

# Cunninghame Scrutiny Group

## Customer Service Standards Scrutiny Report

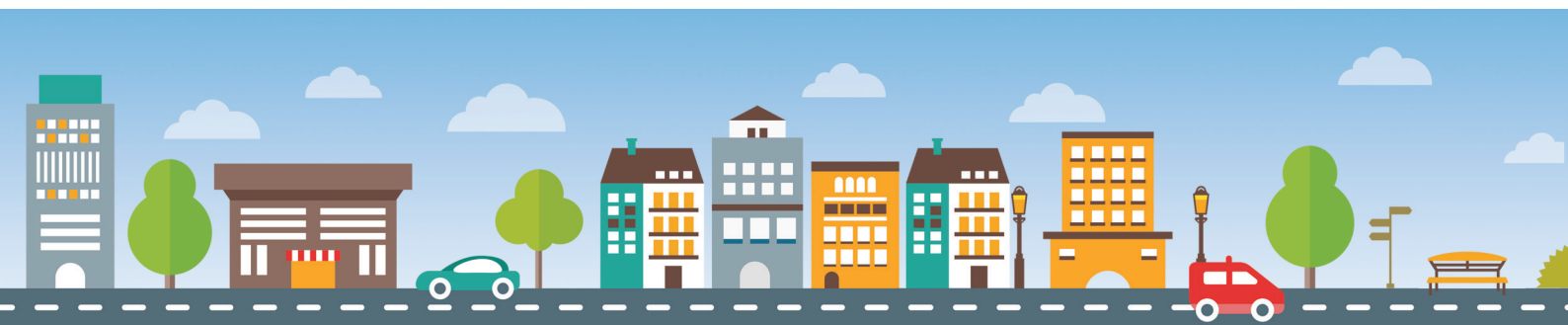


*August 2016*





The **Cunninghame Scrutiny Group** would like to thank **Cunninghame Housing Association** colleagues and **TIS** for their support in producing this scrutiny review report.



# Report Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	4
<b>Foreword</b>	6
<b>Selecting our first scrutiny task</b>	8
<b>Policy and procedure review</b> <i>(Summary, positive points &amp; findings)</i>	9
<b>Meetings with Housing Director and Housing Manager</b> <i>(Summary, positive points &amp; findings)</i>	10
<b>A review of performance information</b> <i>(Summary, positive points &amp; findings)</i>	11
<b>Mystery Shopping Project</b> <i>(Summary, positive points &amp; findings)</i>	12
Findings: Office visits	14
Findings: Telephone shops	15
Findings: Email enquiries	16
<b>Summary of Findings and Recommendations</b>	18
Cunninghame Policy and Procedure Review	18
Staffing	20
The Office	21
Provision of information requested	22
The Next Steps	23
Appendix 1: CSG Members	24



# Executive Summary

The **Cunninghame Scrutiny Group** (CSG) was as launched in 2015 and we are the first scrutiny panel representing tenants and service users of Cunninghame Housing Association.

This is our **first** Scrutiny Report and it provides an independent review of Cunninghame's Customer Service Standards.

CSG has a committee of up to 10 tenants and service users and our remit includes:



“This is our first Scrutiny Report and it provides an independent review of Cunninghame's Customer Service Standards”

- To independently review and scrutinise the performance of the Cunninghame's housing services to support service improvement
- To make recommendations and report progress on actions to Cunninghame's Senior Management Team and Board

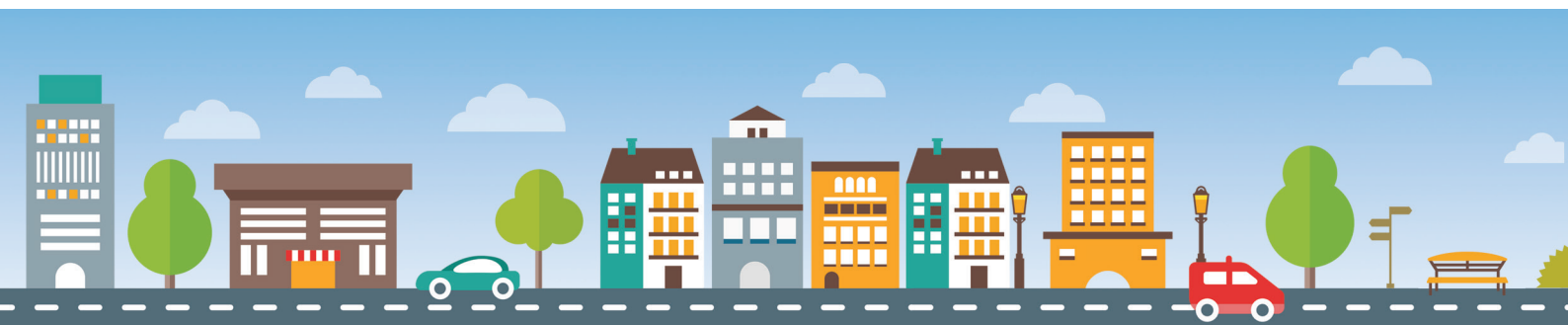
The Customer Service Standard policy was due to be reviewed so it was the perfect time to look at customer service standards as our first scrutiny task.

## The scope of our review included:

- To carry out an independent review of Cunninghame's Customer Service Standards policy to check that it is “fit for purpose”
- To review how the standards are implemented in practice
- To identify how tenants are informed about the standards
- To identify what could be done to improve the standards and how these are communicated.

As part of the scrutiny project CSG carried out the following activities:

- A review of the Customer Service Standards
- Comparison of customer service standards with other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)
- Meetings with Housing staff
- A Mystery Shopping Exercise
- Tour of Cunninghame's offices



CSG have identified a number of recommendations it wishes Cunninghame to consider which are detailed in Section 10 of this report.

Key recommendations include:

- The Customer Service Standards require to be reviewed to take into account current legislative and good practice requirements
- A summarised version of the Customer Service Standards should be provided to tenants
- Cunninghame should involve tenants and service users when it reviews the Customer Service Standards
- A training programme for staff should be provided to update on the new Customer Service Standards when they are reviewed
- Staff should wear name badges and give their name when speaking to tenants and other service users
- Cunninghame to consider how it can increase accessibility to it's Kilmarnock Office
- Signage to be placed at the entrance of the Kilmarnock office
- Cunninghame to review it's policy of closing its offices at lunchtime
- Cunninghame to review the information it provides in each office and to ensure this is accessible



“CSG have identified a number of recommendations it wishes Cunninghame to consider.”

CSG identified that this scrutiny review has helped them to gain a better understanding of the work that Cunninghame does.

CSG are all volunteers and their commitment to this project was exceptional. This review has identified a number of learning points that CSG and Cunninghame can build upon to embed resident scrutiny into its performance management framework.

CSG would like to thank all of the Cunninghame staff who took part in this scrutiny project which is an excellent example of effective partnership working.

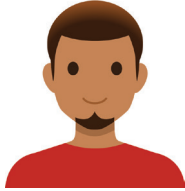
We hope that the recommendations from our independent review will support Cunninghame to further improve it's customer service throughout all of it's services.



# Foreword

**Welcome to Cunninghame Scrutiny Group's (CSG) first scrutiny report.** Over the last six months our group has been reviewing the customer service standards relating to Cunninghame Housing Association.

CSG was launched in 2015 and we have been working with Cunninghame Housing Association to make a difference to our housing services. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of Cunninghame Housing Association for participating in this worthwhile scrutiny review. **Also to thank Ian Macpherson from Cunninghame Housing Association and Ilene Campbell from TIS who have supported our group throughout this process.** Last but not least to thank the CSG group members for all their voluntary time and commitment.



“We hope that the findings and recommendations from our report will support Cunninghame Housing Association to further improve its customer service throughout all of its services.”

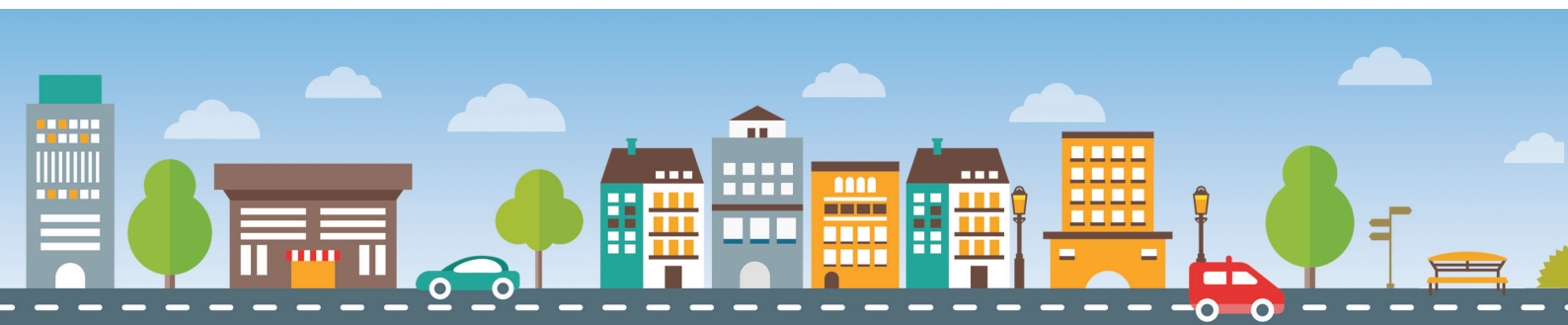
We hope that the findings and recommendations from our report will support Cunninghame Housing Association to further improve its customer service

## Introducing Cunninghame Scrutiny Group

Cunninghame formed a working group of tenant representatives to look at developing tenant involvement in the scrutiny of housing services. The working group consisted of representatives from local tenants and residents groups and also interested individuals.

The working group successfully completed the TIS national Scrutiny Making it Happen Programme in 2015. The scrutiny programme provided a bespoke training and support programme to increase tenants understanding and knowledge of the following areas:

- The Scottish Social Housing Charter and the new regulatory arrangements
- The role of tenants in the self-assessment of housing services
- The role and remit of a Tenants Scrutiny Group
- Practice examples of how tenants are involved in tenant scrutiny in Scotland and the wider UK
- Scrutiny recruitment methods
- How to develop a Terms of Reference
- How to develop a Code of Conduct



Cunninghame Housing Association in partnership with the Working Group conducted a successful recruitment and marketing campaign to launch the Cunninghame Scrutiny Group (CSG) in March 2015. **CSG has 10 tenant members and a list of our group can be found in Appendix One.**

The main role of CSG is:

- To independently review and scrutinise the performance of Cunninghame Housing Association's housing services to support service improvements;
- To commission and review scrutiny activities through an annual work programme and development of actions and improvement plans;
- To make recommendations and report progress on actions to Cunninghame Housing Association's Senior Management Team and Board of Management;
- To report to tenants and other service users on progress being made;
- To review the Tenants' Charter report.

**Our work is based on the following core standards:**

- Being accountable to tenants and service users;
- Being transparent;
- Reflecting the needs and aspirations of tenants and service users;
- Respecting the decision making role of the Board;
- Making recommendations based on robust evidence.

TIS provides our group with a specialist independent advice and training to develop our skills and knowledge to be effective. The training programme included the following modules;

- Understanding the role of the Charter and the Scottish Housing Regulator;
- The Annual Return on the Charter Report and Report to tenants;
- How to understand performance information and data;
- The role of benchmarking.

Ian Macpherson, from Cunninghame Housing Association is the Link Officer ensuring that we have access to the relevant information and Cunninghame Housing Association colleagues to deliver our scrutiny work. The Link Officer is also responsible for keeping Cunninghame Housing Association colleagues up-to-date with the group's scrutiny work.



“TIS provides our group with a specialist independent advice and training to develop our skills and knowledge to be effective.”





# Selecting our first scrutiny task

In determining our first scrutiny task we carried out the following activities:

- A review of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey to identify key issues for tenants and service users;
- A review of the Annual Return on the Charter 2014-15 to identify key issues for tenants and service users;
- Received presentations from Cunninghame Housing Association staff.



“The Customer Service Standard policy was due to be reviewed and was therefore identified as an important first scrutiny task.”

Carrying out this background research CSG agreed that the Customer Service Standards was an area of the business that would merit further investigation.

The Customer Service Standard policy was due to be reviewed and was therefore identified as an important first scrutiny task.

## The scrutiny process

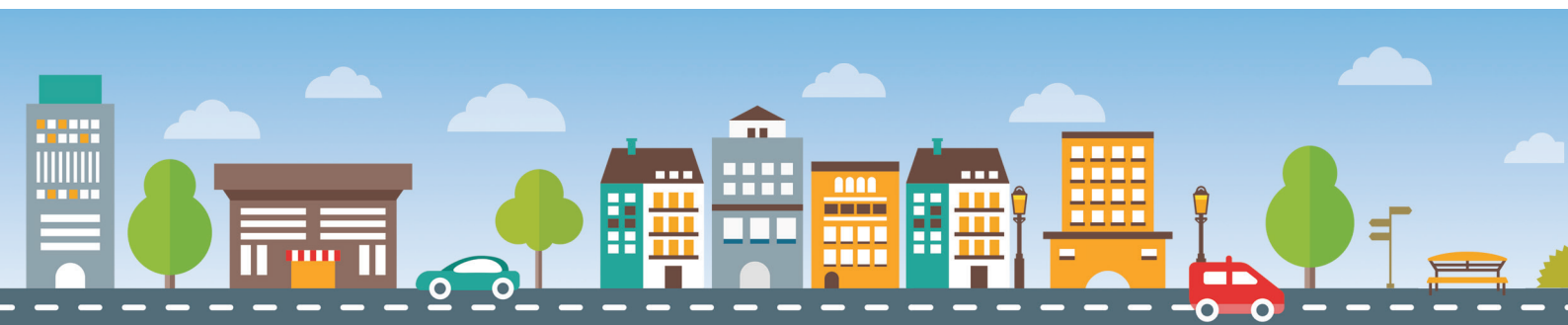
As part of our scrutiny project we carried out the following key exercises:

- A policy and procedural review;
- Meetings with Housing Staff;
- A review of performance, Annual Return on the Charter and satisfaction survey results;
- Mystery Shopping Exercise;
- A study tour of Cuninninghame offices.

**Our customer service review had three definitive steps for each exercise**

1. **Summary**
2. **Positive points**
3. **Findings**

Section 10 of this report provides a summary of our key findings and recommendations.





# Policy and procedure review

## Summary

CSG reviewed Cunninghame Housing Association's Service Performance Standards Policy. We also reviewed the customer service standard information that is included in the Tenants Handbook. The Scottish Social Housing Charter (specifically outcomes 1, 2 and 3) and its impact on how Cunninghame Housing Association communicates with customers was also reflected upon. To compare and contrast we looked at other examples of customer standards from other social rented sector landlords (this included Glasgow Housing Association; Glen Oaks Housing Association, Thenu Housing Association and North Ayrshire Council).

## Positive points

- Cunninghame staff were very helpful in explaining the Service Performance Standards Policy;
- Cunninghame staff were very responsive to clarifying any questions CSG had during the review;
- A summary version of the Customer Service Standards is available in the Tenants Handbook and this information is clear and easy to understand.

## Findings

1. The Service Performance Standards Policy was last reviewed on 15.12.2011 and was due to be reviewed on 15.12.2014.
2. Section 3 of the Tenants Handbook includes information on the Customer Service Standards.
3. It would be helpful to revise the current policy and change the title to Customer Service Standard Policy.
4. It would be helpful to have an easy to read and Plain English version of the revised policy that is provided to tenants and is available on Cunninghame Housing Association's website. This booklet could be called "Customer Service Standards – what you can expect from us".
5. In revising the policy the group noted a number of points:
  - The policy requires to be updated to take into account new legislation including: The Scottish Social Housing Charter; The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 ; Equalities legislation; Disability legislation; Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing in Scotland; and the Scottish Housing Regulatory requirements.
  - The policy needs to be clear about how it links to other policies.
  - The policy structure could be improved upon to make it easier to read.
  - Information about how the standards are measured requires to be updated to reflect the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the new regulatory requirements.



# Policy and procedure review (continued)

## Findings

The policy should be revised to update on tenant and community engagement and include the role of tenant scrutiny.

The revised policy should include reference to digital inclusion.

Standards relating to the Repairs Appointment Systems needs to be included.

6. Cunninghame Housing Association are satisfied that the customer standards are still “fit for purpose” with the following additions:

It would be useful to include what services owners and shared owners receive through Cunninghame Housing Association’s factoring service.

It would be useful to include what happens when a complaint about anti-social behaviour is made so that tenants have a clear understanding and expectations of the process.

It would be useful to include information about alterations and improvements and what tenants can expect if they wish to pursue these and what happens at the end of the tenancy.

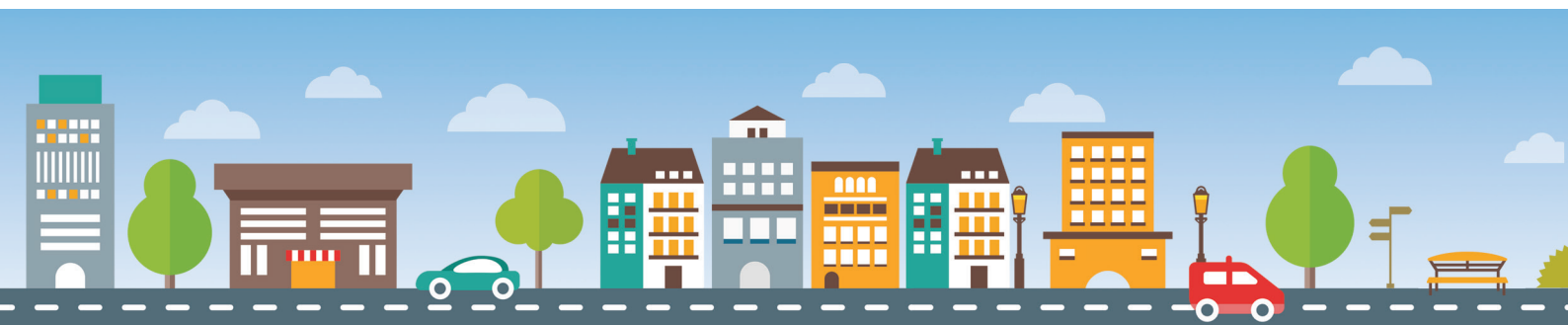
## Meetings with Housing Director and Housing Manager

### Summary

CSG met with Property Services Manager, Karen Agnew and Property Services Director, Steven Good to discuss the operational aspects of delivering the customer service standards. CSG was interested to find out what Cunninghame Housing Association see as the key operational issues that impact on delivering the customer service standards. Also to identify what support and training is in place to ensure Cunninghame Housing Association staff meet these standards in all aspects of their work.

### Positive points

- CSG has a customer focused approach in all aspects of its work.
- Customer satisfaction surveys are carried out every two years.
- Repair response times are improving.



## Findings

1. All staff receive training and information on customer service standards when they take up their post.
2. CSG recommend that when the policy is reviewed, staff training is carried out to ensure consistency of approach.
3. Telephone enquiries are monitored to ensure consistency of approach.
4. CSG acknowledged that staff have to deal at times with challenging situations.
5. All staff and contractors are required to meet Cunninghame Housing Association's customer service standards and this is monitored by the Board.
6. It is important that staff are fully briefed before they meet tenants to address any customer service complaints.

## A review of performance information

### Summary

CSG reviewed the following documents:

- Cunninghame Housing Association's Annual Performance Report 2014 and 2015
- Scottish Housing Regulator Landlord Report 2013-14 and 2014-15

### Positive points

- Tenant and other service user satisfaction with the overall services from Cunninghame Housing Association is increasing and is higher than the Scottish average figure.
- Tenant and other service user satisfaction at being kept informed by Cunninghame Housing Association is increasing and is higher than the Scottish average figure.
- Tenant satisfaction with the opportunities to participate remains higher than the Scottish average figure.



# A review of performance information (cont.)

## Findings

Of the tenants who responded to Cunninghame Housing Association's most recent tenant satisfaction survey:

1. 93.2% said they were satisfied with the overall service it provided, compared to the Scottish average of 88.1%. Cunninghame Housing Association saw an increase from 87.5% from the year before.
2. 93.7% felt Cunninghame Housing Association was good at keeping them informed about its services and outcomes compared to the Scottish average of 89.3%. CHA saw an increase from 87.9% from the year before.
3. 88.9% of tenants were satisfied with the opportunities to participate in Cunninghame Housing Association decision making processes, compared to the Scottish average of 79.6%.

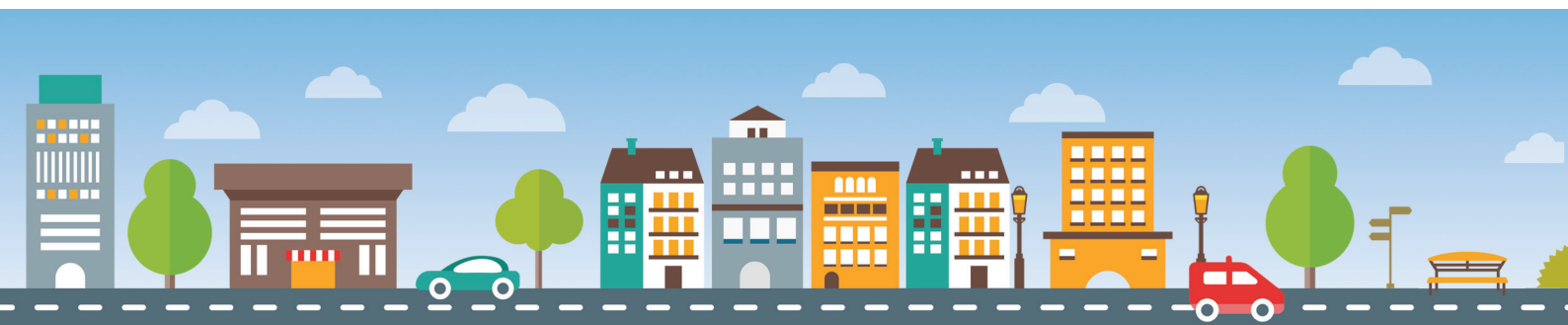
## Mystery Shopping Project

### Summary

Mystery Shopping is a form of market research which assesses services completely from the customer's point of view. The purpose of a Mystery Shopping Exercise is to provide information from a customer's perspective on the quality of every day services to assist staff training and improvements in service.

Mystery Shopping was selected by CSG as a useful way to review how customer service standards are carried out in practice. The Mystery Shopping Project followed an agreed work plan which detailed key tasks, outcomes and timescales for the Project. This included:

- Code of Conduct for Mystery Shoppers
- Training of Mystery Shoppers
- Agreeing Mystery Shopping Scenarios
- Agreeing Mystery Shopping Recording Forms
- Devising a Project Delivery Plan to include live telephone shops, email based enquiries and live office visit shops
- On-going support for Mystery Shoppers



## Summary (continued)

The Mystery Shopping Fieldwork included:

- 5 live visits to Cunninghame Housing Association offices (Ardrossan and Kilmarnock)
- 6 live telephone calls to Cunninghame Housing Association offices (Ardrossan and Kilmarnock)
- 3 email enquiries

The mystery shopping scenario that was used is detailed below.

**“I would like to request a housing application form on behalf of my brother who is moving back to Scotland from England and would like to apply for a house. Can you give me an application form and is there support available if he needs help to fill this in?”**

The fieldwork was conducted between December 2015 to February 2016.

CSG decided not to review the website in terms of customer service standards as we are aware the website is being reviewed to improve its effectiveness.

## Positive points

- In the mystery shop office visits and telephone calls shoppers reported a high level of service with staff being:

Polite and courteous;  
Quick and efficient;  
respectful to tenants and other service users;  
Professional and genuinely wanting to help;  
Well prepared and provide relevant information.

- It is important that Cunninghame Housing Association continues to develop a consistent approach to excellent customer service standards.

- During the Mystery Shopping visits and the Study Tour the offices were found to be:

Safe, clean and tidy;  
To have ramp access;  
To have a notice board.



# Mystery Shopping Project

## Findings: Office visits

Question	Response
Were you greeted with a smile by a staff member wearing a name badge?	In the 5 visits shoppers were greeted with a smile. But staff did not wear name badges.
Was there a ramp for disability access?	A ramp is available in both offices. However there are access problems at the Kilmarnock office which makes it challenging for people in wheelchairs or using prams.
Were the offices clean, tidy and welcoming?	All 5 shoppers said “yes” to this question about the offices being clean and tidy. 4 shoppers said the office was welcoming and 1 shopper said it “could have been more welcoming”.
Is the information on notice boards up to date?	All 5 shoppers noted there were notice boards but they didn’t have time to check if the information was up to date.
Did the member of Staff deal with your enquiry promptly and provide an application form?	<p>3 shoppers answered “yes” to this question.</p> <p>1 shopper recorded that the staff member pointed to the stand “to get a form in booklet”.</p> <p>1 shopper recorded that they received a form, but that they could not get a form in large print as requested but received this two days later”.</p>
Did the staff member give you an allocation booklet?	3 shoppers were provided with an allocations booklet. 2 shoppers were not provided with a booklet.
Did the member of staff advise that assistance is available to complete the form?	<p>4 shoppers were offered support if needed.</p> <p>1 shopper was not offered support, and was informed that as they were a support worker why couldn’t they do this themselves.</p>



## Findings: Office visits (cont.)

Question	Response
What was agreed in terms of your request? Are you clear about what should happen next?	4 shoppers reported that they were clear about what should happen next. 1 shopper recorded that they were not clear on the next steps.

Overall the shoppers rated their overall experience of their office visit as;

Very good	1
Good	2
Average	1
Poor	1

The following additional comments were recorded:

“The member of staff I spoke to was very nice and very helpful”

“I think the staff could have been more informative. If you were shy or not very confident you would not get much help. I did not get much feedback freely. Also I said goodbye to the staff on leaving and got no answer and there was no one else in the office”.

“Although I was dealt with in a friendly and positive manner, I felt that my enquiry was brushed aside as I introduced myself as a support worker”.

## Findings: Telephone shops

Question	Response
Was the phone answered promptly? Number of rings?	All calls answered promptly within 6 rings.
Did the member of staff respond politely and tell you their name?	All calls responded politely. 3 gave their names. 3 did not.
Could the member of staff respond to your enquiry?	In 2 calls the member of staff could respond to the enquiry. 3 calls were transferred to a member of staff who could assist. 1 shopper was transferred to another office to get a form in large print.





# Mystery Shopping Project

## Findings: Telephone shops (continued)

Question	Response
Was your call transferred to another member of staff? Were you told their name?	4 calls were transferred to another member of staff. In 2 of these calls the staff name was given. In 2 calls the staff name was not given.
Were you given adequate information on how to apply for housing?	5 shoppers considered they were given adequate information on how to apply for a house. 1 shopper reported no to this as they were only informed a form would be sent out.
Did the staff member tell you that help is available to complete the application form?	5 shoppers were offered help if required. 1 shopper was not offered help if required.
What was agreed in terms of your request? Are you clear about what should happen next?	All 6 shoppers were clear about what happens next.

Overall the shoppers rated their overall experience of their telephone enquiry as:

**Very good**            3  
**Good**                    3

The following additional comments were recorded:

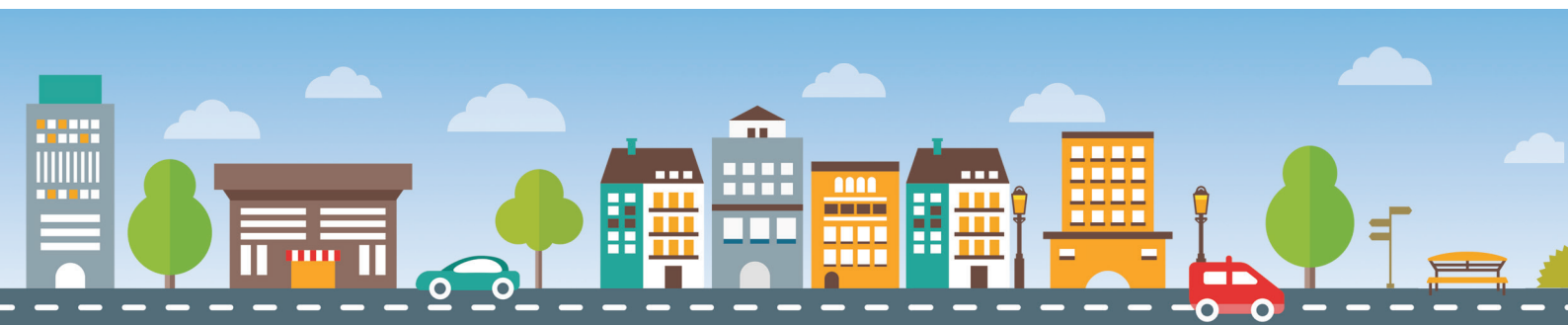
“The staff member was very helpful and explained everything in detail”

“The staff member could have been a bit more helpful with information on what happens next”.

## Findings: Email enquiries

The scenario was slightly altered to “ I am emailing about my sister who has had to leave her house and has no where else to go. She wants to apply to Cunninghame for a house”.

Question	Response
How easy was it to request a housing application form?	It was not possible to click onto the email link on the website.



## Findings: Email enquiries (continued)

Question	Response
Did you receive an automated response when the email was sent.	Full personal responses were received.
How soon after the email was sent was a reply received?	2 enquiries were responded to within 2 hours 20 minutes. 1 enquiry responded to within 24 hours.
What information was provided?	<p>1 response provided information on how to obtain an application form and offered an appointment. But no advice was given in terms of possibly being homeless.</p> <p>1 response asked for the person’s address to send an application form and advice to speak to the homeless section at the local authority as soon as possible.</p> <p>1 response asked for the person’s address for an application form to be sent out and also provided the North Ayrshire Council website link to apply online. Assistance to complete the form was given. It provided contact details and advice to contact North Ayrshire Council’s Homeless Team.</p>
Was the e-mail polite and courteous?	All response were polite and courteous.

Overall the shoppers rated their overall experience of their email enquiry as

Very good	1
Good	1
Average	1



# Summary of Findings and Recommendations

CSG is delighted to present its recommendations for consideration by Cunninghame Housing Association Board.

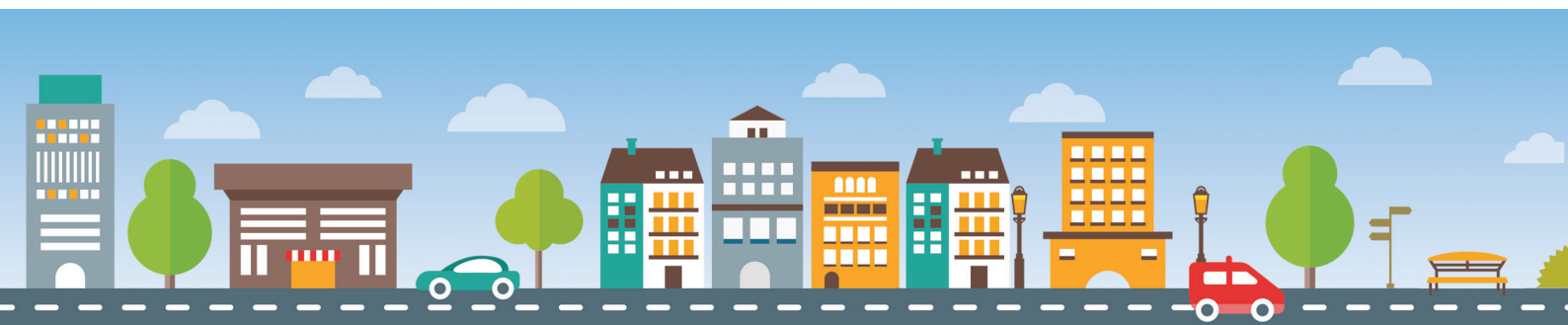
## Cunninghame Policy and Procedure Review

### Findings

1. Cunninghame has a customer focused approach in all aspects of its work.
2. The customer care standards are positive and still “fit for purpose”
3. Cunninghame staff worked closely with CSG to provide information and clarify issues around customer service standard policy and procedural issues.
4. Customer satisfaction surveys are carried out every two years to gather tenant and service user feedback.
5. Tenant and other service user satisfaction with overall services from Cunninghame are increasing and are higher than the Scottish average figure.
6. Tenant and other service user satisfaction at being kept informed by Cunninghame is increasing, and is higher than the Scottish average figure.
7. Tenant satisfaction with opportunities to participate remains higher than the Scottish average figure.

### Recommendations

1. The Service Performance Standards Policy requires to be reviewed to take into account new legislation including: The Scottish Social Housing Charter; Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 ; Equalities legislation; Disability legislation; Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing in Scotland; Housing Regulatory requirements.
2. The policy needs to be clear about how this links to other policies.
3. The policy and tenant summary should be clear to understand and in Plain English and use pictures and graphics. It should also have Community language information on how to access the document is included on the front cover.



**Recommendations (continued)**

4. Information about how the standards are measured requires to be updated to reflect the Scottish Social Housing Charter. For Social Housing in Scotland; Housing Regulatory requirements.

5. The policy should be revised to update on tenant and community engagement and include the role of tenant scrutiny.

6. The revised policy should include reference to digital inclusion.

7. Standards relating to the Repairs Appointment Systems needs to be included.

8. CSG are satisfied that the customer standards are still “fit for purpose” with the following additions:

a. It would be useful to include what services owners and shared owners receive through Cunninghame’s factoring service.

b. It would be useful to include what happens when a complaint about anti-social behaviour is made so that tenants have clear understanding and expectations of this.

c. It would be useful to include information about alterations and improvements and what tenants can expect if they wish to pursue these and what happens at the end of the tenancy.

9. Cunninghame involve tenants and service users when it revises the new Customer Service Standard Policy and Tenant Booklet.

10. Cunninghame have staff training when the new policy is approved.



# Summary of Findings and Recommendations

## Staffing

### Findings

1. In both the mystery shop office visits and telephone calls shoppers reported a high level of service with staff being :

Polite and courteous;  
Quick and efficient;  
respectful to tenants and other service users;  
Professional and genuinely wanting to help;  
Well prepared and provide relevant information.

During the Mystery Shopping exercises staff did not wear name badges.

During the live telephone calls staff did not always provide their name.

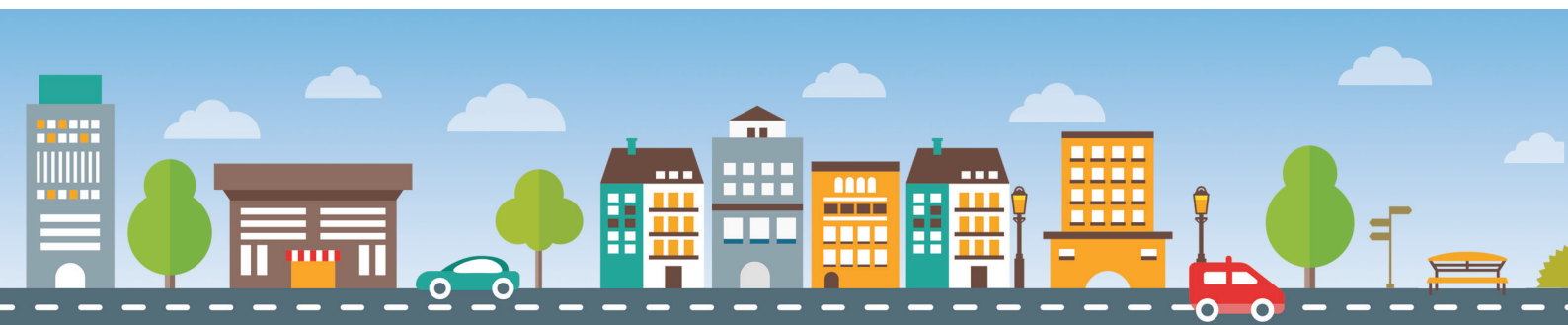
It is important that Cunninghame continues to develop a consistent approach to excellent customer service standards.

### Recommendations

1. Cunninghame provides staff with a “lapel pin” style name badge that is worn during working hours.

2. Cunninghame ensure that they give their name when speaking to tenants and service users.

3. Cunninghame continues to develop good customer service practice through staff training programmes.



# The Office

## Findings

1. During the Mystery Shopping visits and the Study Tour the offices were found to be:

Safe, clean and tidy

To have ramp access

To have a notice board

There is no signage at the front of the Kilmarnock office

It was noted that access to the Kilmarnock office is challenging for wheelchair users and for prams.

It was noted that it is not convenient for many tenants to have the Cunninghame offices closed every day for an hour at lunchtime. It was noted that coffee tables with information are not accessible for wheelchair users.

2. The lack of sound proofing in interview rooms means that tenants and other customers in the reception area can hear discussions taking place in these rooms.

## Recommendations

1. Cunninghame considers options to increase accessibility at the Kilmarnock office.

2. Cunninghame to review its policy of closing the offices for an hour each day at lunchtime.

3. Cunninghame considers a more prominent and accessible display of the information regarding the availability of a hearing loop system and ensures that all staff are aware of this and it is operational.

4. Signage should be placed outside the Kilmarnock office.



# Summary of Findings and Recommendations

## Provision of information requested

### Findings

1. Overall CSG member requests for a housing application form were met favourably with members receiving the form and the information booklet quickly after the request was made. However a few improvements could be made based on our experiences such as:

The allocation booklet is not easy to find on the web site

Staff did not always advise that assistance to complete the form can be given

Assistance may be offered to complete form once it has been received at the office, however tenants are not always made aware of this.

### Recommendations

1. A supply of forms and information booklets should be kept at the reception desk for staff to hand to Customers.

2. Information booklets and forms are displayed in alphabetical order and that consideration is given to the use of different colours on each document to allow people to differentiate between each document more easily.

3. Cunninghame ensures that both the application form and the information booklet are given out at the same time, either by post, e-mail or in person.

4. Staff advise that assistance is available to complete the application form when the form is requested either by phone, e-mail or in person.

5. Cunninghame's website to include information about assistance that is available to complete housing forms or deal with enquiries.

6. When Cunninghame reviews the website it aims to ensure that the allocation information booklet is easier to access

