barriers, disadvantage, and discrimination, including those related to socio-economic background, caring responsibilities, and the impact of intersectionality.
- 16.2 We believe that discrimination in any form is unacceptable. In all our areas of work we are committed to ensuring that our policies, practices, and services promote fairness, equity, and respect for all. We aim to reduce inequalities, promote respect, and create an equitable culture within our organisation.
- 16.3 bdht fully complies with the Equality Act 2010 and all relevant statutory and regulatory guidance, including that issued by the

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Regulator of Social Housing, Homes England, the Government Equalities Office, and our funding partners.

- 16.4 We believe that equality of opportunity is fundamental to delivering excellent services and building vibrant communities together. Our commitment is underpinned by clear policies, regular monitoring, and continuous review, all of which are actively supported by our Board and Teams.

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