



Customer Involvement Strategy 2023 - 2026



Our vision

To have a refreshed approach to customer involvement, where all customers feel they have the opportunity to engage, and that their views are valued and influence change.

Our strategy

The Association is committed to working more closely with our customers, to ensure that we genuinely understand their needs and expectations, to improve our services. This is reflected in our strategic plan which sets out the Association's objectives, with '**Engage effectively with our residents**' as the first objective.

This Customer Involvement Strategy will contribute to this objective by prioritising engagement and involvement activity, to improve services and the customer experience.

Involving customers isn't an optional extra. It is essential for the vitality of our association and our communities.

There are also three key national requirements that we must ensure are met through the delivery of this strategy:

- The Charter for Social Housing Tenants (see appendix 1)
- Together With Tenants (see appendix 2)
- Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (see appendix 3)

But, as a rural housing association, improving our customer engagement and involvement is much more than a regulatory requirement, it's at the heart of everything we do. It's vital that we **empower our customers** to shape and influence our services, to ensure that what we deliver is truly aligned to their needs.

This strategy will be delivered by the Midlands Rural Housing team on behalf of Warwickshire Rural Housing Association.

Customer involvement

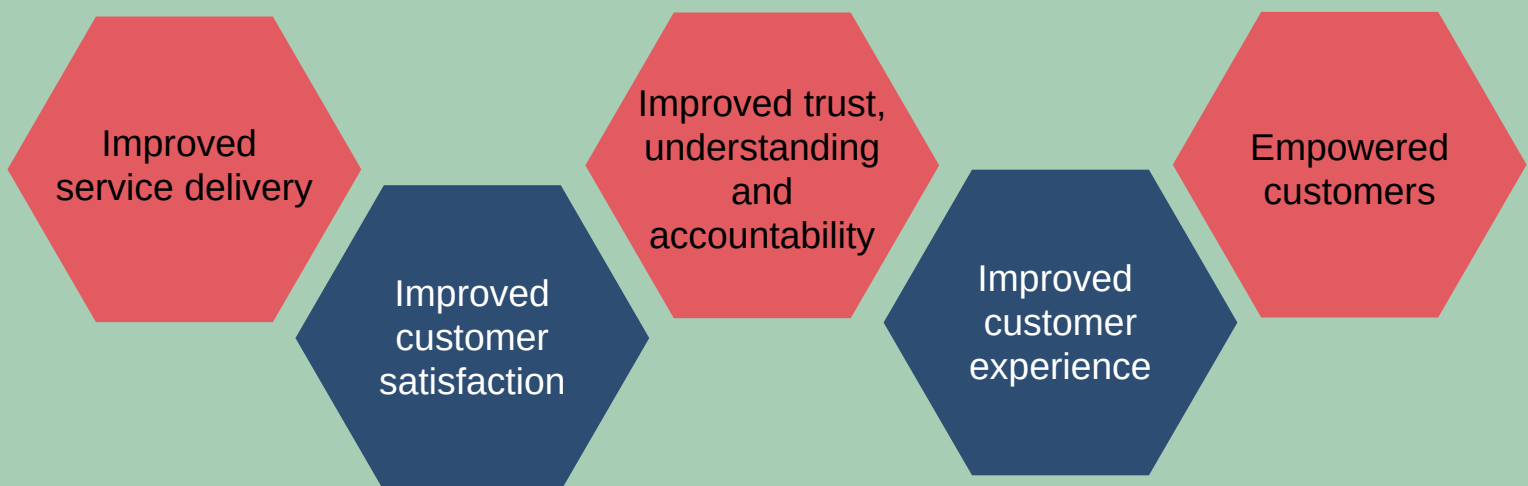
We have made a conscious change from 'Resident Engagement' to 'Customer Involvement'.

Why have we done this?

Our tenants/**residents** and shared owners are all **customers**. They pay for our services and deserve a high-quality customer service.

We need to **engage** our customers to become **involved**, to take part in activities to influence change.

Why customer engagement and involvement matters



Our aims

Through surveys and feedback, our customers told us they want us to:

Listen

"Take time to listen to tenants and seriously listen to what they are saying."

Communicate better how we can get involved

"I'm not sure I've ever been notified how to put forward ideas and views."

Improve my services

"After complaining many times about contractors, nothing has changed."

Visit our schemes more

"Regular visits to schemes to speak to residents might be beneficial."

Combining customer feedback and the recommendations and requirements of national guidelines and regulations, we will focus on the following:

1. Making getting involved simple, flexible and inclusive

To enable as many customers as possible to be involved, how and when it suits them, giving us representative insights to meet the needs and expectations of all customers

2. Creating a culture committed to customer involvement

To build trust with customers that when they speak to anyone at the Association, they will be listened to

3. Improving our communication with customers

To ensure customers are aware of the opportunities to be involved and how to access them

4. Ensuring we have systems and processes for customers to hold us to account

So they know how we are performing and what decisions we are making

Our approach to customer engagement and involvement

We recognise that we're at the start of our customer involvement journey and need to develop ongoing relationships with our customers, based on engagement and participation.

Path to Engagement framework

We will use four stages from the TPAS* 'Path to Engagement' as a framework.

Each stage represents a different level/type of engagement with the 'intensity' of engagement increasing as the number of customers required decreases.

Co-create

Work with the association to improve the design of services, through deeper engagement (focus groups, workshops etc)

Chip-in

Take part in basic engagement (surveys etc)

Opt-in

Commit to future engagement by submitting preferences for issues to be engaged in and channels to be engaged through

Be aware

Engage with information we provide (on social media, in newsletters, on the website etc)

Engagement profile

To help embed the 'Opt-in' stage, we will develop engagement profiles, which we'll use to inform future engagement opportunities, matching specific customer preferences, based on:

Services / issues they would like to influence

Level of involvement they would like to give

Preferred engagement channels

* TPAS are a not-for-profit organisation that promote, support and champion tenant involvement and empowerment in social housing.

How we will deliver this

1. Make getting involved simple, flexible and inclusive

To enable as many customers as possible to be involved, how and when it suits them, giving us representative insights to meet the needs and expectations of all customers

We will offer a flexible menu of involvement opportunities, that enables all our customers to get involved as much or little as they want

We will:

- provide a variety of ways to be involved, with a focus on digital
- adopt a flexible 'tap-in, tap-out approach' to suit different lifestyles
- develop mechanisms for customers to put forward ideas - including Your Idea Matters scheme and social media groups
- be specific in our communications, so customers understand what's required and why it benefits them
- introduce a rolling programme of scheme visits, so we are more visible and obtainable
- develop a simple incentive programme, to thank customers for their time (see appendix 4)
- review and update the website to make it easier to 'opt-in'
- be focused on the areas we know are most important to our customers:



Repairs and maintenance



Garden maintenance



Complaints



Rent and service charges

- prioritise the preferred channels of:



Short surveys - up to 5 minutes



Longer surveys - approx 10 minutes

We will develop a segmented approach for different types of customers

We will:

- move away from a one-size-fits-all, formal approach
- develop specific engagement plans and involvement programmes for shared owners
- develop mechanisms to 'track non-vocal customers' to ensure an early intervention approach

We will provide support to customers to help remove barriers to engagement

We will:

- raise awareness about the opportunities, the flexibility and the misconceptions of 'engagement'
- be specific, so customers understand what's required and why it benefits them

How we will deliver this

2. Create a culture committed to customer involvement

To build trust with customers that when they speak to anyone at the Association, they will be listened to

We will develop a culture where every member of the team listens to and values feedback, and uses it to make services the best they can be

We will:

- embed involvement throughout the association, including Board members, so it's seen as the responsibility of all staff
- develop an engagement toolkit for all customer-facing teams to use
- include customer feedback updates on all team meeting agendas, both 'formal' (i.e. surveys) and informal (i.e. conversations with customers)
- develop processes to capture and record informal / anecdotal feedback
- develop an action plan to ensure regular updates on customer feedback and to log and share service improvements across the association
- raise awareness internally of customer involvement webpages - including how to get involved, Your Idea Matters and You Said, We Did

3. Improve our communication with customers

To ensure customers are aware of the opportunities to be involved, how to access them, and the changes we make following feedback

We will develop communication plans to raise awareness

We will:

- have regular campaigns to promote the ways that customers can get involved
- include updates in every customer newsletter
- ensure it's easy to find out about opportunities on our website
- celebrate where customer feedback has made a difference - including You Said, We Did and Your Idea Matters

How we will deliver this

4. Ensure we have systems and processes for customers to hold us to account

So they know how we are performing and what decisions we are making

We will be transparent and open about what customers can expect from us and how we perform against those expectations

We will:

- develop a resident charter
 - involve customers in everything that has an impact on them from the beginning, so they can influence, improve and co-design services with us
 - ensure that all new and updated customer-facing policies have customer consultation before publishing
 - review and update standards of service with customers
 - develop mechanisms to let customers know how their views and feedback have improved the way we do things and influenced new services
 - create a quarterly performance dashboard and publish on our website and promote through all channels
 - report annually on progress against Together with Tenants commitments
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Measurement and impact

The impact and success of the strategy will be measured annually through customers':



improved overall satisfaction with the Association's service



improved satisfaction with the opportunities to put views and ideas forward



improved satisfaction that we listen to views and take notice

We will also measure:

Number of services changed as a result of feedback

Number and nature of complaints received, the outcomes and lessons learnt

Number and nature of compliments received

Number of involved customers

Number of engaged customer activities completed

Our Customer Involvement Strategy will be reviewed every three years and customers will be consulted on how we can best involve them in the governance and scrutiny of our services.

How we will share our performance

We will share our performance:



in our annual
report



in our
newsletters



on our
website



on social
media

Appendix 1

The Social Housing White Paper

The Government published its long-awaited Social Housing White Paper on 17 November 2020. Called 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents', it comprises seven chapters, each relating to an element of the charter.



1. **To be safe in your home.** We will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.



2. **To know how your landlord is performing**, including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.



3. **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly**, with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.



4. **To be treated with respect**, backed by a strong consumer regulator, and improved consumer standards for tenants.



5. **To have your voice heard by your landlord**, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its board. The government will provide access to help, if you want it, for you to learn new skills to ensure your landlord listens.



6. **To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in**, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.



7. **To be supported to take your first step to ownership**, so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

The most critical charter elements for this strategy are two, three our and five. The Government have outlined clear intentions for stronger customer engagement and for organisations to be continually improving the way they engage with social housing tenants.

Consumer regulation will be strengthened with a code of practice that clearly states what landlords are required to deliver.

There is a key focus on providing more detailed performance information to customers and focussing on values around transparency and accountability.

Appendix 2

Together with Tenants

Together with Tenants is a National Housing Federation (NHF) project focusing on creating a stronger relationship between tenants, residents and housing associations. Following a lengthy period of consultation the NHF released a set of six commitments:



Relationships – housing associations will treat all tenants and residents with respect in all their interactions. Relationships between tenants, residents and housing associations will be based on openness, honesty and transparency.



Communication – tenants and residents will receive clear, accessible and timely information from their housing association on the issues that matter to them, including important information about their homes and local community, how the organisation is working to address problems, how the organisation is run, and information about performance on key issues.



Voice and influence – views from tenants and residents will be sought and valued and this information will be used to inform decisions. Every individual tenant and resident will feel listened to by their housing association on the issues that matter to them and can speak without fear.



Accountability – collectively, tenants and residents will work in partnership with their housing association to independently scrutinise and hold their housing association to account for the decisions that affect their homes and services and the quality of the homes and services they provide.



Quality – tenants and residents can expect their homes to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.



When things go wrong – tenants and residents will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress. Tenants and residents will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.

We have signed up to become a Together with Tenants adopter.

The key commitments for this strategy are '**voice and influence**', '**accountability**' and '**relationships**'. These commitments are reflected in the strategy and progress will be monitored through an action plan.

Appendix 3

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

1. Required outcomes

1.1 Customer service, choice and complaints

1.1.1 Registered providers shall:

- a. provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- b. have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.

1.2 Involvement and empowerment

1.2.1 Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- a. the formulation of their landlord's housing-related policies and strategic priorities
- b. the making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- c. the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved
- d. the management of their homes, where applicable
- e. the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and
- f. agreeing local offers for service delivery.

1.3 Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

1.3.1 Registered providers shall:

- a. treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- b. demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs

2. Specific expectations

2.1 Customer service, choice and complaints

2.1.1 Registered providers shall provide tenants with accessible, relevant and timely information about: a. how tenants can access services

- b. the standards of housing services their tenants can expect
- c. how they are performing against those standards
- d. the service choices available to tenants, including any additional costs that are relevant to specific choices
- e. progress of any repairs work
- f. how tenants can communicate with them and provide feedback
- g. the responsibilities of the tenant and provider
- h. arrangements for tenant involvement and scrutiny.

2.1.2 Providers shall offer a range of ways for tenants to express a complaint and set out clear service standards for responding to complaints, including complaints about performance against the standards, and details of what to do if they are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint.

Providers shall inform tenants how they use complaints to improve their services.

Registered providers shall publish information about complaints each year, including their number and nature, and the outcome of the complaints.

Providers shall accept complaints made by advocates authorised to act on a tenant's/tenants' behalf.

2.2 Involvement and empowerment

2.2.1 Registered providers shall support their tenants to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment, including by:

- a. supporting their tenants to exercise their Right to Manage or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate
- b. supporting the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups and responding in a constructive and timely manner to them

Appendix 3

- c. the provision of timely and relevant performance information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in a form which registered providers seek to agree with their tenants. Such provision must include the publication of an annual report which should include information on repair and maintenance budgets
- d. providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved.

2.2.2 Registered providers shall consult with tenants on the scope of local offers for service delivery.

This shall include how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants and arrangements for reviewing these on a periodic basis.

2.2.3 Where registered providers are proposing a change in landlord for one or more of their tenants or a significant change in their management arrangements, they shall consult with affected tenants in a fair, timely, appropriate and effective manner.

Registered providers shall set out the proposals clearly and in an appropriate amount of detail and shall set out any actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer term. Registered providers must be able to demonstrate to affected tenants how they have taken the outcome of the consultation into account when reaching a decision.

2.2.4 Registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service.

2.3 Understanding and responding to diverse needs

2.3.1 Registered providers shall demonstrate how they respond to tenants' needs in the way they provide services and communicate with tenants.

Appendix 4

Menu of engagement

MENU OF ENGAGEMENT



At home











Review and feedback



Online group



Online survey

Type of engagement	Activity	Commitment	Time	Thank you
	Short online surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing a survey, giving your views and experience about a service area. Can be completed at a time to suit you, with a specified closing date. 	Total flexibility	Varies, approximately 5–10 mins	Entered into 6 monthly prize draw to win £50
	Longer online surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing a survey, giving your views and experience about a service area. Can be completed at a time to suit you, with a specified closing date. 	Total flexibility	Varies, approximately 10 mins–1 hour	Entered into 6 monthly prize draw to win £50
	Policy reviews – online <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A policy document would be emailed to you for proofreading and your views. Your feedback would be sent to through an online survey. Can be completed at a time to suit you, with a specified closing date. 	Total flexibility, no ongoing commitment	Varies, approximately 30mins – 1hr per review	Entered into 6 monthly prize draw to win £50
	Online service improvement working groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small discussion groups with residents, staff and board members on a specific task or topic. The groups review, develop and agree improvements in that area of the business. Attend just groups that are of interest to you. 	The groups meet several times a year, join when you want to, no ongoing commitment	1–1.5 hours per session	Entered into 6 monthly prize draw to win £50
	Online focus groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-off meetings to gather views on specific topics. Can attend groups for areas you're interested in or have knowledge about. 	Adhoc , no ongoing commitment	1–1.5 hours per session	Entered into 6 monthly prize draw to win £50
	Information reviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing and feeding back on information for residents, such as your opinion on updated web pages or a newsletter. How you feedback would vary by project, including by email or completing a questionnaire. Can be completed at a time to suit you, with a specified closing date. 	Total flexibility, no ongoing commitment	1–1.5 hours per review	Entered into 6 monthly prize draw to win £50
	Complaints appeal representative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing and giving your feedback on a complaint when a resident has appealed the initial outcome. The complaint history would be emailed to you and you'll receive a full briefing. Your feedback would be sent to us by email and may also include some phone calls or video chats. This requires a logical mind, and you must ensure absolute confidentiality. 	Adhoc , can be at short notice, no ongoing commitment	1–1.5 hours per appeal	Entered into 6 monthly prize draw to win £50
	Your Idea Matters <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Submit an idea to improve a service on the online form The ideas will be reviewed by a panel of managers, including the managing director. The panel will review the ideas every three months - at the end of March, June, September and December. The successful idea will be passed to the relevant service area and the manager for that area will get in touch and liaise with the resident. 	Total flexibility, no ongoing commitment	5 minutes	£20 shopping voucher for chosen idea