



Communications Strategy

2021-2026

1. Executive Summary

This document outlines the Communications Strategy for West of Scotland Housing Association (WSHA) for 2021-2026. The overall aim of WSHA is to deliver a comprehensive and effective communications strategy that builds relationships with stakeholders i.e. tenants and customers, staff and Board/Sub-Committee Members and external stakeholders. We also want to raise and protect our reputation by promoting the impact our services have on tenants, customers and the wider community.

The strategy outlines the following key communication aims:

- Deliver effective and meaningful internal communications to ensure all staff feel valued, fully informed and listened to so that they are empowered to shape strategic plans and service delivery.
- Ensure tenants and customers are kept fully informed via timely, meaningful and engaging communications so they are informed about services and outcomes.
- Enhance and protect the reputation of WSHA among key stakeholders.
- Promote the impact and work of the Willowacre Trust
- Raise awareness of our MMR homes to lead to a successful implementation of lettings plan.

The strategy also provides an overview of planned communication activity for 2021/2022.

2. Introduction

WSHA is underpinned by the mission of putting customers at the heart of service delivery. This ethos is the basis for the vision, values, culture and strategic aims of WSHA (outlined below).

Our Vision:

We go further to provide housing you call home

Our Mission:

We put customers at the heart of everything we do. We do this by listening to their views and caring about what matters to them. We take a flexible and innovative approach when providing homes and services that help individuals and communities thrive.

Our Strategic Aims:

Drive our direction and demonstrate how we will meet our Vision:

- Deliver outstanding service to customers in all our communities
- Actively manage our assets and develop new homes to meet local needs
- Be the best we can be for our staff and customers
- Work with others to improve tenants' lives
- Be well governed and financially strong

Our Values:

To support our Board, staff, customers and communities by:

- Being adaptable and flexible in meeting their needs
- Empowering and providing opportunities to help you grow
- Creating a sense of belonging
- Engaging and connecting with others who can help.

Our Culture

Our culture will always have a strong customer focus and we aim to embed this throughout the organisation. We will also promote a culture where staff members, senior management and members of our Board are encouraged to provide constructive challenge to the business planning process.

We want to embed a culture of all staff proactively shaping service delivery to meet the diverse needs of our customers and ensure access to our services and information is equal and accessible for all.

Key Business Objectives

Our Corporate Business Plan has an accompanying Action Plan which details specific tasks we plan to complete during the timescales of the Plan.

Our Key Business Objectives for 2021/22 are:

- Agree investment priorities in existing and new homes
- Review priorities for Community & Support Services
- Review and develop our customer care and engagement approach
- Develop our business, people and culture in line with the review of our strategic aims and values.
- Continue our digital transformation
- Become more efficient/reduce Costs
- Deliver our Green Strategy
- Prepare for management of Mid Market Rent (MMR)
- Develop comprehensive plan for growth & consolidation

Effective communication underpins each element of the above and it is therefore essential that a comprehensive and effective strategy is created and delivered that will help to achieve the business objectives of WSHA.

We have ensured that this strategy meets the relevant Governance and Financial standards set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator. The strategy outlines a number of ways we take account of the needs and priorities of our tenants, customers and stakeholders when delivering communications.

3. Stakeholders

WSHA has a wide variety of key stakeholders including:

- Existing tenants and customers
- Potential applicants and customers (including Westscot Living)
- Staff, Board and Sub-Committee members
- Local Authorities
- Project and service funders (including Willowacre Trust)
- Lenders
- Prospective employees
- Regulators
- Housing sector including other RSLs
- Elected Members
- Partner agencies
- Press

This strategy divides our stakeholders into four categories:

1. Internal (staff and Board)
2. Tenants and customers
3. Wider externals e.g. SHR, funders.
4. WSHA Subsidiaries

4. Strategic Approach

COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

We are committed to ensuring the information we share internally and externally is fully accessible and meets the communications needs and preferences of our customers. During 2021, we will take actions to review and improve the accessibility of the information we provide and use our improved data on equalities to inform this process e.g. providing information in an accessible format for those customers with visual or hearing impairments.

We will also begin to embed a culture of celebrating diversity by sharing relevant content to highlight national and international campaigns such as International Women's Day and LGBT Month. Consideration will be given to the content we communicate to ensure it is meaningful and adds value.

INTERNAL CUSTOMERS

Background

WSHA has around 95 staff, including those employed by Willowacre Trust. We have a clear and comprehensive five-year Corporate Business Plan which outlines our strategic aims and objectives for 2021-2026. This plan was shaped in consultation with staff and it includes the strategic objective:

- **Be the best we can be for our staff and customers**

This is supported by the HR & Culture Strategy which aims to give an overarching framework that supports WSHA to be an excellent employer and create a positive staff culture. The focus on staff is reinforced in the Communication Strategy 2017-2020 which outlines the objective:

Improve internal communication to ensure staff, Board and sub-committee members can be active and informed ambassadors for WSHA.

Effective internal communication is key in contributing to a positive culture where staff feel informed, valued and proud ambassadors of WSHA.

Staff Feedback

Staff feedback has been used to shape the strategic aim of internal communications and the related actions for the year ahead. The Staff Engagement Surveys in 2020 and 2021 included the following results:

Statement	2020	2021	Variance
I would recommend WSHA as a place to work	78%	92%	+14%
I am proud to work at WSHA	77%	88%	+11%
Corporate communications - frequent enough	93%	95%	+3%
Corporate communications - detailed enough	87%	97%	+10%
Good understanding of how the organisation is making progress	73%	90%	+17%
Changes that affect me are communicated prior to implementation	62%	71%	+9%
Staff feel listened to	41%	73%	+32%
There is effective communication through regular team meetings	76%	92%	+16%

Aim: Deliver effective and meaningful internal communications to ensure all staff feel valued, fully informed and listened to so that they are empowered to shape strategic plans and service delivery.

Staff, Board and sub-committee members are the greatest ambassadors of WSHA therefore it is essential they have a positive view of WSHA and have the skills and confidence to promote it. Staff, Board and sub-committee members will receive regular communications that contain internal news, examples of how their work makes a difference and give them the opportunity to share content for news stories. They should also feel confident in sharing information that will inform content for promotional purposes.

We will achieve this by:

- Making use of latest technology to improve internal communication e.g. Microsoft Teams. This is particularly beneficial if staff continue to work more flexibly from home after 2020.
- Ensuring staff are consulted effectively and are asked their views in relation to policy review and development as well as decision making.
- Utilising the Intranet to share information and good news stories.
- Creating a staff champions group that will represent their team/department and gather content for WSHA to use as content for online and offline communications.
- Improving the flow of communication between the Board/CMT and staff and giving staff opportunities to feedback.
- Providing structured advice and support to help staff communicate key messages and promote the impact of their services.
- Nurturing meaningful relationships with staff to ensure the Communication & PR Coordinator has an excellent understanding of the work of WSHA, any issues and upcoming news content.
- Ensuring all information is accessible for all staff and internal customers.

All internal communications will reflect the following key messages:

- You share our vision and values and will be supported to deliver them in your working practice.
- Your views are encouraged and valued, and they are used to create a workplace where you feel happy and motivated.
- You are fully informed about all aspects of WSHA so you can help us achieve our strategic objectives whilst putting customers at heart of service delivery.

TENANTS AND OTHER CUSTOMERS

Background

WSHA has around 3,600 homes in 64 separate locations which can make communication challenging due to the fragmented nature of the communities. We recognise that we need to continue to have strong connections with our customers and our communities which is partly achieved by adapting communication to suit the differing needs of customers and the wider community.

Tenant Feedback

We seek tenant feedback on our communication via annual customer satisfaction surveys. The below result from 2019/20 reflects an upwards trend in the last few years and shows that tenants are very satisfied with communication.

Indicator	2019/20	SHN Average
How good do you feel WSHA are at keeping you informed about their services and decisions?	99%	91%

In the 2019 Customer Satisfaction Survey tenants were also asked about the Westworld with the following results:

- 93% of respondents stating they read it to some extent
- 97% found it easy to read
- 87% found it interesting
- 81% found it relevant to them
- 93% said it helped them understand the work of WSHA
- 77% prefer to receive a hard copy

In the same survey tenants also provided the following feedback about how their preferred method of communication:

- Westworld – 74%
- Leaflets – 35%
- Letter – 28%
- Email – 6%
- Website – 6%

Aim: Ensure tenants and customers are kept fully informed via accessible, meaningful and engaging communications so they feel informed about services and outcomes.

We want all of our tenants and customers to be proud of being part of WSHA and act as ambassadors for WSHA. All communications with tenants and customers across all platforms must reflect WSHA's vision and values.

It is essential that we build a positive relationship with tenants and customers via meaningful and regular communication. WSHA continuously strives to seek ways to improve communications and uses feedback to help shape communication activity.

We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring all communications are easy to understand and accessible for all and adhere to the Equalities Act.
- Creating content that reflects the diversity of our customers and their experiences in our homes and communities.
- Ensuring the views of tenants and customers shape communications content and method of delivery at all times. This includes the use of TAG to give their views and using existing customer satisfaction and complaints information.
- Increasing the use of digital channels to communicate e.g. Tenant Portal, text message and social media.
- Thinking innovatively about communication methods to ensure that as many tenants as possible are reached whilst ensuring value for money.
- Maintaining the content on our website to reflect sector best practice and guidance i.e. Scottish Federation of Housing 'Open all Hours'.
- Increasing use of social media engagement particularly with tenants by posting regular and interesting content.
- Providing opportunities for tenants and owners to share their content.

Going Digital

During 2020/21 WSHA began the delivery of our first Digital & IT Strategy which sets out how we will invest in Digital & IT infrastructure to help drive unnecessary costs from our business and use digital services and processes to increase efficiency. We will use digital services and processes to increase efficiency, whilst at the same time maximising our residents' access to the internet through supporting and encouraging them to go online.

In the coming months and years, the digital transformation of WSHA will have a significant impact on how we communicate with all stakeholders, but in particular tenants and customers, who until now have not had the option to receive digital communications from us. This provides the opportunity to increase engagement and

tailor communication preferences to the needs of each individual customer. Whilst undertaking our digital journey we will ensure all online content is accessible. However, we must ensure that we also continue to provide information in offline channels for those who do not wish to receive it digitally.

A key part of the digital strategy has been the launch of a Tenant Portal where tenants can pay rent, report a repair and view rent statements. We will ensure that implementation of this is so successful that an increasing number of our customers will use it. A Promotional Strategy has been developed and is currently being implemented to maximise with a target of one-third of tenants using our portal by March 2021. We will develop a tenant app if necessary to grow our online engagement.

WIDER EXTERNAL

Stakeholder Feedback

In 2020 we carried out a survey with a small number of our external stakeholders to find out more about their views on our partnership including communication:

- 38% preferred method of communication is in person
- 38% preferred method of communication is email
- 25% would prefer to be contact via telephone
- 38% have weekly communication
- 25% have monthly communication

Aim: Enhance and protect the reputation of WSHA among key stakeholders.

WSHA is proud of providing houses you call home and making a difference to individuals and communities. To enhance and protect this reputation it is essential to proactively promote the work of WSHA and effectively manage any potentially damaging situations.

Building meaningful relationships with key stakeholders is also important so WSHA can capitalise on any opportunities to be involved in new projects or funding streams that would help achieve the key business priorities.

We will achieve this by:

- Creating and maintaining a register of all relevant stakeholder groups with our lead officer/s identified and ensuring its' importance is communicated at the induction(s) of new leadership team members.
- As part of annual appraisal ask Directors/Managers to identify all external stakeholders they are engaging with and reflect on their success.
- Proactively seeking content to be used in news releases for sector and national/local media.
- Issuing a quarterly e-news bulletin to external stakeholders.
- Continuing to utilise our online channels e.g. Twitter and LinkedIn to engage and share content with external audience.

- Working with the Development Team and partners to promote new homes to prospective tenants and other external stakeholders e.g. Local authorities
- Ensuring all communications reinforce the vision and values of WSHA.
- Seeking beneficial opportunities for WSHA to be represented externally such as sector forums or Government groups and ensuring those that attend are confident in their ambassadorial role.
- Ensuring all staff are aware of the procedures for press enquiries.
- Getting the views of our stakeholders about overall engagement in a survey every 2 years and report to Board.

WSHA SUBSIDIARIES

Background

WSHA has two subsidiaries, Willowacre Trust and Westscot Living, and communication strategy must be adapted to reflect the aims and objectives of each.

Willowacre Trust

Aim: Promote the impact and work of the Willowacre Trust.

WSHA's charitable subsidiary, the Willowacre Trust, makes a difference to the lives of tenants, customers and the wider community by delivering a range of support services and events. It is crucial that the work of the Willowacre Trust is promoted to increase engagement and demonstrate its positive impact.

We will achieve this by:

- Working with the Community and Support Services Manager/team to create and deliver an annual communications strategy for the Willowacre Trust.
- Creating a dedicated section for WT on the WSHA website and work with the CSS team to ensure content is relevant, current and meets the accessibility needs of customers.
- Using the intranet to ensure all staff are aware of services available to tenants and customers and any upcoming events.
- Proactively seeking opportunities to highlight the impact Willowacre Trust has on individuals and communities e.g. news coverage, WSHA e-news bulletin, Westworld and award submissions.

Westscot Living

Westscot Living is the newly formed brand identity of WSHA's Mid-Market Rent subsidiary.

Aim: Raise awareness of our MMR homes to lead to a successful implementation of lettings plan.

We will achieve this by:

- Embedding a new brand identity that complements the existing WSHA brand.
- Creating and implementing a comprehensive marketing strategy that will lead to successful letting of the MMR homes.
- Proactively generate enquires in the MMR homes prior to them being available to rent.
- Creating a distinct section on WSHA's website for Westscot Living including its' own domain name.

5. Monitoring and Reporting

The Communication & PR Coordinator will lead on the implementation of this strategy. Progress on will be monitored by the Director of Corporate Services with an annual progress report provided to the Board on an annual basis.

To achieve successful implementation of the Communications Strategy, it is essential that the Leadership Team play a key role in delivering effective communication internally externally. Members of the Leadership Team should identify communication structures within their team to cascade information internally and promote a culture of effective communication with all stakeholders.

The Corporate Services team will provide support to the Leadership Team in relation to the communication of key messages and organisational communication.

It is recognised that for internal communication aims to be achieved, all staff are accountable for ensuring they are proactive in keeping updated with key organisational information and they play an active role in any consultations.

Measuring Impact

The key performance indicators for the Communications Strategy are linked to the aims:

Aim	Key Performance Indicator	Target (2021/22)	Measurement source
Deliver effective and meaningful internal communications to ensure all staff feel valued, fully informed and listened to so that they are empowered to shape strategic plans and service delivery.	Intranet Usage	90% of staff login on a daily basis.	Intranet analytics
	Staff Survey Results	+5-10% increase on previous year results	Staff Survey
Ensure tenants and customers are kept fully informed via timely, meaningful	Tenant satisfaction with keeping informed	Maintain 99%	Annual Satisfaction survey

Aim	Key Performance Indicator	Target (2021/22)	Measurement source
and engaging communications so they are informed about services and motivated to engage	Satisfaction with Westworld Implement a reporting system to monitor uptake of services/ Consultations etc	+ 5% Baseline to be established 2021/22	Annual satisfaction survey Create new recording system
Enhance and protect the reputation of WSHA among key stakeholders.	E-news readership	35% per campaign	E-news stats
Promote the impact and work of the Willowacre Trust	Engagement with social media content? Implement a reporting system to monitor uptake of services/	Baseline to be established 2021/22 Baseline to be established 2021/22	Facebook Twitter Create new recording system
Raise awareness of our MMR homes to lead to a successful implementation of lettings plan.	Number of enquiries generated via website	Baseline to be established	Notes of interest recorded

If you require any more information regarding this strategy please contact Sabrina Allan, Communication & PR Advisor, 0141 550 5630 or sabrina.allan@westscot.co.uk