

Customer Involvement & Influence Strategy 2015-2019





Foreword

Trust Board members and staff are absolutely committed to ensuring that our customers influence our decision making processes. We want our customers to be involved in designing the services they receive so that we create and deliver services that meet their needs, and our performance continually improves.

Our Board members are a mixture of volunteers from many walks of life and experiences. Tenants serve on our Board to make sure that their “front-line” knowledge of our housing, care and support services influences our most important strategic decisions. The Board’s commitment to customer engagement is a fundamental part of how Trust functions as an organisation. This will be essential in delivering our ambitious strategic plan to 2019 – Bright Future.

All our staff work in a customer-focussed, person-centred way. Our customers acknowledge that their opinions can have a significant influence on the service they receive, both on an individual level in terms of the housing and care / support services they receive and at the levels of their local housing development and Trust as an organisation.

As John Anderson, Chair of our Customer Panel tells us:

“Since I have become involved with the Panel, it has been very refreshing to see how committed to engagement the Trust staff and Board members are, and how seriously our recommendations and comments have been taken by everyone. I know that we have a very solid foundation to build on and I know that many customers are very keen to get involved in developing customer engagement across the organisation. We are going from strength to strength.”

We are delighted to endorse this Customer Involvement and Influence Strategy and look forward to working with our customers to make sure it is implemented in the most effective way possible over the next few years.


Pam Russell
Chair


Rhona McLeod
Chief Executive

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1. Why does Trust want customers to be involved in influencing our organisation?

“We believe that effective customer involvement & influence will improve our customer satisfaction, value-for-money, performance & service delivery.”

Trust has a long history of meaningful tenant participation, and this Strategy builds from these sound foundations. Customers were very much involved in influencing what this Strategy contains, through a number of participation routes - our Focus Groups, a significant consultation process, discussions with our Customer Panel members, comments from our Registered Tenants' Organisation members, and many, many individual conversations. Everyone's input has shaped this final Strategy and, as it is implemented, our customers' views will shape it further. This Strategy will ensure that our organisation continues to:

- understand our customers
- deliver the services our customers want and need
- satisfy our customers' expectations on quality and performance
- involve our customers at a level where they feel comfortable
- influence national agendas and impact positively on perceptions of older people
- meet all regulatory and legislative requirements (see Appendix 1).

“Customer” means our tenants, their families, their carers and other significant people in their lives, our applicants and future tenants, and our customers who only receive care or support services from us. All our customers' input is equally important, regardless of what type of housing they live in. We will work to involve different customers in different ways, to meet what is relevant and effective for them, and will target our communications to meet their needs. We will make sure that any barriers that customers face are minimised, so that all of our customers are included and have an equal opportunity to be involved.

Customers will be given opportunities to be involved in influencing all the services provided by Trust – Care & Support, Property Management, Housing Management, Catering and Corporate/Strategic. We believe that effective customer involvement and influence will improve our customer satisfaction, value-for-money, performance and service delivery. Involving customers will ensure that we deliver Bright Future – our Business Strategy to 2019, with our three Strategic Aims:

1. to understand and exceed customer expectations
2. to provide quality homes and maintain a viable asset base
3. to continuously develop and grow Trust as a thriving and sustainable business.

2. What results will this Strategy achieve for customers by 2019?

By 2019, this Strategy will ensure that customers will be able to see that a number of results or outcomes have been achieved:

Customer involvement and influence will positively impact on Trust as both a landlord and a care / support provider to improve the quality and performance of all services Trust delivers to all customers, so improving their quality of life.

Customers will find it easy, and will feel confident and empowered, to have their say in issues that matter to them, to improve services to meet their expectations and priorities.

Customers will be involved in influencing the organisation's high-level strategic decision making on the future of the organisation through Board membership and Association membership.

Customers will be fully involved in organisational and local scrutiny work, through effective, constructive challenge, holding Trust to account, and supporting the drive to improve performance in all aspects of Trust's service delivery. To ensure the implementation of the actions arising from this independent, tenant-led scrutiny work, Action Plans will be tracked and monitored by our Board.

Customers will be given information that provides a comprehensive understanding of Trust, and there will be opportunities to be fully involved in a range of informal engagement routes, including social activities and other approaches. Wherever possible, we will meet customers' requests for information.

By 2019, we will fully meet the requirements of the bodies that regulate Trust as a provider of housing, care and support. This means we will meet the Care Inspectorate's requirements in relation to Participation, and the Scottish Housing Regulator's requirements, as expressed in the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC). The SSHC sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities, and Outcome 3 is particularly important in relation to this Strategy:

“Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.”

Customers and staff will work together to ensure these outcomes are achieved.



Please see Appendix 1

3. Which principles underpin this Strategy?

Customer choice

Customers will be given a wide variety of opportunities to become involved, and it will be for each customer to choose whether they get involved, and at what level. Customers who choose to be especially involved will be recognised through an award programme.

Easy access

All customers will be encouraged to get involved at any time through their relationship with Trust, and we will work to improve easy access through using technology. We will support customers who may find it more difficult to be involved, including, for example, people who are frail in any way or who are living with dementia.

Strong value base

All staff and customers will work together in a spirit of equality, co-operation, communication and respect.

Overcoming barriers

Customers have told us of the barriers they face in becoming involved and influencing Trust. We will ensure we minimise these barriers, as detailed in Appendix 2. We will create a summary of this document to make it easy for everyone to understand our key commitments and plans, and we will make sure that this is available in a variety of formats to meet our customers' needs.

Sufficient resources

We will ensure that the implementation of this Strategy is well resourced in terms of both staff time and finance, so that customers feel well supported and are never out-of-pocket. We will make sure that sufficient financial and staff resources are allocated to each year's Annual Implementation Plan.

Building knowledge and confidence

Customers will be supported to become more informed and more confident in their understanding of Trust, so that they feel empowered to set the agenda and prioritise their involvement, so that they can make a difference where it matters to them. They will be helped to understand where in the organisation (or externally) decisions are made, so that they can then become involved and influence at the appropriate level.

Partnership working and relationship building

Customers and staff will be encouraged to work collaboratively with other landlords, other voluntary organisations, specialist organisations and statutory bodies to improve engagement through sharing best practice and resources.

“Customers will find it easy, and will feel confident and empowered, to have their say in issues that matter to them, to improve services to meet their expectations and priorities.”



Please see Appendix 2

4. How will customers be involved and how will they influence Trust?

• What will we continue doing?

Trust already has many different routes for customers to be engaged. These are detailed in Appendix 3 and we will continue to support and strengthen these.

• What will we do that is new & improved?

We will develop new and improved ways for customers to be involved with, and to influence, Trust, ensuring that there are strong linkages across all the aspects of their involvement as follows:

» Supporting customer influence in strategic, high-level decision making (governance)

To improve customer influence in governance we will:

- improve our customers' knowledge about strategic decisions made by the Board and senior management through providing more information on this in "Trust Talk" and on our website
- bring our Tenants' Conference and Annual General Meeting together so that more tenants know what is happening on governance issues
- improve knowledge to help succession planning for Customer Board Membership, with transparent routes to Board membership
- help our tenants to have a better understanding of complex issues like Trust's finances and risk so that they feel more comfortable influencing decisions on these issues, where appropriate
- help customers to better understand which strategic decisions that affect them are made by Trust, and which are made by other bodies (like local Councils), and how customers can try to influence these other decision makers
- involve customers in setting our strategic direction beyond 2019

- look at how technology could be useful in supporting easier access to key people and decision making processes.

» Embedding customer scrutiny of performance and service delivery

We will embed structures that will enable customers to hold Trust to account by constructively challenging Trust's performance, using the Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes as a basis for this. This will result in customer recommendations for improving service delivery and quality.

Customer scrutiny will be strengthened by:

- supporting the Trust Customer Panel to do one in-depth scrutiny exercise per year, as well as regularly scrutinising Trust's performance overall and influencing our self-assessment
- creating a defined budget to be used to support the Customer Panel members' scrutiny priorities
- creating opportunities for local scrutiny, for example of cleaning or gardening services
- improving all our customers' knowledge of the work of the Trust Customer Panel through "Trust Talk" and on our website, which will help encourage future Panel membership
- looking at how Trust is performing in relation to Value-for-Money (Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes 13 and 14)
- encouraging Panel members to learn from the experiences of tenants involved in scrutinising other landlords, and sharing their own expertise
- exploring how technology could assist in scrutiny processes
- looking at how we can use what we learn about customer scrutiny on housing issues to assess and improve our care and support services.

» Strengthening our customer consultation

Trust is committed to customer consultation taking place before decisions are made by Board members or management, with tenants having adequate information, support, training and time to consider issues in a meaningful way.

We will improve this by:

- agreeing an annual Trust Involvement Calendar which shows when all consultation and other events will take place
- supporting and encouraging our Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs), including a yearly assessment of their support needs
- working with RTO members to develop updated good practice guidance and training for committee members, including exploring whether it would be useful to bring key office bearers together (for example a Chairs' Network) to share their experiences and learn from one another
- looking at how our Focus Groups could work differently and linking their work more closely to our Bright Future themes
- expanding tenant involvement in staff recruitment and building involvement into staff induction, training and appraisal
- improving the way we gather and use information from customers, to make our surveying more efficient and more integrated to ongoing activities. We will explore methods where customers can give instant feedback.
- supporting customers who wish to influence broader local and national agendas
- creating better ways for customers to be involved without leaving their own homes
- exploring how best to involve customers in our TRUSTed systems reviews, to ensure that our process changes meet their needs and expectations
- exploring how to involve our customers in procuring some of our key services

- making better use of technology and social media, for customers who want to be involved in this way.

» Improving Information & Activities

Customers need to have easy access to the information they need to be meaningfully involved, with information targeted on what is relevant for different customers. They also want to have opportunities to get involved in different activities, which can be used as a means to gather views and data from time to time.

We will improve these aspects of engagement by:

- creating a team of customers to check the wording and format of key Trust documents, to make sure they are easy-to-read
- updating and improving our Tenants' Handbook
- exploring establishing a "Trust TV" station to bring information into people's homes, potentially with live streaming of Trust events
- creating an easy way for staff and tenants to share information about social activities across the country, so that social events can easily be set up with different groups of tenants, and people can contact each other on-line if they wish. We will encourage more contact between our developments.
- helping staff and tenants to make successful funding bids
- looking at creating a Trust Community Links Fund to help fund projects for tenants to work with their neighbouring communities
- where tenants agree, using our lounges to bring people together from across local communities
- making better use of technology as a method for sharing information and for connecting people.



Please see Appendix 3

5. How will we use all the information we gather from our customers?

All the information gathered through these many and varied routes for customers to be involved will be streamlined to create three levels of Plans:

- 1. Trust Improvement Plan** – one plan showing all the changes planned to improve Trust as an organisation
- 2. Local Development Improvement Plans** – one plan for each housing development, showing all the changes planned to improve the local development, where customers can easily track the actions arising from their input
- 3. Individual Plans** – one plan for each customer showing the changes that will be made to their own care /support (Personal) or to their own home (Tenancy).

We will make sure that it is easy for tenants to see what difference their input has made and, where it is not possible for tenants' wishes to be met, we will ensure that clear, understandable explanations are given, with alternative options explored wherever possible.

6. How will we measure success?

We will know that this Strategy has been a success by sustaining or improving the following measures:

- Overall Customer Satisfaction will be sustained above its 2013 level of 94%
- Customer Satisfaction that Trust is "listening to and acting upon tenants' views" will be increased from its 2013 level of 81%, with greater consistency in this result across the Branches (2013 range - from 71% to 94%)
- Customer Satisfaction with "opportunities given to participate in Trust's decision making processes" will be increased from its 2013 level of 81%, with greater consistency in this result across the Branches (2013 range - from 77% to 93%)

We will explore external accreditation of our Tenant Participation work, and of our customers' efforts.

7. How will we implement this Strategy?

We will create Annual Implementation Plans which reflect our customers' priorities for improving their involvement and influence. The Plan for 2015-16 is attached at Appendix 4.



Please see Appendix 4

Appendix 1

Meeting our regulatory and legislative requirements

This Strategy will ensure that we exceed our regulatory and legislative imperatives in relation to customer participation, predominantly:

- Outcome 3 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

"Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with."

- the National Care Standards, many of which relate to influence and information, and the Care Inspectorate's Participation Quality Theme:

"We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of care and support provided by the service."

We are confident that our approach will meet the Human Rights approach which will be adopted by the Care Inspectorate, within the revised National Care Standards, reflecting our commitment to meet the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19) and the European Convention on Human Rights, most especially Article 10 – Freedom of Expression:

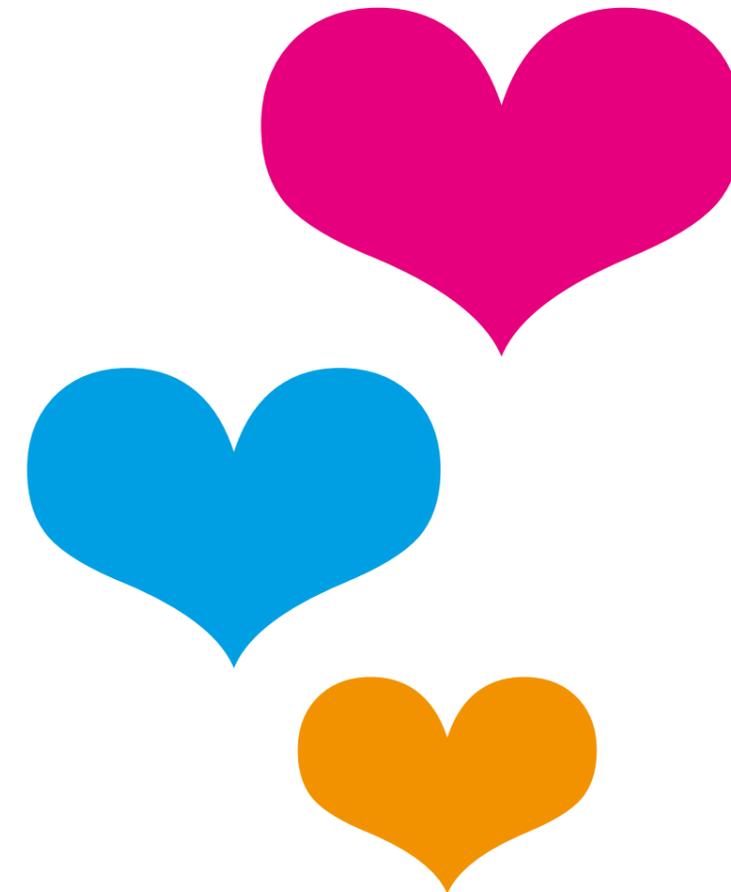
"Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information without interference..."

Implementation of this Strategy will also mean that we meet the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001 and 2014, ensuring (as a minimum) tenant participation and consultation in policies and service standards relating to housing management, asset transfer, repairs and maintenance and tenant participation. This Strategy will ensure we exceed these minimum requirements.

Scottish Government's Age, Home and Community: The Strategy for Housing for Scotland's Older People: 2012-2021 states that:

"... older people in Scotland are valued as an asset, their voices are heard, and [they] are supported to enjoy full and positive lives in their own homes or in a homely setting."

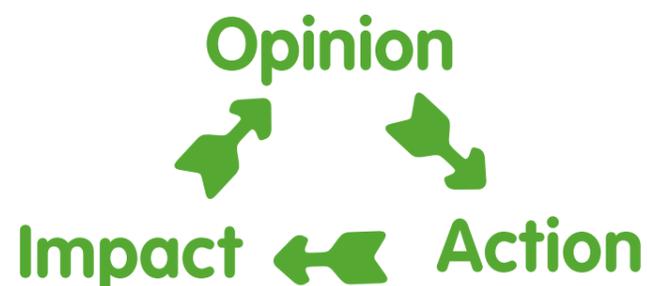
This encapsulates Trust's approach to our older customers, and underpins this Strategy.



Appendix 2

Barriers to involvement and how we will overcome them

Barrier	Steps to Overcome
Not knowing what difference getting involved makes	<p>We will use clearer feedback methods, including Local Development Improvement Plans to allow customers to track actions and progress against the points they raise.</p> <p>We will make greater use of “You said ... We did” type feedback to clearly show the impact of customers’ opinions and that they make a difference. We will make greater, more regular use of “Trust Talk” as a mechanism to share feedback across all customers to show the extent of their influence on the organisation.</p> <p>We will encourage a cross-organisational understanding that it is important for customers that they can track that their opinion results in an action (on which they are kept updated) and, ultimately, an impact in that something changes. This feedback loop on input is essential to meaningful involvement:</p>



Insufficient time / advance notice of consultation	We will create Annual Involvement Plans to show timescales and events.
Too much jargon	<p>We will use Plain Language at all times.</p> <p>We will establish a “Tenants’ Tick ” Panel to test that key documents are easy-to-read.</p>
Too much travel	<p>We will improve methods to capture opinions that do not involve travelling, including Armchair Voices and improved use of technology and social media. This will make it easier to reach our island communities and other customers who are not able to travel.</p> <p>We will localise access to engagement at all levels wherever possible.</p>

Barrier	Steps to Overcome
Too much emphasis on staffed developments	We will improve engagement with our tenants (mostly General Needs and Amenity tenants) who do not live in staffed developments through new structures and methods.
Not feeling knowledgeable enough to participate	<p>We will encourage all customers to understand that Trust values their “collective genius” and that they are “expert through experience” – the insight our customers can contribute through their lived experience of our service delivery is essential to service improvement.</p> <p>Relevant training will be provided to customers to support their engagement – for example, understanding data, IT skills, committee skills.</p>
Not believing that Trust is committed to customer engagement	<p>This Strategy is signed off by the Trust Board and will be jointly sponsored by the Chair and Chief Executive to emphasise our organisational commitment.</p> <p>Training will be available to all staff to embed the Strategy across Trust.</p> <p>Customer engagement will continue to be a key priority for the organisation’s workforce, supported by volunteers.</p>
Insufficient staff time (due to workload pressures) / knowledge / confidence to support engagement	<p>Training will be available to all staff.</p> <p>Dedicated support will be easily available to front-line staff.</p> <p>The Volunteering Strategy will include a focus on volunteers supporting customer involvement.</p>
Practical hurdles like not being able to hear or understand discussions or documents	We will proactively seek to maximise inclusion by ensuring, for example, that portable Induction Loops are available, documents are readily available in large print or languages other than English, and other needs are addressed to ensure inclusion. We recognise that simple changes can be highly significant.

Appendix 3

Engagement routes that we will continue to support and review

We will continue to support established engagement routes as follows:

- **Continuing customer influence in strategic, high-level decision making (governance)**

We will continue to have tenants on our Board and will continue to support and mentor them. We will continue to encourage individual customers to become Trust members.

- **Continuing customer scrutiny of performance and service quality**

We will continue to support our Trust Customer Panel, building their knowledge and expertise of analysing Trust's performance and service delivery. There will continue to be a direct link between the Customer Panel and the Board, with the implementation of Action Plans arising from Panel recommendations being tracked by Board members.

- **Continuing meaningful and effective customer consultation**

We will continue to support, review and encourage a wide variety of consultation routes as follows:

Personal Plans

One of the most important elements of consultation with our customers is their active involvement in the development of their own care / support delivery through the Personal Planning Process. This will continue to be developed to take account of evolving best practice.

Consultation on key policies

We will continue to work with tenants, including developing a list of key policies where tenant consultation will be guaranteed. A rolling Involvement and Influence Calendar will ensure sufficient time and resources can be dedicated to each consultation process.

Registered Tenants' Organisations (and informal groups)

We will continue to support our Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) to undertake their valuable work as influencers on housing and housing related issues and policies, and as a catalyst for social activities in many developments. We will also continue to support informal groups to engage with us. We will explore routes to support groups with banking, book-keeping and auditing. There will be (at least) an annual dedicated visit to all registered groups, to ensure that their support needs are identified and met, and to ensure that best practice is identified and then shared between groups. This visit will also provide an opportunity to support the RTO to develop an Annual Plan for the coming year, which will highlight any particular support needs, for example in relation to accessing funding or succession planning. We will continue to maintain a public register of RTOs.

Tenant Focus Groups

We will continue to work with tenants through our Focus Groups and will examine their format and explore whether there may be ways to closely link their content to focussing on influencing the implementation of the Bright Future strategies. We will also explore whether there needs to be a broadening of the delegate and geographical base, the options for virtual engagement, and whether we should consider occasional focus on specific groups of customers.

Involvement in staff recruitment

The Meet and Greet process has been successfully established in some staff recruitment, and this involvement is much valued by customers. This will continue, with expansion into wider staff recruitment also being explored and developed.

Rent consultation

Meaningful rent consultation is a key obligation of meaningful tenant participation and Trust will continue to undertake this. Continuously improving our rent consultation will be linked to the work on Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes 13 and 14.

Input to Care Inspectorate self-assessments

The grades awarded by customers at their Having Your Say sessions will continue to be collated and added to the self assessment. Feedback gathered from customers from other methods will also be included.

Complaints management and analysis, including learning

Trust welcomes complaints and the opportunity to learn from instances where customers have been disappointed. This will be a continued focus, with relevant complaints also feeding into scrutiny work.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Visits

Customers will continue to be supported to contribute to these visits, which may include Involvement Audits.

Surveys / data gathering

Customers advise us of a degree of "survey fatigue" and we must take this into account. We will continue to survey customers but will develop routes to ensure that people appreciate the difference that their survey opinions make to Trust priorities and policies. We will also develop means of "pulse" surveying to capture opinions and feedback through face-to-face engagement. We will improve the use of data we already hold, to help us gain real insight to our customers' needs and expectations, their interactions with us and their preferences and priorities.

Annual Development Meetings

Tenants value these meetings with staff from across Trust, and these will continue, with expansion to more frequent meetings being explored and implemented.

Property Surgeries

Tenants will continue to have a regular opportunity to meet with their Property Officer to raise concerns and discuss plans and priorities for the buildings and environment around their development.

Planned Maintenance Meetings

The look and feel of each tenant's home is very important and tenants will continue to be given the opportunity to influence investment, including exercising choice in finishes and layouts.

Board Member Visits

Board members will continue to visit developments regularly, to give customers the opportunity to meet them and to give them an insight to their development and their priorities for it. Neighbouring General Needs and Amenity tenants will also be invited along.

Senior Manager Visits

Senior managers will continue to visit developments regularly.

Have Your Say Sessions (Independent and Peer)

Customers will continue to tell us what works well for them, and what could be improved, at Having Your Say Sessions. The independent and peer sessions will continue to be carried out by staff from elsewhere in Trust, to encourage honest feedback. Meeting with customers in a group setting and individually will continue.

Appendix 3

Engagement routes that we will continue to support and review

Involvement in service design and re-design

Wherever possible, customers will continue to be involved in determining the service delivered to them, within the funding that is available to support it.

Involvement in property design / re-design / refurbishment / investment

Tenants' insight to "what works" in terms of property design and layout can bring a valuable perspective, and we will continue to include this wherever possible.

Tenants' Conference

We will continue to work with tenants to hold a regular Tenants' Conference, reviewing it to make it accessible to as many customers as possible, including how we incorporate our Annual General Meeting and as much useful engagement as possible into the Conference.

Working Groups

From time to time, we will continue to invite customers to participate in short-life Working Groups to influence specific topics.

Involvement of frail customers and customers living with dementia

Trust will continue to train and develop our staff, volunteers and other customers to inclusively support the involvement of all customers. We will also look at methods of engagement that involve less travel to facilitate more involvement.

Menu planning

Tenants will continue to be involved in influencing the catering in developments where this forms part of the service.

One-to-one engagement with staff

The importance of regular conversations with staff members cannot be under-estimated. Day and daily, staff are continually listening to customers, then acknowledging and responding to their needs and expectations.

- **Continuing good information provision and a range of activities**

We will continue to provide information requested by customers whenever possible, ensuring it is accurate, clear, helpful and on time, with easy access to a greater level of detail, if required.

We will continue to regularly publish "Trust Talk" with progressively more input from tenants and with local newsletters encouraged and supported.

We will continue to regularly update our website and our existing social media channels.

"We will continue to support, review and encourage a wide variety of consultation routes."

Appendix 4

Implementation Plan 2015-2016

Theme	Task	Timescale	Budget implications
Supporting customer influence in strategic, high-level decision making	Continue to support Board membership and membership	ongoing	Included in Governance budget allocation
	Provide more information on decisions in Trust Talk	By December 2015 and ongoing thereafter	Included in Communications budget allocation
	Provide more information on decisions on the Trust website	By December 2015 and ongoing thereafter	Included in Communications budget allocation
	Bring our AGM and Tenants' Conference together and evaluate	By October 2015	Budget implications will be confirmed following the event
Embedding customer scrutiny of performance and service delivery	Continue to support the Trust Customer Panel	ongoing	Included in Tenant Participation budget allocation
	Support the Customer Panel to do one in-depth scrutiny	By Spring 2016	Included in Tenant Participation budget allocation
	Create a defined Customer Panel budget	October 2015 – February 2016	To be top-sliced from Tenant Participation budget in 2016-2017
	Provide more information on Panel's work in Trust Talk	By December 2015 and ongoing thereafter	Included in Communications budget allocation
	Provide more information on Panel's work on the website	By December 2015 and ongoing thereafter	Included in Communications budget allocation

Appendix 4

Implementation Plan 2015-2016

Theme	Task	Timescale	Budget implications
Strengthening our customer consultation	Continue to support a wide range of consultation methods	ongoing	Included in existing budgets
	Distribute an Involvement calendar	Design – by Oct 2015 Distribute – by Dec 2015	Included in Communications budget allocation
	Establish and deliver an annual support visit to all RTOs	By March 2016	Included in Tenant Participation budget allocation
Improving information and activities	Update and improve Tenants' Handbook	By March 2016	Included in budget allocation
	Establish an easy way to share information on activities on-line	By March 2016	Included in Tenant Participation budget allocation
	Help staff and tenants to make successful funding bids	By March 2016	Any one-off external training costs to be met from Training budget
	Create Trust Community Links Fund from April 2016	October 2015 – February 2016	TBC
	Begin consideration of using lounges as community spaces	By March 2106	None
Gathering information	Continue to provide information by a variety of routes	ongoing	Included in Communications budget allocation
	Create structures to collate information at organisational and local development level	By March 2016	None
Other	Create 2016-2017 Plan and Budget Request	By October 2015	TBC

Margaret enjoying their 40th anniversary celebrations at Bearsden



*This information is available in Braille, tape,
large print and community languages.*

To request a copy please contact 0131 444 1200

If you want to get involved, or to find out more,
call Katrina, our Customer Engagement Officer on
0131 444 4956.

A summary version of this Strategy will be available.



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