

**WESLO HOUSING MANAGEMENT**  
**Customer Care**

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Author	Housing Manager
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This procedure outlines our working style and promotes 6 main principles:-

- **Consultation**
- **Standards**
- **Information & Openness**
- **Courtesy & Helpfulness**
- **Putting Things Right**
- **Value For Money**

These principles are fundamental in achieving Weslo's objectives, which are:-

- To provide affordable good quality rented housing suited to the requirements of the community thereby assisting the Council in meeting the needs of the area.
- To exercise local control over the housing stock and enable tenants and employees to have a greater say in policies affecting their housing and environment.
- To manage, maintain and develop the housing stock and its environment.
- To use the resources of the Company and other locally based groups to promote the economic development of the area.
- To improve the management service for tenants and provide further options for improvement of their homes.
- To give tenants as much choice as possible in the service they receive.

There are a number of **benefits** to be gained from implementing a Customer Care Policy:-

- **improved image**
- **consistency of approach**
- **improved management**
- **customer satisfaction**

The opportunity exists for staff to respond to the needs of the customer. Staff will be encouraged to suggest changes in working practices and they will be involved in policy development.

We aim to provide a quality service to our customers and everyone in Weslo should strive to get it right the first time, every time, to achieve maximum customer satisfaction.

Staff are encouraged to look for ways to say **YES** rather than no.

## 1. Customer Care - Internal Procedures

Weslo Housing Management is committed to providing a high quality service to its customers at all times while carrying out its management function of the housing stock. Customers can be defined as anyone we deal with in our day to day work who is not an employee of Weslo and includes tenants, former tenants, owner occupiers (of formerly rented stock) and contractors.

Weslo has implemented an internal service standard which has been embraced by all staff in their dealings with customers; this has led to all our customers being dealt with in a consistent manner allowing all users of the services provided by Weslo to receive prompt and courteous attention at all times. This provides the framework for information to be provided to tenants advising them of the level of service they can expect.

This code provides standards for contact with customers including telephone use, responding to correspondence, home visits and personal callers to the office.

### (i) Correspondence

#### **Guidance**

All correspondence received in the office which requires a response will be acknowledged on the day it is received advising that a detailed response will be sent within 14 days.

In certain circumstances where there is a requirement to respond within a statutory timescale (e.g. assignments, alterations etc...) staff should endeavour to respond within 14 days. If during this period it becomes apparent that this timescale cannot be met a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and indicating when a response could be expected.

*Avoid jargon, abbreviations and use plain English.*

*Where possible letters will be signed by the sender including full name and designation. There may be an exception when there is a legal requirement for signing by a senior member of staff.*

*Where possible all correspondence should use the salutation Ms, Mrs or Mr rather than Dear Sir/Madam.*

*All correspondence will be produced in an agreed format (Arial Narrow).*

(ii) **Telephone**

All staff have a direct dial facility and should make use of this wherever possible to free up the general telephone lines for others to use.

Incoming calls on the office line ring at designated extensions and staff should attempt to answer these within 4 rings (this equals 10 seconds). Where designated staff are not available line managers should ensure that alternative arrangements are put in place.

All callers should be given the name of the person they are speaking to and the callers name and nature of the enquiry established before passing on to the appropriate person to deal with the enquiry. If the person they wish to speak to is unavailable then we should offer to put them through to someone else who will be in a position to help. If this is not appropriate, we should take details and agree an appropriate time to return the call within 1 working day.

**Guidance**

*Never leave a telephone ringing - pick it up even if it is not yours.*

*Pick up on all calls promptly - remember the constant ringing disturbs other members of staff, delayed response frustrates and affects the efficiency of the person transferring the call and the caller does not know what has happened to their call. If you are in discussion with someone else and there is no one else available to pick up a call, excuse yourself and answer the phone.*

*Greet the caller in a friendly manner :  
Greeting - Company Name - Staff Name  
e.g. "good morning/afternoon, this is Weslo, followed by your name".*

*If you take a message please ensure that it is passed on in writing immediately giving full details including your name, time and date message was taken on a telephone message pad.*

*Use divert where appropriate but arrange with the other member of staff to accept your calls.*

*If, while you are on a call you need to speak to a colleague, tell the caller that you are putting the call on hold to avoid background noises.*

*Do not carry on other conversations while answering the telephone.*

*If it is going to take some time to collect information to respond to a query, offer to ring the customer back rather than hanging on.*

**REMEMBER - LISTEN TO THE CUSTOMER**

(iii) **Callers at Reception**

Personal callers are to be encouraged but when there is a queue it may be necessary to offer an appointment at a later time which is convenient for the caller.

Customers should be attended to at reception within 3 minutes and if they require to speak to another staff member, then they should be seen within a further 3 minutes.

When an appointment has been made this should be dealt with immediately.  
An interview room should be used to discuss matters of a personal or confidential nature. All customers will be treated in a friendly and courteous manner.

**Guidance**

*Ensure that the customer is greeted in a friendly manner and is referred to by name as soon as possible.*

*If the customer has been kept waiting, apologise for the delay.*

*When staff are informed that there is a caller at reception they should ensure that they are seen within 3 minutes, if all members of a section are involved in dealing with telephone callers then the first available person should attend to the personal caller.*

(iv) **Office Presentation**

First impressions are very important therefore it is essential that the appearance of all public areas are kept clean and tidy.

**Guidance**

*All display material will be checked regularly by the receptionist to ensure that it is current and any out of date material removed.*

*All public advice notices should be displayed in areas where they will not inhibit access to or exit from the office.*

*Comfortable seating will be provided.*

*Activity material will be provided for children.*

*Notices on entry door should be discouraged but if necessary should be kept to a minimum, should be corporate.*

(v) **Rent Counter**

Customers who call at the office to make payment should be greeted in a friendly manner and their business dealt with promptly.

**Guidance**

*All customers wishing to make payment should be dealt with as quickly as possible.*

*If a queue develops and only one rent collection point is operating then a second point will be opened to meet demand.*

*Any tenant who has a query which does not involve a straight forward cash transaction should be dealt with in the privacy of an interview room by an appropriate member of staff thereby allowing other customers to continue making payments.*

(vi) **Home Visits**

Tenants are continually encouraged to contact staff therefore whenever home visits are being organised we should attempt to inform tenants, giving adequate notice of time (i.e. morning or afternoon) and date to enable them to respond where this is not convenient. Staff will endeavour to meet any requests for a specific appointment.

**Guidance**

*Staff should clearly identify themselves and show identity cards as necessary.*

*Before starting your interview, ensure that you are at the right address and speaking to the correct person.*

*Always remember that while conducting home visits you are being invited into someone's home.*

(vii) **Tradesmen**

Tradesmen will call at tenants' homes to carry out repairs and carry out annual maintenance of gas appliances.

**Guidance**

*Tradesmen should identify themselves, show identity cards as necessary, and confirm to the tenant the reason for their visit. This also applies to tradesmen working on properties externally. Tradesmen should speak to the tenant in a courteous manner and ensure dust sheets and overshoes are used as appropriate.*

*Tradesmen should advise the tenant when they are leaving and hand over the repair satisfaction card explaining its purpose and asking the tenant to complete and return it.*

(viii) **Style Guide**

**Guidance**

## Using capitals

Try not to use capital letters unless there's a really good reason.

- **Naming the council:** full names of councils take initial capitals, e.g. West Lothian Council, Glasgow City Council.
  - But use lower case\*1 in narrative; for councils in general; and when used adjectivally:
    - The council decided
    - The local councils agreed
    - Jobs with the council
    - Apply for council housing
  - **Departments, teams and directorates:** use initial capitals when naming particular bodies within local and central government or housing associations, e.g. Tenancy Enforcement Team, Neighbourhood Renewal Team, Benefits Section, Department for Work and Pensions, Health and Safety Executive.
    - But lower case for more general references:
      - Your nearest housing office
      - Representatives from social services and the primary care trust
      - Issues of health and safety
    - **Strategy and policy names:** lower case in narrative. Can be title case\*2 in the title of the strategy/policy document itself (nouns only with initial capitals).
      - A copy of our racial harassment policy
      - In line with our antisocial behaviour policy
    - **Job titles:** lower case except when referring to particularly high-ranking individuals. In addresses or in the complimentary close of a letter, all job titles have initial capitals.
      - A meeting of housing officers and wardens with the occupational therapist and a social worker
      - Ask your managing director or personnel officer
      - A parade of councillors
      - Tenants met Councillor Jackson and the Mayor of Falkirk
      - Mr Smith, Chief Executive of Weslo Housing Management
      - Yours sincerely, Bill Bloggs, Housing Officer
    - **The Board:** upper case\*3 when naming a specific board; otherwise lower case:
      - Meeting of the Board of Management
      - Membership of the Weslo Board
      - Apply for board membership
      - Attend board meetings

\*1 Lower Case – all letters in lower case – no

## Numbers

- One to nine in words; figures for 10 or more.
- Numbers at the start of sentences in words, e.g. 'Twenty councillors attended.'

## Bullet lists

When the listed items are free-standing sentences, we suggest an initial capital and a full stop. When the listed items are fragments of a bigger sentence, we suggest lower case and a full stop only at the close of the list. (In legal agreements, we may recommend a different approach.)

For example, these include:

- gas leaks
- storm damage
- blocked external drain.

## Using paper forms

- Print the form.
- The benefit claimant must sign the form.
- Send the form to the address on the form.

## We/you

- Generally, use 'we', 'us' and 'our' not 'Weslo Housing Management' or 'the Company'.
- Generally, use 'you' and 'your' when addressing the reader, rather than referring to them indirectly as 'tenants' or 'owners'.

## Contact details

- **Addresses:** no commas when vertical comma after each address line when horizontal, no comma before postcode

- **Format:** Phone:  
Email:  
Address:  
Website:

(not always in this order, but keep whatever order of phone number, address etc consistent for that section)

- Phone numbers: no brackets; put spaces in long numbers. For example: 01506 123456 or 0800 123 456 or 0845 123 4567
- Opening times: no zeros and full stops for the hour (6pm not 6.00pm)
  - no 24-hour clock
  - en-dashes, no space, between times (6–8pm)
  - abbreviate days of the week if pushed for space, with en-dashes between days, e.g. Mon–Thurs
- 24 hours: (24hrs) or '24-hour helpline' or 'open 24 hours'

## Other points

- *Generally, remove bold unless there is genuine emphasis.*
- *Change '&' signs to 'and', except in names of organisations, e.g. Jackson & Son; HM Revenue & Customs.*
- *'See' references should be in brackets. References to booklet titles in italics.*
- *Website: one word. Online: one word.*
- *Underlining – is not usually necessary – bold type will nearly always emphasize successfully.*
- *Dear Sir/Madam – Yours faithfully*
- *Dear (Name) – Yours sincerely*
- *Always use spell check*
- *Use commas to break up long sentences*