

Access and Customer Care Policy



1 Aims of policy

Chorley Community Housing (CCH) is committed to providing excellent Customer Care. This policy sets out the standard of customer service that all customers can expect when they deal with Chorley Community Housing.

CCH is also committed to offering customers access to the services we provide using the method of their choice at a time and place to suit them. This policy also sets out how we intend to meet this commitment.

2 Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all customers of Chorley Community Housing.

3 Monitoring, review and consultation

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of customers and good practice.

Customers will be involved in the reviews via the mechanisms set out in the Participation and Consultation Policy.

Performance against the targets in this policy will be monitored monthly and will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Board.

4 Responsible Officer

Director of Customer and Neighbourhood Services

5 Contact details

Sharon Simmonds
Tel: 01257 414894
E-mail: sharon.simmonds@chorleych.co.uk

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Executive Summary

Chorley Community Housing is committed to meeting the needs of all customers by providing accessible, high quality services. This policy sets out how customers will be treated when dealing with Chorley Community Housing:

- In person
- At home
- By telephone
- In writing
- E-mail

CCH aims to shape the organisation and service delivery around customer needs and expectations. It is the aim of CCH that customers are offered access to services using the method of their choice at a time and place to suit them.

1 Introduction

This policy outlines the standard of customer service that customers can expect from staff that work for Chorley Community Housing and any contractors providing a service on behalf of Chorley Community Housing.

In seeking to achieve excellence in Customer Care, Chorley Community Housing will:

- Provide an excellent service to customers quickly and efficiently
- Treat everyone fairly and courteously according to their needs
- Recognise diversity in the community and ensure that all customers benefit from Chorley Community Housing services
- Continually train and develop the skills of staff in terms of Customer Care, quality and diversity
- Consult with customers, learn from their views and keep them informed
- Monitor achievements against standards and publish the results
- Welcome comments, compliments and complaints and respond in an open, proactive and constructive way
- Adopt a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

CCH aims to be an accessible and customer focused organisation that places the customer at the heart of service delivery.

Developing a customer focussed approach links into equality and diversity, is part of good management and of providing high quality services to meet customer needs.

Customers are demanding easier access, more choice and more access outside traditional core hours.

2 Policy

2.1 Visiting Chorley Community Housing offices

CCH aims to ensure that services can be easily accessed through a conveniently located main office.

The main customer access point is located at 24-26 Gillibrand Street, Chorley, PR7 2EJ, which is centrally located in Chorley town centre.

The office opening times of Chorley Community Housing are:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday	9am to 5pm
Wednesday	12noon to 5pm

The offices are closed on a Wednesday morning in order to allow time for staff training.

- Staff will greet customers courteously.
- Staff will wear an authorised identity card at all times.
- Staff will be helpful and, wherever possible, try to resolve the customer's enquiry.
- Staff will arrange for the provision of translation and interpretation facilities, where required.
- Staff will treat any information given by the customer in confidence.
- Staff will respect customers' privacy and confidentiality.
- Staff will act in a professional manner at all times and pay full attention to the customer.
- Customers will be greeted by a Customer Services Assistant wherever possible within 5 minutes of their arrival.
- Customers with an appointment will be kept waiting for no longer than 5 minutes past the agreed appointment time.
- Customers without an appointment should be notified on arrival of the time they are likely to wait before seeing someone.
- Customers should be informed straight away if there is likely to be a delay.

Chorley Community Housing's reception area will:

- Be clearly signposted and clearly display opening times and the out-of-hours emergency telephone number.
- Be fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Provide accessible services to all customers.
- Be clean, tidy, well lit, warm and ventilated with comfortable seating.
- Have an up to date range of information and leaflets regarding the services that Chorley Community Housing provides, available in large print, on audio tapes and in other languages on request.
- Have an interview room facility so that customers can speak in private, if required.
- Have a hearing loop.
- Provide some toys for young children.
- Display Chorley Community Housing's service standards.

2.2 Visiting Chorley Council's One Stop Shop

CCH works in partnership with Chorley Council to enable customers to make enquiries regarding the services that CCH provides at the One Stop Shop.

There are 2 dedicated repairs reporting lines for CCH which can be used free of charge by customers in order to report a repair direct to CCH Customer Assistants.

When visiting the Council's One Stop Shop customers can expect the same level of service as they would when visiting a CCH office and the same standard of reception area.

2.3 Visiting customers at home

- Staff will aim to make home visits, where required and appropriate, at the earliest possible opportunity, preferably by appointment.
- Staff will respond swiftly to an emergency, and normally within 1 working day. The following are examples of an emergency, but this list is not exhaustive:
 - Domestic violence or severe harassment cases
 - Severe anti social behaviour cases
 - Where there is cause for concern for a tenants welfareEmergency repairs will be dealt with in accordance with the timescales set out in the tenant handbook.
- Staff will be punctual for all appointments. If for any reason a member of staff cannot make an agreed appointment time they will notify the customer of the delay and agree another appointment time on the same day. If this is not convenient the appointment will be rescheduled for another day.
- Staff will identify themselves on arrival and produce an authorised identity card.
- Staff will leave a "no access card" if the customer is not at home at an agreed appointment time or a visit has been made without an agreed appointment. The card will state the name of the officer that called, the date and time they called and their direct dial telephone number.

2.4 Contacting CCH by telephone

CCH aims to ensure that services can be easily accessed by telephone.

Chorley Community Housing has a dedicated telephone number (01257 414900) through which customers can access the range of services available. Calls will be answered in person Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm.

- Chorley Community Housing will aim to answer all telephone calls within 20 seconds.
- Staff will answer politely, giving their name and department, and ask how they can help the customer, apologising if there has been a delay in answering the call.
- If the customer's enquiry will take some time the customer's telephone number will be taken and they will be called back.
- Staff will give the customer their full attention for the duration of the call.
- Phones will be staffed throughout office opening hours.
- Extra facilities will be provided for callers whose first language is not English.
- Extra facilities will be provided for callers who have hearing difficulties.

- Staff will take accurate messages and pass to the appropriate person if they are unable to deal with the customer's enquiry.
- If the customer has a query that cannot be answered quickly they will be informed that the query will be looked at in detail and the length of time it is likely to take for a response. The customer will be called back as soon as possible, within 5 working days.
- All telephone calls requiring a response will be returned the same working day, or if this is not possible, within one working day.

Customers will have access to a 24/7 Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) service which will enable them to make rent payments by telephone.

Extra facilities will be provided for callers whose first language is not English and for those customers with hearing difficulties.

Outside of normal office hours the dedicated number for CCH will give the customer details of the out of hours emergency telephone number (01257 414970). Procedures are in place to ensure a response to emergencies outside of normal office hours.

2.5 Voicemail messages

- Chorley Community Housing will only use answer phones or voicemails to ensure that telephone calls do not go unanswered.
- Recorded messages will be audible and accurate, giving an alternative number where appropriate or the option to leave a message.
- All messages will be responded to the same working day or, if this is not possible, within one working day.

2.6 Written correspondence

- All written correspondence received by Chorley Community Housing requiring a reply will be acknowledged within 3 working days.
- All written correspondence received by Chorley Community Housing requiring a reply will be responded to in full within 10 working days.
- All e-mail correspondence requiring a reply will be acknowledged within 2 working days and responded to in full within 10 working days.
- If it will not be possible to respond to correspondence within the timescales set out above the customer will be notified as soon as possible and given an indication of the likely response time.
- All correspondence will be in Plain English and will be jargon-free.
- All correspondence will have a professional and polite tone.
- A reply will be given in Braille, large print, audio tape, CD or translated into another language if required.
- All personal correspondence will include a contact/team name and a direct/team dial telephone number.
- Any issues raised by the customer will be acknowledged and responded to in full within the correspondence.
- All applications for housing will be acknowledged within 10 working days.

2.7 Contacting CCH via the Internet

CCH has a dedicated website, www.chorleych.co.uk. A range of services and information will be provided via the Internet.

Customers can contact CCH via a dedicated enquiries e-mail address, enquiries@chorleych.co.uk.

Customers are able to report repairs on-line and also make rent payments.

CCH aims to provide a website which is easy to use and navigate. CCH will continue to develop its website services in order that forms can be downloaded and/or submitted online.

2.8 Requests for information

Requests for forms or general information will be dealt with within 5 working days.

2.9 Services available outside of normal office hours

CCH operates an emergency out of hours service that enables customers to report an emergency repair.

2.10 Publications

- All Chorley Community Housing publications, including policies and procedures, will be written in a clear, concise and easy to understand manner.
- All publications will be reviewed and updated at regular intervals.
- Consultation will take place with tenants and other customers, including external organisations, on changes to content of CCH publications and leaflets, as appropriate.

2.11 Removing barriers to access

Chorley Community Housing aims to ensure equality of access to all services.

- Chorley Community Housing will provide an interview/visit from a member of staff of same sex if requested for vulnerable customers.
- Chorley Community Housing offices are accessible to people with physical or sensory disabilities.
- Chorley Community Housing will provide the services of an interpreter through Language Line if the customer's first language is not English.
- All CCH staff will carry a language identification card and will have access to the Language Line facility.
- Chorley Community Housing will provide the service of intermediaries if someone has hearing or speech difficulties or other specific needs.
- Chorley Community Housing will provide information in different formats such as large print, Braille or audio tape on request.
- Chorley Community Housing has some staff trained in the use of sign language.
- Chorley Community Housing provides the services of Neighbourhood Officers. The Neighbourhood Officers provide a whole range of services and the nature of their role is to be out in the communities. Part of their role includes providing a point of contact for those that find it difficult to visit our offices.

- Chorley Community Housing also has a dedicated Tenant Support team whose role is to identify vulnerable tenants and determine their support requirements. The Tenant Support team is able to draw in the services of other organisations as appropriate.

2.12 Identifying customers who are not accessing the service

CCH will take steps to identify customers who are not accessing the service as frequently as others by carrying out regular surveys.

CCH will explore options for the implementation of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in order to develop an improved knowledge of its customers.

An analysis of customers with support needs is also made on a case by case basis using referrals from the Neighbourhood Officers.

2.13 Maintaining confidentiality

Chorley Community Housing will handle any personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Every person who uses the services and all employees can expect that Chorley Community Housing will not reveal any information held about them without their permission, unless they are exceptional circumstances. If information about customers or staff is passed on, this will be in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

2.14 Responsibilities of the customer

In order to ensure a swift and effective service to customers, Chorley Community Housing expects a certain standard of behaviour in return.

Chorley Community Housing asks that customers:

- Be courteous to staff. Staff will not accept abusive or violent behaviour or harassment towards staff or other customers.
- Provide information asked for in a timely manner.
- Read any information sent to them.
- Attend appointments on time.

2.15 Consultation and customer satisfaction

CCH will regularly consult with customers via the mechanisms set out in the Participation and Consultation Policy in order to get feedback to ensure clear understanding of customers, their needs and their access preferences.

CCH will encourage and use customer feedback and complaints to improve service quality and access to services.

2.16 Staff training

Staff will be properly trained in customer care to ensure they give a professional service. A training plan will be put in place to ensure staff are friendly, courteous and helpful as well as being knowledgeable in the information they provide to customers.

3 **Monitoring, review and consultation**

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of customers and good practice.

Customers will be involved in the reviews via the mechanisms set out in the Participation and Consultation Policy. They will also be consulted on any changes to the policy.

Performance against the targets in this policy will be monitored monthly and will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Board.

4 **Jargon Buster**

Hearing loop	Device designed to aid communication with people who wear a hearing aid.
CRM system	Technology enabling the organisation to collect customer information, profiles on customer preferences, etc and help the organisation to understand, anticipate and respond to customer needs.

Procedure for providing information in different formats

CCH offers information in a range of different formats at the request of the customer. This document sets out the procedure staff should follow when they receive a request for information in a different format.

The information requirements of customers are indicated on Orchard as UDCs. All staff should check the UDCs against a person carefully before issuing any information to a customer and must ensure it is provided in the format requested by the customer.

Telephone language translation service

CCH subscribes to Language Line in order to provide a telephone language translation service. The target for arranging a translation call is 24 hours (excluding weekends). CCH staff should endeavour to deal with any requests at first point of contact.

Making a call to a Limited English Speaker (LES)

1. Dial the designated number assigned to you by Language Line Services (0845 310 9900)
2. Tell the agent your 6 digit ID number (L49145)
3. Confirm your organisation name
4. Tell the agent the language you need an interpreter for
5. Confirm your personal details
6. Tell the agent the LES's name and telephone number
7. After a brief hold the interpreter will be connected
8. The interpreter will introduce themselves using their ID code
9. Brief the interpreter on what you would like to accomplish on the call
10. The agent will conference in the LES
11. Working with the interpreter, you can now talk with the LES

Receiving a call from a Limited English Speaker (LES)

1. Try to obtain the name and language of the LES and their telephone number. Once you have this information let them know you will call them straight back.
2. Dial the designated number assigned to you by Language Line Services (0845 310 9900)

3. Tell the agent your 6 digit ID number (L49145)
4. Confirm your organisation name
5. Tell the agent the language you need an interpreter for
6. Confirm your personal details
7. Tell the agent the LES's name and telephone number
8. After a brief hold the interpreter will be connected
9. The interpreter will introduce themselves using their ID code
10. Brief the interpreter on what you would like to accomplish on the call
11. The agent will conference in the LES
12. Working with the interpreter, you can now talk with the LES

All information related to Limited English Speakers needs to be passed to the Customer Services team so that this information can be uploaded onto Orchard.

Documents translated into another language

The target for producing a document that has been translated into another language is 5 working days.

1. Obtain the name, address and language the customer requires.
2. Obtain exact details of the document required.
3. E-mail an electronic copy of the document and the details of the customer to the Customer Services team on the day of the request.

The Customer Services team will then organise for the document to be translated and will send the document out on receipt.

The Customer Services team will also then upload the relevant information requirements onto Orchard.

Documents transferred to audio tape

The target for producing a document on audio tape is 5 working days.

1. Obtain the name, address and telephone number of the customer.
2. Obtain exact details of the document required.

3. E-mail an electronic copy of the document and the details of the customer to the Customer Services team on the day of the request.

The Customer Services team will then organise for the document to be produced on audio tape and will send the document out on receipt.

The Customer Services team will also then upload the relevant information requirements onto Orchard.

Documents produced in Braille

The target for producing a document in Braille is 5 working days.

1. Obtain the name, address and telephone number of the customer.
2. Obtain exact details of the document required.
3. E-mail an electronic copy of the document and the details of the customer to the Customer Services team on the day of the request.

The Customer Services team will then organise for the document to be produced in Braille and will send the document out on receipt.

The Customer Services team will also then upload the relevant information requirements onto Orchard.

Large print

The target for producing a document in large print is 3 working days.

1. Obtain the name, address and telephone number of the customer.
2. Obtain exact details of the document required.
3. E-mail an electronic copy of the document (preferably in Word format) and the details of the customer to the Customer Services team on the day of the request.

The Customer Services team will then organise for the document to be produced in large print and will send the document out.

The Customer Services team will also then upload the relevant information requirements onto Orchard.

Updating customer information

All staff that come into contact with customers will be issued with a form which will enable them to obtain detailed information from customers regarding their requirements.

This information should be passed to the Customer Services team who will ensure that all relevant information is entered onto Orchard.

Bulk mail outs

When producing a bulk mail out i.e. newsletter, a copy of the document(s) must be sent to the Customer Services team 10 working days before the document is to be issued to allow sufficient time for the document to be produced in other formats.

The Customer Services team will then organise for the document to be produced in other formats as required.

Compensation for failure to provide information in other formats within target times when requested

Chorley Community Housing will offer compensation for failure to provide, on request, information to customers in other forms within target times. The size and nature of the document and the workload of the contractor may affect the ability to meet the targets but the customer will be informed if this occurs and will be given a revised target date. If this date is not met, then compensation will be paid.

Requested format	Target for provision	Compensation Amount
Large print	3 working days	£10.00
Audio tape	5 working days	£10.00
Alternative language (written and text only)	5 working days	£10.00
Oral translation or interpretation service (by telephone)	Within 24 hours of request (excluding weekends)	£10.00
Braille	5 working days	£10.00

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Typetalk

The Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) provides a service called **Typetalk**, which is funded by British Telecom. This is a telephone relay service which enables speech-impaired, deaf, deaf blind and hard of hearing people the ability to communicate with hearing people worldwide by providing an operator to relay the conversation. Typetalk provides a link between textphone users and others by allowing the textphone user to dial any number direct by putting 18001 at the start.

To enable speech-impaired and deaf people to communicate with hearing people, a **textphone** can be used. A textphone has a keyboard and a small screen on it that displays the other persons conversation.

If you need to make a **call to a textphone** user dial 18002 before the number you wish to call, this will bring a Typetalk operator onto the line to relay the conversation for you.

If you **receive a call** from a person using Typetalk, the operator will ask you if you have used the service before. If you haven't they will explain what to do. It does not require any special training, instead of speaking to the person making the telephone call you will be speaking to an operator. The operator will then relay the textphone users conversation to you by reading what the person has typed. When you respond the operator then types what you have said. More in-depth information about Typetalk can be found on their website at www.typetalk.org

Sign Language

Carol Bagshaw, Tenant Support Manager can assist with providing basic information by using sign language.