

Strategy on:	Customer Engagement Strategy
Compliant with Charter Outcomes and Standards:	Yes
Compliant with Equal Opportunities:	Yes
Compliant with Business Plan:	Yes
Compliant with Risk	Yes
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This strategy is available, on request, in different languages and in other formats such as large print, audio format and braille as required.



1. Introduction

To fulfil our vision of Great Homes, Great People and Vibrant Communities, Shire Housing Association is committed to putting our customers at the heart of what we do and how we do it.

We have developed this strategy in recognition that we required to review, improve and modernise our approach to how we involve our customers to provide them with opportunities to work with us, influence the decision-making processes and help shape the services we provide.

The Association's Business Plan identifies Customer Engagement as a strategic priority and by developing a meaningful Customer Engagement Strategy we will demonstrate our commitment to.

- Putting customer engagement at the centre of our values, culture, and ethos
- Maximising opportunities for consultation, participation and engagement
- Taking account of the views and opinions of our customers
- Using customer feedback to influence and shape services and service delivery
- Encouraging active involvement in driving improvements, influencing decisions, and determining the future direction of the Association
- Have a range of ways to easily engage with us in issues that matter to them
- Are empowered to challenge us and hold us to account
- Are given the information needed to make informed decisions about our services and performance.

2. Purpose and Scope

Customer Engagement encompasses a range of activities such as consultation, participation, scrutiny and communication and provides users of the Association's services with 'a voice' and a way to make sure the services they use are fit for purpose and providing them with a way to shape those services to meet their needs. It is a two-way process that allows a sharing of ideas and offers insight into how and why decisions are made and provides opportunities to influence these decisions.

Genuine and meaningful engagement requires:

- Trust between the Association and our customers
- Acknowledgment that engagement is a continuous process of sharing information, ideas, and power
- Ensuring all parties are encouraged to contribute to the engagement agenda
- Ensuring the decision-making process is open, clear, and accountable
- Enough time for all views to be properly considered
- Confidence that customer groups and organisations can operate independently from the Association
- Good working relationships which evolve as customer requirements and expectations change



- Adequate resources for training, support, and servicing for customer groups
- A Strategy tailored to suit the individual needs of the Association's communities
- A Strategy that is inclusive and observes the principles of equalities.

The benefits of effective engagement can lead to positive outcomes for the residents, customers and communities as well as the Association.

These benefits include;

- Better understanding of our customers, their needs, requirements, and aspirations
- Improved services and increased levels of customer satisfaction
- Effective and efficient processes that achieve better value for money
- Better links and partnerships with customers
- Informed customers that have a better awareness of the Association's legal, regulatory and financial limitations
- Improved communication and flow of information
- Policies and procedures that respond to the changing needs of customers
- Gain new skills and knowledge and/or build on existing skills and knowledge
- Build confidence and feel empowered to challenge the Association and hold it accountable
- Contribute to and influence decisions on services and service delivery
- Get a better understanding of how their homes and communities are managed

Whilst the Association is committed to promoting and developing our Customer Engagement Strategy and activities, we respect and recognise that our customers also have a right to NOT engage.

3. Key Aims

The Association recognises the diverse needs of individuals and communities, and we aim to ensure that customers are given opportunities to get involved and engage in ways that suit them.

This Customer Engagement Strategy seeks to develop new forms of involvement and engagement to meet the needs and preferences of our customers by:

- Increase customer involvement in shaping and influencing the decision-making process at all levels by promoting engagement opportunities
- Increase the opportunities and range of methods for customers to engage with the Association easily and effectively
- Minimise or, where possible, remove any barriers to effective engagement and ensure equal opportunity of access to engagement activities
- Use customer feedback and input to drive and shape service improvements and increase levels of satisfaction



- Develop mechanisms for connecting, communicating, and engaging with customers, especially hard to reach and under-represented customers within our communities
- Imbed a culture of customer engagement throughout the Association and establish it as a core activity for all staff

4. Legislation

The Association has both legislative and regulatory obligations with regards participation, consultation, and the provision of information. We manage our business so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate and influence decisions at a level they feel comfortable with. By successfully implementing our Customer Engagement Strategy, we wish to exceed these standards and expectations.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a legal duty on registered social landlords (RSLs) to have customer participation strategies in place and to maintain a register of Residents and Tenants Organisations (RTOs).

This Act also introduced a right for customers, groups and individual customers to be consulted by the landlord on issues affecting them which include: Housing management, repairs and maintenance policies and the standards of service to be provided in relation to these.

The Association will comply with all legislation in relation to Customer Involvement.

5. Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Charter was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2012 and is a tool to enable tenants and other customers to monitor the standard of performance that the landlord provides. The Charter has been broken down into sixteen outcomes.

Outcome number three covers participation and states: “*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.*”

This outcome describes what landlords should achieve by:

- Meeting their statutory customer participation duties;
- How social landlords gather and take account of the views and priorities of their tenants and other customers;
- How these views are reflected in the landlord’s services;
- How landlords help and support tenants and other customers to build their capacity for effective involvement

6. Decision Making and Scrutiny

There are various ways for customers to engage with the Association from formal to informal arrangements.



These include:-

- Management Board Membership
- Registered Tenants Organisations (RTO)
- Tenant Panel Focus Groups
- Staff & Tenant Estate Inspections
- Satisfaction Surveys
- Complaints & Feedback
- Public Meeting Consultation Events

It is the intention of the Association, that individuals will find a level and method of engagement that suits their own individual interests, lifestyles, time commitments, preferences, skills and knowledge.

7. Equality and Diversity

The Association will comply with the terms of our Equality and Diversity policy and our commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities throughout our day to day business. We do not discriminate on the grounds of ethnic origin, disability, gender, marital status, sexuality, age, language, political and religious beliefs, social class or any other form of discrimination

We recognise that there are identifiable groups that are 'hard to reach' and, consequently, underrepresented in normal mainstream engagement arrangements. Using a range of methods, we will endeavour to identify and actively seek to engage with these groups and look for practical methods that will make customer engagement accessible to as many of our customers as possible.

The Association is committed to monitoring data and as and when a new involved customer is recruited, we will ask them to complete an Equalities Monitoring Form to allow us to determine how many customers are involved during the year who have a protected characteristic and use this to inform how we shape our service delivery

8. Barriers to Engagement

The Association recognises that there may be several barriers to effective, successful, and ongoing engagement with customers. When planning engagement activities, we will proactively seek to remove these barriers to make engagement a viable option by, as far as possible, reasonable and appropriate.

We shall do this by:

- Ensuring locations and venues are local and accessible
- Paying reasonable expenses
- Offering translation or interpretation services
- Providing communication aids
- Assisting with transport to venues
- Providing training and support
- Paying childcare and/or dependent care costs



- Holding meeting at times that meet customers' requirements

9. Feedback and Complaints

Shire Housing Association strives to provide an excellent customer service at all times and welcomes feedback and comments from our customers. We will seek feedback via our website, e-mail, in writing and verbally to learn from service users experiences, using them to shape and develop our service.

We operate a Complaints Policy that is open and transparent, should any customer or service user feel the need to make a complaint against an individual or the organisation, the complaints policy and procedure will be implemented. All complaints will be recorded and dealt with under Complaints Policy and Procedures, which meet the requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

10. Resourcing and Monitoring

Customer Engagement is a key activity for the Association, not only because of legislative and regulatory requirements but also because its fundamental to support the Association's Vision. It is essential that Customer Engagement is seen as an integral function within the Association in which every member of staff has an important role and a responsibility to ensure that customers are given opportunities to give their views, influence decisions and inform service delivery.

To successfully implement this Strategy and to develop sustainable Customer Engagement, it is recognised that the strategy must be properly resourced and supported. We will ensure that adequate funds and staff time are made available to develop and support customer engagement in all its forms therefore, budgets and staff resources have been set around key strategy priorities that focus on:

- Front line staff prioritising customer involvement and encouraging customers to take part in the opportunities available to them
- Staff can fully engage with promotion and events
- Staff can continue to build working relationships with partner agencies.

11. Strategy Review

This Customer Engagement Strategy is an evolving document that will be subject to ongoing review in order to ensure that it;

- Reflects the changing needs, demands, aspirations and preferences of the Association's customers
- Meets our objectives
- Complies with legislation, regulatory requirements and good practice
- Is delivering value for money

The Strategy will be measured against the Action Plan on annual basis and the Strategy will be reviewed in full at least every three years.

