Estate Research
Genealogy Matters

Customer Care Manual

This manual ought to be read together with the Customer Care and Complaints Policy.

It is acknowledged that good customer service is a team effort: it is dependent upon collective responsibility from everyone who works at Estate Research.

The following procedures are to apply in all circumstances except in exceptional circumstances where other law, legislative or other requirements may take precedence.

Staff

During the recruitment and any ensuing induction process prospective employees will be assessed in relation to our customer care principles.

Management are required to objectively assess by no later than 2 weeks prior to expiration of induction period the customer service skill set.

Management will use a 1-5 point scoring system (1 being exemplary and 5 being wholly inadequate) to assess suitability to the role. A record of this assessment will be held confidentially in the HR folder. The following criteria are to be assessed:

1. Friendliness
2. Courtesy/ manners
3. Professionalism
4. Timeliness
5. Ability to abide by commitments made

The result of the assessment will be assessed using the following Red, Amber, Green (RAG) performance monitoring system:

COLOUR INDICATOR	INDICATION RATE
Red	85% and below
Amber	86% - 94%
Green	95% and above

Employees are expected to score 95% above. Results of the assessment are referred back to the employee on a confidential basis. Employees scoring less than the desired amount will be assessed for on-going suitability to role and whether further training may appropriate.

The Management Team will demonstrate its commitment to the policy by adopting the customer service values and principles, promoting them among their team and monitoring performance and recommending change to improve customer service. Team meetings are scheduled to take place four times a year in addition to any ad hoc meeting. These meetings are minuted in accordance with ISO requirements. Each scheduled meeting will have customer service news as an item to discuss these will provide requisite format to managers to discuss current KPI status, compliments and complaints that may have been received in the intervening quarter.

Managers will support the spread of good customer service throughout the organisation, particularly through a planned customer service training and development programme and meetings.

All staff will demonstrate the customer service values and principles through their positive behaviour and professional approach to the delivery of their services and by participating in on-going training and development opportunities.

Procedures for recording customer service data and for monitoring adherence are continually being developed. The following KPIs are to be regarded by employees as being particularly pertinent to customer service:

A score of 1-5 is provided in relation to the above criteria (1 being exemplary and 5 being wholly inadequate) so as to facilitate monitoring.

Estate Research monitor results against them using the Red, Amber, Green (RAG) performance monitoring system:

COLOUR INDICATOR	INDICATION RATE
Red	85% and below
Amber	86% - 94%
Green	95% and above

The KPIs we use are reviewed on an annual basis. Management are required to continuously consider whether further KPIs are necessary.

Where a KPI falls below green as a trend, this should be identified, recorded within the systems directory.

Management shall consider within 2 working days what action is required to improve performance levels

KPI CRITERIA	DETAILS
Client satisfaction	File handlers are encouraged to obtain feedback from customers. Surveys received will be assessed on a monthly basis and objectively quantified.
Research accuracy	A sample set of 10 cases per month will be reviewed and assessed to ascertain whether information published by Estate Research is accurate and can be verified/ substantiated.
Correspondence quality assurance	A sample set of 10 is taken on a monthly basis and the dedicated case handler is assessed as to whether they are complying with written communication requirements (referred to below).
Survey collation	Estate Research file handlers are expected to receive a minimum of 95% of surveys back from customers who have agreed to complete a survey. Management are required to obtain a sample set of cases and review evidence of file handlers seeking completed surveys.
Complaint handling times	The complaint procedure provides a strict timetable for resolution. Estate Research management review the complaint register on a yearly basis and assess whether the procedure has been followed.
Number of complaints	Managers assess on a monthly basis the number of complaints a file handler has and then pursuant to investigation will determine whether the file handler's performance falls short.
Call response times	A sample set of 10 is taken on a monthly basis and the dedicated case handler is assessed as to whether they are complying with telephone requirements (referred to below).
Case completion times	As each case is fact specific the sample set of 10 cases is taken from the dedicated file handler by management on a monthly basis and assessed for overall completion times.

Customer Interaction

STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

Telephone Answering

We recognise that maintaining a high standard of customer telephone contact across the organisation is essential to public perception.

1. All staff will aim to answer phone calls within 20 seconds.
2. All staff will answer the phone to an external caller by saying good morning, good afternoon, good evening, followed by their first name and a phrase, such as 'can I help you?' or 'how can I help you?'.
3. All staff will endeavour to deal with customer queries and requests directly and will only transfer a call to another member of staff if the caller specifically requests to speak to someone else or if they do not have the information required.
4. Where a caller wishes to speak to a member of staff who is unavailable, the staff member dealing with the call must always offer to help, take a message or, if applicable, provide a mobile telephone number.
5. If a call cannot be dealt with directly or transferred to an appropriate team member for response, a message should record the caller's contact details and sufficient information about the subject of the call. Staff should avoid telling a customer that another member of staff is sick, at lunch, on a tea break or busy and should not ask a customer to ring back.
6. Where an issue or query raised by telephone cannot be dealt with immediately, the responsible employee will provide a reply as soon as possible, adhering to the response times for written communication, but recognising that telephone contact is expected to be, and should be, considerably more rapid.
7. Telephone messages must be communicated in a timely manner.
8. Where voice mail is used for 'out of office' cover, the member of staff must record an appropriate greeting and must respond to messages in a timely manner or ensure messages are passed to another appropriate member of staff for prompt call back.
9. Voice mail should not be used as 'out of office' cover for extended periods of time. Calls should be diverted to an appropriate extension.
10. The use of speakerphones should be avoided and when used, customers must be informed they are on speaker and who else is present.

Written Communication

Any letter or email communication is accepted by the recipient as being from Estate Research and therefore all care must be taken to ensure that content, language and grammar are correct and the tone of the correspondence is suitable.

While often considered more informal, particularly when used internally, email communication should adhere to the same standards as traditional letters.

1. All letters to be sent on company letterhead.
2. In all written communication, the first name and surname of the dedicated case handler will be used together with job title. Contact details, including direct dial telephone numbers and email address, where applicable, will be provided to ensure customers have an easily identifiable point of contact.
3. Standard phrases to close letters will be used as appropriate, that is 'yours sincerely' or 'yours faithfully'. When appropriate, employees may use less formal closing phrases, such as 'kind regards' or 'best wishes'.
4. Out of office automatic email response must be enabled where a member of staff will be absent for more than 1 working day. The out of office message must provide an alternative point of contact for enquiries.
5. All correspondence by letter received from a customer will be acknowledged within 3 working days, unless a full response is to be issued in the interim period. Acknowledgements should be issued by email whenever possible.
6. All external correspondence received by email will be acknowledged within 1 working day, unless a full response is to be issued in the interim period.
7. All correspondence will receive a response within 15 working days. Where a response cannot be issued within the 15 working day timeframe, Estate Research will contact the customer to provide an explanation and a new target response time.
8. When appropriate, a response to written correspondence can be made by telephone or in person, in which case a file note should be made and retained to record details of the contact, including date, time and outcome.

Documents

Employees are required to become fully versed in the standard documents that are sent to customers. Initial contact ought ideally to be made by telephone to verify research and inform the customer of all the disclosable details of the matter in accordance with our over-arching culture of transparency.

Customers ought to be notified of the documents (listed below) that will follow in the post. Employees shall post the agreement pack on the same day of communication.

BOOKLET

A booklet is provided to the customer within the agreement pack. It addresses, in plain English, questions that commonly arise. It also refers to the website which has further details including details of the following:

- ethical policy;
- complaints procedure; &
- customer care policy summary.

CUSTOMER CARE POLICY (SUMMARY) & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY

These policies will be included within the booklet. The customer is to be informed of the standards that they can expect from us and the procedure available should things go wrong.

AGREEMENT

The agreement is a one page document and seeks to detail the proposed contractual relationship between Estate Research and the customer in plain English.

It identifies all the key conditions of the agreement; the how, what, why and when; the mutual obligations and the mechanism by which a fee will be levied.

It also alerts the customer to their legal right to cancel the agreement and informs them the circumstances within which they can cancel the agreement.

A covering letter is to accompany the contract, the customer is to be referred to the agreement and the ensuing contractual relationship that they will enter into should they sign it. The letter is to notify the customer that they may wish to obtain legal representation prior to signing.

The agreement is not to be amended without express authority being obtained from senior managers working in conjunction with our in-house solicitor.

SURVEY

Staff are encouraged to request feedback from customers ideally by way of a survey. This survey will be referred to in the literature sent out to the customer at the outset. Staff are requested to refer to the survey in a telephone conversation and ask that it be completed upon conclusion of the research via an online portal or, if requested, by paper format.

In addition to the survey that the beneficiary completes we are now intent on sending out surveys to council representatives on an annual basis.

The questions within the survey address the following issues::

- Quality of service
- Responsive/ timeliness levels
- Friendliness
- Helpfulness of staff
- Professionalism
- Transparency

We assess answers on a monthly basis using the following RAG system.

Estate Research have targeted outcomes and monitor results against them using the Red, Amber, Green (RAG) performance monitoring system:

COLOUR INDICATOR	INDICATION RATE
Red	85% and below
Amber	86% - 94%
Green	95% and above

Complaints & Compliments

Employees are required to encourage feedback about the customer's experience.

Should the customer complain or indeed if a complaint can be inferred the complaints procedure will be triggered. A complaint can be defined as follows:

'Any oral or written expression of dissatisfaction by any person, however made, about the service, actions or inactions of Estate Research representatives which requires a response.'

We have developed a complaints procedure set out in our complaints policy that has a strict timeframe for completion. Where a complaint arises the associated file-handler will be assessed using our KPI/ RAG system to ensure that the timeframe is adhered to. Employees are required to familiarise themselves with the Customer Complaints Policy and the associated flowchart.

The procedure requires a complaint to be registered and recorded. An audit trail is to be provided in relation to the handling of a complaint and management are required to follow internal saving requirements in accordance with ISO requirements.

Any ensuing lessons learnt from mistakes relating to the complaint are to be flagged up and disseminated to staff so that they can learn from the experience. Wherever possible management are required to adopt a constructive approach as recognise that blaming does not assist in encouraging future transparency and co-operation.

Similarly we recognise that standards can be improved by compliments and in a similar manner to the complaints procedure compliments are reviewed, recorded and, where applicable, provided to the rest of the team.

Complaint Procedure

In conjunction with our complaint policy employees are required to adopt the following procedure upon receipt of a complaint regardless of that receipt has been in writing, orally, survey response or whether it can be inferred from actions/ inactions of the customer.

Oral complaints are to be transcribed immediately and placed upon file and within a complaints folder held at the head office. The case handler's line manager is to be notified immediately who will consider the matter.

An acknowledgement that the complaint procedure has been initiated will be sent to the complainant within 2 working days.

If possible the complainant will be asked to provide an account of the issue in writing as soon as possible.

The Line Manager will investigate the matter fully, recording all findings in writing and saving them in a prescribed confidential area on IT system.

The Line Manager will assess the magnitude of the complaint and confer with higher management staff if necessary. If appropriate, he/ she will use best endeavours to resolve the complaint without delay.

If the complainant seeks further redress the matter will be transferred to Aidan Hutchings (Managing Director) or James Gartland (In-House Solicitor) for further internal investigation. If a complaint proceeds to this stage the complainant will be informed in writing within 2 working days.

We aim to investigate and reply to all complaints within 10 working days.