

# Customer Care Policy

Version No.: P009 v1

## Gwella Contracting Services

## Record of Amendments

| Amendment no | Date | Signature |
|--------------|------|-----------|
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|              |      |           |

If you have any comments / suggestions for improvements to this Policy or are missing any of the amendments then please contact the Technical Department:

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. An integral part of Gwella Contracting Services ethos is that we take great pride in delivering excellent service to our clients and their occupants. This commitment is designed to support our deliverance and will ensure that Gwella Contracting Services always provide a consistent and high standard of service.
- 1.2. We will always aim to deliver an excellent service to all of our customers. This will be achieved in the following ways;
  - By providing easy access through a choice of access channels to ensure that all customers can access the services they need in the way that they want. This can be either face to face, or by telephone, fax, letter, email or web-site.
  - By consistently striving to provide quality services and improving on our service delivery year-on-year. This performance will be measured by company/client defined key performance indicators (KPI's) and feedback received from our clients and their customers.
  - By utilising our previous experience of dealing with asbestos surveys and removals within properties;
  - And through consultation with existing clients and staff.
- 1.3. This document has been developed to assist all staff, office or site based, with delivering our high quality services within this bespoke industry sector, by adopting practices, procedures and principles which will deliver consistency and resolution at first point of contact and enable continuous service improvements.
- 1.4. We have set the following 'Key Points' which we expect all staff to ascribe to in order to assist us in achieving the best customer care possible;
  - Demonstrate a positive attitude.
  - Take pride in their work and the appearance of their work environment.
  - Be helpful and anticipate customer needs, whether this is on the telephone or face to face.
  - Respond to queries or correspondence promptly.
  - Say "I'll find out for you" rather than "I don't know"
  - Be polite and courteous at all times.
  - Take pride in the appearance of company vehicles and tools, and dress appropriately for the work to be carried out.
  - Be knowledgeable and up to date with current policies and procedures within Gwella Contracting Services.
  - Respect peoples' privacy and dignity at all times.
  - Ensure clients always know the person taking responsibility for the work, and that all major issues will be dealt with by a senior member of the staff.
  - Act in a manner that meets Gwella Contracting Services and our client's expectations.

- Improve customer satisfaction by enhancing the client's experience from instruction to completion.
- Be determined to enhance the company's reputation.
- Be determined to become the Consultancy of choice.
- Be determined to retain existing clients.

## **2. What is Customer Care?**

- 2.1. All of our staff members are here to provide an excellent standard of service. From Management through to Operational Staff, we recognise that customer care is about treating other people in the same way that we would like to be treated.
- 2.2. Customer care means providing good quality services in a friendly, efficient and helpful way, and continually striving to improve services by ensuring good communication and a positive attitude to customers
- 2.3. Our customers want accessible, efficient and cost effective services and we are committed to meeting these demands. Because of that we will always;
  - Provide transparency by being open and honest with customers.
  - Offer choices.
  - Provide consistent information, regardless of how the customer chooses to be contacted.
  - Give clear concise details whilst being prepared to explain. Where we are unable to assist, we will always take the customers details and forward them to the appropriate member of staff for response, at all times relaying this information to the customer and advising them of our plan of action.

## **3. Customer Care Principles**

- 3.1. We have found that the foundation for delivering quality services and projecting the right corporate image is by adopting standards that will form the baseline for our corporate approach to delivering professional customer care.
- 3.2. Our experience has enabled us to develop and implement the following Customer Care principles; because of this we will always aim to;
  - Be attentive and courteous.
  - Be honest and fair in dealing with customers.
  - Respond quickly to requests for assistance.
  - Provide services that are fair and accessible to all.
  - Set and publish standards for all services.
  - Record, monitor and publish complaints and compliments.
  - Ensure complaints are dealt with openly and fairly.
  - Actively seek the views of customers and staff.
  - Consult and survey customers on a regular basis.
  - Review our customer and staff care commitments.
  - Share good practice.

- 3.3. Part of our on-going staff development programme will ensure that we highlight areas of good practice when it comes to providing an excellent standard of Customer Care and also share these amongst our clients and suppliers; we will therefore not be shy about promoting our services and praising those who excel in this area.
- 3.4. We will always acknowledge the hard work and innovation displayed by our staff.
- 3.5. We will look to introduce robust systems so that good practice can be communicated to all staff.

#### **4. Customer Identification – Understanding our customer, their needs and expectations**

- 4.1. To deliver excellent services it is essential that Gwella Contracting Services understand our clients and the homeowners/occupants that they represent. Understanding the level of service required by the client will allow us to provide the first class service demanded in this industry.
- 4.2. When working in properties it is important that all members of our team, whether onsite operatives or office staff fully understand what behaviour is expected of them when dealing with occupants of properties and whilst undertaking the delivery of our services.
- 4.3. We will expect our staff to always remember that they are working in someone's home/property and to respect the people within these homes/properties and the homes/properties themselves.

#### **5. Customer Satisfaction**

- 5.1. Customer satisfaction will be achievable by providing an excellent service; however we recognise that we must always listen to our clients and with their feedback we will be able to continue to improve our customer satisfaction. Consultation with our own staff will be vital to ensuring complete customer satisfaction.

#### **6. Staff Professionalism and attitude**

- 6.1. Our commitment to delivering excellent services starts with the recruitment and training of our staff, which in turn begins with induction, training, learning, development and performance review and appraisal for all our staff; this will enable us to place priority and emphasis on demonstrating customer focus. Our policies, procedures and guidelines will clearly state our expectations regarding the highest possible standards of communication, response and behaviour.
- 6.2. Staff recognition will be used to highlight and promote excellence in this area with customer feedback being a primary measure in identifying high performing branches, teams and individuals.

## 7. Information and Communication

- 7.1. We recognise that all customers are individuals and should be treated as such. They should be given the same level of service that we would wish to receive. Our staff will be polite and attentive at all times.
- 7.2. We place our customers at the centre of everything that we do. As a result, it is imperative that we ensure that contacting us is a simple, easy and convenient experience for every customer.
- 7.3. Staff communication with our customers at present is mainly via telephone, email, and letter or on occasion when customers visit our offices. However we are actively looking to implement other mediums, such as texting and web based applications which will help us to communicate more effectively with some customers, such as younger people, and may also offer cost savings.
- 7.4. It is important to make use of information that we already hold and collate when clients and occupants of properties are contacted to avoid the need for customers having to provide information more than once. We will be specific about the services we will provide and how and when they will be delivered and make sure that communication with customers is accurate and timely. To help us to achieve this, the information we hold about customers will be kept up to date.
- 7.5. Some customers may find asking for advice or clarification difficult; therefore it is our responsibility to help them make the most of the services we offer without making them feel inadequate.
- 7.6. We will be aware of and respect customer's differing needs and cultural diversity whether that be the first language spoken, family structure, religious beliefs, physical and sensory impairments, or learning difficulties.
- 7.7. We will respect the confidentiality of all information (whether held electronically or on paper) that we handle recognising that most of it is of a personal nature. Our staff will always be made aware of the requirements under data protection legislation and how it applies to their work. We will never give information we have obtained about an individual to any other person unless we have that individual's specific permission to do so.
- 7.8. We will always try to avoid use of jargon and acronyms.
- 7.9. **Serving Customers Face to Face.** The following expectations will form part of our training process for Client facing staff responsible for Customer care within the Social Housing Sector, this list is not exhaustive but demonstrates the level we expect all staff to achieve;

- Where applicable, make eye contact and greet all customers with a friendly greeting, "Good morning" for example.
- Show that we are listening attentively and, to clarify a situation, respond as appropriate with a nod, a smile or "reflection" of what is being said.
- If the customer has a sensory impairment, ascertain whether there is a need for interpretation to be provided.
- If the customer does not speak English as their first language, ascertain whether there is a need for interpretation to be provided.
- Ensure complete confidentiality this would include ensuring that one customer cannot overhear your conversation with another customer.
- If customers are waiting, acknowledge them and explain that you will attend to them as soon as you can. People do not usually mind waiting if they can see you are busy and know that you will give them your full attention as soon as you are able. Do not try to deal with more than one customer at a time.
- Remember that arrangements should be made to ensure that someone else responds to the telephone while you continue to serve customers in a queue without interruption. Do not hold, or continue to hold, unnecessary conversations with colleagues, friends, family or other customers while you are attending to a Customer.
- Sometimes there is a need to find diplomatic ways of cutting short conversations with 'over friendly' customers when other customers are being inconvenienced.
- Do not talk about customers, other staff, policy decisions or confidential matters (or express your personal observations on shortcomings in the service) at any time when you can be heard by others.
- Courtesy is also expected from customers. Rudeness is not tolerated and for customers who behave in an unacceptable way this may result in our refusal to undertake work within their premises. You have approval to politely refuse to carry on with any discussion if you are subjected to:
  - Foul language; offensive and abusive behaviour; threats or physical violence.
  - Physical violence can never be tolerated and should be reported to your Manager immediately.

**7.10. Serving Customers on the Telephone.** The following expectations will form part of our training process for staff responsible for Customer care within the Social Housing Sector and any enquiries received via the telephone, this list is not exhaustive but demonstrates the level we expect all staff to achieve;

- Answer the phone promptly. **No phone should be left ringing**, even over lunch time.
- Never keep the caller waiting once the call is connected.
- Don't continue previous conversations as you pick up the receiver.
- Smile as you pick up the receiver - it makes your voice sound friendlier.
- Answer by saying something along the lines of: *"Good Morning/Afternoon, Gwella Contracting Services"* Or *"Gwella Contracting Services, Amy speaking"*

- Be sure of what customers want by listening attentively. Remember that they cannot see nods or smiles, so verbal prompts are needed.
- If the customer has a sensory impairment, ascertain whether there is a need for interpretation to be provided. Customers who are hearing impaired or who have speech difficulties may prefer to communicate by Fax or by "Typetalk".
- If it becomes apparent that another person or department should deal with the enquiry, then make sure that the call is transferred to the right number. **Customers must not be 'passed around the houses'.** Make sure first that you have agreed your course of action with the customer.
- If you cannot help a customer there and then, arrange to call them back later when you have found the information required. Take their full contact details including name, address and telephone number and a brief synopsis of the nature of the enquiry. **Do not forget to call them back, or make sure that someone else calls back on your behalf.**
- Before you end the call, go over exactly what is expected of both parties to avoid confusion.
- It will be helpful to give your name or title in case of any follow up.
- If you take a telephone message, write legibly and include the following:
- Who the message is for; date and time of call; the caller's name (ask for spelling if you're not sure); the caller's phone number (and organisation if appropriate); a brief summary of the message; any action needed e.g. who will call who back; and your name.

7.11. **Contact with Customers via Letters or E-mail.** The following expectations will form part of our training process for staff responsible for Customer care within the Social Housing Sector and initiating contact via letter or email, this list is not exhaustive but demonstrates the level we expect all staff to achieve;

- We need to recognise with letters and e-mail all we have are words. Without the right tone, misunderstandings or offence could easily happen, or an important working relationship could be lost. Good writers learn to choose their words very carefully and get the tone just right.
  - Reply to the letter or e-mail promptly.
  - Adopt a courteous tone.
  - Include your name and contact number on all letters.
  - Use Plain English.
  - If the customer has a sensory impairment, ascertain whether there is a need for translation to be provided. Customers who are blind or visually impaired may request information on audiotape, Braille or large print.
  - If the customer does not speak English as their first language, ascertain whether there is a need for translation to be provided.
  - Use minimum 14pt standard Arial font for customers who are visually impaired.

The following additional points need to be remembered when composing e-mails

- Avoid the use of 'strange' fonts and symbols (some e-mail software cannot read them).
- Start your e-mails with a polite greeting.
- The recipient needs to know with whom they are dealing. Set up a Gwella corporate signature at the end of your message to give your full name, job title, telephone number and office details.

- Avoid poorly formatted messages in one continuous paragraph, poorly structured messages that are not specific in the response required, messages written all in capitals (equivalent to SHOUTING) or all in lower case.
- Use short words and simple expressions, short sentences and short paragraphs that are clear and concise, but still courteous.
- Use the spell checking facility; letters and e-mails with poor spelling or grammar reflect badly on us.

## **8. Client Confidentiality**

**8.1. As a UKAS accredited organisation, following ISO/IEC 17020:2012 standards, we are committed at every level and in all aspects of the service we offer to provide a confidential service to all our clients. This means that:**

- Information will be treated in the utmost confidence and will not be divulged to anyone outside the organisation.
- No conversation about a client will take place with anyone who does not work for Gwella Contracting Services or directly for the client.
- No personal information about a client will be given to any third party even if the person is a member of their family.
- Information will only be passed to another agency with the written consent of the client.

## **9. Safeguarding**

**9.1. Gwella Contracting Services has a responsibility with regard to safeguarding vulnerable adults and children. Procedures on Safeguarding will be agreed between our clients and Gwella Contracting Services and we will adhere to client specific requirements towards safeguarding within their properties. Such procedures will include a requirement that a Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) to the Enhanced Level (or Independent Safeguarding Authority equivalent) shall be obtained for all Surveyors.**

## **10. Dealing with Complaints/Disputes**

- 10.1.** At Gwella Contracting Services we believe that it is vital when undertaking asbestos removal work within occupied properties to engage with the occupants and to listen to and learn from their feedback.
- 10.2.** In the unlikely event of a complaint being made against us, it is incumbent upon the Quality Manager to log the complaint and to investigate accordingly.
- 10.3.** On receiving a complaint a 'Non-Conformance Report Form' will be completed and the incident will be logged on the company 'Non-Conformance Register'. It is the responsibility of the Quality Manager to ensure the complaint is dealt with promptly and in line with any SLA requirements. It is also the responsibility of the Quality Manager to ensure corrective/preventative measures are put in place, where required.

- 10.4. Gwella will fully investigate the occurrence of all complaints and will put corrective and preventative action in place to ensure that the incident does not happen again. The findings of the complaint/preventative action will be disseminated throughout the company (if applicable), in order for the whole company to be aware of the lessons learnt.
- 10.5. At all stages of this process our clients will be kept aware of the situation and advised of our proposed remediation measures.
- 10.6. If at any stage the occupant of the property or the client is dissatisfied with either the progress in resolving the issue or with the proposed measures to rectify the problem, the complaint can be referred to the Quality Manager and ultimately directly to the Director.
- 10.7. All complaints are dealt with in accordance with our Non-Conformance procedures, as set out in our Quality Manual.

## **11. Delivery**

- 11.1. Customer consultation implies that our customers want services delivered in an efficient, professional manner and in a way that suits them. They want problems to be resolved quickly, ideally by their first point of contact and they want to be kept informed of progress regularly. They need to be listened to and their views taken into account, which is what all of us require when receiving services.
- 11.2. We will ensure that we always conduct our business in ways to ensure our success in this regard, that means always demonstrating the appropriate behaviour and ensuring our employees have the right skills, knowledge and information available to them.
- 11.3. We will implement our Customer Care Policy along with bespoke processes and procedures, and make this information available to all relevant staff enabling front-line employees to respond to customer needs at the first point of contact regardless of what channel they choose to contact us. Our services will therefore be delivered transparently and consistently.
- 11.4. Value for money is important for both our customers and for the success of our organisation; we will therefore look for ways of working more efficiently within a culture where staff will be enabled to deliver a "right first time" approach.