



Customer Engagement Strategy 2021 – 2024

- **Welcome from Chief Executive Officer**

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our Customer Engagement Strategy for 2021 – 2024.

The Strategy sets out how we will engage with our customers to ensure they have real influence over the services we deliver. A key priority for us is to continue to deliver services which focus on customers needs and priorities while achieving value for money and other Key Business Objectives. This Strategy sets out how we will work in the coming years with tenants, factored owners and Mid-Market tenants across the communities where we have homes.

We will build on the work that our Tenant Advisory Group have undertaken over the last number of years, ensuring that our tenants have a real influence over how we deliver services, and how we set our Key Business Objectives.

We will also look to improve how we engage with our factored owners to gather feedback about their priorities in service delivery and work with them to make these changes.

In 2022, we will complete our first MMR development and we will work with our incoming tenants to agree how best to involve them in delivering services which meet their needs.

We have worked with our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) and a Short Life Working Group made up of staff, tenants and Board members to develop this Strategy and I want to take this opportunity to thank them, and all tenants responded to our consultation on this topic.

We know that we can only improve by working with our customers and I look forward to continuing this journey over the life of this Strategy.

- **Legal Framework**

The framework that sets out the rules around how we must engage with our customers comes from a variety of sources.

For our tenants the key sources are the Scottish Social Housing Charter and specifically the outcomes relating to [equality, communication and participation](#):

- We manage our business so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services
- We manage our business so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with us and get the information they need about us, how and why we make decisions and the services we provide

- We manage our business so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence our decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

The second key source is the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 which obligates social landlords to develop a participation strategy which should set out how they will seek to gather the views of tenants when they propose to make any changes to service delivery.

As a social landlord we also have to comply with the Scottish Housing Regulator Regulatory Standards including [standard 2](#):

- *The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.*

For our Factored Owners the rules setting out how we should communicate with them are found in the [Property Factors Code of Conduct](#) which notes:

- *Homeowners can access information, documents and policies / procedures that they may need to understand the operation of the property factor*
- *Homeowners know the procedures and timescales for responding to enquiries*

Our Written Statement of Services will provide this information to factored owners.

- **Key Objectives**

The Key Objectives which underpin our approach to engaging with our customers are:

- We will provide a wide range of opportunities for involvement for all our customers ensuring each customers individual needs are taken into account
- We will be open and transparent when engaging with customers
- We will provide regular feedback to customers about the impact their engagement is having on how we deliver services
- We will embrace digital means of engagement while also providing opportunities for non-digital engagement for those customers who are digitally excluded

We have recently reviewed our values and our approach to customer engagement will embrace these in how we work with customers. Our values are:

Value	We will
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always communicate with you in polite and friendly manner • Listen to you and respect your views

Value	We will
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always behave respectfully and professionally
Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be welcoming and friendly to everyone • Ensure that everyone we work with feels respected • Take time to listen and get to know you and your needs • Be aware of and have understanding of various cultures and beliefs
Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak honestly and be open • Help wherever possible • Do the right thing even if it is not the easiest thing to do • Take responsibility and proactively resolve any issues • Do what we say we are going to do and communicate updates • Ensure any information you share with us will be treated in a confidential manner
Supportive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always have a “how can I help” approach • Show empathy and understanding • Listen to your concerns and help to resolve issues wherever possible
Improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always seek to do our best • Strive to improve what we do for our customers • Take positive action to improve poor customer service • Look for ways to make a positive difference through the work that we do

- **How we will engage our customers**

A number of the opportunities for involvement are well established and we will look to build on these over the course of the Strategy. You can read more about these below. We will also look to increase the opportunities for customers to engage with us using new and innovative approaches over the life of the Strategy and set out some examples in this document.

We will also look to establish opportunities for our Factored Owners and MMR tenants to engage with us.

Development of Existing Approaches

Board

Our Board is made up of 8 tenant members and 7 general members and is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction of the Association. As part of their induction process Board members will have the option to attend a Tenant Advisory Group meeting and can attend on further occasions when invited to attend. Individual TAG members can attend Board meetings to observe where they are interested in filling a vacancy for the Board.

Tenant Advisory Group

Our Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) is made up of tenants from across the communities we have homes. TAG is the main way we engage and involve tenants in the operation of West of Scotland Housing Association. TAG are responsible for overseeing our performance in how we deliver services to tenants and receive quarterly updates on performance against a range of key performance indicators. They also have a role to play in challenging and scrutinising decisions made by our Board and Management Team.

TAG also agree on an annual basis a consultation plan which contains the range of activities to take place throughout the year, setting out how customers should be involved in these activities. This may involve setting up Short Life Working Groups to assist WSHA to review policies or procedures, or it may involve agreeing one off consultation events. We will look to make it as easy as possible for customers to give us their views in any consultation events; making use of short online surveys, asking for views by text and email, and identifying opportunities for those not digitally active to give their views. We will also ensure that we provide information in accessible language and will take into account the different needs of our tenants who may wish to respond to consultation activities.

TAG will also have a key role in supporting the implementation of this Strategy, receiving regular quarterly progress updates and also preparing an Annual Report that they will present to our Board and other tenants about key activities throughout the year.

Tenant Scrutiny

We will reconvene our Tenant Scrutiny Group whose work was halted by the pandemic. We will undertake a recruitment exercise and facilitate training for those tenants who wish to become involved. The Group has a Framework which sets out how they will work and once the Group reconvenes, we will review this document with the membership to ensure it continues to meet the needs of tenants. This Framework also sets out how the relationship the Group has to stakeholders including us and to the wider tenant group.

The Scrutiny Group will undertake a minimum of two activities on an annual basis, reviewing different aspects of the services we provide to tenants and other customers. The activities are decided by the Scrutiny Panel but can be suggested by the Board. Each activity will have a terms of reference, which will set out in advance the tasks the Group will use to investigate our service provision, and will set out how they will collect the views of relevant customers and staff. The Group will present their findings to our Board and Management with clear recommendations and will prepare an annual report of their activities to ensure they are accountable to other tenants.

Readers Panel

We have developed a panel of interested tenants who work with us to review standard communications to ensure any messages are clear and easy to understand. We will continue to work with this group and other tenants to build into each policy review we undertake the necessity to provide any standard communications to the Group for their review and input. This format of the Readers Panel means that tenants can be involved without the necessity of attending meetings and we also ensure that tenants who are not digitally active can be involved.

Rate Your Estate

We will reconvene our Rate Your Estate Group whose work was halted by the pandemic. This Group will work closely with our Estates Officer to assess the conditions of our communities both in terms of Grounds Maintenance but also wider Estate Management concerns. We will also work with existing members to explore whether this Group could work in a more efficient way using digital methods. This could involve tenants sending in images for the Groups attention which would then be assessed by Group members and assist in identifying areas for inspection.

Corporate Business Planning

Each year we create a Corporate Business Plan which sets out our aims and ambitions over the coming five years, and related Key Business Objectives. Built into the development of this plan is an engagement session with TAG which gives the Group an opportunity to influence the priorities for the coming year. This session is also open to other tenants who wish to attend as a one off. We will also build into our annual consultation plan the need to gather views of customers in advance of this session, so more tenants have the opportunity to identify their priorities for the year ahead.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys

We will continue to undertake customer satisfaction surveys throughout the year to gather tenant feedback on how we, or contractors working on our behalf, are performing. We will look to develop our Housing Management System to ensure this is done on an automated basis after completion of a task providing instantaneous feedback on performance. This will allow us to utilise our continuous surveys to gather more in-depth customer feedback on a monthly basis.

Engaging with Younger Tenants

It has been a priority for us to find a way to encourage younger tenants to get involved and give us feedback about our services. Using our equalities data we can now ensure that the responses to our surveys are representative of the age profile of our tenants by targeting respondents if their demographic group is underrepresented. However, it is still our aim to provide a real platform to engage

with younger tenants and we will explore whether we can adopt a digital approach that would meet the needs of younger tenants while providing us with a group that we could reach out to if we have issues we would like to discuss.

New Approaches

Equality and Diversity

We are aware that our customer base is diverse, and we aim to provide opportunities for tenants from all backgrounds to become involved with us to ensure our services reflect their individual needs and priorities. In partnership with our Equality and Human Rights Working Group (EHRWG) we will explore options for ensuring that we are effectively gathering feedback from tenants who have protected characteristics under equalities legislation. This may take the form of online focus groups or face to face meetings, and we will ensure these are accessible to all customers. We will make sure that any feedback we receive is used to improve how we deliver services that meet the needs of all our tenants and will be accountable to both TAG and EHRWG for this.

Local Residents Groups

We have homes in communities across the west of Scotland and we know that each community has its' own needs and concerns about how we manage their neighbourhood. We will look to work with communities to support them to form their own arrangements for gathering feedback in their own area. This support could extend to working with Groups to ensure they are suitably constituted to enable them to apply for external funding to deliver activities or services within their own area. If required, we will work with local groups to implement a formal agreement which sets out the relationship between that group and ourselves. We will also look to support any local group who wishes to explore any opportunities around using Community Right to Buy provisions to acquire assets within their locality.

Digital Involvement

The last year has shown that how we engage with our customers can be undertaken digitally in a way that we had not envisaged just a few years ago. As part of our Digital Strategy, we aim to move more of our services online giving increased choice for customers as to how they receive services. We will include customer engagement as part of this approach utilising our new customer app, social media and online meetings to gather feedback from customers. We will also continue to make use on online and mobile surveys to collect views and responses from customers. We will also provide support from our Digital Participation Officer should any customer require support with digital skills.

However, we know that not all of our customers are able to access digital services and we will continue to undertake engagement activities using traditional methods.

Factored Owners Forum

We have had one meeting to date with a Group of Factored Owners and we will look to hold further meetings with this group and other interested factored owners in the year ahead. We will work with this Group to identify relevant areas of discussion that will allow us to improve the factoring service we provide. We anticipate undertaking a review of our approach to factoring in the year ahead and this Group will be a vital part of this exercise as we enhance our understanding of what kind of service factored owners wish us to provide.

Working with Mid Market Rent (MMR) Tenants

Our first MMR development will complete in 2022 and we will look to work with the new tenants to identify the most appropriate means of involving them in discussions around procedures and services.

The above list is not meant to be exhaustive, and we will continually review our approach to engaging with our customers using a variety of methods that meet their needs.

- **Supporting Customer Engagement**

We want to make sure that all customers have the opportunity to become involved; whether that be forming their own groups or taking part in online surveys. Our Customer Engagement Team Leader will lead on the engagement activities for all customers and local officers will support tenants who want to be involved within their communities with the support of the Customer Engagement Team Leader and their team. We will ensure that the Customer Engagement Team Leader is supported by colleagues in undertaking, responding to, and reporting on consultation and engagement activities.

We will also provide a training and conference budget for TAG to enable them to develop and enhance their skills to support them in holding us to account. We will provide the same for members of our Scrutiny Group to ensure they have the appropriate skills to scrutinise our services. Where groups of customers come together to undertake activities within their own local area we will provide budgets to support their work.

6. Keeping Customers Informed

Our Communications Strategy sets out how we will keep customers informed. 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.

- **Monitoring and review**

We will take a number of different approaches to monitoring the progress and reviewing our customer engagement strategy. These are outlined below:

Tenant Advisory Group

The main method we will use to monitor our approach to customer engagement will be via regular updates provided to TAG. We will provide quarterly updates to TAG on how we are progressing against agreed actions, and we will also produce an Annual Report which will be shared with our customers. TAG will then prepare an Annual Report that will be presented to the Board outlining the work that has been undertaken, and an assessment of our performance. On an annual basis we will update the key actions and share these with TAG.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys

We will also continue to undertake regular satisfaction surveys of our customers which will assess how satisfied they are with the opportunities available to them to get involved and influence decisions, and how well they think we communicate with them. Following consultation activities, we will undertake surveys to identify any improvements that could be made to our processes in gathering customer feedback.

Consultation Activities

We have undertaken a number of surveys over the past year which gives us a good set of baseline data. We will look to increase the number of customers responding to our consultation activities on an annual basis and will report these figures to TAG and other tenants.

Key Performance Indicators

To measure the impact on our approach to customer service we will report on the following indicators:

Indicator
% of tenants satisfied with opportunities available to participate and influence our decisions
No of tenant consultations undertaken with consultation reports completed and distributed to stakeholders
No of tenants responding to consultations
No of customer consultations undertaken with factored owners
No of factored owners responding to consultations
Total no of survey completions annually
% of factored owners satisfied with opportunities to participate and influence our decisions

We will monitor these KPIs over the next year to collate baseline information and then put targets in place following this.

- **Key Actions**

For 2022/23 the key actions to be undertaken will be as follows:

- Improve how we engage with our younger tenants using a variety of methods including assessing the support for developing a specific youth forum which allows younger tenants to raise issues which impact them.
- Develop a digital approach to Rate Your Estate which allows customers to raise issues from their own community which can be assessed by both a panel of tenants and our staff.
- Recruit new members of our Scrutiny Group and undertake two activities on service areas agreed by group members and our staff.

- Develop a Factored Owners Forum giving members the opportunity to better understand our responsibilities under the Property Factors Code of Conduct, and to work with us to improve how we deliver services to them.
 - Work with new MMR tenants to agree the best approach for gathering their views about service delivery.
 - Introduce a consultation plan for the year which sets out clear timescales for policy, strategy, and other consultation activities – and produce a report after each consultation exercise which is shared with customers. This will involve developing a ‘consultation check list’ which will identify the range of options used to gather customer feedback
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- **Contact details**

If you want to get more involved with us, or have any questions or comments about our Strategy then you can contact us at:

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