



**Chevin**  
HOUSING GROUP



## **AN INTRODUCTION TO MYSTERY SHOPPING**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE THIS DOCUMENT IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE OR FORMAT (LARGE PRINT, AUDIO TAPE OR BRAILLE), PLEASE CONTACT GILL GREEN, PERFORMANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT CO-ORDINATOR AT CHEVIN HOUSING GROUP (TEL. 0114 241 7714 OR 0773 991 9161 (call or text))**

This leaflet will give you a brief introduction to “mystery shopping” and the role of the “mystery shopper”.

### **What is mystery shopping?**

“Mystery shopping” is a form of market research where people are trained to observe, experience and evaluate the customer service process of an organisation.

### **What does a mystery shopper do?**

A mystery shopper acts as a customer and carries out a series of agreed tasks, which monitor the quality of customer service of an organisation. This could be any organisation which deals with the public – for example a supermarket, a hairdresser, a solicitor, or a landlord such as a local authority or a housing association.

If a mystery shopper was asked to monitor their landlord, they could, for example, be asked to phone and request a repair. They would have to monitor how long it took to answer the phone, assess how they were greeted and how efficiently and effectively their enquiry was handled.

The mystery shopper would then have to report back their findings accurately and objectively by completing a questionnaire.

### **What is the purpose of mystery shopping research?**

The purpose of the mystery shopper research is to provide feedback on the quality of service provided by the organisation. This is intended to assist the organisation to focus on customer

service improvements by providing them with information on the quality of their current service.

## How long will it take?

We expect tenant mystery shoppers to take about 10 – 20 minutes to carry out each mystery shop (plus travelling time if it involves visiting one of our offices). It should take about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire, making a total of half to one hour to complete one mystery shop. The total time taken to carry out a mystery shop will depend upon whether you are asked to visit one of our offices, write a letter, send an email or make a telephone call. Each mystery shopper will usually carry out their mystery shops using a variety of these methods. We can tailor the type of shops you do (i.e. write letters, send emails, visit offices or make telephone calls) to suit your personal circumstances, for instance if you have difficulty travelling to one of our offices during office hours, you could carry out all your “shops” by letter, email or telephone.

We will agree specific times with each mystery shopper when they will carry out their mystery shops. They will normally be done over a period of a few weeks, making one or two mystery shops every week, so as not to attract too much attention.

## Will staff know that a mystery shop is taking place?

All staff at Chevin will have been informed that their organisation intends to carry out customer research, but they will not be told when it will happen, or by whom. **It is essential that mystery shoppers do not reveal the fact that they are a mystery shopper to any Chevin staff or any other Chevin resident.**

## Will Chevin’s staff be able to identify me?

Mystery shoppers will be trained to carry out their mystery shopping exercises without identifying themselves *as a mystery shopper*. They will, however, be able to say *who* they are, as the mystery shopping scenarios are “real life” situations e.g. reporting a repair or making an enquiry about your rent account.

## How does Chevin ensure support and training for the mystery shoppers?

We will assess the level of training required by each individual mystery shopper prior to them starting on a project. We will tailor

our training to match people's skills and abilities and will provide ongoing support throughout each round of mystery shopping.

## What skills do I need to become a mystery shopper?

You will need to be:

- Able to use the phone
- Able to read and follow the questionnaire and fill it in clearly and accurately – either typed or handwritten.
- Available to carry out the mystery shops during our office hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

More details on the essential requirements for mystery shopping are available on our fact-sheet ; “Mystery Shopper Person Specification”.

## How much will I earn for doing the mystery shops?

Each mystery shopper will be asked to complete the training (provided free of charge by Chevin) and carry out a *maximum* of 10 mystery shops. When those shops have been successfully completed, you will receive £10 worth of retail vouchers (for a shop(s) or venue (such as a cinema or theatre of your choice) for each mystery shop and any travelling expenses & childcare costs. We cannot pay mystery shoppers in cash, as this would have tax implications and might affect some people's benefits.

Any additional expenses such as travel and childcare will be reimbursed upon the production of valid receipts and food and refreshments will be provided free of charge on the training day that you attend.

## How do I become a mystery shopper?

If you are interested in becoming a mystery shopper, please complete the application form and return it to us in **an envelope marked “private and confidential”**.

If you are accepted for training, then you will need to successfully complete our one-day training course before you can conduct your first shop. We try to hold our mystery shopper training days at a convenient location and at a time to suit as many people as possible. If, however, you are unable to attend our one-day training event, it may be possible for the training to be delivered in your own home, at a time to suit you.

## **Could mystery shopping help me or my future job prospects?**

We believe that the training, support and experience you receive working as a mystery shopper will help you to develop skills and abilities which could assist you in your future career development and will:

- Build your confidence
- Develop organisational skills
- Improve communication skills
- Develop interviewing techniques

## **How important is the work?**

Being a Chevin mystery shopper also gives you the opportunity to become directly involved in improving Chevin's services. The results of the mystery shops that you carry out are fed directly into our service improvement plan and this translates into real changes and improvements in our services to you – our customers!

Chevin Housing Group will provide each person with a certificate once they have completed the training exercise and successfully completed five mystery shops.

**If you are interested in becoming a mystery shopper for Chevin Housing Group, please contact Gill Green, Performance and Business Co-ordinator IN CONFIDENCE on:**

**0773 991 9161 (call or text)**

**0114 241 7714**

**[g.green@chevinha.co.uk](mailto:g.green@chevinha.co.uk)**