

Customer Access Policy

(2022 – 2025)

Document control

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Responsible Executive Director	Executive Director – Customer Insight
Author	Director – Community & Business Planning
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Version	Date of review	Details of review
1.1	August 2023	Additions to incorporate Unacceptable Behaviour.
1.0	November 2022	This Policy sets out the various channels through which our customers can access the services we provide.

1. Introduction

Livv Housing Group is committed to delivering flexible and personalised services, that are easily accessible to our customers through a variety of channels which best suit their needs. There is no one size fits all approach to customer service - different customers need different things and we are respectful of this and work hard to design our services that reflect our customer's feedback. Our priority is to make it easy for our customers to access the services they need in way that suits them best.

Our customers tell us that they prefer to contact us primarily by telephone and in the last year we received over 85,000 calls, 11,000 e-mails and 15,000 live chats from the people who live in our homes. We talk to our customers regularly and they are telling us more and more that alongside traditional communication channels, that they also want the opportunity to access our services online. They compare us to some of the best customer service providers in the market and expect us to rise to the challenge, and we welcome this.

In response to this feedback, we are developing opportunities for digital service delivery whilst recognising that not everyone will want to move to online. We also understand that there are some services which are best delivered face to face in the community or in a person's home and we have increased our resources in the communities to enable this to continue.

We have no ambition to move away from the current channels that our customers value and like to contact us through, but we are continuously challenging ourselves to modernise the way we in which we do things and include more digital engagement in our delivery model.

This Policy sets out the various channels through which our customers can access the services we provide. It is in place to:

- Inform and advise customers as to the choice of channels they can use to access our services.
- Describe our approach to developing new customer access channels, including digital and automated serve options.
- Explain how we will monitor the ease with which customers can access services and use this information to drive service improvements.

We are focussed on delivering a great customer experience, and will continue to develop our customer access channels in order meet and exceed our customers' expectations. We will look at what the best service providers are doing and benchmark our level of service and ease with those organisations.

2. **Scope**

The implementation and scope of the policy applies and is applicable to:
(Select the entity or entities the policy covers)

Livv Housing Group	X
Livv Homes	X
Livv Maintenance	X
First Ark Social Investment (Operating as Livv Investment)	
All entities	

3. **Compliance**

The policy is in place in order to support:

Regulatory Compliance, in particular the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard	X
Legislative Compliance, in particular the State the specific legislation(s)	
Best Practice	X

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard requires us to:

- Provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of our tenants in the delivery of all standards. Including providing accessible, relevant and timely information about:
 - How tenants can access services, and
 - How tenants can communicate with us and provide feedback.
- Demonstrate that we understand the different needs of our tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support. Including:
 - How we respond to tenants' needs in the way we provide services and communicate with tenants

4. **Policy Statement**

This policy sets out the ways that customers can access the various services we provide and our approach to developing new channels to suit customer needs.

How to contact us

Customers can contact us Monday to Friday 8am-8pm and Saturday 9.30am-1pm to request a service. This can be on the telephone, through live chat or by e-mail. We will respond to customer requests quickly and for those queries that are more complex where we need more time, we will keep customers informed about progress along the way.

Our staff are trained to ensure they can answer customers' queries or requests for service. Some customers want to find the answers to their questions without speaking to someone. Our website is rich with information and there are options for customers to self-serve for simple transactions. We

will expand this into more areas of service through the life of this policy. For customers who want to talk to us, they can speak directly with a member of our Contact Centre staff.

Outside of our opening hours, we are still here to provide support for emergencies. Our team are here to report things that can't wait 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Customers can also make rent payments via an automated telephone payment line (available 24 hours a day or through any PayPoint location).

Contacting us online

Our website is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at www.livvhousinggroup.com and customers can request services using the 'Contact Us' form. The website sets out all of the ways customers can contact us and our hours of operation.

We talk to customers to ensure that the content on our website is up to date and relevant. This is where we publish information on our performance against the things customers tell us are important.

Our Customer Portal, Livv Online, provides automated access to a number of services including:

- View outstanding reported repairs
- View rent balance
- Pay rent
- Update personal contact details
- Give feedback and ask questions

Talking to us in person

Our customers tell us that meeting face-to-face is not a priority and the days where customers need to travel to our office to ask for support are gone. We are out and about in our communities and our Housing Advisors spend the majority of time out with customers in the community and in their homes. We believe that this is an important investment in building relationships and supporting customers at the time and in the place they need it. This is especially important for more sensitive and complex enquiries where privacy is really important.

Private and confidential conversations need to be held in safe and neutral spaces. We work with a range of partners in the borough who will provide access to meeting spaces.

The pandemic told us how important it is for our customers to see people regularly and many of the people living in our homes can feel isolated and lonely at times. Having the opportunity to talk to our teams can have a real and positive impact on their wellbeing and we are here to support that.

Regular 'drop in' sessions at locations within our communities across the borough, where customers can meet the Livv Team, are part of our customer engagement programme. We'll review these regularly to ensure that customers are benefitting from this service.

Contacting us through social media

We are active on Facebook and share lots of information on our page that customers can access any time of day. We also take messages from social media which are dealt with by our Contact Centre.

We will continually review our use of social media to identify how we can use it to further improve the services we provide and the way customers can access these services.

Our most used services

Our most frequently used services and how to access them are detailed below:

	Telephone	E-mail	Livechat	Livv Online	PayPoint	Property Pool Plus
Rent payment	✓			✓	✓	
Rent enquiry	✓	✓	✓	✓		
New repairs	✓	✓	✓			
Existing repairs	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Lettings enquiries	✓	✓	✓			✓

Providing choice for our customers

Our priority is to provide choice for our customers in how to contact us and to make it easy when they do. We will continue to seek regular feedback about our contact channels and how customers value them.

A future where customers can deal with us digitally is on our agenda and we will continue to develop opportunities for customers to access automated services where it's easy for them to do so.

Customer Engagement

We want to talk to our customers regularly and understand how we can shape our services based on their feedback and experiences. This is at the heart of how we design our services. We talk to our customers and involve them in the decisions we make as a business.

We use surveys with our customers to ask "how easy was it to deal with us?" and "how satisfied are you with service provided?". We review the feedback to understand what is working well and how we can improve the services we offer. We share the results with our customers through the 'how we are doing' page on our website, which is updated every three months. We also provide a

summary of the improvements we have made as a result of this feedback in our Annual Report.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy sets out how we are committed to “*create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all*”. Our colleagues deserve to be treated with respect and we take a zero-tolerance approach to the harassment, victimisation or bullying of employees by anyone they come into contact with when doing their job.

We treat all of our customers with fairness and respect and this is embedded in our values. Our colleagues are trained and supported to do this and we expect anyone who contacts us to treat us in the same way.

We understand that situations arise that cause some people to feel frustrated or upset, but where this turns into unreasonable behaviour we will take steps to address this.

If anyone behaves in a way which could be considered aggressive, abusive, discriminatory, or is upsetting for a member of our team, we will make every effort to find a constructive and positive way to communicate. If we are unable to find a way to positively communicate for whatever reason, we may choose to take steps to end the contact and/or restrict contact until we can agree a way forward that is reasonable and acceptable to all concerned. In all cases, we will make a fair judgement, taking account of the circumstances, context and the individual needs of the person concerned. This includes recognising our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

Where we have need to restrict contact we will agree when this will be reviewed and the parameters for resuming contact.

If anyone disagrees with a decision to end a conversation or restrict contact, they can request that we reconsider it. A manager will then investigate this further and, where applicable, may review live chat transcripts or listen to calls that have been recorded for training purposes. They will then write to the customer setting out their findings and explaining the decision and implications for any future contact. In cases of extreme aggression or abusive behaviour we may additionally refer the matter, if appropriate, to the relevant authorities, including the Police. If so, we will inform the customer of what action has been taken and why.

5. Policy Outcomes

We are committed to delivering flexible and personalised services, easily accessible to our customers in a way which best suit their needs. We’ve developed this policy following feedback from our customers.

Our aim is to continue to make it as easy as possible for customers to contact us and request a service. We want to benchmark with the best service providers and will keep an eye on new ideas and approaches inside and outside of the housing sector to give our customers the best service we can provide.

6. Monitoring and Review

The following Key Performance Indicator's (KPI's) will be monitored:

- Customer Ease – measured through transactional surveys following a customers contact with the Contact Centre (where possible, split by contact channel).
- Customer Satisfaction – measured through transactional surveys following a customers contact with the Contact Centre (where possible, split by contact channel).

We will also measure the volume of customer contact made through each channel, in order to better understand any changes in how our customers are choosing to contact us, and inform the further development of these services. This policy is scheduled to be reviewed every three years unless due to a change in Government legislation or regulatory requirements, then the review period will be brought forward in order to ensure compliance.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The following teams/employees have the following responsibilities.

Customer Services Committee	Responsible for oversight of the Policy and its delivery.
Executive Director - Customer Insight	Responsible for final approval of the policy under the Policy Framework
Director – Customer Services Director – Customer Relationship Management Director – Community & Business Planning	Responsible for implementation of the Policy and delivery of the services outlined.
Director – Marketing & Communications	Responsible for development of the Social Media Strategy and any future use of social media platforms as customer access channels.
Director - Business Improvement	Responsible for development and improvement of digital access channels.

8. Equality & Diversity

An equality analysis (EA) was completed as part of the policy review and approved November 2022.