



Northamptonshire
Rural Housing
Association

Customer Experience Strategy

2024 - 2029

**Customer
first**



Perform
with accountability
and transparency



Communicate
with clarity and
empathy



**Listen, learn
and act**



Our vision

**To deliver a positive experience,
for all our customers, all the time.**

Our strategy

Our customers are our number one priority; they're the reason we're here. This strategy puts them at the heart of everything we do.

We want all our customers to feel valued, respected, listened to, and to have their say in the decisions we make.

Our customers have let us know they want our services to be easy to access and easy to use. They want it to be easy to contact us how, and when, they want to.

We need to know how our customers feel about us, so that we can improve. We need to always consider the needs of vulnerable customers to ensure a fair and inclusive experience. And we want to meet our regulatory requirements in an open, fair and transparent way.

We've always had our customers at the heart of everything we do. And this strategy builds on the great work happening across the association to continually improve our customers' experience. It's a new approach, coordinating the Customer Care Strategy from 2019 and the Customer Involvement Strategy from 2023, giving us a holistic look at the entire customer journey. It will require us to review and improve our processes, our communications and our culture.

It provides a framework for how we'll consistently put customers first, ensure we listen to and act on the voice of customers, treat all customers with fairness and respect and continue to improve our customers' experience and their satisfaction with our homes and services.

Links to other strategies

This strategy links closely with, and supports, existing strategies and plans.

Our organisational values

Our values wrap around and drive this strategy. These values underpin everything we do and we'll continue to develop our culture around them:

- integrity
- openness
- clarity
- diversity
- accountability
- excellence

Our Business Plan

This strategy directly addresses two of the key aims set out in the Business Plan:

- Engage effectively with our customers to listen, understand and support their needs
- Provide high quality housing management services responding to customer needs

This strategy provides direction for the achievement of these, focussing on the customer voice, improving customer experience and delivering clear and timely communications.

Our Marketing and Communications Strategy

Our Marketing and Communications Strategy provides direction about how we communicate and what we want to be known for. This includes:

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do:

- You can trust us.
- Your wellbeing is important to us.
- We will listen to you.

Operating and policy context

This strategy takes into account that we're operating in a challenging and changing environment. It will help us meet the requirements of legislation and the Regulator of Social Housing, and recommendations from the National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing, including:

- the Social Housing Regulations Act 2023, which has introduced:
 - new consumer regulations
 - framework of Tenant Satisfaction Measures
 - Housing Ombudsman's Complaints handling code
 - Awaab's Law
- 2022 Better Social Housing Review
- Together with Tenants

The change of Government in 2024 may mean we need to revise our strategy in line with any new policies or legislation.

What our customers think



Through surveys, complaints and regular feedback, customers have told us that they expect a consistent and seamless experience. Our customers want:

- clear, timely communication
- a more flexible system for repairs and servicing appointments
- to be able to track repairs and/or regular updates about ongoing repairs
- quicker repair response time
- a more reliable gas contractor with quicker access to parts
- evidence that we're listening to and understanding customers' views and priorities and acting on them
- transparency about our service promises, including planned maintenance and grounds maintenance
- staff who care about the services we provide and act professionally and fairly with respect and empathy
- an association that always keeps its promises.

How will we deliver this strategy?

We've listened to what our customers want and need, listened to what the regulator requires us to do and looked at our existing values and organisational objectives.

We've used this feedback and information to create four themes to help us focus and prioritise improvements.

The strategy is accompanied by an action plan which will enable us to deliver our aspirations to improve our customers' experience every time they interact with us.

Customer experience themes



We'll develop a customer first culture, where everyone recognises that providing a good customer experience is everyone's responsibility and everyone has a part to play



We'll make communicating with us easy and we will ensure when we communicate with customers that we provide clarity with an empathetic tone.



We'll listen to our customers, learn from them how we can improve our services, and act on what they tell us.



We'll ensure our customers are aware of how we're performing and are able to hold us to account.

Customer first



We're committed to creating a customer-first culture.

We recognise that our customers all have different circumstances and needs, but our aim is to consistently deliver good services to everyone.

We understand that what we do and how we do it has an impact on our customers' lives. We won't take the impact we have lightly.

We know that behind every customer interaction is a person who needs information, advice, support or to tell us something.

We need to know who our customers are and what they need.

And we need to have a flexible approach to customer involvement, where all customers feel they can engage, and that their views are listened to and influence change.

What does that look like?

A culture where:

- ✓ everyone recognises that they are part of the customer experience
- ✓ our teams, including contractors, deliver a connected and joined-up customer experience, and
- ✓ we have strong leadership with customer-focused behaviours and attitudes embedded at all levels, in all roles, including our Board.

Customers will see:

- ✓ knowledgeable, professional staff who listen and are empowered to make decisions and take ownership of queries
- ✓ easy access to services which are delivered fairly and equitably
- ✓ issues resolved according to our service promises
- ✓ their insight used to influence change and design services
- ✓ staff and contractors who are trained to recognise signs of vulnerability and to respond with sensitivity and understanding.

Communicate

with clarity and empathy



We will make communicating with us easy and we'll ensure when we communicate with customers that we provide clarity with an empathetic tone. We'll treat all customers fairly and with respect.

We want our customers to:

- be well informed about our service promises
- know what service levels to expect from us
- be able to communicate with us easily
- know how to, and be easily able to, get involved.

Customers will see:

- ✓ a choice of how to communicate with us
- ✓ a positive experience every time they interact with us or our contractors
- ✓ clear and accessible service promises
- ✓ accessible, relevant and timely communications
- ✓ we recognise vulnerable customers may face challenges in accessing services or understanding information and we offer alternatives
- ✓ a comprehensive introduction to our services for new customers
- ✓ that complaints are addressed fairly and promptly
- ✓ a proactive customer service, including self-service options for those who want them
- ✓ a consistent and empathetic tone of voice and communication style.

Listen, learn and act



We'll listen to our customers.

We'll learn from customers how we can improve our services.

We'll act on what customers are telling us.

We're building on the work we've already started to make sure our customers' views shape and influence our decisions and services to help us to improve.

We'll use customer insight and data to listen, understand and learn how we can improve our services to ensure customers are happy and live in safe and well-maintained homes.

We'll tailor and improve services and communications by understanding what matters to them.

We'll deliver the best possible service whilst allocating appropriate resources to ensure value for money.

Customers will see that:

- ✓ we meet the requirements of the regulatory consumer standards throughout the organisation
- ✓ we offer a range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise our performance, strategies, policies and services
- ✓ getting involved is simple, flexible, inclusive and worthwhile
- ✓ that we're working with contractors to improve how we share and learn from customer feedback
- ✓ we make real changes as a result of customer feedback in surveys, focus groups, complaints and conversations and that we share where we've improved as a result
- ✓ we're getting to know our customers and their needs.

Perform

with transparency and accountability



We will ensure our customers are aware of how we're performing and are able to hold us to account.

We'll be open with customers and treat them with fairness and respect so they can access services, raise complaints, influence decision making and hold us to account.

Customers will see:

- ✓ a clear approach to complaints handling, where all complaints are addressed fairly, effectively and promptly
- ✓ flexible ways to complain and easy to access policies and procedures
- ✓ easy to access data about our performance, including lessons learnt from complaints
- ✓ that we have systems and processes in place for customers to scrutinise and challenge our performance
- ✓ how we're performing in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and what action we're taking to improve performance
- ✓ how we've taken customers' views into account to improve services, information and communications.

Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in customer service and resident engagement



We are committed to creating an inclusive, respectful, and equitable environment for all residents.

Our EDI strategy aims to ensure that every individual feels valued, heard, and empowered, regardless of background, identity, or circumstance.

What does that look like?

- ✓ **Inclusive customer service:** Delivering services that are accessible, culturally sensitive, and responsive to the diverse needs of our residents.
- ✓ **Resident engagement:** Actively involving residents in shaping services, policies, and decisions, ensuring representation from underrepresented groups.
- ✓ **Staff awareness and capability:** Staff equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to deliver inclusive services and engage respectfully with all communities.
- ✓ **Data and insight:** Data used to understand the diversity of our resident base and identify gaps or inequalities in service delivery and engagement.
- ✓ **Accountability and governance:** EDI embedded into governance structures, with clear responsibilities at Board and operational levels.

Customers will see:

- ✓ **Customer service enhancements**
 - Communication channels to meet diverse needs (e.g. language, accessibility).
 - Staff trained in inclusive service delivery and cultural competency.
 - Feedback mechanisms that capture EDI-related experiences and concerns.
- ✓ **Resident involvement**
 - Inclusive resident panels and forums.
 - Services influenced by underrepresented groups
 - Support to make participation easy (e.g. childcare, transport, digital access).
- ✓ **Staff development**
 - Staff undertaking EDI training.
 - Inclusive leadership and allyship across teams.
- ✓ **Monitoring and evaluation**
 - Demographic data used to inform service improvements.
 - Engagement levels monitored across different resident groups.



We'll share our performance:



in our annual
report



in our
newsletters



on our
website



on social
media

Contact us:

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