Our Customer and Community Engagement Strategy

We are as much about customers and communities as homes and properties and deliver services to an increasingly diverse range of customers and community groups, with very different and changing needs.

We believe that our customers are at the heart of our business and want to make sure that we are communicating with them, including listening to them, effectively. It is important that we are capturing all of the valuable feedback from our customers about our services and their local neighbourhoods and communities and that we are using this effectively to improve and develop future services, including future Community Investment projects.
The wider operating environment is also changing, with increasing pressure on resources, higher customer expectations and more use of technology to access services and give feedback. The Social Housing Green Paper and NHF Together with Tenants initiative place a greater emphasis on engaging effectively with customers, ensuring the customer’s voice is heard and working with customers to co-create or co-design services.

More recently, there has also been a renewed emphasis on the charitable and social purpose of housing associations and the important role that we have to play within wider neighbourhoods and communities (e.g. through the Centre for Excellence in Community Investment), over and above simply being a landlord.

This area of our work is covered by the Regulatory Framework, specifically the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard which sets out a number of requirements for Registered Providers to support tenants to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment.

In using the term ‘customer and community engagement’ we are referring to the opportunities that we have to listen to customers, capture their feedback and work with them to design services, as well as how we inform customers about the organisation and their local neighbourhoods and communities.

In addition to this, we believe that we need to go one step further and develop a corporate, Group-wide approach to Community Investment that consolidates Social Value/Community Investment initiatives into a separate strategy and reporting framework. Over the next 12 months we will start to scope out this work.
Strategic Priorities

In our Business Strategy 2018-2023, we set out our mission to ‘Build a better future by investing in affordable homes, services and communities’ and make it clear that our customers are at the very heart of what we about, and that the customer voice is central to this.

This, our first Platform Housing Customer and Community Engagement Strategy, sets out what this means in more detail, our vision for customer and community engagement and how we will achieve it.

The strategy has been developed to link to our organisational values and is particularly relevant to the following strategic business priorities:

**Great Customer Service:**
- Improve customer engagement and insight so we get closer to our customers and meet their needs
- Provide high quality services that support local communities
- Commitment to the development of truly accountable local service delivery. We will learn from each other’s experiences to develop such initiatives more widely - e.g. work to tackle digital exclusion, support for community funded local initiatives, debt and welfare benefit advice and creating job and training opportunities.
- Tackle digital exclusion.

The strategy is also very closely aligned and linked to the following organisational strategies and projects:

- Customer Experience Strategy
- Digital Strategy
- Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Platform One project.
Goals and Projects

Our vision is that by 2022 we will have harmonised our approach across the Group and will have robust, meaningful and outcome focussed, customer and community engagement that truly influences our current and future services. We have developed a new model that will provide the framework to help us do this, based on 6 key areas:
Customer insight is about knowing and understanding our customers, their circumstances, preferences and what they think about our services and their local neighbourhood.

Customer Insight is a key theme in our Customer Experience Strategy, but is also a fundamental element of customer and community engagement.

We have a wealth of useful insight available to us from sources such as:
- Complaints feedback
- Compliments
- Avoidable contacts
- Social media feedback
- Survey findings
- Customer journey mapping
- Mystery shopping and focus groups.

We have already started to link up this feedback to ensure that it is not viewed in isolation and that we fully understand trends in what customers are saying.

We will continue to review the way that we collect this feedback and insight to ensure that it is effective and representative and that we publish subsequent improvements and outcomes.

Our Customer Scrutiny Panels will be provided with regular insight information so that they are fully informed and this will help them to select future scrutiny reviews and services that can start to be reviewed and co-designed with customers.

A framework for colleagues to use customer and community insight information when planning and designing new services, products or changes to existing ones.

Diverse representation of customers when using insight information and working with them to co-design services.
We are committed to ensuring that our framework for customer engagement is closely linked to the overall governance of the organisation and that there are robust, outcome focussed arrangements in place for customers to scrutinise our services.

The focus of this part of this strategy is to have a new, harmonised model for scrutiny that links with our Board and also our developing approach to co-designing services with customers.

We recognise that it is in everybody’s interests for us to take complaints seriously, resolve them as quickly as possible and to make sure that we learn from them. Some customers will find it challenging to raise complaints with us, so as part of our customer engagement structure, we will implement Complaints Advocates across the Group, who can support other customers through our complaints process to help try to resolve complaints as quickly and effectively as possible.

The Customer Insight that we have is becoming more and more useful to us to help us know what customers think about our services and where we need to improve.

However, we know that sometimes, we don’t always involve customers in the solutions to the trends and issues raised as much as we could do. We want to start exploring more of a ‘service co-design’ approach, where we work with representative groups of customers on specific issues to jointly explore and find solutions to service improvements and re-designs.

2022 VISION

- A robust and outcome focussed model for Customer Scrutiny that links to the governance of our organisation.
- Trained Complaints Advocates to support other customers through the complaints process.
- Develop and implement a framework for us and customers to be able to co-design/co-review new and existing services.
We know that we have room to improve in terms of our customers feeling that they are kept informed both about local communities and neighbourhoods and also wider Platform organisational issues and services.

This gives us opportunity to review and develop how we keep customers informed and what works best for them. The role that new digital technologies can play to support this will be fully explored as part of this review.

**2022 VISION**

- An effective and flexible range of tools for communicating with and informing customers.
- Improved customer satisfaction with how informed they feel.
We know that most of our customers prefer to engage with us quickly, using online methods and this can give us really good opportunities for getting a wide and diverse range of views on specific issues.

We currently have some online engagement options available for customers, but these need to be further developed, harmonised and embedded across the Group.

- An online community of customers that engage with us on a range of issues using different digital options.
We provide more than 45,000 homes from Herefordshire in the West, to the Lincolnshire Coast in the East, and from the Derbyshire Dales in the North to the Cotswolds in the South.

There are a vast array of very different neighbourhoods and communities within these areas, all with their unique differences and issues. In some of the areas that we work, we only manage a handful of properties and in others, particularly in some of the areas previously owned by local authorities, we are the main landlord.

We firmly believe that we are about more than just being a landlord and that we, along with customers, residents and other partners and stakeholders have a key role to play in helping create thriving and sustainable communities. There is no one size fits all, however we will put in place a framework to help us shape and prioritise some of our work in local communities that clearly links to our strategic business objectives and focuses on the following key themes:

- Increasing Tenancy Sustainment
- Reducing ASB
- Increasing Digital Inclusion
- Increasing Community Cohesion
- Improving Health and Wellbeing

This will give us a streamlined approach to planning and delivering community engagement projects across the Group going forward.

We also want to make sure that there are a range of ways for people with an interest in their local community to engage with us and will offer a variety of initiatives including:

- Community Champions
- Environmental Improvement Funds
- Scheme Walkabouts
- Consultation on Environmental Improvements
- Consultation on new developments
- Other community initiatives & partnership working

A harmonised approach to local community projects and activities based upon a clear framework that links to business and customer priorities.

A clear plan for managing relationships with our key partners and stakeholders.

Scoped out a plan for how we will review and develop Platform’s future Corporate Strategy for Community Investment.
We already provide a range of projects and activities to support those customers who may want to further develop their skills and capacity, however our approach to this needs to be streamlined across the Group going forward.

We recognise that due to our geography, there may be different priorities and requirements in different areas, but we want to provide more training and support services that can help customers develop their confidence, access employment, more successfully sustain their tenancy, get involved in scrutiny or co-design, or take on a wider role within their local community.

We will provide a range of projects and activities that promote:

- Customer Training
- Digital Inclusion
- Volunteering
- Teen Champions
- Health & Well Being
- Job Clubs/Employment Support
Our Checks and Balances

We will deliver our vision by achieving a wide ranging set of goals and projects for each of these key areas that are set out in the two-year roadmap that accompanies this strategy.

A Group wide Steering Group will be developed to ensure that we deliver on our Customer and Community Engagement Commitments.

Progress and performance will be reported and recorded at Regional Operations Management Teams on a quarterly basis.

We will look at ways that customers can review progress against the plan and include this as part of the review of scrutiny arrangements going forward.