

## INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT CODE OF CONDUCT

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide clear guidance to involved customers, colleagues and others who may engage in co-regulation discussions and the Customer Experience Forum as part of the 'Coastline Conversation'. It sets out the expected standards of behaviour, responsibilities and best practice in fulfilling their obligations to the Coastline group and its customers.
- 1.2. The Code of Conduct defines the rules under which all parties will operate to support co-regulation.
- 1.3. Customers, Coastline colleagues and others agree to observe the terms of the Code of Conduct, and other arrangements put in place, to ensure good governance in all their dealings on behalf of Coastline and its customers.
- 1.4. Customers involved in consultation processes will be expected to sign the Code of Conduct as a commitment to abide by its terms. Colleagues who work with involved customers will also sign and abide by the Code of Conduct.
- 1.5. The terms of the Code of Conduct will apply to all meetings – whether face to face or virtual - and arrangements that support co-regulation.
- 1.6. It is important that all parties work within the terms of the Code of Conduct. Failure to do so will be considered an act of misconduct. If misconduct occurs, colleagues will be subject to Coastline's internal disciplinary procedures, and customers will be subject to the provisions of Section 6 of this Code of Conduct.
- 1.7. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Customer Voice Code of Conduct, attached at Appendix A.
- 1.8. The Code of Conduct is underpinned by Coastline's core values to:
  - Put our customers first;
  - be open and honest;
  - strive to the best; and
  - value each other.

### 2. Equality and Respect

- 2.1. Customers and colleagues are expected to treat each other with courtesy and respect at all times. Personal comments, offensive, discriminatory or abusive remarks or behaviour will not be tolerated.
- 2.2. All customers and colleagues will acknowledge that everybody has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of ethnic or national origins, disability, gender, marital status, age, sexuality, religion, economic circumstances, or any other matter which causes people to be treated with prejudice.
- 2.3. Customers and colleagues will strive to uphold the principles of equality and diversity in all their written, verbal and electronic communications.

2.4. Customers and colleagues will ensure that all communications are relevant and uphold the code of conduct. Particular attention will be paid to: -

- Tone
- Language; not use language that is inflammatory, offensive or which undermines another person's position
- Frequency; customers and colleagues will exercise mutual respect in the frequency of communications, and in particular will allow issues to be resolved as set out in the Local Offers.
- The relevance of the people included in the communication
- The Contact Centre as being the first point of contact as they have the ability to resolve many queries at the first point.

2.5 Relevant training will be required for colleagues and involved customers who participate in 'Customer Voice' and/or the Customer Excellence Forum.

### **3. Declarations of Interests**

3.1. Customers and colleagues must declare an interest on any matter that appears on any meeting agenda for discussion that raises a conflict of interest, or has the potential to do so. If in doubt members should, as a precaution, declare the interest and, if possible, seek clarification with the Chair or Coastline before the meeting at which the item is to be discussed.

3.2. Customers may be members of a political party but they must not represent a political party or interest group in their role in any involvement activity in serving Coastline and its customers.

3.3. Customers and colleagues should act in the best interests of customers at all times. They should not act out of self-interest and must not use their position on any committee, or at any meeting, to raise or promote personal issues, agenda or complaints.

### **4. Relationship with Coastline**

4.1. Customers and colleagues will not act in a way that is contrary to the values and objectives of Coastline.

4.2. Customers will not give colleagues any instructions concerning their day to day duties.

4.3. Customers and colleagues will not do or say anything that could bring Coastline into disrepute. If any customer has a serious concern about any aspect of the business or management of Coastline, the appropriate person should be contacted. If necessary, Coastline's Complaints Procedure should be followed.

4.4. Customers in breach of their tenancy or lease conditions are not eligible to act as an involved customer until the breach is resolved, for example:

- Having rent arrears without an agreement to repay
- Having breached their agreement to repay arrears

- Having a notice seeking possession in place for a breach of tenancy
- Subject to an order in respect of antisocial behaviour or investigation

## **5.0 Confidentiality**

- 5.1** Coastline places a high commitment on the open conduct of its business, whenever possible. However, Coastline also appreciates that there will be times when high levels of confidentiality will be required.
- 5.2** In order to carry out its functions effectively, Coastline will trust customers with information that may be business sensitive and confidential. Customers agree not to discuss or share any confidential information with any person or organisation.
- 5.3** Customers agree to treat all information about customers as strictly confidential. When information about an individual customer is raised it will be with their consent and discussed with dignity and respect. Comments about individual colleagues will be made with dignity and respect. All contributors will work within the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 5.3** Customers agree to return all confidential information to Coastline once its use has been served or if a customer resigns or is removed from a committee or similar body.
- 5.4** Customers agree not to represent Coastline verbally, in writing, or electronically unless authorised to do so.
- 5.5** Customers will not use, communicate, distribute or share by any means, any information they receive for any purpose other than the legitimate business of any meeting.
- 5.6** All customers hold collective responsibility for decisions made in meetings. In the event that a customer disagrees with any decision made, he or she agrees to abide by it and not to do or say anything to undermine the decision made.

## **6.0 Breaches of the Code of Conduct**

- 6.1** Chairs will take reasonable steps to deal with disruptive or discourteous behaviour. The Chair will give a verbal warning. If unacceptable behaviour continues the Chair will ask the person to leave the meeting.
- 6.2** If an involved customer is persistently disruptive or is found to have breached any other part of the Code of Conduct, a meeting will be arranged to determine whether the customer should step down from involvement, with the agreement of the executive team.
- 6.3** The customer concerned will be notified in writing by the Company Secretary that a meeting has been called to consider their conduct. The letter will give the member at least two weeks' notice of the meeting.
- 6.4** The customer will have the opportunity to examine the related documents one week before the meeting and will be able to present their case during the meeting. They may be accompanied by a friend or colleague who is not a legal representative.
- 6.5** The meeting will be Chaired by a Non-Executive Director and include a member of the Customer Scrutiny Panel and a Senior Manager.

- 6.6 The customer will be given an opportunity to appeal the decision through stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.
- 6.7 Prior to the meeting to consider their conduct and during the appeal period the customer will be suspended from involvement and will not attend meetings or events or receive any information regarding involvement activities.
- 6.8 If a colleague is persistently disruptive or is found to have breached any part of the code of conduct Coastline's internal disciplinary procedure will be followed.

## **7.0 Attendance**

- 7.1 When an involved customer is attending a meeting they will be expected to come prepared to enable them to make a contribution to the meeting.
- 7.2 When an involved customer is unable to attend a meeting apologies should be submitted in advance, whenever possible.
- 7.3 If an involved customer fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the same group without giving formal apologies, he or she will be deemed to have stepped down from that group. Notice will be given and arrangements made to appoint a replacement.
- 7.4 If a customer wishes to stand down from a committee or group they will inform the Chair of the meeting or a member of the Community Investment Team.

## **8.0 Ground Rules for Meetings**

- 8.1 The followings rules will be observed by all participants at meetings:-
- arrive or log in within 15 minutes of the start of the meeting
  - meetings will start on time and will endeavour to finish by the expected closing time
  - if it is necessary for a member to leave early, notify the Chair before the meeting begins
  - participants will have studied meeting papers in advance
  - mobile phones will be turned off or set to silent during meetings, unless prior approval given by the Chair
  - all questions or comments will be made through the Chair, using 'chat' or 'raise the hand' features for online meetings
  - one person will speak at a time, where possible
  - participants will ensure comments are relevant to the matter being discussed
  - personal issues or complaints will not be raised at meetings
  - all members will be treated with respect, and views expressed by others will be received courteously
  - meeting decisions will be accepted as the collective view of the group