

trust

Affordable homes.
Exceptional care.

Customer Engagement Strategy

2023-2026



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Introduction

Welcome to our new strategy, which demonstrates our commitment to continually improving our customers' experiences, through engaging with them so that they influence our organisation to meet their evolving and changing expectations.

We know that participation is about people - listening to our customers, gathering and actioning as much customer feedback as possible across the whole of Trust, valuing their experience and trusting their judgement – their influence is a force for good.

This strategy will provide the framework for us turning customers' feedback into action and change, improving our customer satisfaction and making sure that everything we do is centred around doing right by each and every customer.

This strategy will help us take a fresh approach to many of our existing engagement structures whilst also engaging in new ways, including using more tailored, personalised, and digital methods to help us reach our “seldom heard” customers, as well as continuing to work with and value our customers who are already very involved.

We are building from our business strategy, The Time Is Now, developing and delivering the services our customers want and need. Our work to design new services will engage with customers directly and will support co-design between those who use our services and those who deliver them.

We developed this strategy by listening to the key areas for improvement our customers identified, and we will deliver it collaboratively with our customers as equal partners, with real control over the outcomes. We will create blended hybrid engagement opportunities with them, that work for them.

Our approach will evolve in the coming years to ensure it produces the outcomes they want, remaining relevant and meaningful. This strategy sets out our bold engagement vision for Trust, with clear priorities for the next three years and ideas for our direction of travel beyond 2026. We want to ensure that our customers can engage at the level which suits them.

Thank you to all our customers who contributed their ideas to creating this strategy and thank you in advance for participating and turning it into a reality over the next few years.

Dr Norval Bryson & Rhona McLeod
Chair **Chief Executive**

Why have a customer engagement strategy?

Our customers and what they think are important to us, and we recognise that to develop our services and business, the feedback we get from our customers is key to our future success.

By having this strategy, we provide our customers with a variety of ways to engage and get involved in what we do – making the most of their experience and expertise to develop and improve our services and housing product.

It also helps us meet our regulatory and legislative imperatives, predominantly:

Outcome 2 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

“Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.”

Outcome 3 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

“Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.”

We will also meet the National Care Standards, many of which relate to influence and information, including:

1.9 I am recognised as an expert in my own experiences, needs and wishes.

1.10 I am supported to participate fully as a citizen in my local community in the way that I want.

2.8 I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me, at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs.

2.9 I receive and understand information in a language or format that is right for me.

2.10 My views will always be sought and my choices respected, including when I have reduced capacity to fully make my own decisions.

4.6 I am actively encouraged to be involved in improving the service I use, in a spirit of genuine partnership.

We are confident that our approach takes a human rights approach, meeting 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...”

This customer engagement strategy will ensure we exceed the minimum requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001, 2010 and 2014. Our approach also sits comfortably within the principles and actions in the Scottish Government’s Vision for our Future Homes and Communities – Housing to 2040.

Key Principles of Engagement

We will engage with our customers in line with these key principles. :

- Ask, then listen, then ask
- Listen to understand, not to respond and defend
- Identify any barriers that limit access to engaging with Trust, and overcome them
- Involve customers in co-designing our services, products and processes
- Take time, and dedicate resources to customer engagement, building trusting relationships, based on mutual respect and partnership
- Actively encourage all our customers to engage with us throughout their tenancy
- Have kind, caring, open, frank, informed and honest dialogue
- Empower our teams to respond to every engagement rapidly and flexibly, delivering as closely as possible to what customers want, while fully explaining any limitations
- Value our customers' input – they are experts by experience and their expertise compliments that of our employees, who are expert by profession
- Support our customers to grow their skills and confidence

Our customers can engage with Trust in:

- **Governance** – e.g. through association membership and board membership
- **Scrutiny** – e.g. through membership of our award-winning Customer Panel
- **Consultation** – e.g. through different focussed working groups, registered tenant's groups, customer surveys and feedback opportunities
- **Information** – e.g. through our newsletters, website, online and in person events and many other methods of communication
- **Service co-design** – e.g. through specific design workshops and feedback sessions.

Our Three Pledges to Strengthen Customer Voice

Pledge 1 – we believe in effective engagement

We will sustain and expand the ways our customers can engage with us by creating a wider range of options, including digital, that makes it easier for everyone to find an engagement route that works for them.

We will

- build our engagement structures to have cross-organisational influence, including designing engagement routes that recognise our customers' different experiences and aspirations across our different housing types
- using individual interactions with customers as an opportunity to capture feedback and find tools to share these to enable influence at an organisational level
- deliver improved digital and social media engagement options, with support for customers to build their digital skills and confidence
- create new engagement opportunities digitally and in person
- engage with every customer on at least an annual basis to make sure we know what they need from us
- develop new means of engaging locally, involving customers in prioritising improvements to homes and services
- take our engagement closer to customers – digitally and geographically
- strengthen our customer involvement in staff recruitment, performance feedback and training material
- support our Registered Tenants' Organisations and explore other models of local customer group structures
- explore options to acknowledge and appreciate involvement, including supporting customers to gain appropriate skills to enhance their knowledge and confidence
- establish a new Collaborative Customer Group, involving customers and cross-organisational employees to track implementation of this strategy.
- deliver on the commitments to our customers contained in our Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Pledge 2 – we believe in improving quality and value for money

We will work with our customers to ensure we are delivering affordable high-quality homes and services that matter to them.

We will

- gather and make better use of quantitative and qualitative data as a strong mechanism for gathering intelligence/customers' voice
- involve our customers in service redesign so that their priorities are met
- develop a structure which helps us to recognise and enhance the good work done by our development teams and customers
- develop Customer Insight Groups involving customers from across the organisation to bring together and analyse all our sources of customer feedback, and show what we have changed
- encourage more comments, complaints and compliments and learn more from them
- involve our customers in local and organisational quality assurance processes using their insight to drive improvement and customer-focussed solutions
- gain an external award, accreditation or recognition to validate the quality of our engagement practices
- review and improve our satisfaction surveying and rent consultation methods

Pledge 3 – we believe in increasing our communication channels

We will increase our communication channels, including digital options, to expand our customers' knowledge and understanding.

We will

- review and improve customer communications, including newsletters, and providing easy to read information
- review our template letters simplifying the language wherever possible and creating a suite of templates for local use
- train our teams to use simple, transparent language in all communications
- consider alternative digital communication methods
- grow the visibility and accessibility of our Board and senior team so that they can spend more time communicating with customers face to face and digitally, through focus groups, topic specific feedback sessions and planned customer visits/calls
- track and feed back to customers regularly on the differences and demonstrable improvements their influence makes via the Collaborative Customer Group
- increase our use of social media, including visual communication, through using things like video, animation and vlogs
- communicate with all customers by their preferred communication method

Conclusion

Delivery of this Strategy will be supported by the whole organisation. We know that this is the right thing to do, from our customers' perspective, as well as from a business and regulatory one.

Our new Collaborative Customer Group, involving customers and cross-organisational employees, will actively track implementation of this strategy, monitoring progress against our Action Plan. We will, additionally, work in an iterative way to ensure that our engagement remains relevant as Trust evolves and grows.

Working together, colleagues and customers will deliver improved customer engagement – improving insight, involvement and information to generate real customer influence and positive change.

Appendix 1 – Customer Engagement Strategy Action Plan Priorities

Develop new engagement group structure

Aug 23 - Dec 23

- Realigning existing Customer Panel and Wishaw Area Committee into new groups
- Creating knowledge of customer interest areas which can be drawn on for topic specific groups
- Understanding the different areas of the organisation which would benefit from focus groups
- Understanding digital tools which can assist the groups and information gathering

Review customer information formats

Aug 23 - Dec 23

- Review Trust Talk and local newsletter template in line with digital options
- Review customer information leaflets/packs – easy read and format options

Create feedback and improvement action plan mechanism from Customer Satisfaction Survey results, Performance Report and areas of regulatory focus

Nov 23 - Feb 24

- Creating structure and developing a single place to collate all feedback and improvement actions for prioritisation and agreement
- Aligning mechanism for improvement recommendations and suggestions to Board

Create comprehensive customer engagement action plan for 2024/25 and 2025/26

Nov 23 - Mar 24

Appendix 2 – Customer Engagement Structure



