



CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Date approved	29 August 2018
Review frequency	Every three years
Date of next review	August 2021

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Charing Cross Housing Association is committed to putting our customers at the heart of what we do and how we do it and has as one of its stated visions “**to seek out new opportunities to work with our people and our communities**”.

Although a high percentage of tenants have reported that they are either very or fairly satisfied with the opportunities they have to participate in the Association’s decision making process, it is recognised that the reality is that there has, traditionally, been a very poor response to participation and consultation exercises.

As a result it was recognised that the Association had to review, improve and modernise its approach to how we involve our customers and provide them with opportunities to work with us, influence the decision making processes and help shape the services we provide. Accordingly, the Association’s Business Plan identified Customer Engagement as a strategic priority and one of the foundation blocks for the Association’s ‘Journey to Excellence’.

2.0 PURPOSE

By developing a meaningful Customer Engagement Strategy and an achievable implementation action plan the Association will demonstrate its commitment to;

- Putting customer engagement at the centre of its 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

It is recognised that the strategy will evolve and develop over time to reflect the changing priorities, aspirations and demands of customers. However, by the end of the three year lifespan of this strategy the Association is looking to ensure that robust mechanisms are in place to ensure our customers:

- Are actively involved in shaping services, driving improvements, influencing decisions and determining the future direction of the Association
- Have a range of ways to easily engage with the Association on issues that matter to them
- Are empowered to challenge the Association and hold it to account

- Are given the information they require to make informed decisions about the Association's services and performance

3.0 WHAT IS CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT?

For the purpose of this strategy Customer Engagement encompasses a range of activities such as consultation, participation, scrutiny and communication.

Customer Engagement 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 opportunities to influence these decisions.

Genuine and meaningful engagement requires:

- Trust between the Association and its 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 of 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 are also two-way and can lead to positive outcomes for the residents, customers and communities as well as the Association.

For 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

Customers that take an active role in engaging with the Association will have the opportunity to:

- 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

4.0 CONTEXT

The Association has both legislative and regulatory obligations with regards participation, consultation and the provision of information.

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 – Introduced a legal requirement for landlords to actively develop and support tenant participation and to consult with tenants and registered tenant organisations (RTOs) on a range of housing management, repairs and maintenance policies and proposal which may affect them.

Scottish Social Housing Charter – Contains 2 outcomes that directly relate to Customer Engagement;

Outcome 2 – Communication: Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers (i.e residents) 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 the landlord provides.

Outcome 3 – Participation: Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate and influence their landlords' decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

By successfully implementing its Customer Engagement Strategy, the Association wishes to exceed these standards and expectations.

5.0 RIGHT NOT TO ENGAGE

Customer Engagement Strategy

However whilst the Association is committed to promoting and developing its Customer Engagement strategy and activities, it also recognises that customers also have a right NOT to engage

6.0 AIMS OF THE STRATEGY

The Strategy has 6 key aims that it seeks to achieve;

AIM 1 – Increase customer involvement in shaping and influencing the decision making process at all levels by promoting engagement opportunities

AIM 2 - Increase the opportunities and range of methods for customers to easily and effectively engage with the Association

AIM 3 - Minimise or, where possible, remove any barriers to effective engagement and ensure equal opportunity of access to engagement activities

AIM 4 - Use customer feedback and input to drive and shape service improvements and increase levels of satisfaction

AIM 5 - Develop mechanisms for connecting, communicating and engaging with customers, especially hard to reach and under-represented customers within our communities

AIM 6 – Imbed a culture of customer engagement throughout the Association and establish it as a core activity for all staff

These aims determine the outcomes and objectives of the strategy and form the framework for the implementation action plan.

7.0 MENU OF ENGAGEMENT

A key outcome of the strategy is that customers are given opportunities and ways to engage and get involved with the Association that suit them. The Association will therefore offer a 'Menu of Engagement' that recognises the diverse needs of individuals and communities.

There are a number of engagement methods and activities currently available for customers ranging from the formal, strategic decision making level to the informal submitting suggestions and comments. Additionally, the Association

is seeking to develop new form of involvement and engagement to meet the needs and preferences of its customers.

DECISION MAKING & SCRUTINY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Committee Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO) Joining the Service Improvement Group Tenant Representative Panel Focus Group Short-Life Working Group Interested Customer Register Self-Assessment Group
ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff & Tenant Estate Inspections Mystery Shoppers
VIEWS & OPINIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Suggestion Box Comments Section on Website Satisfaction Surveys Questionnaires Complaints & Feedback Public Meetings Consultation Exercises
SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership of CCHA

By providing a range of options and opportunities to become involved and engage with the Association, it is intended that individuals will find a level and method of engagement that suits their own individual interests, lifestyles, time commitments, preferences, skills and knowledge.

8.0 EQUAL ACCESS TO ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Association seeks to make sure that any individual, group or sector of our communities that receive a service from it has equal access and opportunity to engage with the Association and to participate in any or all of its engagement activities.

However, it is recognised that there are identifiable groups that are 'hard to reach' and, consequently, underrepresented in normal mainstream engagement arrangements.

The Association 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 its customers as possible.

9.0 BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

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

- 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
- Provision of crèche facilities
- Holding meeting at times that meet customers' requirements

10.0 RESOURCING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

To successfully implement this strategy and to develop or customer meaningful and sustainable Customer Engagement, it is recognised that it must be properly resourced and supported. Such resources may be financial and/or staff time.

The Association will ensure that adequate funds and staff time are made available to develop and support customer engagement in all its forms. To support the delivery of tenant engagement activities, the Association will also identify suitable sources of funding and will, where appropriate will submit applications.

11.0 SUPPORTING & PROMOTING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Customer Engagement is a key activity for the Association, not only because of legislative and regulatory requirements but also because it is fundamental to support the Association's 'journey to excellence'.

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. All staff are therefore expected to embrace and positively promote engagement as part of their daily duties.

12.0 MONITORING & EVALUATING THE STRATEGY

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 its objectives
- Complies with legislation, regulatory requirements and good practice
- Is delivering value for money

Progress with implementing 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