

CONSUMER DUTY - TREATING CLIENTS FAIRLY POLICY

Huntingdon Area Money Advice (HAMA) is committed to ensuring that our clients are at the heart of all that we do. We are fully committed to providing the highest standards of client service and advice.

HAMA's aim is to ensure we deliver user-friendly, robust, reliable and high quality money advice. As a part of our overall approach we are fully committed to treating our clients fairly, giving each client the time and space they need and as such we endeavour to meet both their expectations and requirement of high quality service.

Our Consumer Duty - Treating Clients Fairly (TCF) policy is based on guidance provided by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to ensure we deliver consistently the best possible outcomes to our clients based on a culture of openness, fairness and transparency. As an advice centre, we take the requirements of the FCA seriously, in particular, the requirement to treat clients fairly.

The FCA outlined six key themes that are central to the TCF initiative:

1. Clients should be confident that they are being helped by an advice centre where treating customers fairly is embedded in the culture
2. Services marketed are done so with the aim that they meet the needs of client and are targeted accordingly
3. Clients should be provided with clear information and are kept appropriately informed before, during and after accessing service provision
4. Where advice is provided, it takes into account a client's individual circumstances
5. The service provided is of an acceptable standard
6. Clients do not face unreasonable barriers to make a complaint

The FCA Guidance on Fair Treatment of Vulnerable Customers is found at <https://www.fca.org.uk/publication/finalised-guidance/fg21-1.pdf>

HAMA has set out below how we aim to ensure these principles are embedded in our approach to dealing with our clients.

- We ensure the client knows and understands the advice process and understands any expectations or requirements HAMA has regarding clients accessing ongoing advice from us.
- We continually aim to meet the needs of our clients and treat them with dignity and respect. This will include finding interpreters and alternative methods of communication where appropriate.
- We keep our clients regularly informed in a clear and fair manner that is unambiguous and not misleading.
- We ensure our services are delivered with clarity and transparency and do not contain hidden conditions or rely on complex technical definitions.
- We make certain our clients understand any implications certain choices may have and work with the client to find the best solution to their particular problem;
- We work hard to ensure that all aspects of our service remain clear and prominent at all times.



- We take into account our clients' circumstances and give them the time and information they require to find sustainable solutions to their debt situation.
- We ensure there is no conflict of interest between adviser and client. A conflict of interest occurs when circumstances relating to both adviser and client may prevent the adviser acting independently and solely in the interests of that client. In the event that there is a conflict of interest, we will inform our client as soon as we become aware of it and take action to remove it or ask another adviser to take over.

Our approach:

- Our priority is to provide our clients with an excellent service underpinned by quality and choice. We are committed to ensuring our clients and also our volunteers want to stay with us and would be willing to recommend us to their families and friends.
- Our service is shaped by listening to our clients' needs and understanding what is important to them. We take responsibility for meeting the needs of our clients and always look for ways to improve the quality of our service.
- We aim to treat our clients fairly and deliver high quality services which meet their expectations throughout their relationship with us. We recognise that our volunteers are critical to delivering a positive client experience and ensuring they are treated fairly. Our culture, ethos and values encourage and support all our volunteers working within HAMA in whatever capacity to deliver this.
- All of our volunteer advisers are fully trained to be able to advise clients and understand the importance of treating clients fairly. We are also committed to continually find ways to improve. All staff are required to undergo Vulnerable Adults training as part of becoming an adviser.

Complaints:

- We respond in a timely manner to our clients' and prospective clients' questions and queries, and address any issues or concerns promptly. All customer complaints are dealt with and escalated as appropriate and as required by us in order to meet our obligations to our clients and the requirements under the Financial Ombudsman Service guidelines
- We are happy to provide full details of our complaints procedure on request by contacting John Pickersgill on 07541 405299 or centremanager@huntsmoneyadvice.co.uk.

Approved by the HAMA Board of Trustees: 12 June 2018

Reviewed and amended 11th June 2021

Reviewed and amended 25th June 2024

Next review June 2027

This policy is in line with the current guidance from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and is in line with the principles of the FCA Consumer Duty that *"a firm must pay due regard to the interests of its customers and treat them fairly"*.