

thirteen

Code of Conduct for Involved Customers

Thirteen Involved Customers may include tenants and leaseholders, applicants for housing, those who receive services, residents who live in the neighbourhoods managed by Thirteen and people who are buying their homes from Thirteen.

Whilst this code of conduct is specific to involved customers, all representatives of Thirteen are bound by Thirteen's internal policies.

Statement

Thirteen is committed to maintaining the highest standards of conduct in all areas of involvement activity and expects individuals participating in customer involvement projects to observe this conduct. This includes when attending internal or external events/training.

Being self-aware and professional are core values of the Organisation which underpins all its objectives.

1. Purpose

- a) The purpose of this document is to set standards for how involved customers will conduct themselves with each other, staff, board members and at any time representing Thirteen during the course of their volunteering as an involved customer.
- b) To ensure that all members feel welcome and are able to contribute at involvement projects, events and training.
- c) That meetings are conducted in an open and business-like manner.
- d) That the highest standards of behaviour are maintained by customers at all times.
- e) A copy of the Code of Conduct will be signed by each involved customer, along with a Confidentiality Statement.

2. Personal Conduct

An involved customer will:

- Appreciate and respect differences – e.g. in knowledge, background, etc. Never discriminate on any ground against anyone else in the course of carrying out their volunteering with Thirteen.
- Ensure that any involved customer or Thirteen are not brought into disrepute by their actions.
- Not seek to obtain any personal benefit or advantage (other than the rewards and expenses payable for participation in involvement projects), or expect to receive more favourable treatment by staff, because of being an involved customer.

- Not disclose any information received from anyone in accordance with the Confidentiality Statement.
- Not use social media in such a way to place Thirteen, any of its staff, or involved customers at risk, or to share this information publicly.
- Raise issues of staff, board or contractors performance (where necessary) constructively and through the appropriate channels.
- Not undermine or appear to undermine the authority of a senior officer in his or her dealings with a more junior member of staff.
- Not individually give instruction or direction to any member of staff or contractor unless you have specific and, where applicable, delegated authority to do so.
- Avoid inappropriate personal familiarity with members of staff.
- Behave in a manner which is professional and aids the smooth process of involvement, communication and the improvement of services for Thirteen customers maintaining independence and integrity at all times. Examples of this can be found at Appendix One.

3. Disclosing interests and dealing with conflicts of interest

An involved customer must:

- Disclose any interest, whether personal or on behalf of any tenant or customer group they belong to, which might possibly affect or influence their approach to involvement.
- Withdraw from any involvement group or volunteering (in whole or in part) where a conflict of interest is clear and substantial.

Volunteers should contact the Customer Involvement team if they think that a conflict of interest has or may arise.

4. Confidentiality

All involved customers must sign a Confidentiality Statement which reinforces this Code of Conduct.

All involved customers will respect the confidentiality of personal information about individuals which is provided for the purpose of any aspect of involvement they take part in. Involved customers must also refrain from mentioning specific individual cases which may cause identification of an individual.

Any information of a confidential nature must not be disclosed to anyone, except to the lead officer from the Customer Involvement team for the volunteering they are taking part in.

5. Gifts and Hospitality

If any gift or hospitality is received or offered in the course of acting as an involved customer, it will be brought to the attention of the Customer Involvement Team and what happens to the gift will be discussed with them. All hospitality will be entered into the Thirteen Gifts and Hospitality Register.

6. Breaches of the Code of Conduct

If an involved customer fails to abide by, or breaches, the Code of Conduct or Confidentiality Statement, acts in a manner which is not in the spirit of these documents or goes against the principles of co-regulation and partnership working, actions may be taken as outlined in the Breaches of the Code Of Conduct process. If a customer or staff member feels they need to raise an issue of concern relating to involvement, or the working of the customer involvement framework and streams, they will raise this in the first instance with the Chair of the Customer Involvement Framework, who will raise the matter with the Customer Experience Manager, or the person may raise this directly with the Customer Experience Manager if necessary. Alternatively, if they do not feel comfortable or do not believe their concerns will be investigated, they can report a breach anonymously using Thirteen's Whistleblowing Procedure by emailing whistle.blowing@thirteengroup.co.uk

Breaches of Code of Conduct process

This process will show you what to expect if your conduct falls below the levels expected of an involved customer. Any aggrieved person, or anyone witnessing a potential breach including customers, staff and members of the Board of Thirteen can raise a breach. The escalation procedure for this is as follows:

- **Informal guidance** - Where possible the customer chair, or a relevant officer when necessary, will discuss minor concerns about your conduct with you informally in the hope that this concludes the issue with regards to your conduct.
- **Firm guidance** - If the customer chair or the officer feels that informal guidance is not sufficient, it may be necessary to issue you with firm guidance during a joint discussion; this could be mediation or training. Written confirmation of the joint discussion will be sent to you and stored on file for twelve months, clearly stating the actions required and timescales for any review. This will be taken into account if a similar incident occurs and the matter progresses to a formal process in the future.
- **Formal Process** - In some cases, the relevant officer may feel that informal guidance and firm guidance are not appropriate or adequate and the issue may move directly to the formal procedure.
- The formal process will be applied where you do not respond appropriately or adequately to informal or firm guidance or where the conduct issue that is believed to have occurred is too serious to be dealt with informally.
- The Customer Experience Manager will then convene an Investigation Group to determine the level of breach after a preliminary in-depth investigation. This may include an impartial officer, the Head of Touchpoints, the Customer Experience Manager and the chair of the Customer Involvement Framework.

The Investigating Group will determine whether the breach is minor or major as well as determining the outcome of the alleged breach. A range of outcomes may be taken as a result of the investigation, including:

- ✓ Being asked to withdraw from all involvement activities (major breach or two minor breaches);
- ✓ Being given a final written warning and having this recorded formally by the Customer Involvement Team (minor breach);
- ✓ Being offered training and support (minor breach);
- ✓ No further action to be taken (no breach determined).

A final appeal on the breach may be made in writing to the Director of Experience within 10 working days of receiving notification of the decision.

Appendix One: Agreeing to the code of conduct

In carrying out their volunteering activities, involved customers are expected to observe the following:

1. Respect each other, be considerate and show empathy of each other's point of view
2. Encourage and support new members
3. Set aside personal or individual disputes
4. Accept the majority decision, even if you do not agree with it, do not take it personally
5. Not abuse their position as an involved customer to gain any favour or personal benefit
6. Keep an open mind and make balanced judgements
7. Abide by the terms of the Confidentiality Statement including data protection
8. Come prepared to meetings, having completed any work allocated
9. Be patient, trust each other and work together as a team to achieve the aims
10. Be reliable and punctual when attending meetings
11. Not to attend meetings or involvement events under the influence of alcohol or drugs
12. Submit apologise in advance if they are unable to attend a meeting
13. Be honest, listen and always be willing to learn
14. Be respectful and supportive of the chair and any speakers
15. Be polite giving everyone the opportunity to contribute their views, actively listen without judgement and do not talk over each other.
16. Be clear and brief to assist with the smooth running of meetings by keeping to the task at hand and not deviate away from the agenda
17. Show a commitment to equality and diversity, be respectful, do not use abusive, rude or offensive language about individuals or groups
18. Respect that each volunteer has different skills and knowledge and acknowledge their value
19. Turn off mobile phones or keep on silent if needed
20. Be professional at meetings and events
21. Don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand and allow the relevant person to answer the query
22. Remember the purpose of volunteering as an involved customer is to benefit customers generally and not specific individuals
23. Be friendly to anyone you meet during your volunteering
24. Not to use technology or social media to share information from an involvement project if that information will cause offence or damage to the reputation of an involved customer, customer involvement project or Thirteen itself

25. I'm aware of the avenues open to Thirteen and in agreement with the action that could be taken should I fail to abide by these requirements and the Code of Conduct.

In signing this Code of Conduct, I agree to abide by all requirements set out above:

Signed by: _____ (Thirteen Involved Customer)

Print name: _____ Date: _____

In return, Thirteen will agree to provide training, support (including travel and other expenses) for involved customers

Signed by: _____ (On behalf of Thirteen)

Print name: _____ Date: _____