

Customer Care Policy

Introduction

Karin is committed to providing a good quality service to tenants, applicants, the general public and others with whom we have contact. This policy is about the services we provide, the standards we aim to achieve and the expectations we have of our residents.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

- You can get advice and information on all our policies and services that affect you by telephoning us or visiting our office during opening hours.
- You can make an appointment with our housing staff to discuss more complicated problems.
- All new residents will receive a tenant handbook containing important information about their home and the services provided by Karin.
- We issue four newsletters to our tenants each year.
- We produce an annual report which will include our performance over the year under review.

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

Telephone calls

We will:

- answer all calls promptly, courteously and politely;
- respond to all telephone messages by the next working day;
- arrange for an officer to respond to any urgent calls or enquiries within 24 hours.

Office

We will:

- ensure our office has a welcoming environment for tenants and other visitors;
- see all visitors to the office within five minutes of arrival and will interview callers in a private area or office to respect confidentiality.

Home Visits

- We will:

KARIN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

- visit tenants at home if requested;
- always treat tenants, household members and possessions with respect;
- carry identification when visiting your home;
- explain our reasons for visiting if we call without giving prior notice to you.

Letters

- We will:
 - acknowledge or reply to a letter within 7 working days;
 - provide translations where required;
 - provide a straightforward response to tenants' enquiries;
 - when we cannot give you an answer immediately, let you know when we will be able to do so and give reasons for the delay.

Staff

- Staff will always be courteous and professional.
- We will:
 - issue all staff with identity cards that can be produced upon request;
 - ensure that tenants know who their housing officer is;
 - offer appointments and home visits with housing officers;
 - give you as much notice as possible if we are unable to keep an appointment and offer an alternative date to you.

COMPLAINTS

We will:

- Implement a fair and accessible system for making complaints and advertise the procedure for doing so.
- Acknowledge all complaints within three working days of receiving them.
- Settle complaints sensitively, apologise if we have made a mistake and learn from our mistakes.
- Allow you personal representation or to have another person act on your behalf.
- Aim to answer all complaints in full within the agreed timescales.
- Publish records of complaints to tenants and to stakeholders.

We expect you to:

KARIN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

- Be polite to our staff.
- Report any concerns to our staff as quickly as possible.
- Provide us with information we need to be able to assist you.
- Update us on any changes in your circumstances to ensure that we have accurate information.
- Let us know if you are unable to keep an appointment with us.

SERVICES

We will:

- Provide tenants with a statement of their rent account on request.
- Explain what rent and service charge covers.
- Review service charge costs to ensure value for money.
- Endeavour to keep rent levels affordable and within Government guidelines.
- Help you complete Housing Benefit claims.
- Take action to prevent and minimise arrears of rent;.
- Recover bad debts from former tenants.
- Undertake annual occupancy checks of all tenancies in order to combat illegal subletting.
- Consult with tenants and other service users when we are reviewing our services to seek their views and gauge their satisfaction.
- Provide tenants with details of cleaning specifications for their blocks of flats, if appropriate.
- Ensure that all communal and shared areas are maintained to a good standard and regularly inspect communal areas.
- Handle all complaints promptly and sensitively.
- Provide an out-of-hours emergency response service to our tenants.
- Work with external support services to provide support to vulnerable tenants in our general needs properties.

We expect you to:

- Pay your rent promptly.
- Inform us of any difficulty in making payments;
- Make claims for Housing Benefit promptly and renew claims within timescales.

ALLOCATIONS AND LETTINGS

KARIN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

We will aim to:

- Assess all applications quickly.
- Be sensitive to the needs and circumstances of all applicants.
- Review our waiting list every six months.
- Advise applicants and transfer cases of their position on the waiting list.
- Let our homes to people in need and ensure that we are fair to all our applicants.
- Accompany people to view new homes wherever possible.
- Sign-up tenants with the minimum bureaucracy.
- Provide information about our services at sign up.
- Assist people to settle into their new homes.
- Provide information on lettings in our quarterly newsletters and annual report.

We expect you to:

- Give us accurate information about yourself on your housing application.
- Give us accurate information about your household and what needs there are.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

We will aim to:

- Meet our repairing obligations as outlined in the tenancy agreement.
- Have a repair satisfaction slip on our repair orders to our contractors that should be filled in by the tenant when the repair is completed.
- Respond to any work marked as "poor".
- Offer an out of hour's repairs service for emergencies.
- Meet our legal obligations by carrying out an annual gas safety check.
- Inspect at least 20% of all completed repairs to assess the standard of work.
- Offer repair appointments that are as convenient as possible.
- Ensure that all contractors comply with a Code of Conduct set by us and carry identification.
- Carry out annual cyclical repairs to properties identified in our stock condition survey and consult with tenants about such work.
- Seek the view of tenants on the standard of our repairs service at regular intervals.

We expect you to:

KARIN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

- Observe our published timescales for completing repairs.
- Give reasonable access to your home for repairs.
- Inform us quickly when repair needs arise.
- Keep your home in good decorative order and keep communal areas tidy.
- Use the out of hour's service in emergencies only.
- Pay for the cost of repairing any damage caused by you, your visitors, or your household.

NEIGHBOUR DISPUTES, NUISANCE AND HARASSMENT

We will aim to:

- Investigate all cases sensitively, fairly and within published timescales.
- Offer mediation in such cases if considered appropriate or useful and if agreed with the parties involved.
- Respond quickly to serious incidents and deal firmly with those who breach their tenancy conditions.
- Work with tenants, voluntary agencies and community groups to combat anti-social behaviour.
- Remove graffiti within 28 working days.
- Provide additional security or alternative accommodation to people in danger.

We expect you to:

- Make children and visitors aware of the need for good behaviour.
- Keep us informed of ongoing problems.
- Give positive consideration to attempting mediation if the need arises.
- Try to resolve differences with neighbours directly before involving Karin.
- Understand Karin's limitations when dealing with antisocial behaviour and nuisance problems and have realistic expectations.

KARIN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

TRANSFERS

We will aim to:

- Give you information about all re-housing and purchasing options available to you.
- Promote opportunities for people to exchange their homes and try to "match" up potential partners for exchange.
- Let you know your position on the transfer list and points total.
- Let you know what alternatives are available.

We expect you to:

- Have a clear rent account before being eligible to move.
- All your home to be inspected to ensure it is in good condition before the move is agreed.

TENANT INVOLVEMENT, CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

We will aim to:

- Identify the best ways of hearing your views, e.g. meetings, surveys.
- Consult with you and take your views into account on the services we provide.
- Involve and consult tenants on all our service reviews.
- Ensure that the Board of Management has tenant representation and hears the result of consultation with tenants.
- Offer financial and other support to all tenants who wish to form a tenants' association.
- Assist tenants with arranging and running meetings and communicating with each other.

TENANT WELFARE AND SUPPORT

We will aim to:

- Provide advice on benefits to which you may be entitled.
- Assist with completion of forms.
- Refer tenants to specialist organisations providing advice, support, (e.g. welfare benefits), debt counselling.
- Liaise with local support agencies to ensure the needs of our vulnerable tenants are met, e.g. alcohol support, mental health agencies.

VOID PROPERTIES

KARIN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

We will aim to:

- Ensure that empty properties are turned around and let as soon as possible.
- Ensure that they are to an agreed minimum standard.
- Take quick action to evict unlawful occupants.

We expect you to:

- Give us four weeks' notice if you intend to vacate your property.
- Ensure your property is left in good condition.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- All staff will carry out their duties within an equal opportunities framework and will ensure that all our customers are treated fairly, equally and with respect.

We expect you to:

- Comply with equal opportunities and treat Karin staff and contractors with respect.