

# CS007 - Communications Policy

<b>MONITORING FORM</b>	
Department	Corporate Services
Department Director [Title]	Human Resources Director
This policy is applicable to	Everyone
Author	Sarah Bickerstaff
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Internal /external consultees (if required)	Tenant Participation Group & Staff Forum

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Weslo's communication policy supports our Business Plan and provides a framework to facilitate engagement with our stakeholders.
- 1.2 The policy aims to:
  - a. Ensure openness and transparency in all that we do;
  - b. Educate, inform and provide support in order to achieve the organisation's business priorities and key objectives;
  - c. Ensure all internal and external communications are effective;
  - d. Provide mechanisms for two-way communication;
  - e. Provide guidance to staff on methods and style of communication;
  - f. Ensure information about Weslo is accessible and ensure any barriers to communication are identified to allow easy access to our information and the services we offer
- 1.3 We will make information publicly available, unless there are justifiable reasons for not providing it. We will comply with the Freedom of Information Scotland Act [FOISA], and will publicise information in accordance with our 'Guide to Information <https://www.weslo-housing.org/wp-content/uploads/Guide-to-Information-FOI.pdf>
- 1.4 We will provide opportunities for our tenants, owners, customers, staff, Board members and any other relevant stakeholders to be involved or to influence our decision-making process.
- 1.5 We will aim to adopt best practice, ensure equality and value for money.

## **2 SCOPE**

For the purposes of this policy it is deemed to include the following organisations: Weslo Housing Management all employees (permanent, temporary or contracted) and any other internal/external stakeholder.

## **3 CONSULTATION**

### **Tenants**

- 3.1 Our Tenant Participation strategy outlines how we will meet our legal obligations in accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. <https://www.weslo-housing.org/wp-content/uploads/OPS045-Tenant-Participation-Strategy-1.pdf>

### **Staff**

- 3.2 Our Managing Performance policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of managing performance throughout the organisation. The related procedure outlines the ongoing and regular communication mechanisms in place between staff and their line managers to ensure staff:
  - a. are aware of company business plans and performance standards
  - b. understands their role in the organisation,
  - c. are clear about performance standards required of them
  - d. are getting feedback about current performance levels
  - e. are motivated and supported by their managers

- f. are supported to achieve and develop by having any performance issue effectively addressed in a timely manner

## **Staff Forum**

- 3.3 Weslo has a staff forum which is representative of each department across the company and is chaired by the Human Resources Director. The staff forum is an information and consultative group body providing an opportunity for dialogue and exchange of views between Management and staff representatives on issues of mutual concern and interest.
- 3.4 It is not a forum for collective bargaining nor is it intended to replace or undermine existing methods and channels of communication but rather to enhance them. It is intended to provide a forum to discuss issues which affect the whole workforce and:
  - a. promote an exchange of views between management and staff on issues of mutual interest
  - b. test new ideas and approaches with staff
  - c. provide an opportunity for the views of staff to be taken into account in making decisions which are likely to affect their interests
- 3.5 Matters for communication and consultation may include the following:
  - a. Business Planning
  - b. Staffing Policies and Procedures
  - c. Jobs and employment
  - d. Major organisational changes
  - e. Health and Wellbeing
  - f. Company events
  - g. Fundraising

## **4 HOW WE WILL COMMUNICATE**

- 4.1 We will use different ways to communicate and seek views from our stakeholders; we will take account of individual needs and preferences and provide feedback. The variety of methods we use, but not exclusive to, are listed below:
  - a. Letters and emails
  - b. Tenant Newsletters
  - c. Telephone calls and texts
  - d. An annual general meeting [AGM] and financial report
  - e. Our annual performance report on the Charter [ARC]
  - f. Our annual governance Assurance Report
  - g. Social media via Weslo's website, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn
  - h. Face to face contact
  - i. Press releases
  - j. Leaflets, posters
  - k. Meetings
  - l. Through Tenant Scrutineers, Tenant Participation group or staff representatives
- 4.2 Our written communications can be made available in a range of format including large print, audio, alternative language and braille.
- 4.3 We will use plain English or provide explanations of any necessary jargon used in our communications.

- 4.4 Through our membership of “Happy to Translate”, we can provide translation support to those customers where English is not their first language.

## **5 HOW WILL WE RESPOND**

- 5.1 We aim to respond to customer enquiries by their preferred communication method e.g. letter, email, telephone, third party (when authorised to do so) or in person.
- 5.2 We will answer telephone calls promptly, identify ourselves and will call back within 24 hours if we cannot answer the enquiry immediately or if the member of staff you wish to speak to is not available.
- 5.3 We will aim to respond to all written and email communications within 5 working days, and to write to customers again if it will take longer to investigate more complex queries. Where issues relate to Data Protection or Freedom of Information the timescales specified within these policies will take precedence.
- 5.4 Full information on the standards of service customers can expect are detailed within our Customer Care document [appendix 1]

## **6 WHAT WE DO WITH FEEDBACK WE RECEIVE**

- 6.1 Feedback from consultation and reviews will be used to assist the Executive Team and Board to make any informed decisions about any changes in the way we deliver services. All comments received remain confidential.
- 6.2 Periodically, we will publish feedback on what changes we have made or are considering as a direct result of feedback received. We will use a variety of ways to ensure that as many customers as possible have access to feedback.
- 6.3 All Board minutes are published on our website in accordance with FOI. This gives our customers the opportunity to understand our decision-making process.

## **7 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 The purpose of the Scottish Social Housing Charter [the Charter] sets outcomes and standards that all social landlords are expected to meet. The Charter sets out the levels of service tenants should expect from their landlord [us].
- 7.2 We have therefore developed a performance framework to ensure our targets are measured, are in line with the Charter, and that these are submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator [SHR] and published annually. Our Performance report and is available on our website, hard copies are available on request.
- 7.3 Key performance indicators are reported to our Board and staff are updated at regular team meetings. We report annually to all tenants in our performance report and will update the Tenants Panel at regular intervals with performance reporting

## **8 COMPLAINTS**

- 8.1 We have implemented a Complaints Handling Policy and procedure which has been based on the Scottish Ombudsman model and has been approved by the Board.
- 8.2 We will provide staff with regular complaints handling training.

8.3 The Board is advised monthly of the number of complaints received and response times in addition to a more detailed analysis of complaints on a quarterly basis.

## **9 MEDIA**

9.1 Any media enquiries or press releases must be handled by the Executive Team.

## **10 TRAINING AND AWARENESS**

10.1 Training on this policy will be arranged for all staff and refreshed every three years. All staff and Board members are required to comply with our Social Media Policy [\[Link\]](#)

## **11 CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION**

11.1 All employees and Board members are required to respect confidentiality, our Data Protection policies and procedures and sign up to Code of Conduct on an annual basis. The Code of Conduct outlines the behaviours we expect staff and Board members to abide by and it also used to ensure the highest standards of probity and honesty, transparency and accountability.

## **12 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

12.1 This Policy will always be carried out in accordance with Weslo's Policy of Equality & Diversity which aims to promote diversity, fairness, social justice and equality of opportunity by adopting and promoting fair policies and procedures.

## **13 PUBLICISING AND AVAILABILITY**

13.1 This policy is available on the Weslo website, to Board and staff members and any other key stakeholders. Copies are available free of charge. A summary of this policy can be made available in other formats and languages.

## **14 MONITORING & REPORTING**

14.1 This policy will be reviewed regularly annually in line with the Business Planning process to facilitate and demonstrate continuous improvement in stakeholder engagement.

## **15. OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

This Policy relates to:

- a. Managing Performance Policy
- b. Tenant Participation Strategy
- c. Staff forum constitution
- d. Employee Handbook
- e. Code of Conduct
- f. Data Protection Policy

And these must be read in conjunction with this Policy.

## **Appendix 1**

## CUSTOMER CARE SERVICE STANDARDS

We define Customer as anyone we deal with in our day to day work who is not an employee of Weslo and includes tenants, former tenants, staff, Board members, owner occupiers, contractors and other customers.

Our internal service standards ensure that all our customers are dealt with in a consistent manner and receive prompt and courteous attention at all times.

When using any of our services, internally or externally, you can expect our staff to:

- deliver our services in a friendly, welcoming and professional manner
- treat you with courtesy and respect
- be efficient and effective in our dealings with you
- deal with your requests, enquiries and concerns promptly
- provide you with accurate and relevant advice
- treat you equally and without discrimination
- maintain confidentiality at all times
- accommodate any special needs
- communicate and provide information in ways that meet your needs

The following customer care service standards outline the levels of service you can expect when you contact or meet with us.

Contact Method	Standard
Visits to our Office	<p>We will deal efficiently and professionally with all visitors to reception.</p> <p>The time taken to deal with each visitor will vary depending on the nature of the enquiry, which will be recorded and monitored on a weekly basis by the HRD and reviewed monthly by the SMT. This will include time taken to deal with the enquiry from arrival to conclusion.</p> <p>Visitor satisfaction with time taken to deal with enquiry as well as quality of service received will be captured using a token system at reception for rating service as:</p> <p>Excellent service, Good service or Fair/Poor Service</p> <p>This will form part of the overall monitoring of customer service by our reception and other colleagues [where appropriate].</p>
Telephone	<p>We aim to answer 100% of incoming calls.</p> <p>Our staff will identify themselves and ask for your name and the nature of your enquiry. This will enable us to pass you to the most appropriate person to deal with your enquiry. If the person you wish to speak to is unavailable, we will provide you with direct contact details or offer to put you through to someone else who will be in a position to help. If this is not appropriate, we will take details and arrange an appropriate time to return your call within 24 hours.</p>

Written communications	<p>We aim to acknowledge 100% of all correspondence that requires a response within 5 working days.</p> <p>In certain circumstances where there is a requirement to respond within a statutory timescale, we will respond within the timescales outlined in the relevant policy.</p>
Electronic Communication (email)	We aim to acknowledge 100% of all email correspondence that requires a response within 5 working day. We will provide a send detailed response within 10 working days.
Pre- arranged visits to your home	We aim 100% of the time to give 7 working days' notice of time for pre- arranged visits to your home. In the event that the appointment date and time is not convenient we will endeavour to meet any requests for a specific appointment.
Complaints	We have a separate complaints policy which outlines our customer care standards. This is available on our website or on request from your local office.