

Elim Housing Mystery Shopper Guide

This guide will provide an explanation of Mystery Shopping at Elim Housing Association. It will set out what is involved in being a Mystery Shopper, identify what good service should look like and help you feel prepared and comfortable completing a Mystery Shopping exercise.

What is Mystery Shopping?

Mystery Shopping is a form of market research that uses residents' experience to assess the quality and standard of our service.

In the role of volunteer 'Mystery Shopper' residents will make a small number of customer service requests using telephone or email contact. We will then ask you to assess the quality of the service you received and to feedback your views on your interaction with Elim.

If you live in a property with internal or external shared space, we may also invite you to carry out an inspection of the communal area and to provide your feedback to us.

If you volunteer to become a Mystery Shopper, we will provide the training you need before you start, along with a short question prompt sheet and feedback form to help you carry out the mystery shopper exercise.

The Mystery Shopper feedback will allow us to better understand your perspective on Elim's customer service. It will help us to check the accessibility of our services and whether we are following good practice on a day to day basis, and help identify areas for improvement.

When will the Mystery Shopper project take place?

- We are asking residents to volunteer for the Mystery Shopper project by September 20th 2024.
- Training will be provided on or during week commencing 23rd September 2024. This will take place via Zoom
- Our Customer Engagement Officer will provide you with the most suitable mystery shopping scenarios that suits you by 27th September 2024.
- All Mystery Shoppers will be asked to complete their exercise in October, and to send your feedback forms back by October 31st 2024.

How should you prepare for the Mystery Shopper exercise?

Firstly, whichever scenario you have, please take some time to familiarise yourself with the questions you will be asking and the potential answers that you will recording on the feedback form.

Think about the standard of customer service you would hope to receive from Elim. There is further information below on what good customer service should look like.

Preparing to carry out a communal area inspection:

- You can carry out the inspection of the communal area at the best time that suits you.

- Please make a note of the date and time you carried out the inspection on your feedback form
- When inspecting the communal area, please take the form with you and complete it as you go along
- It would also be very helpful if you could take photographs and share these with us to support your feedback. Our Customer Engagement Officer will discuss this option with you

Preparing for email contact:

- Try and send your email query as early in the month as possible, as it may take up to a few days to receive a written response.
- Our housing officers do not work on evenings or weekends, so we will only receive emails between 9am - 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am - 4pm Friday.
- Feel free to write your email query using the words or format that feels most natural to you.
- Complete the email feedback form once you have received a response from the Elim team
- If one of the Elim team asks whether you would prefer a phone call to discuss your query, please make a note of this. It will be your choice to accept this offer or not.

Preparing to make telephone contact:

- Our phonelines are open for routine calls between 9am - 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am - 4pm Friday.
- Have a pen and the form provided to hand and use the form provided to make a note of the telephone number you called from and the date and time you called.
- Complete the telephone contact feedback form once you have finished your call with the response from the Elim team
- Some of the questions will be straightforward to answer i.e. 'Did they answer by greeting me, their name and asking how they could help me?'
- Other questions, such as 'Did I feel listened too and were they empathetic?' will be more personal and you will need to use your own judgement on how you felt about the service you received.

Guidelines for both phone and email calls

You must use your own identity when making calls or sending emails so Elim staff can find your tenancy on the system or direct you to the correct person. Please note that the exercise will not have any effect on your profile or property.

- Please ask all the questions provided for your scenario.
- Please only email each scenario once only. If you do not receive a satisfactory response to your enquiry in the first instance, you should make a note of the response and the response time, but there will be no need to ask the question again.
- If you fail to get through on the phone, please record the time and date of the failed call and try again at a further time. All feedback will help us track where things can be improved.
- If a staff member fails to reply to you within a suitable timeframe, please send a gentle reminder and make note of this on your form.

What standard of customer service should the Mystery Shopper expect?

- If you contact us about any service by phone or by using any of our email addresses, we will aim to respond within 2 working days. If you require a more detailed answer, you should get a full reply within 10 working days. We aim to respond to residents within these timescales and quite often much more quickly.
- We aim to answer phone calls quickly and deal with your query at the first point of contact
- Where the member of the team cannot deal with a query at first contact, they should either pass you to a different colleague, or tell you who your message has been passed to. You should then receive a follow up from this member of the team.
- The response you receive should always reflect our Elim CARES values. The service you receive should put customers first, be polite, supportive and understanding of your perspective.
- Our Elim CARES Values were created in partnership with our customers, colleagues, Board and other stakeholders, and they represent our commitment to how we deliver our services and work together successfully. You can find out more on the Elim website.

Code of conduct

As a Mystery Shopper we trust you to:

- Treat all staff with respect and be inclusive
- Respect the confidentiality of Elim Housing Association
- Treat all information you collect as confidential - you should not share any information with anyone but the Resident Engagement Officer. Please do not let the staff you interact with know you are part of the mystery shopper exercise
- Work to the agreed timetable and plan to make telephone calls on week days.
- Avoid preconceptions and be objective and non-biased when evaluating.
- Any conflict of interest must be declared.

If you are responsible for breaching this code of conduct, we will ask you to stop taking part in the mystery shopper exercise.

What happens once the Mystery Shopping exercise is complete?

The Resident Engagement Officer is responsible for the mystery shopper programme and will collate all the completed mystery shopping forms and discuss these with the individual mystery shoppers.

Once all information is collated, a report will be presented to Elim's Management Teams and Board Members. We will identify any opportunities for change or improvement and share these outcomes with Elim's residents.