

Policy Summary

Communicating with customers

Customer summary of a Genesis Housing Group policy

This policy sets out Genesis Housing Group's approach to communicating with customers. It applies to all forms of communication with customers, except those customers who come under Pathmeads contract management. This includes customers living in City West and Hackney Homes properties.

Introduction

We are committed to keeping customers informed and communicating effectively with them.

We aim to:

- provide clear and tailored communications that are informative and relevant to customers
- ensure that all our customers have equal access to information, and that this information is provided in a format suitable for each customer's needs
- provide value for money in our communication services
- ensure consistency in how we communicate and in how we manage requests for translations.

Definitions

Customer: Anyone who uses our core services, including tenants, leaseholders, shared owners, people who receive support services from us, domiciliary care or people involved in our community development work.

Translation: The conversion of written text from one language to another.

Interpretation: The conversion of speech from one language to another, including British Sign language and other sign languages.

Plain English: Clear and concise language that the intended audience can understand and act upon from a single reading. Documents in plain English will be free of jargon.

Service commitment

We have a service commitment setting out a minimum set of standards which customers can expect from us when they contact us. We will provide information that is accurate, reliable, clear, and free of jargon. We will be polite, and our staff will be trained in customer care.

Writing and style

We will write our written material in a way that is easy to read and understand and is free from jargon. When we send rent statements or legal documents to residents, we will include a clear explanation of the content of the document.

Wherever possible, we will print our written material for customers in font size 11 or above to ensure that it is easy to read. We will use pictures and symbols to communicate information effectively to people with learning disabilities, where appropriate.

We will design our publications in a way that will make information clear and easy to read. We will aim to make newsletters and leaflets visually appealing, to encourage customers to read the news, information and advice contained in the document.

Translating and interpreting

When we receive a request to translate a document, we will consider whether a verbal interpretation or a translation of part of the document might be preferable to translating the whole document.

If appropriate, where a customer does not speak or understand English, we will communicate with them via a friend, relative or support worker, where the customer has given permission for us to do this. Where the family member is under 18 years old, this will not always be appropriate – for example, if the subject matter relates to legal action, harassment, or any other sensitive issue.

If a customer is unable to understand spoken or written English we will provide, on request:

- verbal explanation of information

- written translations of key documents into any language, Braille or audio
- verbal interpreters/telephone interpretation at interviews or meetings (including Type Talk - a service which connects people who cannot speak or hear on the phone, with other people using a telephone)
- translators (signers or lip speakers) for hearing impaired people
- information in large print (font size 14 or larger)
- information by text message.

We will also translate sections of occupancy agreements, or will provide a verbal interpretation. We will not usually provide a full translation of occupancy agreements and customers will always sign the English language version of their occupancy agreement and not the translated version of the text.

All publications and letters sent to customers will clearly display how they can obtain the information in large print, Braille, audio format, or in their own language. This information will be in large print English, and in the main community languages, which will be taken from our customer profiling data.

We will translate key documents, including our Service Commitment leaflet, into our main community languages automatically.

We will use approved agencies for any translation or interpretation work. We will hold a central database of staff members who speak another language and who are willing to interpret/translate for colleagues, where possible and where appropriate.

At the same time as producing translations or interpretations in different languages, we will provide information on available English courses where appropriate.

Timescales

We aim to provide written translations in an alternative language within 10 working days of receiving a request.

If a customer requests an interpretation service by phone, at a home visit or when they come into our offices, we will aim to arrange this right away, either using an external agency to interpret over the phone, or by arranging for a member of staff to interpret face to face. If this is not possible, we will arrange another appointment within 10 working days when the interview can take place with an interpreter.

Translators (signers or lip speakers) for hearing impaired customers, Braille, audio cassettes and CD will take longer to arrange. An appointment will be organised on the day of the request wherever possible and the customer notified of the appointment within two working days.

Access to meetings

We will provide the best possible access to meetings. This includes having disabled access and facilities. Invitations and publicity for events will include details of who to contact to arrange additional services, such as a translator. We will meet requests for extra services where it is reasonable to do so within available resources.

Websites

Customers will be able to find information and access services online. We will avoid using flashing or moving text to ensure our website is accessible to all customers. We will use pictures and symbols to enhance understanding and simplify use. Customers will be able to adjust the text size, colour, and overall visual settings of the website. We will also enable customers to listen to text in audio format and create a translated version of the content of the site

Emails and text messaging

As with all written correspondence, communication via text message or e-mail will be free from jargon and will be polite and professional in tone. Text messages will not be used for communicating confidential and personal information, such as rent arrears. Text messaging will not replace other primary methods of contacting our customers, but will be used as an additional communication tool.

Identifying communications needs

We will work towards collecting and recording the communication requirements of our customers. Where we know this information, we aim to communicate with our customers in their preferred format proactively. We will evaluate the data on communication preferences on an annual basis and amend the main community languages in which we advertise our translation services accordingly. We will share information on customer communication needs with our contractors and partners when this is relevant to service provision.

Proactive translations

We will use the data on customer communication needs to inform our approach and tailor our services. We will endeavour to provide translations and interpreting services proactively where staff are aware of an alternative communication need.

Training staff

Training and guidance will be given to all relevant staff to ensure they are sensitive to the diverse needs of our customers. We will provide all staff with equality and diversity training which will include information on communication tools available. Plain English training will be made available to all members of staff.

Contact us

If you would like a copy of the full policy please contact the Policy Team on **020 8150 4112** or email **info@ghg.org.uk**



If you are a **PCHA customer** phone us on **020 8150 4000** or email **info@pcha.org.uk** www.pcha.org.uk



If you are a **Springboard Housing Association customer** phone us on **020 8475 0033** or email **info@springboardha.org.uk** www.springboardha.org.uk



If you are a **Pathmeads customer** phone us on one of the numbers below:
Temporary housing 020 8900 4900
Octavia Hill 020 8900 4998
Key Places 020 7380 9025
or email **info@pathmeads.org.uk** www.pathmeads.org.uk



If you are a **St Matthew Housing customer** phone us on **01284 732550** or email **info@stmatthewhousing.org** www.stmatthewhousing.org

If you need any part of this information in large print, Braille, on audio tape or explained in your own language please contact us on the number below.

Si necesita esta información en Braille, en CD, en cinta o en su propio idioma, póngase en contacto con nosotros en el teléfono siguiente.

Spanish

إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على أي جزء من هذه المعلومات مطبوعاً بأحرف كبيرة أو بطريقة برايل أو مسجلاً على اسطوانة مدمجة أو شريط صوتي أو مشروحاً باللغة التي تتحدثها، يرجى الاتصال بنا على الرقم الموضح أدناه.

Arabic

যদি আপনি এই তথ্যগুলোর যে কোন একটির সম্বন্ধে বিস্তারিত জানতে চান, অথবা আপনার নিজের ভাষাতে ব্রেল, সিডি, অডিও টেপ-এ পেতে চান তাহলে নিম্নলিখিত নম্বরে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Bengali

Si vous souhaitez obtenir une partie de ces informations en Braille, sur CD, cassette audio ou expliqué dans votre langue, veuillez nous contacter au numéro indiqué ci-dessous.

French

જો તમારે કોઈ પણ ભાગની આ માહિતી બ્રેઈલ, સીડી ટેપર, ઓડિયો ટેપ અથવા તમારી પોતાની ભાષામાં સમજી શકો તેની જરૂર હોય તો નીચે જણાવેલ નંબર ટેપર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

Gujarati

Se necessitar de parte desta informação em caracteres aumentados, em Braille, em CD, cassete áudio ou apresentada no seu idioma, por favor contacte-nos, através do telefone abaixo indicado.

Portugese

Haddaad u baahan tahay warkan afkaaga-hooyo, afka loogu talagalay dadka aan arki karaan – afka faraha ama CD-ga ama ajeladda rekorka nala xirir. Namberkan isticmaal.

Somali

**Telephone 020 7563 0037
or email info@ghg.org.uk**