



## Customer Care Policy

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\*Should legislation or best practice guidance require, the policy will be reviewed before the due date



If you would like this policy in Large, Print, Audio, Braille another language or an alternative format please contact our customer services team on **0330 1231860** and we will do our best to help.

## Customer Care Policy

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## Definitions

- 1.1** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a Victory resident, leaseholder, or anyone who receives a service or interacts with Victory, where an initial response to their problem has not proven satisfactory. The cause of the dissatisfaction must have occurred within six months of the complaint being raised.
- 1.2** A discretionary payment is defined as “A without prejudice payment or a gesture of goodwill in acknowledgement that Victory has failed to provide an adequate service. The aim of the payment is to make amends for inconvenience caused and to minimise the level of dissatisfaction that a resident may feel as the result of a service failure”. (Additionally there are statutory payments defined by law which are outlined in the relevant policy).
- 1.3** The definitions of the terms equality and diversity used within this policy are based on definitions contained within the Equality Act 2010:
- 1.4** Equality is about fair treatment
- Inequality exists and that discrimination needs to be tackled
  - Employment and services should be accessible to all
  - Everyone should be treated fairly
  - Everyone has individual needs and the right to have those needs respected
- 1.5** Diversity is about respecting difference
- It is “the mosaic of individuals and groups with varying backgrounds, experiences, styles, perceptions, values and beliefs”
  - Everybody is different – where there are two people there is diversity
  - We need to understand, value, and respect those differences
- 1.6** The definition of a vulnerable adult is “anyone aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation” (Department of Health, 2000).

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<b>Customer Care Policy</b>
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**‘Putting Things Right’ Complaints Policy**

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**This document forms section two of Victory Housing Trust’s  
Customer Care Policy**

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**Last Reviewed : December 2016**

## **2. 'Putting Things Right' – Complaints Policy**

### **2.1 Introduction**

We aim to provide the best possible service at all times, but we recognise that sometimes we may get things wrong. Victory welcomes and values feedback on the services it provides and encourages residents to raise any concerns they may have on the services they have received. Where a problem arises, our primary focus will be on putting right the problem that has occurred. Where the issue cannot be changed, the focus will be on taking actions – revising policies, procedures or providing training - to try to avoid a reoccurrence of the problem.

### **2.2 Purpose**

Victory aims to have a Complaints Policy that ensures:

- Complaints are valued and acted on promptly
- Learning from complaints is used to improve services
- Residents have a clear, simple and accessible method to raise an issue of concern
- Staff know how to respond effectively to issues raised by residents
- Complaints are dealt with consistently and promptly with residents kept informed throughout the process
- Service standards, agreed with residents, are met
- No resident is treated less favourably as a result of making a complaint

### **2.3 Scope**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a Victory resident, leaseholder or anyone who has received a service or interacts with Victory, where an initial response to their problem has not proven satisfactory. The cause of the dissatisfaction must have occurred within six months of the complaint being raised.

For example a complaint is where:

- Someone is dissatisfied with our standard of service or the service provided by one of our contractors.
- Someone feels we have failed to do something we should have done or have acted inappropriately.
- Someone feels we have treated them or their family unfairly or impolitely.
- Someone feels we have failed to follow our policies, procedures or met service standards.
- There is a service failure which requires consideration to ensure it is addressed and to avoid complaints being made at a later date.

Complaints about neighbours or other residents are addressed through the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

A complaint is not:

- A request for information or an explanation of our policies, procedures, practices or service standards.
- An initial request for a service, for example, a repair request to one of our properties.
- About a matter or service where Victory has no responsibility, for example, legislation, government or local authority policy or where the responsibility rests with another organisation.

Complaints can be raised by telephone, letter, e-mail, in person, through our web-site, or through third parties. Where a complaint is made by a third party, it will be necessary for Victory to be satisfied that the person has permission to act on the complainants behalf before we respond.

Wherever practicable, the member of staff first approached will seek to resolve complaints immediately and informally. Additionally, Victory employs a Complaints and Service Improvement Officer who may meet with the person making the complaint where this is considered the most efficient or appropriate course of action.

To ensure a speedy resolution of all complaints, it is important we understand what went wrong and what action the complainant would like Victory to take and/or what the complainant would like to happen to put things right. Where this is not clear it may be necessary for Victory to clarify the problem, which can cause a delay in responding to a complaint.

If the complaint is upheld, the primary aim will be to put right the problem that has occurred and for Victory to apply any lessons learnt to improve services. Sometimes it may not be possible, practical or value for money to retrospectively put the matter right. In those instances the focus will be on taking actions – such as revising policies, procedures or providing training - to try to avoid a reoccurrence of the problem.

Wherever practicable, Victory will seek to resolve complaints immediately and informally. If that is not possible, the following process will apply.

## **2.4 Local Resolution**

If we are unable to resolve the complaint straight away, we will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and aim to respond with our findings within 10 working days from the receipt of the complaint. Occasionally we may need more time to investigate or clarify the problem. Should more time be required we will provide an estimate of how long it will take before we can respond. The response – which may be by telephone, in person or in writing - will explain whether the complaint has been upheld or not and, where appropriate, what

action Victory intends to take to rectify the matter. If we respond by telephone or in person, the outcome will subsequently be put in writing.

Hopefully this will resolve the matter. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, they can ask for their complaint to be reviewed. In the absence of a request for a Review, the complaint will be recorded as closed after 20 working days.

## **2.5 Review**

Requests for a Review should be made in writing within 20 working days – if more time is required the complainant should contact Victory (within that timescale) to seek an extension of the time period. Requests for a review will be acknowledged in writing. The request should explain in what way Victory's response was unsatisfactory and what action the complainant would like Victory to take and/or what they would like to happen to resolve the complaint. Once in receipt of this information, a more senior member of staff will take a fresh look at the problem that has been experienced. The Review will not normally address new issues that were not previously raised at the Local Resolution stage.

Our response will normally be provided within 15 working days, but should more time be required we will explain how long we think it will take before we can respond. Where a response is provided by telephone or in person, the outcome will subsequently be confirmed in writing.

Hopefully this will resolve the matter. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may appeal the outcome of the review of their complaint. Appeals should be requested within 20 working days. In the absence of an appeal, the complaint will be recorded as closed after 20 working days.

## **2.6 The Appeal**

Requests for an Appeal should be made in writing within 20 days of receiving a Review outcome – if more time is required the complainant should contact Victory (within that timescale) to seek an extension of this time period. In the absence of an extension, complaints will be deemed closed after 20 working days. All requests for an Appeal will be acknowledged in writing. The request should set out in what way the Review was inadequate and what action the complainant would like Victory to take and/or what they would like to happen to resolve the complaint. Appeals are undertaken by a Complaints Panel consisting of at least one member of the Board, one resident representative and a member of the Executive Team who has not been party to your complaint already. The Appeal will not normally address new issues that were not previously raised at the Review stage.

A Complaints Panel hearing will normally be called to consider the complaint within a month of receiving the Appeal request. If it is likely to take longer than this to assemble the members of the Complaints Panel, we will write to you and give an estimate of the additional time required. There is a separate

protocol which explains the role of the Complaints Panel and how Appeals are undertaken. If your complaint is the subject of an Appeal full details will be provided.

As much advance notice as is possible will be provided on the time and date of the Complaints Appeal Panel meeting. Whilst every effort will be taken to avoid any pre-notified inconvenient dates or times, Victory reserves the right to proceed with the Panel meeting in the absence of the complainant. This provision recognises the complexity of the arrangements required to enable the attendance of all Panel members, the availability of the complainant, the availability of key staff who may be required for interview, and the objective to not lengthen the appeal process. If a complainant does not wish to present their case in person or is unable to attend the Panel meeting, the Complaints Appeal Panel will base their judgment on the information available to them.

The outcome of the Appeal will represent Victory's final response on the matter and the Trust will not enter into any further correspondence or discussion on the complaint.

If the complainant is dissatisfied they may be entitled to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service either directly after 8 weeks of completing Victory's complaint process or earlier where supported by a 'designated person'. Guidance will be provided as part of the Appeal response.

## **2.7 Complaints about Debt Advice**

If the complaint relates to debt advice or other Financial Conduct Authority regulated services and if the complainant feels that their complaint has not been resolved through our complaints procedure, they have the right to refer the complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service. They will only investigate the complaint after it has been through our internal complaints procedure and they can only do this once a full eight weeks has passed following the date the complaint was made. The complainant has the right to refer the complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service within six months of our final response.

## **2.8 Mediation**

Victory may suggest mediation at any stage in the complaints process as a mechanism to resolve difficulties or disagreement. Mediation is voluntary, and will only take place with the agreement of all parties. If agreement is reached to enter into mediation, the cost of the mediation process will be met by Victory. The complaints process will be suspended whilst mediation is underway and will only be reinstated if the mediation is unsuccessful in resolving the issue.

## **2.9 Complaints about Staff, Board Members & Involved Residents**

The purpose of this policy is to establish if Victory has acted inappropriately and, if it has, to put things right. That should be distinguished from disciplinary



proceedings, which are there to decide whether a particular member or members of staff have broken Victory's rules.

Where a complaint is raised about the actions of a member of staff this will be referred to the Human Resources Department. A member of the Human Resources Department, in conjunction with an appropriate Senior Manager will assess whether the complaint and the supporting evidence justifies investigatory action and/or disciplinary action in accordance with Victory's disciplinary procedure. The decision whether or not to initiate investigatory action and/or disciplinary action will be strictly confidential to the member of staff concerned and to Victory. Complainants need to be aware that if they make a complaint against a member of staff and investigatory and/or disciplinary action is initiated, the member of staff will be provided with a copy of the complaint and be given an opportunity to respond.

Where a complaint is raised about the actions of a Board Member or an Involved Resident this will be investigated in line with the procedure set out in the Code of Conduct. The decision whether or not to initiate investigatory action and/or disciplinary action will be strictly confidential to the Board Member or Involved Resident concerned and to Victory.

## **2.10 Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints cannot be properly investigated, because of insufficient verifiable information, and are therefore discouraged. Where an anonymous complaint is received, Victory will consider if any action is either appropriate or practical.

## **2.11 Petitions**

Where a complaint is received in the form of a petition or a Community Call for Action, this will be logged as a complaint and will be recorded against the nominated spokesperson.

## **2.12 Legal Action**

Victory will not consider complaints that concern matters that are, or have been, the subject of legal proceedings. Where a complainant chooses to pursue their complaint through a solicitor, threatens legal action or takes legal action about an issue, Victory will normally refer the matter to their Solicitors and deal with the matter outside of the complaints policy process.

## **2.13 Multiple Complaints**

In the event that more than one or multiple complaints are received from a complainant, Victory reserves the right to deal with these as one complaint. Approval for this rests with a member of the Executive Team.

## **2.14 Fast-Tracking Complaints**

In exceptional circumstances and with the approval of a member of the Executive Team, a decision may be made to progress a complaint through the procedure more quickly than usual, or to skip one or more stages of the procedure.

## **2.15 Unacceptable Actions & Behaviour Policy**

We expect complainants to behave in a reasonable manner. Victory will not accept or investigate complaints where the behaviour of the complainant has become unreasonable or unacceptable – for example, if they are being threatening or abusive in any way. In these circumstances the matter will be dealt with in line with Victory's Unacceptable Actions and Behaviours Policy which may include suspension of the complaints policy for the duration of any restricted contact imposed.

## **2.16 Time expired complaints**

Complaints are expected to be made in a timely manner. Victory will not consider or investigate complaints where the cause of the complaint occurred more than six months prior to the complaint being raised.

Unless we hear from the complainant, all complaints are closed after 20 working days of Victory's response. If more time is required by the complainant to consider their response they should contact Victory to seek an extension of this time period. Complaints, once closed, will not normally be re-opened or escalated to the next stage of the complaints process except under very exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of Victory.

Complaints that have been closed will be deemed to have completed Victory's complaints policy.

## **2.17 Discretionary Payment Policy**

If the complaint is upheld, the primary aim will be to apologise, put right the problem (wherever that is possible, practical and value for money) and to apply any lessons learnt to improve services – such as revising policies, procedures or providing staff training - to try to avoid a reoccurrence of the problem. In exceptional circumstances, a discretionary payment may be awarded. Any requests for a discretionary payment will be dealt with in accordance with a separate Discretionary Payment Policy.

## **2.18 Enquiries from Councillors and Members of Parliament (MP)**

Where a Councillor or MP is acting as the representative of a constituent who wishes to raise an issue, this is categorised as a Councillor/MP enquiry rather than a complaint. These will be dealt with outside of the Complaints Policy unless it is specifically requested by the Councillor/MP that the concern

should be considered and responded to in accordance with this Complaints Policy. It may be necessary for Victory to be satisfied that the Councillor/MP has permission to act on an individual's behalf before we respond.

## **2.19 Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board has overall responsibility for this Policy.

The Executive Team is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy.

Assistant Directors and Managers are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their services comply with the policy.

Employees are required to ensure that they act in accordance with the policy in carrying out their duties. Employees will be empowered to deal with complaints and will receive training and support to do this in line with Victory's policy and procedures. Additionally, Victory employs a Complaints and Service Improvement Adviser whose role is to monitor, ensure consistency and promote good practice to all employees.

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**Customer Care Policy**

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**Unacceptable Actions and Behaviours Policy**

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**This document forms section three of Victory Housing Trust's  
Customer Care Policy**

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**Last Reviewed : December 2016**

### **3.1 Unacceptable Actions and Behaviours Policy**

This Policy outlines our approach to anybody who receives a service from, or interacts with, Victory whose actions or behaviour becomes unacceptable. This includes social media and other forms of electronic communication.

### **3.2 Purpose**

- To be open and transparent in dealing with everyone, including those whose actions we consider unacceptable.
- To deal fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately with all contacts. Everyone has the right to be heard, understood and respected.
- To provide an accessible service whilst retaining the right to restrict or change access to our service where we consider a person's actions to be unacceptable.
- To ensure that others do not suffer any disadvantage from those who act in an unacceptable manner.
- To ensure everyone is treated with respect and courtesy, including our employees.

We expect employees to treat everyone with courtesy and respect and we expect the same courtesy and respect in return. We know that people can act out of character in times of trouble and distress or when upset. Whilst we recognise this, this policy sets out what actions are unacceptable and how such actions will be dealt with should they arise.

Actions that are considered unacceptable can be broadly grouped as follows:

- Violent, aggressive or abusive behaviour
- Unreasonable demands
- Unreasonable persistence

### **3.3 Violent, aggressive or abusive behaviour**

Violence or abuse towards staff is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (whether spoken or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened, bullied or abused.

Examples of this type of behaviour include:

- Threats
- Physical Violence
- Personal verbal abuse
- Shouting or swearing
- Derogatory remarks
- Rudeness
- Inflammatory statements
- Unsubstantiated allegations

### **3.4 Unreasonable demands**

Demands become unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact significantly on the work of the organisation, by taking up an excessive amount of staff time to the disadvantage of residents or service delivery. What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised by the individuals.

Examples of this type of behaviour include:

- Demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to only a particular member of staff
- Excessive phone calls, letters or emails
- Repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns
- Demands for information which are excessive or time consuming to accommodate

### **3.5 Unreasonable Persistence**

It is accepted that persistence can be a positive advantage. Persistence becomes unacceptable when it takes up a disproportionate amount of time and resources. The way in which individuals may approach the organisation may be entirely reasonable, but it is their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so that is not.

Examples of this type of behaviour include:

- Contacting the office persistently about the same issue and/or approaching different staff about the same issue
- Refusal to accept a decision made or accept explanations relating to our decisions or actions
- Refusal to follow relevant procedures for pursuing an issue, for example, by using the complaints process
- Continuing to pursue an issue we consider resolved or closed without presenting any new information
- Failure to accept that we are unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than that provided already

### **3.6 Managing Unacceptable Behaviour – restricting contact**

All incidents where physical violence is used or threatened will be reported to the police. Verbal abuse or harassment may also be reported to the police.

Staff that directly experience violent, aggressive or abusive behaviour have the authority to deal immediately with that behaviour in a manner they consider appropriate to the situation and in line with this guidance. We allow staff to end meetings or telephone calls if anyone is aggressive (verbally or physically), makes threats, is abusive or offensive. Whenever possible and practical, and if they feel safe to do so, the member of staff should warn the

individual that for the meeting or telephone call to continue they need to stop their actions or their use of language.

Documents that are deemed irrelevant, abusive to staff, and/or contain allegations that lack substantive evidence may be returned or destroyed.

In serious cases, legal action may be taken.

Unacceptable behaviour by individuals may result in the need to apply restrictions in the level and nature of contact between the individual and Victory staff.

Restricted contact may apply to the whole household and the nature of the restrictions imposed will be tailored to the circumstances. Examples of restricted contact may include:

- Restrictions in the format and frequency with which Victory staff will communicate, perhaps limiting contact to one or more forms of communication – telephone, email, by letter, and/or by attendance at the office by appointment – and/or to set times or days.
- Restrictions on which members of staff may deal with the individual – contact may be limited to a single member of staff.
- Require the individual to make an appointment to see a named member of staff before visiting the office.
- Restricting contact by all mechanisms other than in writing and in extreme cases Victory may only correspond through a third party, for example, the organisation's legal advisors.
- Temporary suspension of the complaints policy for the period of the restricted contact. Victory will not normally accept or investigate complaints where the behaviour of the complainant has become unreasonable or unacceptable.
- Temporary suspension from involved resident activities for the period of the restricted contact.
- Refusal to meet with or enter a property or to only attend such meetings when accompanied by the police.
- Restricting repair and improvement works to a property other than works required to meet minimum health and safety standards.
- Taking other action that we consider appropriate.

Assistant Directors have the authority to impose a short term (up to five weeks) temporary restriction in contact where they feel that is appropriate and necessary to manage unacceptable behaviour. A decision to restrict contact for a period beyond five weeks will only be taken after careful consideration of the situation by a member of the Executive Team. The individual will be advised in writing why a decision has been made to restrict future contact, the restricted contact arrangements that will apply and, if relevant, the length of time that these restrictions will be in place.

### **3.7 Right to appeal**

Any individual has the right to appeal against a decision to restrict contact. All appeals should be put in writing and initially directed to the Chief Executive.

For appeals against short term restriction (less than five weeks) imposed by an Assistant Director, the appeal will be considered by a member of the Executive Team. For appeals against the decision to restrict contact for a period beyond five weeks, the appeal will be considered by the Chairman of the Board (or in their absence a Vice Chair of the Board). The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing and will advise whether the appeal has been successful or not and whether any restricted contact arrangements still apply (in full or part), or whether a different course of action is adopted to remedy the situation.

### **3.8 Recording and reviewing decisions to restrict contact**

We record all incidents of unacceptable actions and any decision taken to restrict contact. This information is kept on the Unacceptable Actions Log and relevant correspondence may be saved in the relevant files on our computer system.

### **3.9 Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board has overall responsibility for this Policy.

The Executive Team is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy.

Assistant Directors and Managers are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their services comply with the policy.

Employees are required to ensure that they act in accordance with the policy in carrying out their duties.



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<b>Customer Care Policy</b>	<b>4</b>
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## **Discretionary Payment Policy**

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**This document forms section four of Victory Housing Trust's Customer Care Policy**

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**Last Reviewed : December 2016**

## 4. Discretionary Payment Policy

### 4.1 Introduction

Wherever a problem or service failure has occurred our aim will be to apologise, put right the problem (wherever that is possible, practical and value for money) and to apply any lessons learnt to improve services – such as revising policies, procedures or providing staff training - to try to avoid a reoccurrence of the problem. In exceptional circumstances, a discretionary payment may be awarded.

This policy sets out our approach to discretionary payments for service failure. It details some circumstances when discretionary payments will be considered and what the discretionary payment may be. It should be noted this is not an exhaustive list of circumstances and each case will be considered on its own merits.

### 4.2 Definitions

Victory recognises that, in some cases, customers have a statutory right to a payment. In other cases a discretionary payment or other benefit may be appropriately given, as recognition of service failure or because of the special circumstances of the case.

#### **Statutory payments**

Statutory or compulsory payments are available to tenants in four instances:-

- **Home Loss** - Home loss payments may be made to tenants who have lived in their property for a minimum of twelve months and are required to move home permanently as a result of redevelopment or demolition of their home.
- **Disturbance** - Disturbance payments may be made to people who are required to move to another property temporarily (for example whilst major improvements are undertaken) or to people who have lived at a property less than twelve months and are required to move home permanently. The payment is for reasonable moving costs.
- **Improvements** - If a tenancy is ending and the tenant has completed improvements to the property after 1 April 1994 (having gained Victory's prior consent), the tenant may be entitled to a payment for those improvements at the end of their tenancy. This does not apply to fixed-term tenancies.
- **Right to Repair** - The Right to Repair scheme covers specific repairs, known as 'qualifying repairs' which cost less than £250 and should be done within a set time limit. If Victory does not carry them out within that time a payment may be awarded up to a maximum of £60.

Statutory payments are determined by government policy both with regard to

the amount payable and the basis on when tenants are eligible for payment. To find out whether you might qualify for any of these payments contact Victory for further information.

## **Discretionary Payments**

Victory aims to provide the best possible service at all times, but we recognise that sometimes we may get things wrong. Wherever there is a service failing or a problem has occurred, Victory's primary focus and aim will be to put right the problem. In exceptional circumstances, a discretionary payment may be awarded to tenants or leaseholders.

For the purpose of this policy, a discretionary payment can be defined as:

“A without prejudice payment or a gesture of goodwill in acknowledgement that Victory has failed to provide an adequate service. The aim of the discretionary payment is to make amends for inconvenience caused and to minimise the level of dissatisfaction that a tenant or leaseholder may feel as the result of a service failure”.

### **4.3 Scope**

This policy covers discretionary payments for service failure and applies to all Victory residents. This includes those in rented accommodation, shared ownership and other leasehold homes.

In considering a claim for a discretionary payment Victory shall undertake:

- To act fairly at all times
- To look at all claims on their individual merits
- To respond quickly and politely

### **4.4 When will Victory not consider making a discretionary payment**

Victory will not consider making a discretionary payment in the following circumstances:

- Where the loss or damage has been caused by a third party, such as a utility company or local authority, or where it has been caused by a resident, family or visitor to the resident or from an alteration or repair which the resident has arranged privately or carried out themselves.
- Where the loss or damage was beyond Victory's control, e.g. weather related, or where the problem has arisen because the matter has not been reported in a timely manner and damage has arisen because Victory has not been given the opportunity (e.g. through a reported repair) to resolve the matter.
- The loss or damage is a result of routine or end of life failure of a building's

component, fixture or fittings. In such instances the primary aim will be to repair or replace the problem rather than to offer a discretionary payment.

- Where improvement works to a property will unavoidably result in low levels of damage to property e.g. holes left in carpets or other floor coverings as a result of installing new radiator pipes
- When a request for a discretionary payment is deemed to be an insurance claim (see '4.5 Insurance Claims' for further clarification). With the exception of statutory payments, Victory will not consider discretionary payments that relate to matters that are, or have been, the subject of legal proceedings. Where someone chooses to pursue a discretionary payment claim through a solicitor, threatens or takes legal action, Victory will normally refer the matter to their Solicitors and deal with the matter outside of this discretionary payment policy and in accordance with legal advice.

#### **4.5 Insurance Claims**

For certain claims and liabilities, Victory has insurance policies in place to handle those claims. When a discretionary payment request falls within an insured liability, those claims will be referred to the insurer to consider and will be dealt with outside of this policy. In these circumstances, any payment will be subject to the eligibility of the insurance claim and may be made by the insurance company.

It is a condition of the policy cover that these matters are handled by the insurers. Therefore, Victory has no discretion on the matter and must follow the advice issued by them.

To clarify, a request for a discretionary payment is deemed to be an insurance claim when:

- There is any allegation of material loss or damage to the property greater than the value of the third party property damage excess.
- There is any allegation of injury, stress or ill health as a result of Victory's actions, failure to act or defects within the premises.
- There is a specific request for a discretionary payment in recompense for any action or inaction or defect within the premises (providing the request relates to an alleged loss, injury or damage which is covered by the above two bullet points).

Claims for discretionary payments which fall under the terms of Victory's Liability Insurance Policy will be passed on to Victory's insurance brokers. The claimant will be notified of this in a timely manner. Following this, Victory is unable to enter into any further discussions in relation to the request for a discretionary payment.

Claims will only be accepted by our insurers in writing and, if they relate to material loss, must include any written estimates, copies of bills/receipts and photographs where applicable. In a case of personal injury, the claimant will be required to complete the appropriate Claims Notification Form in order to ensure their legal rights are protected.

#### **4.6 Home Contents Insurance**

Discretionary payments are not designed to cover lack of earnings or similar, nor are they to recompense for a lack of contents insurance. All residents and leaseholders are expected to arrange their own home contents insurance to protect their personal belongings from loss or accidental damage. Generally speaking, a home contents policy covers just about everything a resident owns within their home; furniture, furnishings, household goods, kitchen equipment, electrical equipment, computers, clothing and valuables. Victory has made arrangements with third parties to provide affordable contents insurance. Where a resident could make a claim on their own contents insurance, irrespective of whether this is held or not or whether accidental cover is included, a discretionary payment would not normally be made.

#### **4.7 Time Expired Claims**

Requests for discretionary payments are expected to be made in a timely manner. Claims should be made within a month of the incident which is the subject of the claim. Claims relating to service failures that occurred before this time period will not normally be considered.

#### **4.8 How will discretionary payment claims be dealt with?**

Claims for discretionary payments can be made by letter, email, telephone, or personal visit. Assistance with making a claim in writing will be offered to customers where requested.

All claims will be acknowledged by Victory in writing and in low-level and straightforward cases where adequate evidence has been provided; a decision may be made on the strength of your claim.

Victory will confirm with the claimant, normally within 10 working days from the date of the claim or where applicable from the date of any inspection, the outcome of the claim. Should more time be required to investigate the claim, we will provide details of when a response can be expected.

If a customer complaint is received which includes an actual or potential discretionary payment claim against Victory, the customer may be informed in writing that this will be considered as a request for a discretionary payment.

Discretionary payments will be made promptly once a decision has been reached. Where there is an outstanding debt owed to Victory, the discretionary payment will be used to clear the debt either in full or in part.

Any payments Victory makes under the Discretionary Payment Policy will be in full and final settlement of the issue. This means that the resident or service user is accepting that the matter is resolved. Before making any payment, Victory will ask for a signed acceptance that the discretionary payment is in full and final settlement of the issues. Without that confirmation payment will not be made.

Victory may award discretionary payments in many forms. Except for situations where statutory payments apply, Victory will consider the following: - vouchers, cheque payment, rent free period and reduction of any arrears balance.

Discretionary payments will be paid directly by Victory unless the payment is part of an insurance claim.

The following table provides guidance on the likely **maximum** values which could be awarded based on our responsibility and the level of impact on the resident or service user.

Degree of our responsibility	No Impact	Low Impact	Medium Impact	Major Impact
None	£0	£0	£0	£0
Partial	£0	£25	£50	£75
Full	£0	£60	£125	£250

The table seeks to provide guidance on the likely level of payment that may be given over and above any costs incurred in putting right the problem (wherever that is possible, practical and value for money) – for example by completing a repair or improvement to a property.

#### **4.9 Failure to agree**

If a customer is dissatisfied with the outcome of a request for a discretionary payment they will have the right to make a complaint for unsatisfactory resolution of a request for a discretionary payment. Where agreement has not been reached, the matter will enter the complaints process (at the Review stage) and be reconsidered by a more senior member of staff.

If after this stage the claimant remains unhappy, the matter may be escalated to the third and final Appeal stage. The outcome of the Appeal will represent Victory's final response on the matter and Victory will not enter into any further correspondence or discussion on the request for a discretionary payment.

Victory reserves the right to refuse to process any appeals made on the basis that the claimant feels that the fixed statutory payment set by government policy, of which Victory has no control is, insufficient.

#### **4.10 Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board has overall responsibility for this Policy

The Executive Team is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy.

Assistant Directors and Managers are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their services comply with the policy.

Employees are required to ensure that they act in accordance with the policy in carrying out their duties.

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<b>Customer Care Policy</b>	<b>5</b>
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**Resident Engagement Policy**

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**This document forms section five of Victory Housing Trust's  
Customer Care Policy**

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**Last Reviewed : December 2016**



## **5. Resident Engagement Policy**

### **5.1 Policy Statement**

Victory puts residents at the centre of decision making, providing a range of opportunities for residents to be involved at governance, strategic and local delivery level. Resident input into the development of services is considered pivotal to the efficiency and effectiveness of our housing service and the quality of service provision.

In order to ensure that Victory residents have the opportunity to be involved in influencing decision making about housing and related services at all levels of the organisation we will:

- Promote the support available to help residents to be actively involved, e.g. transport to meetings, training, information in large print , reimbursement of expenses for attending meetings
- Maintain a specific budget for resident involvement which will include support for involved residents expenses, child and dependency care costs, training and development, venue hire and refreshments for residents meetings
- Actively publicise activities and the ways that residents can be involved
- Produce information which is easily accessible in a range of formats on request e.g. other languages, audio tape and large print
- Provide training for residents to ensure that they have the opportunity to develop any skills and knowledge required to be involved effectively in a range of ways and at different levels of the organisation
- Include resident engagement on all new staff induction plans to ensure everyone is aware of the resident engagement policy and the range of activities available for residents.

### **5.2 Introduction**

Victory is committed to support residents in influencing and shaping how we deliver our services. We will actively engage with residents and, where possible, will be responsive to their views and needs. We recognise the importance of supporting the creation of communities where people are proud to live.

This policy is underpinned by Victory's Co-Regulation Framework. This Framework was developed by a working group of staff, residents and Board members and approved by Victory's Board in September 2014.

### **5.3 Purpose**

This policy aims to set out how Victory will work to actively support residents to become involved in shaping and influencing the services delivered by Victory.

#### **5.4 Scope**

This policy is relevant to anyone living in a Victory home. It is also relevant to leaseholders, shared owners and freeholders who pay a service charge.

#### **5.5 Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board has overall responsibility for this policy.

The Executive Team is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy.

Assistant Directors and Managers are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their services comply with the policy.

Employees are required to ensure that they act in accordance with the policy.

#### **5.6 Implementation and Monitoring**

The Assistant Director of Housing will monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy and associated procedures, including:

- % of residents satisfied that Victory listens to their views and acts upon them
- % of residents that feel Victory is good at keeping them informed about the things that affect them as a resident
- Total Expenditure (excluding staffing costs) on Resident Involvement per property managed
- Total spend on Communication per property managed
- The impact of services changed, implemented or withdrawn during the year as a result of Resident Involvement.

#### **5.7 Legal References**

The key primary legislation and guidance underpinning this policy is as follows:

- Localism Act 2011
- Homes and Communities Agency Regulatory Standard
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 1998

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<b>Customer Care Policy</b>	<b>6</b>
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**Consultation Policy**

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**This document forms section six of Victory Housing Trust's  
Customer Care Policy**

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**Last Reviewed : December 2016**

## 6. Consultation Policy

### 6.1 **Introduction**

The Housing and Regeneration Act (2008) introduced statutory requirements for landlords to empower tenants and ensure that they have the opportunity to shape services and standards. This approach is called co-regulation, where landlords, the regulator and tenants together set, monitor and ensure that standards are met.

This consultation policy supports Victory's approach to co-regulation and service delivery which is to positively engage with tenants, formally incorporate residents' views and to be transparently accountable.

Victory is committed to making evidence based decisions that take into account the views and experiences of people affected by those decisions. We will seek to engage with all Victory residents to ensure everyone has an equal chance to have their say, whether members of formal involvement structures or not. We will consult with relevant stakeholders.

Understanding the needs of residents is essential to sound decision-making and the provision and maintenance of efficient and effective services. Consultation will increase Victory's understanding of residents' needs and without it Victory cannot be sure that the services we provide are the right ones, targeted in the most efficient way.

This consultation policy provides a basis for consistent decision-making and resource allocation and supports Victory in obtaining the highest possible standard of resident and stakeholder feedback. This will enable Victory to make effective decisions about service delivery and service development.

Through consultation we are seeking to:

- Inform decision making
- Ensure we stay in touch with the needs of residents and stakeholders
- Raise awareness and understanding of services, how they are provided and the local resident capacity to influence and change those services
- Avoid wasting resources on services and support residents do not want
- Share consultation results effectively and use them to inform policy development and service delivery wherever appropriate
- Maintain an open dialogue with stakeholders, while giving due consideration to the risk of consultation fatigue among residents.

This policy aims to support a process of informed and transparent decision making and planning and the delivery of effective and high quality consultation.

## **6.2** Definitions

Consultation: Where Victory is considering a change to an existing service, programme or plan or creating a new one, it will consult with those affected at an appropriate level to gather their views in order to inform the decision making process. From time to time this may involve consulting with existing resident involvement forums/bodies

Involvement: across its entire customer facing services, Victory involves its residents through various forums and bodies and through events in shaping, monitoring and scrutinising those services.

## **6.3** Purpose

This Consultation Policy explains Victory's overall organisational approach to consultation on Victory services and corporate and improvement plans.

## **6.4** Scope

This is a Victory wide policy and applies to all consultation exercises Victory undertakes as part of its work. This policy aims to support a process of informed and transparent decision making and planning, by improving the quality and effectiveness of consultation undertaken by Victory. The policy is supported by a more detailed procedure.

Victory cannot undertake consultation on every aspect of its work. The procedure will involve making a judgement about what is reasonable and appropriate, with a focus on residents and stakeholders. Consultation is just one form of engagement and other approaches may be more appropriate when considering timescales, budget, the impact of consultation findings and decision making.

Consultation will be undertaken where, as part of Victory's corporate plan and any improvement plans, there:

- Are statutory requirements to do so (e.g. changes to service charges)
- Is scope to influence the service outcome
- Are specific options or choices available to residents
- Are plans to develop a permanent new service
- Are plans to make changes to services, policy or procedures

Decisions on consultation will be facilitated by use of a Consultation Matrix. The matrix provides a framework for decision making based on the potential influence outcomes from the consultation process will have on the outcome and the impact on households/residents because of the proposed change/development. Use of the Consultation Matrix will require questions to be asked about how much the consultation process will inform the decision making process.

## 6.5 Consultation Matrix

The consultation matrix is a guide to the level and type of consultation required based upon an assessment of the number of residents that will be impacted by the new service or issue together with an assessment of the level of opportunity to influence the outcome. The level of consultation increases in accordance to the opportunity to influence decisions and the number of Victory households impacted.

In addition to agreeing what level of engagement should be achieved, consideration should be given to the scope of the engagement and resource implications for any consultation exercise. When deciding whether to undertake a consultation exercise the balance between impact on residents and level of consultation needs to be considered.

Level of opportunity to influence the outcome	High				
	Moderate				
	Low				
		<b>&lt;100 ( &lt; 2%)</b>	<b>100 to 500 (2-10%)</b>	<b>500 to 2500 (10-50%)</b>	<b>Over 2500 (+50%)</b>
<b>Number of households impacted</b>					

### Key to the Consultation Risk Matrix

<b>Levels of consultation</b>	
	<b>Extensive</b> – Multiple consultation activities (conference, workshops, focus groups, questionnaires), opportunity for all residents to get involved, feedback to all residents e.g. issuing all tenants with a revised Tenancy Agreement.
	<b>Wide consultation</b> – Consultation beyond existing involvement groups which may include questionnaires, special events or workshops targeted at those affected e.g. major policy changes (such as introduction of fixed term tenancies) Aim to engage with +100 residents.
	<b>Involvement structures &amp; activities</b> – Consultation through Forums, Special Topic Groups and/or existing programme of local events e.g. Policy review, Lettable Standard.
	<b>Information</b> – Letter to those affected and/or inclusion in Victory News e.g. informing people in a locality of repairs – new roofs

## **6.6 Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board has overall responsibility for this Policy

The Executive Team is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy.

Assistant Directors and Managers are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their services comply with the policy.

Employees are required to ensure that they act in accordance with the policy in carrying out their duties.

## **6.7 Implementation and Monitoring**

Victory will monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy and associated procedures, including:

- Progress of consultation exercises as outlined in Victory's Corporate Plan
- Compliance with best practice in consultation
- Value for money
- Legal and regulatory requirements
- Future aspirations

[a1]

## **6.8 Regulatory References**

- Housing and Regeneration Act (2008)
- Department for Communities and Local Government's Review of Social Housing Regulation (2010)
- Localism Act (2011)
- Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012
- HCA Regulatory Framework

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**Customer Care Policy**

**7**

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**Equality and Diversity Policy**

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**This document forms section seven of Victory Housing Trust's  
Customer Care Policy**

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**Last Reviewed : December 2016**



## 7. Equality and Diversity Policy

### 7.1 **Introduction**

Victory is committed to eliminating unfair discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and valuing diversity amongst our workforce, customers and the communities we serve. We understand that certain groups or individuals are more likely to be discriminated against.

Victory recognises that understanding diversity and tackling inequality is vital to the delivery of a good housing service and that housing provision is fundamental to a good quality of life and is a major determinant on health, education and community cohesion.

Victory is dedicated to promoting equality and diversity both as a landlord and an employer and will work to eliminate any direct or indirect discrimination whether intentional or unintentional. Victory will use the strength of the organisation to influence and actively challenge and eliminate inequality and disadvantage.

### 7.2 **Purpose**

This policy defines Victory's overall corporate approach to Equality and Diversity.

### 7.3 **Scope**

This Equality and Diversity policy is a corporate wide policy and covers all aspects of Victory's work:

- as a provider of housing
- as a provider of housing and associated services
- as an employer and
- as a purchaser of goods and services

### 7.4 **Our customers:**

- We will work together to ensure that our customers receive services that recognise issues of discrimination and celebrate their diversity. Recognising that equality is not always about treating customers the same, we will work to provide services that meet the needs of individuals and create sustainable cohesive communities.

### 7.5 **Our People:**

- We will work to create a working culture where everybody feels welcomed and everyone is valued and respected.

## **7.6 Our Aim**

In order to positively address equality and diversity we will:

- Promote equal opportunities whatever a person's race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, beliefs, gender including gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation , HIV status, physical or mental disability, state of health, appearance, marital status, civil partnership, family circumstances, offending behaviour or any other matter which may cause a person to be treated unfairly.
- Work towards a culture that does not tolerate bullying, harassment and discrimination in the workplace and one that promotes equality and dignity at work.
- Give staff, involved residents and board members equality and diversity training.
- Identify, understand and meet the diverse needs of residents in a way that promotes equality of opportunity and eliminates discrimination.
- Apply our commitment to equal opportunities and diversity when we decide who serves on our Board and Resident Involvement committees.
- Make sure everyone we work with or who works for us knows about our policy, and keeps to it. Victory expects that all staff, residents, contractors and other stakeholders will demonstrate inclusive behaviour, use thoughtful language, respect difference and challenge others. If any of these people have their own policy, we will make sure it does not conflict with ours.
- Take into account good practice in equal opportunities and diversity when we update our housing and employment policies and procedures.
- Self Assess our performance against the HCA 'Tenant involvement & Empowerment Standard'.
- Complete Equality Impact Assessments where appropriate.
- Respect and listen to customers and staff.

## **7.7 This Policy applies to:**

- All current residents and clients of our housing services
- All permanent and temporary employees, agency staff, and job applicants
- All Board and Committee members
- Consultants, contractors, suppliers and service providers working for Victory

## **7.8 Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board has overall responsibility for this Policy

The Executive Team is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy.

Assistant Directors and Managers are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their services comply with the policy.

Employees are required to ensure that they act in accordance with the policy in carrying out their duties.

All employees, Board Members, Involved Residents, consultants, contractors, suppliers and service providers working for Victory are expected to promote the spirit of diversity and this Equality & Diversity Policy to the full.

## **7.9 Implementation and Monitoring**

The Business Team will monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy and associated procedures, including:

- Compliance with the regulatory framework in respect of equality and diversity
- The approval and monitoring of Equality Impact Assessments
- The annual monitoring of complaints made alleging discrimination

## **7.10 Policy Links**

As a corporate wide document, this policy maintains links to all other organisational policies as well as the following additional documents:

- Completed Equality Impact Assessments
- Victory's Corporate Plan
- Code of Conduct for Suppliers, Service Providers, Contractors and Consultants

## **7.11 Legal and Regulatory References**

The key primary legislation and guidance underpinning this policy is as follows:

Equality Act 2010

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## **Safeguarding Policy**

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**This document forms section eight of Victory Housing Trust's Customer Care Policy**

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**Last Reviewed : December 2016**

## 8. Safeguarding Policy

### 8.1 **Introduction**

Victory aims to take all reasonable measures to safeguard vulnerable residents and service users from abuse and neglect. This includes vulnerable adults, children and young people. We aim to raise awareness, take steps to minimise the likelihood of abuse occurring and to respond appropriately by having robust procedures for dealing with suspected, alleged or actual incidents of abuse.

### 8.2 **This policy applies to**

- children and young people up to 18 years of age
- vulnerable adults

The definition of a vulnerable adult is “anyone who aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation” (Department of Health, 2000).

All Victory staff (including staff on temporary contracts and agency staff) Board Members, Involved Residents and contractors are responsible for working within the principles of this policy. They have obligations to be proactive in looking out for and responding to signs of abuse. They are required to take action, in line with the procedures which accompany this policy, where they suspect or become aware of alleged or actual abuse against vulnerable adults, children or young people.

Abuse which is any misuse of power can be intentional **or** unintentional; active or passive, and it may be part of a pattern of behaviour or a single incident. Abuse can take many forms including the following:

- Physical abuse including actual or threatened physical attack, verbal assault or neglect.
- Sexual abuse including rape, other sexual assault, threatened touching or inappropriate sexual remarks, recruitment of vulnerable individuals into the sex industry
- Emotional abuse including any actions or comments which fail to show dignity and respect for the individual.
- Neglect, which is a failure to properly care for the physical and emotional needs of the person and to protect them from harm

- Financial abuse including misappropriation of the personal finances of people using our services, borrowing from people using our services etc.
- Institutional Abuse where the rituals and routines mean individuals have to sacrifice their lifestyle to conform to those of the institution. This is often the result of poor practise which does not focus on the dignity and respect of the individual
- Discriminatory abuse including that based on a person's race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion & social status

This policy takes into account a range of legislation and guidance for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. A list of the key legislation and government guidance is included at the end of this policy. Our policy also fits with principles and approaches that have been agreed between key agencies within Norfolk

### **8.3 Vulnerable Adults**

“No Secrets” published by the Department of Health in 2000, recommends that statutory agencies work together to protect vulnerable adults. In Norfolk, Adult Social Services, Health and the Police have drawn up an agreed county wide protocol outlining how agencies working with vulnerable adults should work together.

Victory offers services to a wide range of people including vulnerable adults across all our housing services. We do not want to make assumptions however we know that the likelihood of people being at risk of abuse increases if they have a disability, with age, isolation, lack of social networks, cognitive loss, mental health needs and frailty. Therefore, the policy applies across our services areas.

### **8.4 Children and Young People**

Every Child Matters and the Children's Act 2004 set the framework for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 specifies how individuals and organisations should work together. The Local Safeguarding Children Board oversees these arrangements. In Norfolk, Norfolk cc Children Services and Norfolk Constabulary (Child protection Unit) are the lead agencies for investigating and coordinating action relating to protection of children and young people.

Victory is not an investigative or intervention agency working with children and young people. However a number of our staff and contractors are in regular contact with children and young people in the course of their work and are therefore in a position where they may observe or be alerted to signs of abuse.

We will ensure that our staff are aware of this policy and their responsibilities, and receive appropriate training. The training will include recognising abuse; the obligation to report abuse – alleged, suspected or actual; professional boundaries; confidentiality.

Safeguarding will be a regular agenda item at team meetings and supervision sessions.

We will produce information and guidelines for contractors.

We will provide information to on our approach to safeguarding. This will include awareness raising with appropriate groups of residents and service users and their advocates. Our approach will be sensitive, aiming to instil confidence rather than fear, and empowering people to recognise, prevent and report abuse.

## **8.5 Primary Aim**

Our primary aim is to prevent abuse occurring. We will

- Have safe recruitment procedures in place
- Produce guidelines for staff that will help them recognise potential indicators of abuse.
- Recognise that there are some risks for vulnerable residents and service users resulting from lone working. Our lone worker procedure will reflect this risk and cover the general principles of how these risks will be managed. The guidelines that accompany this safeguarding policy will also deal with / include these risks.
- Have a culture which empowers staff to raise concerns about practices (either within Victory or within organisations that we work with). Report all allegations regarding abuse by staff, Board members or contractors to Adult Social Services protection Team even when the allegation is not proven.

## **8.6 Suspected Abuse**

If abuse is suspected, alleged or does occur we want to ensure that we have robust procedures in place to deal with it. We will

- Adopt a victim centred approach
- Ensure our staff understand the need to take action in line with our procedures if a vulnerable person is at risk of harm even if the residents or service user does not want us to act ;

- Have easily accessible and clear guidelines and procedures for staff to follow both in relation to safeguarding adults and safeguarding children and young people. These will cover emergency and non-emergency situations; what constitutes a criminal offence; when other agencies such as the police, Adult Social Services, Children Services should be involved. These procedures will align with the county wide protocol overseen by Adult Social Services and arrangements overseen by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- Our information to residents and service users will include details of where to report concerns including contacts outside of the organisation;
- Use the expertise of other agencies to determine what action we should take;
- Offer appropriate support to victims of abuse (in conjunction with other agencies) We will also offer support to witnesses and work appropriately with perpetrators where they are our residents or service users;
- Participate in Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) as appropriate;
- Offer support to staff who are dealing with abuse cases;
- Offer appropriate support to any staff or contractors while allegations against them are being investigated;
- Cooperate fully with any investigations by other agencies.

We will have designated managers for safeguarding vulnerable adults and safeguarding children and young people. The designated managers will be responsible for reviewing all allegations of abuse and ensuring that the policy and procedures are being followed.

We will regularly review the effectiveness of this policy and the related procedures with staff and residents / service users. Our aim will be to identify if there are any potential weakness and/or disincentives to reporting abuse.

We will, confidentially, report any accusations against staff or contractors and the outcomes of investigations to our Board

We will always treat any sensitive or personal information given to us as confidential and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will only pass this information onto third parties such as statutory organisations, if :

- We are required by law to do so – either for the prevention or detection of crime or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders,



- There is an information sharing protocol, contract of confidentiality agreement in place

However, in some cases we will not need consent to share information if where doing so would:

- Place a child at risk or harm
- place an adult at risk or harm
- prejudice the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime, or
- lead to unjustified delay in making enquiries about allegations of significant harm or serious harm.

## **8.7 Guidelines and Procedures**

The guidelines and procedures which sit under this policy are

- Guidelines and procedures for safeguarding adults
- Guidelines and procedures for safeguarding children, young people

## **8.8 Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board has overall responsibility for this Policy

The Executive Team is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy.

Assistant Directors and Managers are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their services comply with the policy.

Employees are required to ensure that they act in accordance with the policy in carrying out their duties.

## **8.9 Related Policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with following Victory policies

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy

## **8.10 Related Legislation, Reference and Guidance**

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Community Care Act 1990
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Protection of Children Act 1999
- Care Standards Act 2000
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Health and Social Care Act 2008
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- 'No Secrets' 2000
- Every Child Matters
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010
- Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Joint policy and operational procedures
- Norfolk Safeguarding Children procedures
- Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework – C 1.3  
Safeguarding and Protection from Abuse
- HCA Regulatory Framework

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<b>Customer Care Policy</b>	<b>9</b>
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**Volunteers Policy**

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**This document forms section nine of Victory's Customer Care Policy**

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**Last Reviewed : December 2016**

## 9. Volunteers Policy

### 9.1 **Introduction**

A volunteer is a person who gives freely of his/her time, skills and experience without expectation of financial reward. Volunteering can take many forms, and may be for a limited time to complete a particular project or on an on-going basis.

Victory recognises the significant contribution that volunteers can make to the services we provide to our residents. Involving volunteers in our activities brings a diversity of skills and experience to our work, assists us in meeting the needs of our residents and enriches the involvement we have with local communities. In return, we aim to give volunteers the opportunity to learn new skills, gain confidence for future employment and put something back into their local community.

Victory offers a range of volunteering opportunities. This policy sets out how volunteers will be supported whilst volunteering with us.

### 9.2 **Purpose and Scope**

This policy defines Victory's overall corporate approach to volunteers.

Volunteers extend and complement the work undertaken by the Board and residents in formal involvement structures, but for the avoidance of doubt when individuals are undertaking the following activities they are not classed as volunteers:-

- Charity Trustees (Non Executive Directors)
- Resident Panel members
- Communication group members
- Community Fund group members
- Task and finish group members
- Work experience placements are not included under this definition of volunteering.

This policy is relevant to anyone living in a Victory home including leaseholders, shared owners and freeholders who pay a service charge.

It is the responsibility of the Business Team to identify ways in which the work of Victory can be extended by the involvement of volunteers, and to ensure that these opportunities complement rather than supplement the work of paid employees.

The business case outlining the reasons to recruit a volunteer, who will supervise the volunteer, the nature of the activity and the specific skills required to perform the activity, the duration of the position and where they will be based must be taken to the Business Team.

Volunteers may be recruited under the following circumstances:

- Where a specific activity can be identified, for which a volunteer can take responsibility, and which compliments the work of paid staff.
- Where there is an agreement about the nature and the purpose of volunteer involvement.
- Where adequate resources are available to provide support, supervision and training for them.
- Where there is an opportunity for volunteers to use and develop their skills and talents.

### **9.3 Selecting Volunteers**

We will use appropriate means to advertise for volunteers; usually the Resident News, Victory website and social media.

Residents interested in volunteering at Victory will need to complete an application form. The applicant will need to provide two references, one professional and one personal reference. If this is not possible, we are happy to accept two personal references, although the person needs to have known the applicant for at least two years.

The applicant will be invited to an informal meeting with the relevant person supervising. Following this meeting it will be confirmed whether the role would be suited to the volunteer and likewise if the volunteer feels they would be suited to the role.

If the volunteer is successful, the individual will be issued an agreement, which will outline the date that they are due to commence; the duration of the role; the name of their supervisor and the team that they will be working within. This agreement is NOT an employment contract, but forms part of the process of managing volunteers effectively.

### **9.4 Status of volunteers**

A volunteer is not an employee or worker and will not have a contract of employment or services with Victory.

If the voluntary activity is ongoing, Victory will agree a role description with the volunteer.

It is also expected that both Victory and the volunteer will give as much notice as possible if unable to meet these expectations.

## **9.5 Health and Safety**

Victory has a responsibility for the health and safety of volunteers during the voluntary activity.

Volunteers should at all times follow Victory's Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding and other associated safety procedures. Volunteers have a duty to take care of themselves and those who might be affected by their actions.

Volunteers should not act outside their authorised role. Volunteers should report all accidents to their Victory supervisor.

Victory will provide volunteers with appropriate guidance on any health and safety issues that arise.

## **9.6 Safeguarding**

Supervisors must ensure that volunteers are aware of their responsibilities under our Safeguarding Policy. Volunteers will not be expected to carry out any activities on their own.

## **9.7 Expenses**

Volunteers are not paid for their time but will be reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses incurred in connection with their volunteering for Victory, including:-

- Travel
- Childcare or carer costs to enable them to volunteer
- Postage and telephone costs if working from home
- Essential equipment, such as protective clothing

Claims for reimbursement should, at all times, be reasonable and supported by receipts and, agreed in advance.

Volunteers will be reimbursed for any mileage expenses they incur. This will mean:

- Travel to and from the place of volunteering
- Travel undertaken during volunteering.
- The amount of money reimbursed for mileage will be based on the Authorised Mileage Rates as allowed by HMRC.
- Volunteers must certify that they hold a valid driving licence for the UK, insurance which includes business cover, a current MOT certificate (if vehicle over 3 years old), road tax (where applicable) and that the mileage and subsistence claimed has been incurred wholly on Victory business.

## **9.8 Volunteers in receipt of benefits**

It is the responsibility of the volunteer to establish whether volunteering is going to affect their entitlement to any social security benefits. Further advice

should be obtained from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Job Centre Plus, or Citizens Advice Bureau or the Tenancy Support Team.

## **9.9 Insurance**

Victory will ensure that volunteers are covered for insurance purposes in respect of personal injury. Victory will also ensure that volunteers are provided with professional and public liability insurance.

The insurance will not cover unauthorised actions or actions outside the volunteering agreement.

## **9.10 Induction and Training**

All volunteers will receive an induction on the background of Victory (including our aim, objectives, values, code of conduct and key policies), any background information required to do the job and detailed information about such procedures as claiming expenses, reporting accidents and dealing with any emergencies.

All volunteers will have a named supervisor who will be responsible for ensuring a full induction is carried out and that they are contacted at least once per month.

Volunteers must be briefed on issues such as confidentiality and the importance of maintaining a correct relationship with staff, residents and Board members.

Victory will identify and provide training required for the role

## **9.11 Conduct of Volunteers**

In the interests and safety of all staff, volunteers and residents, we expect volunteers to work according to our adopted code of conduct for Employees, Non Executive Directors and Involved Residents.

## **9.12 Data Protection and Confidentiality**

Volunteers may become aware of personal information as part of their role. Volunteers should not disclose this information or use it for their own or another's benefit without the consent of all parties concerned. This does not prevent disclosure once the information is in the public domain (unless it has been made public as a result of the volunteer's breach of confidentiality) or where the law permits or requires disclosure.

If a volunteer is suspected to have breached confidentiality concerning information involving Victory, action will be taken, which may result in the volunteering agreement being terminated.

Any information held by Victory regarding volunteers will be treated as confidential.

### **9.13 Supporting Volunteers**

Victory will support our volunteers and is committed to empowering volunteers through all methods available.

All volunteers will have a named person within Victory as their main point of contact. A supervisor will manage the day-to-day support and training of the volunteer.

For ongoing volunteering activities, meetings to feedback on progress, discussion of future developments and to air any problems or issues, will be held with the volunteer

Volunteers may be provided with a reference from Victory if moving to other voluntary work or to paid employment.

Documents will be provided in different formats (for example, large print or different languages) if required. British sign language interpretation is available.

### **9.14 Dealing with problems**

As volunteers are not employees, they are unable to use Victory's Grievance Policy and Procedure. However, they are entitled to raise any concerns or issues under our complaints policy.

Where a complaint is raised about the actions of a Non Executive Director, employee or an Involved Resident this will be investigated in line with the procedure set out in the Code of Conduct. The decision whether or not to initiate investigatory action and/or disciplinary action will be strictly confidential to the Non Executive Director, employee or Involved Resident concerned and to Victory

If a complaint is made about a volunteer, this will be notified to him/her in writing and Victory will investigate to determine whether or not any action should be taken, which could include termination of the volunteers' agreement.

### **9.15 Termination of Activity**

The role and placement of the volunteers may be terminated by the supervisor with immediate effect. In all cases, the volunteer will be entitled to an explanation of the decision and action taken.

Victory welcomes feedback and encourages volunteers to offer ideas for improvements. Volunteers who choose to stop volunteering at any time will also be invited to provide feedback.



## **9.16 Roles and Responsibilities**

- The Board has overall responsibility for this policy.
- The Executive Team is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy.
- Assistant Directors and Managers are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their services comply with the policy.
- Resident Volunteers are required to ensure that they act in accordance with the policy.

## **9.17 Implementation and Monitoring**

The Assistant Director of Housing will monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy and associated procedures.

## **Legal and Regulatory References**

The key primary legislation and guidance underpinning this policy is as follows:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Police Act 1997
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amended 2013)

## **Policy and Procedure Links**

As a corporate wide document, this policy maintains links to all other organisational policies as well as the following additional documents:

Corporate plan  
Code of Conduct  
Health and Safety Policy  
Safeguarding Policy  
Putting things right – complaints policy  
Data protection Policy