

LEEDS BLACK ELDERS ASSOCIATION



CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

To support Leeds Black Elders Association (LBEA) in this aim, the organisations customer care policy is built around four corporate principles:

- Customer Care will be provided in a professional manner within the LBEA by well trained and knowledgeable staff;
- Every employee and volunteer will give priority to the consideration of the needs of the individual customer, their right to information, to equality of access, to privacy and dignity;
- All of the LBEA's services will consistently seek to attain a defined and published standard of quality and our customers will be informed of their course of redress when these standards are not met;
- The term "customer" will include colleagues, volunteers and partner agencies. We recognise that caring for our customers begins with caring for others who form part of a service chain within the LBEA and its partners.

Every employed person and volunteer of LBEA can influence the quality of service, which a customer receives and consequently their perception of LBEA. It is, therefore, vital to emphasise that the practices, which are set out in this policy, are relevant to everyone. They do not just apply to employees and volunteers who have face-to-face contact with the public but all staff and volunteers can and must play their part with enthusiasm and commitment.

1. LBEA will play its part by:

- Giving customer care a high corporate priority;
- Developing organisational values and practices on customer care which are shared and communicated effectively;
- Setting out the good practice necessary to achieve those values.
- Encouraging all employees and volunteers to optimise their use of existing resources in delivering services and customer care;
- Providing customer care training for all of its employees and volunteers;
- Updating information to all its employees and volunteers to add to their knowledge and awareness of customers and their care;
- Regularly monitoring its customer care strategy to ensure that the needs of all its service users, visitors and in-house – are met.
- Providing a clear, accessible process for any customer to comment or complain about any aspect of LBEA's services.

2. AIMS OF POLICY AND PROCEDURE

LBEA is a small organisation delivering a range of services throughout the City of Leeds. It is committed to providing high standards of service – and has adopted this policy to: -

- Ensure that services are delivered in a caring and professional way;
- Act as a framework of reference for staff, volunteers, customers and our partners;
- Ensure that staff and volunteers are fully informed about their roles and responsibilities;
- Promote good practice in customer service including service standards;
- Ensure that performance is monitored and that action is taken to address any problems;
- Provide clear guidance on how to deal with customer comments and complaints;

3. CUSTOMER CONTACT AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

Dealing with Customer Contacts

LBEA has a Customer Contact procedure to help customers to comment on its services and give guidance to staff on how to deal with customer contacts. This includes customers:-

- Asking questions about a service or facility.
- Making comments on a service or facility.
- Passing compliments on a service or facility.
- Making complaints about a service or facility.

4. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

What kind of circumstances may give you reason to a complaint?

You believe you have been treated unfairly on the grounds of your gender/race/religion/age/sexuality or for any similar reason.

You feel that we have failed to provide information about LEEDS BLACK ELDERS ASSOCIATION or its services.

You feel that we have failed to provide a key service.

You feel you have experienced an unreasonable delay in receiving a service.

You feel that a service provided has been inadequate.

You believe that our Staff Members have been rude or unhelpful.

You disagree with a decision we have made or a policy we operate.

What should I do to complain informally?

You can make your complaint to the member of staff concerned, or to any line manager. Any worker will be pleased to tell you who is the most appropriate person to approach. This may be done in person, or by telephone or email. We aim to listen to what you have to say, to apologise whenever necessary, and to try to agree a solution with you. We will try to deal with your complaint to your satisfaction immediately; however, there will be occasions when this may not be possible (for example during holiday periods).

If there will be a delay in responding to your complaint, you will be told and we will reply as quickly as possible either verbally or in writing as you wish. If you remain dissatisfied with us or with our response you should use the formal procedure outlined below.

What should I do to make a formal complaint?

You may use the formal complaints procedure at any time: you do not have to complain informally first if you believe that your complaint is too serious for that approach.

Attached to this Policy you will find a basic form, which you may use to make your complaint; if you would prefer, you may write a letter instead.

In either case, you should feel free to obtain assistance with writing your complaint if you need it; such assistance could be given by a friend or family member, a Citizens Advice Bureau or Advocacy group or a similar organisation.

You should then post or hand-deliver your complaint to Leeds Black Elders Association, marking the envelope clearly "Private & Confidential, for the attention of the General Manager" (if your complaint involves the General Manager, you may address it to the Chairperson of the Management Committee).

What will happen after I complain?

LBEA will aim to acknowledge receipt of your formal complaint within three working days; this will be done by letter, so it is important that you provide us with your correct postal address. This letter will also tell you what steps will be taken to investigate your complaint: we will normally ask you to meet with us to discuss the problem (in which case you are welcome to be accompanied by a person of your choice from outside of LBEA), and we may allocate responsibility for this meeting and the subsequent investigation to the appropriate line manager. If your complaint is about a member of staff, it will be passed immediately to the appropriate line manager; the General Manager will write to you to tell you that this has been done and to explain that our internal inquiry process has begun. We aim to resolve all complaints quickly, and to keep you informed throughout the process.

You will receive a full written response usually within 28 days; if there will be any further delay, you will be informed. This letter will include information on what to do if you are still dissatisfied.

Will my complaint be confidential?

Your complaint may be seen by Managers or the Management Committee of the LBEA, as part of the investigation process but we will make every effort to safeguard your privacy; your complaint will not become "public knowledge" unless you so wish. You should be aware, however, that if your complaint is specifically about a member of Staff or a Committee Member of the LBEA, it will be necessary for that person to be told that a complaint has been lodged against him/her, to allow the investigation to proceed.

What if I am still unhappy – can I appeal?

You can appeal if you are unhappy about any aspect of the formal procedure outlined above, including the final response. You cannot go directly to the appeal stage unless you have used the formal procedure.

If you wish to appeal, you should complete the form, which will be attached to the letter sent to you after the formal procedure. Again, you can obtain assistance with this, as explained above.

You should post or deliver this form to Leeds Black Elders Association, marking the envelope “Private and Confidential: for the attention of the General Manager if your appeal relates to some aspect of LEEDS BLACK ELDERS ASSOCIATION or its services, OR “Private and Confidential: for the attention of the Chair of the Management Committee” if your appeal relates to a staff issue.

What will happen if I appeal?

You will receive written acknowledgement of your appeal usually within five working days, along with information as to when and how it will be dealt with. A panel (consisting of three of the Management Committee will normally be formed to consider your appeal. You may attend this meeting (bringing a person of your choice from outside LEEDS BLACK ELDERS ASSOCIATION, if you wish to), or make written comments if you would prefer. Your appeal and the original complaint will be considered in detail, and you will receive a written response within 14 days of the hearing. Leeds Black Elders Association will make every effort to comply with the decision or recommendations of the appeal panel.

What if I am still dissatisfied following an appeal?

The appeal stage is the final internal one as far as LEEDS BLACK ELDERS ASSOCIATION is concerned. If you remain unhappy, you are entitled to contact Leeds City Council Social Services or your local councillor or MP. You are, of course, entitled to do this directly without using our complaints procedure at all, although obviously we would encourage you to tell us first and allow us to try to resolve matters if you are unhappy.

What should I do if I wish to praise LEEDS BLACK ELDERS ASSOCIATION, or just make a suggestion or comment about something?

Leeds Black Elders Association welcomes all comments and suggestions, and tries to take account of these where possible when planning work, etc.

Please write to us, telephone, email or fax, or use the LEEDS BLACK ELDERS ASSOCIATION service user evaluation forms when these are sent to voluntary and community organisations.

Leeds Black Elders Association

180 Chapeltown Road
Leeds LS7 4HP

Tel: 0113 2374332

Fax: 0113 2374313

Email: info@lbea.co.uk

5. HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Golden rules to remember

- Treat all complaints seriously; don't take the complaint or criticism personally.
- Make your first response positive. Don't rush onto the defensive.
- Try to resolve the complaint as your first objective.
- Avoid using jargon that the customer might not understand.
- If there has been a mistake – acknowledge it and apologise.
- Be prepared to take responsibility for other people's mistakes
- Take the initiative with suggestions to put things right and offer choices.
- Try to make amends – but don't make promises we can't keep.
- If the customer is wrong, don't embarrass them if you need to point it out.
- Be tactful.
- Learn from mistakes.
- Watch your body language, say you're sorry with your actions as well as your words.

6. CUSTOMER CARE TRAINING AND AWARENESS

Customer Care is more about people and their attitudes than about processes, or procedures and so the aim of customer care training must be to ensure that any policy or strategy relating to customer care and quality of service which LBEA adopts is understood, supported and implemented by all staff and volunteers. Training is designed to help LBEA implement customer care throughout the organisation at all levels, not just by "front-line" or direct service providers. Any training undertaken must be applicable to both direct and support service staff.

The training package will:

- Enable the implementation of customer care to take place.
- Address the way Managers support their Staff Members in implementing customer care;
- Enable Staff Members and Volunteers to improve their relationship with customers and other Staff Members;
- Act as a catalyst for change;
- Be cost effective in its approach;
- Promote a policy/culture that is based on commonly understood and agreed objectives that are seen as progressive and effective by the customer.

The training package content:

- What is Customer Care?
- Who is the Customer?
- How does the Customer see us?
- What images do we want to create?
- Listening – both listening skills and telephone behaviour.
- Dealing with aggressive customer.
- Handling customer enquiries.
- Ways to change practices/service delivery to improve Customer Care.
- Communication – internally and externally
- Physical customer care characteristics

The training package would need to relate to the policy adopted by LBEA and to follow the agreed approach. Therefore training should ensure that the customer care policy can be clearly understood and implemented.

Aims of the Training Package

- enable all staff to be more efficient and competent in dealing with customers;
- improve skills;
- make the staff and volunteers job easier and more enjoyable and interesting;
- make the staff and volunteers more valued by customers and the organisation;
- ensure LBEA get a better understanding of customer wants and expectations;
- ensure that LBEA delivers a quality service and provides value for money;
- ensure that physical customer care characteristics are central to service delivery and planning.