

Customer Care Policy



Housing People

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1. Introduction

This policy outlines the service level our customers can expect to receive from Cornerstone.

2. Contact & communication

We have two offices. Our office on Western Way (Cornerstone House) is open to the public. Our Depot is where our repairs service is coordinated from.

Opening hours

- Office opening times are between 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday.
- Outside of these hours a message can be left on the answer machine, which will then receive attention the next working day.
- The repairs line operates between 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 3.30pm on Fridays the repairs lines closes between 1:00pm to 1:30pm.
- There is a designated number for out of hour's emergencies.

Appointments

- Appointment requests are usually carried out within ten working days.
- For urgent matters an appointment will be made sooner.
- If agreed with the customer an appointment may be arranged after the ten day target.
- Where the requested member of staff is unavailable within the target period, an appointment with an alternative member of staff will be offered. We will ensure that the member of staff dealing with the particular matter is the most appropriate person.

Maintenance response times

We operate the following repairs target times in order to maintain homes to a high standard. Please see the Tenants' Handbook for definitions and examples of the repair categories.

Emergency 24 hours
Urgent 5 working days
Routine 20 working days

Telephone calls

- During office hours staff receiving external calls will welcome the caller with "Good morning/afternoon, Cornerstone and give their first name.

- All telephone calls will be answered promptly and we aim to answer all queries at the first point of contact. If the receiver is unable to do this then the call will be transferred to the most appropriate person. This may not always be the person requested by the caller.
- Where the appropriate person is unavailable calls will be returned as soon as possible and no later than the end of the following working day. If a member of staff is unavailable within this period, the caller will be advised of this and given the option of speaking to another member of staff.
- During office hours when all phone lines are busy or when a staff member is unable to answer the phone a message can be left on the answer machine and a member of staff will return the call within four working hours.

Letters and e-mails

- We aim to send a full response within five working days of receipt.
- Where this is not possible (due to absence of a staff member, or where further investigation is required) an acknowledgement will be sent stating the reason for the delay and anticipated date of a full response.

Information

- Information relating to Cornerstone services can be found in Tenants' Handbook, leaflets and on Cornerstone's website.
- We will keep our Tenants updated of changes to services through the Tenants Newsletter which is published on a regular basis. Also, on 1st October each year Cornerstone publishes its Tenant Annual Report which provides an overview of our current service standards, how we compare to other housing associations and identifies areas for improvement.
- We will make every effort to provide information in alternative formats when requested.

Staff Identification

When visiting tenants or applicants staff will introduce themselves and carry ID cards which can be produced.

Standards of Behaviour

Staff are expected to behave in a professional and polite manner. In return, we expect our customers to treat our staff in the same courteous manner. Confrontational situations are not acceptable and in such situations staff will politely end the discussion or call on their supervisor to intervene.

3. Confidentiality and data protection

- When visiting the office general enquires will be answered at the reception desk or upon request in a private interview room. A private interview room will be used for discussing other private matters.
- Information concerning clients will not be divulged to a third party without the consent of the person concerned or will only be given in exceptional circumstances, e.g. to the

police or social services with approval of a manager. The provisions of the Data Protection Act will be applied in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

4. Equality & Diversity

Cornerstone is committed to treating all people with equal fairness, courtesy and respect and endeavour to eliminate any unfair discrimination internally or with any of the partners we work with.

Arrangements will be made for providing information services to customers with visual and hearing difficulties. In instances where customers have difficulty communicating in English, every effort will be made to provide a translation or interpreting service, to enable customers to fully express their views or needs and understand information given to them.

5. Providing support and access to related services

In order to support our customers access to services related to their tenancy a computer is available for use by both existing tenants and applicants in the reception area of our office. The computer can be used to access housing and welfare related websites. Assistance can be given by a member of staff.

6. Monitoring our performance

Cornerstone's performance can be measured in several ways, such as tenant scrutiny which is carried out through Cornerstone's Performance Panel and various customer satisfaction surveys. The number and type of complaints are monitored of systems such as monitoring response times to letters and calls.

Cornerstone is also a member of HouseMark which is used internally to benchmark against other registered providers, the results of which will be included in various publications including the Tenant Annual Report. This provides staff and tenants with an opportunity to monitor and review Cornerstone's performance.

7. Making a complaint

When we are unable to meet a tenants request or expectation we will always explain why we have been unable to do so. If a customer is not satisfied with the outcome they should in the first instance contact the Housing Officer or Maintenance Manager with their grievance. If they are not satisfied with the answer provided at this point they then should follow the Formal Complaints Procedure, the details of which are available upon request at the office and on our website.