

making
connections



CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
SUMMARY



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INTRODUCTION

At PHA we are committed to providing the best level of service possible. We believe engaging and communicating with our customers effectively will help us to achieve this. This means we need our customers to become more involved by influencing our decisions and helping to shape our policies.

While our Board and senior members of staff will continue to lead and manage our organisation, we want to have closer working partnerships between senior staff, board members and our customers. Our Customer Scrutiny Panel is at the centre of this. The role of the Panel is to review our services and put forward suggestions for improvement. This will set the foundations for 'transparent self-scrutiny' within our organisation.

This strategy sets out our commitment to moving towards self-scrutiny and documents how we will develop effective consultation, involvement and communication with our customers so they can take part, have a say, be heard and influence PHA's future.



HOW HAS THIS STRATEGY EVOLVED?

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 specified that all registered social landlords like us must have a 'tenant participation strategy'. We met this requirement by implementing our Customer Engagement Strategy (2011-2014). However in our efforts to become more modern and innovative, we decided to move towards self-scrutiny by developing a Customer Scrutiny Panel. We also decided to combine our customer engagement and communication within one strategy document.

WHAT HAS INFLUENCED THIS STRATEGY?

This strategy has been influenced by both national and local factors.

National Drivers

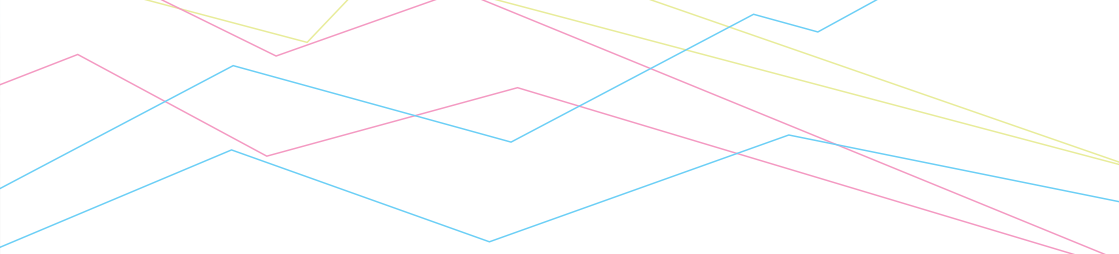
The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into effect on 1st April 2012, with the aim of improving the quality and value of service which social landlords deliver to customers. This strategy focuses upon the two Charter outcomes linked to customer engagement.

The charter is clear that social landlords must make it easy for customers to:

Communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about them, the decisions they make and the services they provide.

Participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

This strategy details our commitment to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and takes into consideration the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).



Local Drivers

At PHA we want to be more than simply a Housing Association. We want to be a 'community anchor', fully committed to improving the area as a whole, as well as the quality of life for our customers, helping to make Partick a great place to live and work.

We also recognise the benefits of customer involvement and self-scrutiny and as such, will continue to provide a platform for RTO's, customer projects and tenant groups to develop, and offer ways for customers to become involved and influence our decisions.



WHAT ARE THE MAIN AIMS OF THIS STRATEGY?

This strategy has 11 aims or 'outcomes' - seven for customer engagement and four for communication.

Customer engagement

A Culture of Engagement

We will develop a culture of customer involvement and participation throughout our entire organisation. This will involve training and personal development for staff and board members to make sure they have the right behaviour and attitude to working successfully with our customers.

Opportunity

We will provide a wide range of opportunities for our customers to become actively involved with us. Offering different formats to accommodate people's preferences, these include three active tenant organisations, a Customer Scrutiny Panel, welfare reform and annual visits projects, and several community projects.

Customer Influence

We will ensure our customers influence our decision making process and shape the delivery of our services. This will primarily be achieved through the Customer Scrutiny Panel, where members (tenants) set their own priorities and focus assessments on areas of interest to them which need improving.

Involvement and Empowerment

We will develop customer involvement and empowerment by supporting all aspects of customer participation. This includes supporting our customers' personal development and capacity building, ensuring they are fully equipped to effectively review our services and influence our policy decisions.

Inclusive and Open

We will enhance involvement throughout our customer base by promoting inclusion and equality. This will include supporting the involvement of under-represented groups such as young people, ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities. We will identify these groups through our annual visits and promote customer involvement within them so we can best meet their needs.

Continuous Improvement

We will continue to evolve the delivery of customer engagement by investigating and introducing new ways of involving our customers and developing our approach to self-scrutiny. This strategy is a working document and we will amend it to reflect the improvements we make.

Community Anchor

We will enhance our links with the wider Partick community through partnership engagement. We operate several community projects which are open to the whole community, including Partick Community Growing Project, Merlin's Meadow, Centurion Way Growers and Hayburn Court Community Garden. We will actively support and promote the benefits of these projects throughout the community.

Communication

Meeting Customer Needs

We will communicate effectively with our customers and provide accessible information. Our communication channels include our quarterly newsletter The Partick Times, website, leaflets, correspondence, annual visits, meetings and open days. We offer additional formats where needed, such as audio, Braille or translations.

Open, Understandable and Transparent

We will ensure all communication with customers is open, understandable and transparent, and always of a high standard.

This will include:

Up-to-date, easy to understand and jargon free information.

Staff contact names and details on all material.

Communication and media training for staff to keep standards high.

Involvement of our Customer Scrutiny Panel to review our materials.

Expansion of our 'armchair critics' to provide feedback.

Use of Plain English wherever possible.

Meeting Future Needs

We will keep our customers up-to-date with the various communication options available and commit to increase and develop innovative methods in the future. We will use our annual visits and tenant surveys to find out which options our customers prefer and where we need to improve.

Listening and Learning

We will ensure we have a robust method of consultation and feedback, which customers can access.

We will offer a range of consultation methods and will:

Provide detailed information on proposals and allow adequate time for customers to respond.

Use the views of our customers to shape and improve our proposals.

Provide feedback to our customers on the areas they have been consulted on.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

As well as meeting our statutory obligations for communication and engagement as set out in the Social Housing Charter, PHA is taking things further by removing barriers to effective communications and engagement with our customers.

This includes:

Arranging meetings to suit customers' needs and preferences.

Using accessible and secure community venues for meetings.

Training and supporting customers so they can participate effectively.

Providing funding to support assignments, as far as we are able.

Providing grants to support the work of registered tenant organisations.



HOW DOES THIS STRATEGY FIT WITHIN PHA'S CORPORATE PLAN?

PHA's overall strategic direction is defined within our Corporate Plan (2012-2015). The successful achievement of the 11 outcomes in this strategy supports two of our five long term corporate aims:

To sustain, support and improve our communities

This strategy aims to ensure all customers have the opportunity to become involved in a way which suits them individually. We will therefore support and sustain the various customer groups through offering knowledge, training and commitment. This will involve a number of different ways, but first-rate communication will be vital in each. Through a commitment to partnership working and self-scrutiny, PHA will continue to improve the area and opportunities available to our customers.

To raise our profile and reputation as a leading organisation with a strong influential voice

PHA's profile, both within the local community and the social housing sector, will be enhanced by the number of successful customer and community projects underway. This will increase our reputation as a first class Association that plays a vital role in improving the local community. Through the sustainment of our RTO's, Customer Scrutiny Panel and community projects, PHA will be a positive influence in making the decisions which shape the services our customers receive.

In addition, this Strategy supports one of the three key objectives in our Corporate Plan:

'Get closer to communities, so we know, understand and respond to what our customers want and need, and support community and economic regeneration.' PHA will embrace partnership working and new alliances within the local community with the different community projects it undertakes. This will allow us to get closer to and engage with the wider Partick community, while also taking account of our customer needs for the local area. As a major organisation within Partick we acknowledge our role in promoting and improving the local area.

This strategy also informs and impacts upon a number of other key strategies which are currently in operation at PHA or under development, including:

ICT Strategy.

Growing Greener Together Strategy.

Performance Management Strategy.

Value for Money Strategy.

2014/15 Delivery Plan.

HOW WILL PERFORMANCE ON THIS STRATEGY BE MONITORED?

PHA will ensure that our performance management and reporting systems show how well we are achieving the outcomes of this strategy. We will identify any areas where improvement is needed and report them to our tenants and other customers.

We will benchmark our service against other local registered social landlords. Primarily, this will be current participants within the Quality and Efficiency Forum (QEF) which periodically reviews benchmarked data and highlights areas for further review. We will share this information with the Customer Scrutiny Panel to help inform their assessment priorities.

THE 'SMALL PRINT'

Updates

This strategy will be updated during 2015 to reflect changes resulting from a review of the 2012-2015 Corporate Plan. It will also be reviewed annually and updated to reflect budget requirements and new learning as a result of our performance monitoring exercises.

Equality

Customer engagement and communication is open to all PHA customers. No individual will be discriminated against on the grounds of the protected characteristic highlighted in the Equalities Act 2010.



A copy of our full Area Customer Engagement & Communication Strategy is available to collect from our office or to download from our website at www.partickha.org.uk

