



Caledonia Group Customer Service Strategy

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1. Introduction

At the Caledonia Housing Association Group (“the Group”) we are determined to be recognised as an organisation where excellent customer service is guaranteed. We recognise that our customers have a diverse range of needs and this is reflected in their differing requirements and expectations. Likewise, we also recognise that their priorities and aspirations are also diverse and ever evolving. We are committed therefore to aligning our services and overall customer service approach to these needs, priorities and aspirations.

This Strategy has been developed to directly support the implementation of the customer excellence aspects of the Group’s business strategy. It sets out the actions that we will take across the Group to successfully deliver on the specific customer service priorities identified by the tenants at Caledonia and Cordale Housing Associations through the major customer satisfaction surveys carried out by both organisations in 2015.

It also reflects and complements the provisions of Caledonia Housing Association’s Customer Service Standards Policy. This was developed in consultation with tenants and details our commitment to provide high quality customer service in line with our Customer Service Standards, the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the standards we have set for specific service activities.

2. The Caledonia Housing Association Group

The Group comprises Caledonia Housing Association and Cordale Housing Association and is one of Scotland’s leading providers of high quality affordable homes for people in housing need. We own and manage around 4000 homes across Tayside, Fife and the Highlands through Caledonia, with a further 500 owned and managed in West Dunbartonshire by Cordale. We are also in the process of developing partnership proposals with Bellsmyre Housing Association that could further add to the Group’s presence in the West Dunbartonshire area.

We offer a wide range of housing types and tenures and associated tenancy and property management services that aim to meet the specific needs of our diverse customer group. We also complement our housing services with a range of tenancy support and care related services that aim to ensure that people can sustain and enjoy their homes and contribute to the communities where they live.

3. Strategy Aims

The main aim of our Customer Service Strategy is to ensure that we achieve high levels of customer satisfaction with the Group, and the services we provide, by focussing on key customer priorities. The tenants at Caledonia and Cordale, who are our main customer group, provided clear views on their service priorities through the customer satisfaction surveys carried out in 2015.

From the Caledonia survey, the key service areas identified by the tenants related to providing an effective repairs service, providing good customer service and modernising and upgrading homes. The main service delivery approach issues identified involved keeping tenants informed, treating tenants fairly and with respect and ensuring value for money.

From the Cordale survey, the key service areas identified by the tenants related to providing an effective repairs service, modernising and upgrading homes and the maintenance of neighbourhood environments. The main service delivery approach issues identified involved keeping tenants informed, staff being able to deal with queries and treating tenants fairly and with respect.

Summarising the wider survey outcomes, the tenants expressed their desire for good quality housing and property management services being consistently delivered and combined with high standards in customer service, value for money and affordable rents. There was a wish to see improvements achieved where performance was below expectations but also a firm view that service improvements should be balanced against the costs involved in achieving these. The key priority themes identified by the tenants through the two surveys can be summarised as follows:

- Service provision
- Quality of home and environment
- Customer service
- Value for money and rents
- Communication

Our aim through this Strategy will be to improve overall levels of customer satisfaction by focussing our resources on key improvement actions linked to these issues, with specific priority being given to activities where improvements have been assessed and agreed with the tenants as being required. Information on these is provided in Sections 4 – 8 below and in summary format in Appendix One.

4. Service Provision

We are committed to ensuring that high quality housing and property management services are delivered on a consistent basis across the Group. The outcomes from the survey, in the main, highlighted high and improving levels of satisfaction with Caledonia and Cordale and the services that we provide. There were however specific service areas, identified as key activities by the tenants, where our performance had either decreased or was lower than we had expected. Variations in customer satisfaction levels were also identified in relation to household type and location factors for Caledonia and by location for Cordale. Taking account of these findings, our service provision related improvement activities over 2016-17 across the Group will focus on the following:

- Reviewing our neighbourhood management services and implementing service improvements
- Investigating the variations in satisfaction across geographical areas and household types with a focus on ensuring service consistency

At Caledonia work will also be carried out to review the Association's reactive repairs service with a view to implementing service improvements that will support increased levels of customer satisfaction with the service.

At Cordale we will also have an additional focus on the development of services to assist tenants with household financial issues and improving anti-social behaviour complaint outcomes for tenants. These actions reflect specific outcomes from the Cordale survey.

More generally, we want to ensure that our services are effective and represent value for money. We will take steps to achieve this by setting challenging standards and targets for our services, benchmarking our performance against other housing associations and improving our use of technology to better support our service delivery activities.

5. Quality of Home and Environment

The standard of our homes was identified by the tenants at Caledonia and Cordale as a key priority for them. The results of the surveys highlighted significant improvements in levels of tenant satisfaction with housing quality at both Associations compared to the previous year. In both instances the outcomes were also above the Scottish national average figure. Notwithstanding this, in a broader sense we will seek to achieve further improvements in satisfaction levels across the Group by continuing to invest in the modernisation and upgrading of our homes and by ensuring that tenant priorities are reflected in the Group's Asset Management Strategy.

Although positive outcomes were achieved in relation to housing quality generally, it was also identified from the results that new tenants at Caledonia and Cordale were less satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in than they had been the previous year, and also that levels of satisfaction in both instances were lower than the Scottish national average. Work has commenced to investigate the reasons behind this with a view to identifying potential ways of improving levels of new tenant satisfaction across the Group. This will continue to be a key improvement activity over 2016-17.

At Cordale we will also have an additional focus on reviewing the Association's neighbourhood environmental maintenance service. This reflects the specific priority placed on this by the tenants at the Association through the customer satisfaction survey.

6. Customer Service

We want our tenants and other customers to have the best possible experience when they use our services. Key customer service priorities identified through the satisfaction surveys related to ensuring that tenants and other customers were treated fairly and with respect and that we had knowledgeable staff who were able to deal effectively and professionally with service queries. Positive feedback was received through both surveys for these aspects of customer service at Caledonia and Cordale.

Our focus moving forward therefore will be on maintaining high levels of satisfaction with our customer service approach and in ensuring the consistency of this. Key to this will be continuing to work to the detail of our existing Customer Service Standards and the focus within these on:

- Dealing with the majority of customer enquiries right first time at the point of contact
- Delivering services with appropriate speed in line with set standards
- Taking a pro-active approach to putting things right if they go wrong

Also, we are aware from the survey considerations that our tenants want easy access to our services and that they want us to take specific account of the requirements and preferences of the diverse range of tenants across the Group. In addition to maintaining the existing access channels to our services, this also involves developing the options available to them to access and use our services on-line. This will be a key service improvement consideration for the Group over 2016-17 and will involve the review and assessment of self-service options for accessing and using services that could be progressed. This will also involve consideration of the assistance that we would need to provide to customers to help encourage and support the use of on-line services.

More generally, ways of making better use of information technology to improve customer service and value for money will be a key longer term theme within this Strategy.

Furthermore, we are fully aware of the central role that the staff team across the Group have in achieving our customer service aims. In essence, we want every member of staff to be committed to providing excellent customer service for every customer and for every service request. We will aim to do this by continuing with our work to:

- Equip our staff team with the right skills, knowledge and information to provide excellent customer service
- Embed a customer focussed culture amongst all staff at all levels across the Group
- Set challenging standards and targets for our customer service related activities

A programme of customer service and complaints related training is being progressed for the staff team over the course of 2015 and this will serve to further strengthen over approach to customer service across the Group. Building on this by investigating and progressing customer service related accreditations that would further support our work will be another longer term Strategy consideration.

7. Value for Money and Rents

Our tenants have told us that achieving high levels of tenant satisfaction in relation to views on value for money as well as keeping rent increases as low as possible for existing and future tenants are important for them. Linked to this, they also advised that they want us to ensure that our services are effective and provide value for money.

Taking account of these views, we are committed to ensuring that our services across the Group are effective, delivered in an efficient way, well managed and monitored and supported by appropriate technology. This will also involve the implementation of robust performance management

arrangements and the provision of feedback to our tenants and other customers on our service performance outcomes. Also, rent affordability for tenants will continue to be a key consideration in the annual rent and budget setting process at Caledonia and Cordale.

The satisfaction survey outcomes for Caledonia highlighted improving and high levels of performance in relation to tenant views on overall satisfaction and value for money. At Cordale, an improvement in overall satisfaction was also achieved. There was a decrease however in performance relating to views on value for money. Given this, and the level of importance placed on value for money by the tenants across the Group more generally, developing an approach to demonstrating and reporting on value for money in consultation with the tenants at Caledonia and Cordale will be a key improvement activity for 2016-17.

8. Communication

Key communication related priorities highlighted by the tenants through the satisfaction surveys centred on the following:

- Keeping tenants and other customers informed
- Taking the views of tenants and other customers into account
- Listening to and acting on the views of tenants and other customers

Strong outcomes were achieved by Caledonia and Cordale in relation to keeping tenants and other customers informed. Views on opportunities to participate in decision making processes was higher than the national average figure for both Associations but lower than we would like to achieve. Lower than anticipated levels of satisfaction were achieved in relation to listening to and acting on tenant views, particularly at Caledonia.

Work has been carried out recently at Caledonia to comprehensively review the Association's Tenant Participation Strategy. Likewise, work is also being carried out at Cordale to develop comprehensive tenant participation arrangements. We anticipate that this work will support the achievement of improved levels of performance in relation to tenant views on communication related matters. Notwithstanding this, specific steps will be taken over the course of 2016-17 to develop specific communication and involvement arrangements that will enable tenants' views to be more effectively taken into account in service review and design work across the Group.

9. Performance Monitoring

We recognise the importance of measuring outcomes in order to determine success and to review and develop the Customer Service Strategy on an ongoing basis. We will measure the effectiveness of the Strategy on an annual basis through the indicators listed below:

- Delivery of the improvement actions detailed in the Customer Service Strategy Action Plan
- Monitoring and review of the customer service and service delivery related indicators within the performance management frameworks in place at Caledonia and Cordale
- Monitoring and review of information relating to the implementation of the Customer Service Standards

10. Strategy Review

This Strategy will be subject to review on an annual basis and will be developed to link to and directly support the implementation of the priorities detailed in the Caledonia and Cordale Business Plans. Associated action plans within the Strategy will be developed for each organisation and implemented each year. Steps will also be taken to develop the action plans to focus on three year timeframes to ensure a clear direction for our customer service improvement activities over a longer timeframe. These will be reviewed by the Executive Management and Operational Management Teams. The action plans will also be subject to review with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and will be made available more widely to the Group's customers and staff team.

APPENDIX ONE – CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS – 2016-17

1. Group

GROUP SERVICE PRIORITY THEMES	IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS 2016-17
Service Provision	Review of the neighbourhood management services and the implementation of identified service improvements Investigation of variations in satisfaction across geographical areas and household types with a focus on ensuring service consistency
Quality of Home and Environment	Investigation of the reasons for views on the standard of home for new tenants when moving in to identify ways of improving levels of satisfaction across the Group
Customer Service	Review and assessment of on-line self-service options for accessing and using Association services
Value for money and rents	Development of an approach to demonstrating and reporting on value for money in consultation with the tenants at Caledonia and Cordale
Communication	Development of communication and involvement arrangements that will enable tenants' views to be more effectively taken into account in service review and design work across the Group.

2. Cordale Housing Association

CORDALE SERVICE PRIORITY THEMES	IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS 2016-17
Service Provision	Development of services at Cordale to assist tenants with household financial issues Review of the neighbour dispute service at Cordale to identify options to improve satisfaction with complaint outcomes
Quality of Home and Environment	Review of the neighbourhood environmental maintenance services at Cordale to identify potential improvements

3. Caledonia Housing Association

CALEDONIA SERVICE PRIORITY THEMES	IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS 2016-17
Service Provision	Review of the reactive repairs services at Caledonia and the implementation of identified service improvements