

Treating Customers with Fairness and Respect Policy

1. What this policy is about

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to how we will consider customers' needs throughout their tenancy and support them to manage and overcome issues which may impact on their ability to maintain their tenancy and live safely in their home.
- 1.2 The Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight on Attitudes, Rights and Respect recommended that we have an approach to 'vulnerable' customers.
- 1.3 Customers' needs and vulnerabilities are changeable, they can be short or long-term and are influenced by a range of factors and experiences such as age, disability, bereavement, literacy or language levels, domestic abuse, financial hardship or loss of employment.
- 1.4 Additional needs may be identified where a housing issue disproportionately impacts a customer due to their personal circumstance or characteristics (protected and non-protected) or where they are experiencing circumstances where they need support to access services or manage their tenancy.
- 1.5 This policy focuses on customers who have additional needs but have the capacity to make their own decisions. Where a customer has been assessed as lacking, or believed to lack capacity to make decisions we will work with their appointed representative.

2. Our approach

- 2.1 We aim to give customers a positive start to their tenancy. We do this through understanding their circumstances to ensure they are living in the right home in the right community. We will work with customers to ensure the home is affordable and identify any support needs at the start of their tenancy. We hope that creating trust from the beginning will encourage customers to contact us when they need support.

**This policy applies from 13 September
2024**

This policy applies to: Livv Housing Group

2.2 We will take customers' protected characteristics into account when considering their circumstances. Protected characteristics are set out in law through the Equality Act 2010:

- Age (which may relate to a person's age or age group at any stage of life)
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
- Religion and belief (and no belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

2.3 We have also considered how we meet customers' needs in our other policies including our Complaints and Compliments, Lettings, Equipment and Adaptations, Repairs, Domestic Abuse, ASB and Hate Crime and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies.

Recognising customers who need support

2.4 We aim to identify customers who need, or who may need, additional support or a reasonable adjustment.

2.5 We will do this through:

- gathering customer data at the start and throughout their tenancy
- formal applications that may include an assessment of needs
- notifications from partner agencies e.g. social care
- notification from a relative, friend or neighbour
- new tenancy and proactive tenancy management visits
- observations at maintenance related visits (internally and contractors)
- wellbeing checks
- ongoing contact we have with our customers
- self-referral/identification.

In some circumstances, we may ask for evidence or information of additional needs.

Responding to customers' needs

2.6 We will consider customers' needs, abilities and circumstances when delivering our services and communicating with them. We will work across teams to identify ways we can improve service delivery to meet customer needs.

2.7 Throughout a customer's tenancy, we will assess and respond flexibly to develop personalised support to ensure that their needs are met when their circumstances change, or emerging concerns arise.



- 2.8 We provide a range of support for customers of all ages covering financial wellbeing and resilience, health and wellbeing, employment and training, social inclusion and connectivity (including digital).
- 2.9 Where we do not have the expertise or are limited by our service offer and role, we will work closely with key partners. We will proactively develop and maintain links with these partners to support our customers.

Reasonable Adjustments

- 2.10 Reasonable adjustments can include physical changes and additional provision for homes or changes to the way we deliver our services.
- 2.11 A reasonable adjustment is a legal term defined by the Equality Act 2010. Its purpose is to ensure all our services can be equally accessed by customers with disabilities, as well as those without.
- 2.12 We use the definition of a disability set out in the Equality Act 2010. This states a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- 2.13 Many of the adjustments to our services we offer can also be made available to our customer without disabilities, where appropriate and reasonable to do so.
- 2.14 Examples of reasonable adjustment include, but are not limited to:
- working with Local Authorities to support the provision of aids and adaptations in the home.
 - additional security where a customer is at risk.
 - providing information in other formats in agreement with the customer to ensure we use the most appropriate means of communication – for example, translations, interpreters, or signers, as well as audio recordings, Braille, and large-print documents.
 - allowing more time for the customer to answer the door at appointments
 - referral to specialist teams
 - working with customers to put direct debits in place for housing benefit/Universal Credit payments
 - support with rehousing options (choice-based lettings and mutual exchange).
- 2.15 A reasonable adjustment can be requested from us in the following ways:
- by the customer themselves
 - by referral from a local authority or other relevant agency
 - by a family member (with permission)
 - by a Livv colleague



- 2.16 The Equality and Human Rights Commission advises the following when deciding whether an adjustment is ‘reasonable’ or not:
- how effective the adjustment will be in assisting a customer with a disability.
 - the practicality of us making the adjustment.
 - the cost of the adjustment and whether this is possible within our resources
 - any disruption to the service that making the adjustment may cause.
- 2.17 If we’re unable to make a reasonable adjustment due to cost or resources, we’ll work together with the customer to find the best alternative solution for them.

Record keeping

- 2.18 We will:
- Record the nature of the support need securely on our housing management system, together with any communication or access needs and whether there is anyone with delegated authority to speak to us on the customer’s behalf.
 - Check our system when we contact customers to be aware of any additional needs and respond appropriately.
 - Undertake regular reviews to make sure the information we have is up to date and accurate and that the support or reasonable adjustment is still required.

Training

- 2.19 We will provide clear guidance and training for all colleagues to be alert to customers’ needs and make any referrals for support or reasonable adjustments where needed.

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 All colleagues are responsible for carrying out their work in line with this policy and associated procedures. The Director of Communities is responsible for overall implementation of this policy. Specific responsibilities are set out below:

Role	Responsibility
Customer Services Committee (CSC)	Responsible for final approval of policy.
Executive Director – Customer Insight	Review prior to approval from EDT and CSC.
Director - Communities	Responsible for the implementation and delivery of the policy.
Customer Insight and Property Teams	Delivery of the policy.



4. Monitoring and review

4.1. We will use the following KPIs to monitor the policy:

- Tenancy turnover where it could have been prevented/sustained
- Current and former rent arrears
- 'Know your customer' profiling data collected
- Customer feedback on how easy it is to do business with us
- Improved outcomes (Mental Health/ Financial Support/Employment)
- Number of customers supported

4.2. We will review this policy every three years, or sooner if our monitoring of the policy identifies that changes are required, for example because of changes to law, regulation or related Livv strategies and policies.



Control framework

Compliance

This policy supports compliance with:

- Consumer Standards 2024
- Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024
- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014

Document control

Version	1.0
Policy applies from	13 September 2024
Policy applies to	Livv Housing Group
Approved by	Customer Services Committee
Approved on	12 September 2024
Replacing	Enabling Customers to Keep their Home Policy 2021-2024
Next review due by	September 2027
Responsible Executive Director	Executive Director Customer Insight
Policy author	Director - Communities
Equality Analysis	August 2024
Environmental Impact Assessment	Not required
Circulation	Intranet; Livv Housing Group website

Version control

Version	Date of Review	Summary of changes made
1.0	September 2024	New policy in Policy and Strategy Framework. Replaces Enabling Customers to Keep their Home Policy

