



Thomley
People First Code of Practice

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Version Control

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Date	Version No.	Produced By	Reason for Update	Approved
29/01/2016	Version 1	S Nieburg		
27/11/2017	Version 2	W Koehler	Annual review	W. Koehler
11/03/2019	Version 3	W Koehler	Annual Review	W Koehler
28/04/2021	Version 4	E Shinton	Annual Review	E Shinton
28/04/2021	Version 5	E Shinton	Annual Review	E Shinton

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2. Introduction

- 2.1. The intention of this Code of Practice is to set out the minimum standards of we expected from Thomley staff, volunteers and trustees in managing our relationship with others. We are committed to providing high quality, efficient service to meet the needs and aspirations of our clients and supporters.
- 2.2. The Code of Practice specifically addresses the following areas of work:
 - 2.2.1. Written communications
 - 2.2.2. Electronic communications
 - 2.2.3. Redirecting correspondence
 - 2.2.4. Confidentiality
 - 2.2.5. Telephone enquiries
 - 2.2.6. Advice on telephone manner
 - 2.2.7. Taking messages
 - 2.2.8. Personal enquiries
 - 2.2.9. Attending to visitors

3. Who is this for?

- 3.1. This Policy/Procedure is relevant to:
 - 3.1.1. Employees
 - 3.1.2. Casual Staff
 - 3.1.3. Volunteers
 - 3.1.4. Trustees

4. Why do we need a code of practice?

- 4.1. A Code of Practice allows Thomley to clearly set out minimum expectations of how, and the time-scale within which, staff will respond to letters, electronic communications and telephone calls. It will also allow us to achieve consistency of practice throughout the Charity.

5. Who does the code of practice apply to?

- 5.1. This code applies to all Thomley staff, volunteers, and trustees whenever and wherever they are representing the Charity.

6. What is people first?

- 6.1. Ensuring that we give our visitors/supporters the sort of service and response that we ourselves would wish to have if we were receiving a service ourselves.
- 6.2. Our visitors/supporters have a right to expect to be treated with respect/dignity in the way that we listen and respond to their requirements. They are entitled to receive a response that is polite, professional, timely, clear and accurate.

7. Who are our customers?

- 7.1. Our customers are all the people/organisation/supporters Thomley has a working relationship with, keeping in mind that our primary focus is on our visitors that includes children, parents, carers, friends and other community members who make use of our direct services.

8. Written and electronic communication

- 8.1. Any communication must comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018), and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- 8.2. Any individual/organisation writing to Thomley with an enquiry will receive a prompt and clear reply irrespective of what format this has been received in.
- 8.3. We should therefore aim the following minimum standards:
 - 8.3.1. reply within no more than seven working days after receipt of the letter. 'Receipt' means the date the enquiry is first received
 - 8.3.2. make sure the reply is full and accurate response to the issue raised by the customers
 - 8.3.3. reply in plain, jargon-free language
 - 8.3.4. reply in a way which respects any particular needs/requirements of the customer
 - 8.3.5. use the "out of office response" tool when member of staff is out of the office for any significant length of time, giving the date of return.

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- 8.4. In written responses, the following points are also worth bearing in mind:
- 8.4.1. quote correspondence references where given.
 - 8.4.2. date the correspondence.
 - 8.4.3. use appropriate salutations based on the nature of the relationship you have with the customer.
 - 8.4.4. whenever possible use a heading.
 - 8.4.5. never make reference to a child's personal details (i.e. medical records or additional needs) to anyone without the written permission of the parent/carer.
 - 8.4.6. when an immediate/full reply may not be possible use the same guidance from this section and inform the person when you are likely to make a full response.
 - 8.4.7. If the person normally responsible for a reply is on leave or otherwise absent from the office, arrangements must be in place to make sure that a reply (or acknowledgement) is sent within the required timescale.
 - 8.4.8. Ensure the correspondence is filed appropriately.

9. Confidentiality

- 9.1. There will always be certain items of correspondence that are potentially sensitive. You should use your judgement as to whether a reply should be sent under confidential cover. If in doubt, always seek advice from Senior Manager.
- 9.2. Treat any items of correspondence marked 'confidential' as private and assume that it is only to be opened by the person it is addressed to.

10. Telephone and face to face discussions

- 10.1. As with written correspondence, any person who makes contact with us using telephone or face to face, is entitled to receive a reply that is prompt, clear, polite, timely and professional.
- 10.2. Always give your name when answering the phone.
- 10.3. Please be patient and tolerant if you are dealing with people whose first language may not be English or who may have other communication difficulties.

11. Messages

- 11.1. If you are not in the office, you should make arrangements for someone else to take the calls or ensure that the answering machine is operational.
- 11.2. If a message is left for you, you should try to phone the caller back within 2 working days of the original call being received, unless exceptional circumstances prevent this.
- 11.3. If there are circumstances which prevent you from returning a call within 2 working days, you should arrange for the caller to be advised (e.g. by a colleague) that there will be a delay in you responding. In that case, where possible, the caller should be given some indication as to when a response is likely to be made.
- 11.4. If you are answering a call for an absent colleague, or for someone who is not immediately available, first see if you or anyone else can help with the enquiry. If not, take a clear, concise message so that an accurate and prompt response can be made. Make sure the caller's name, post, telephone number, date and time of the call and when the caller is available to receive the return call are recorded. Do not assume that the caller will be known to the colleague concerned: request brief details of the enquiry unless it is clear that it is a personal or private call.
- 11.5. Always give the caller an indication of when their call may be returned. If, for example, you know a colleague is likely to be absent for some days the caller should be advised that there will be a corresponding delay in their call being returned unless someone else can help with their enquiry.

12. Visitors

- 12.1. All visitors should be made to feel welcome on arrival. You should find out why they have come or who it is they have come to see.
- 12.2. If visitors have to wait because they have not made an appointment, their waiting time should be kept to a minimum and they should know when, and by whom, they will be seen.

13. Comments/Complaints

- 13.1. Comments/Complaints help us to learn and make improvements to our practices. These should be treated in this context and any comment/complaint received, whether orally or in writing, should be processed under the Thomley's Comments/Complaints Procedure.