

Building homes,
independence
and aspirations



Scotland Customer Involvement Strategy 2018-2021

Foreword

Welcome to our Customer Involvement Strategy 2018 – 2021

We're on a mission to build homes, independence and aspirations.

The launch of our new strategy 'building homes, independence and aspirations' is a product of our customer led approach.

We started from a position of asking who our current and future customers are, what they want and how we can empower them to achieve their goals.

We will build 10,000 new, high quality homes across a range of tenures. We will be a digital first organisation, with 90% of customer transactions taking place digitally, to deliver the quality of service our customers expect. We will be 20% more efficient to continue to drive improvements in Value for Money.

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do. You have made us what we are today, shaping who we are and how we deliver our services.

Our involvement programme is diverse and accessible. There are many ways you can take part.

Working closely with you gives us a better understanding of what is important to you. Whether it is a decent home, colleagues who care or reliable services, we take time to listen.

Introduction

Our customer involvement strategy for Scotland demonstrates how we will meet our statutory and Scottish Social Housing Charter customer involvement outcomes. It sets out the range of involvement opportunities for customers, the ways in which we consult with our customers and how we will provide feedback to customers.

The Viewpoint team will continuously monitor and review the strategy to ensure it meets the needs of our customers and Home Group.

We aim to involve as many customers as possible in delivering our services effectively and assessing our performance.

By implementing this strategy we will:

- Provide a range of involvement and consultation opportunities for customers on the services we deliver and the key issues affecting our customers
- Make decision-making opportunities available to all our customers
- Deliver good two way communication and good quality information, delivered in different formats accessible to all our customers
- Increase customer satisfaction
- Enhance our culture of customer involvement and participation throughout Home Group
- Increase mutual respect between colleagues and customers
- Maximise customer involvement activities to all our customers, tackling discrimination and ensuring inclusion and equality.



Background

Home Group provides affordable housing to communities throughout Scotland. We manage almost 4000 homes for social rent, with offices in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee.

Our geographical spread of properties, and the range of house types among them, reflects the diversity of our customers and the challenges of devising a Customer Involvement Strategy which aims to involve everyone fairly and equally.

Working with customers is essential to delivering better services and ensures customers are able to influence the decisions we take. We understand that customer involvement must lie at the core of our culture and be embedded in the working practice of every colleague working across Scotland. This strategy sets out how we will work with our customers to ensure opportunities are provided to influence the decisions made about our homes, services and communities.

The Legal Framework Housing Scotland Act 2001

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 created a legal framework for customers who have a Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) or Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST) to take part in the way their housing is managed. Landlords like Home Group must develop a customer participation strategy and put it into practice.

Scottish Social Housing Charter (The Charter)

The Scottish Social Housing Charter was introduced on 1 April 2012 as part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. The Charter was reviewed during 2016 and the second Charter came into effect on 1 April 2017. The Charter sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when providing their housing activities.

In terms of customer involvement the Charter seeks to ensure that customers:

- Can participate in their landlord's decisions
- Are satisfied that their views and priorities are reflected in their landlord services
- Are given opportunities to be involved in developing, monitoring, assessing and reporting on the quality of the housing services the landlord provides
- Have a range of ways to get involved – including ways suitable for those hard to reach or seldom heard
- Are able to get involved – if and when they want to – at a level they feel comfortable
- Get support to build their capacity for more effective involvement
- Can take part in reviewing opportunities for involvement to ensure they are working well.

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) safeguards and promotes the interests of all customers of social landlords in Scotland. The Regulator uses the Charter outcomes to assess how we are performing as a landlord.

Scotland Housing Act 2014

The Housing Scotland Act received Royal Assent on 1 August 2014. The Act has the objectives of “... safeguarding the interests of consumers, supported improved quality and delivering better outcomes for communities.”

Under the Act, landlords must consult with customers, applicants, Registered Tenant Organisations and anyone else they want, if changes are to be made to the allocation policy.

Aims and objectives

We are committed to involving our customers in a meaningful and effective way. The aims of our Customer Involvement Strategy are to:

- Ensure that customers are able to influence the way in which we take decisions relating to our service
- Provide ways for customers to influence both local issues, and shape strategic decisions related to new services or significant changes to existing ones
- Enable customers to choose the level and type of involvement that suits them best
- Encourage mutual trust, respect and partnership between customers and Home Group.

The specific actions to meet the aims and as outlined above are detailed in the Customer Involvement Action Plan.

This Involvement Strategy has been developed in consultation with the Viewpoint Team and other customers. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects best practice and to give our customers the opportunity to comment on whether the Involvement Strategy is working effectively.

The accompanying Action Plan will be reviewed and agreed annually in discussion with customers. This will ensure customers are involved in setting priorities each year and monitor the effectiveness of our Involvement Strategy.

A summary of this Strategy will be published and made available to all of our customers. The full Strategy is also available on request and on our website at www.homegroup.org.uk/getinvolved



Our Customer Promise and the Charter

Our customer promise sets out the service our customers can expect from us. We use the customer promise and the Charter to make sure we provide the best services possible. We invite our customers, to help us monitor our Customer Promise standards and services.

Customer Promise

A decent home which meets the 'Home standard'

Value for money: A clear understanding of cost of services and ability to scrutinise and influence budgetary spend

A safe place to live

A choice of products and services. Help (signposting) with how to obtain other services

Reliable services: Good and quick repairs. Good complaints services. 'One stop shop for enquiries'

Clear information and opportunities to influence. Clear accessible information provided through a number of dedicated channels and various ways to get involved

People who care

Scottish Social Housing Charter

Outcome 4 Quality of housing
Outcome 5 Repairs, maintenance and improvements

Outcome 12 Value for money
Outcomes 14 and 15 Rents and service charges

Outcome 6 Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

Outcomes 7, 8 and 9 Housing options
Outcome 10 Access to social housing

Outcome 2 Communication
Outcome 5 Repairs, maintenance and improvements
Outcomes 7, 8 and 9 Housing options
Outcome 10 Access to social housing

Outcome 2 Communication
Outcome 3 Participation

Outcome 2 Communication

Our customer assessors won the “Best Practice in tenant led scrutiny of the Charter” in the TPAS Scotland National Good Practice Awards 2016.

Scrutiny and self-assessment

With the introduction of the Charter there is an increased emphasis in giving customers more power to hold their landlord to account. Each year we provide information to the SHR on how we have met the Charter outcomes which is known as the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). The SHR then publishes a report on our performance. The SHR's approach highlights the importance of our customers being involved in assessing and monitoring our performance. The SHR requires Home Group to:

- Agree our approach to self-assessment with customers
- Ensure this approach is effective and meaningful and publicised to our customers
- Demonstrate how self-assessment is being implemented
- Provide a statement of how we will involve our customers and clients in self-assessment activities.

Customer scrutiny and self-assessment goes further than involvement, giving customers the opportunity to review processes as well as outcomes. Methods such as customer scrutiny activities, neighbourhood inspections and service review panels will be developed across Scotland by our Involvement Team and Operations colleagues.

We will involve customers in identifying which approaches will work best for them in Scotland and learn from the experiences of customers in other areas within Home Group. Our customers will be involved in setting their priorities and agreeing the scrutiny methods.

We have developed a menu of involvement options to ensure that customers have different opportunities to engage with us and at a level which is appropriate and comfortable to them.

What we will consult on

- Changes to policies and procedures regarding housing management and related services, including rent and service charges, repairs service, allocation of houses, estate management, anti-social behaviour and tenancy management
- Service standards relating to housing management, repairs and maintenance
- Our Customer Involvement Strategy
- A disposal which would result in a change of landlord or, if different, of owner of the house which is the subject of the tenancy. We are committed to consulting customers at the earliest stage possible and with any potential disposal we will publish a separate and specific customer involvement plan.

How we keep you informed

The Charter measures how good we are at keeping customers informed about our services and decisions.

We will provide you with good quality information that is informative and easy to understand:

- Homelife Magazine
- Customer Handbook
- Website
- Annual Customer Performance Report
- Consultation Outcome Reports.

Involvement – a menu of opportunities

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do – working with you to shape our services

Home Group Board

You can have a say on how Home Group is run. We have two customer members on the board who are selected through a rigorous recruitment process, ensuring involvement runs right at the heart of our decision making.

Viewpoint Team

You can get involved in helping us set policy, monitoring our services and check we're doing what we say we do. The Scotland Viewpoint team scrutinises our services and helps us measure our performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter and our Customer Promise. The Viewpoint team meets every two months. Contact the customer service centre on 0345 141 4663 to find out how to get involved.

Customer Forum

You can be involved nationally. The customer forum meets twice a year and is made up of involved customers from regional viewpoint teams, the human library, customer assessors and other involvement groups.

Customer Promise Assessments

You can speak to customers in our neighbourhoods and assess how well we're doing at delivering our customer promise to customers at a local neighbourhood level. Customer Assessors award gold, silver or bronze and produce an improvement plan for Home Group colleagues to action which is tracked by the Viewpoint team.

Estate Inspections

You can join our involvement advisor, housing managers and maintenance surveyors on an inspection of your neighbourhood. We use these inspections to look at and improve the overall appearance of your neighbourhood including communal areas and open spaces.

Customer insight, learning from complaints and satisfaction surveys

You can give us your feedback on services. Our customer service centre will contact you from time to time to find out your views on the quality of service and let you share your customer experience.

You can also give your views on how well we engage with you and your views on the value for money of our services.

The feedback we receive from you provides us with insight into what we are doing well and where we need to focus improvements.

As part of the Charter return, we ask questions set by the Scottish Housing Regulator about levels of customer satisfaction. These questions are asked every three years and we publicise the results in our Customer Performance report each year and on our website. However, we do want to go further than that, for example, through our surveys we will find out more about how our customers view the affordability of our services.

Communications

You can influence the content of publications including Homelife magazine and the Annual Charter Performance Customer report by coming along to editorial panels.

You can ensure our publications are informative, relevant and easy to read by joining our online KISS (Keep It Short and Simple) group.

Digital Involvement

You can give your views and opinions digitally, by email or via the website, on a range of issues from the comfort of your own home anytime-day or night, join anyone@home or email involvement@homegroup.org.uk

What happened here?

You can help us review complaints, health and safety and anti-social behaviour incidents and advise how we could have dealt with them better, avoid them in future and learn from our mistakes.

Recruitment

You can help to recruit colleagues. Help us to find the right person for the job by supporting us with the recruitment of new colleagues.

Registered Tenant Organisations and Local Groups

You can get involved in your neighbourhood. We work with registered tenant organisations (RTOs) and attend meetings when invited. We consult with RTOs on any proposals that affect their members and take account of customers' and RTOs' views. We keep a list of all RTOs and this is available for public inspection on our website and within our offices.

If you don't have a Registered Tenants Organisation in your area we can help and support you to develop a local group.

Value for money

You can have a say in how our money is spent. You can get involved in scrutinising our services. Customers are trained to assess whether the services we provide are good value for money.

Involvement in design of homes

You can influence the design, development and regeneration of housing as we push forward with our strategy to build 10,000 new homes.

Formal and informal consultations

When we consult with customers we aim to:

- Define clearly to all customers affected by the proposal the details of the reason for the proposed change, options that are being considered and the likely impact
- Agree a timetable of key events including consultation periods, meeting dates, feedback methods and timetables with Registered Tenant Organisations and other groups of customers
- State clearly how and within what timescales customers can make their views known
- Provide details of contact details of the lead colleagues who are dealing with the consultation
- State how and by whom the final decisions will be taken.

Customer Involvement Budget

An annual budget is allocated for customer involvement. The budget funds a number of activities including:

- Registered Tenant Organisation annual grants
- Charter Performance report
- Customer involvement events
- Performance updates
- Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Funding customer places to relevant conferences
- Customer out-of-pocket expenses.

Resources and support for customer involvement Expenses

Our customer involvement is crucial to help us deliver and design services that are customer focused. We appreciate that our customers must be supported when they give up their time, experience, ideas and share skills – so we ensure that all out-of-pocket expenses are paid to customers. Out-of-pocket expenses which are reimbursed against receipts are not generally liable for taxation and should not affect your benefits if being claimed.

The payment of out-of-pocket expenses is set out in Home Group's Involvement and Volunteering Expenses policy which is available on request or at www.homegroup.org.uk/getinvolved

We will ensure each year that sufficient funds are identified within our budgets to support our Customer Involvement Strategy. We have a dedicated Customer Involvement Advisor based in Scotland supported by our central Involvement Team

Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs)

Where there are local tenant and resident groups in our neighbourhoods, groups can apply to become an RTO. If you would like to set up a group then we can help.

There are advantages to becoming an RTO including:

- The right to be consulted over any proposed changes to your housing service
- An annual administration grant
- To raise issues that affect your neighbourhood with Home Group
- To network with other RTOs throughout Scotland.

Register of Tenant Organisations

Home Group keeps a register of all the RTOs registered with us. The register is open for public inspection by any member of the public at our office and is available on our website.

Training

Our national Involvement team can provide training for Viewpoint team members and members of groups such as the What Happened Here groups.

Providing feedback

You have told us that you would like to receive feedback in the following ways:

- Email
- Website
- Newsletter
- Meeting
- Charter Performance Report.

Monitoring our Customer Involvement Activity

Our Customer Involvement Strategy will be reviewed every three years. It is a working document and will continue to evolve.

The Scotland Viewpoint team will review progress with the Customer Involvement Action Plan twice a year. The Action Plan will be updated on an annual basis and communicated to all customers via our website and performance report.

A review of progress will be published in the annual Charter Customer Performance Report and other performance newsletters.

We will produce an annual Impact Assessment report which sets out how customers have changed, shaped and influenced the way we work across Home Group. The report will include customer value for money assessments.

We have created You Said/We Did reports where we will record changes from consultations, workshops etc. and will feature them in Homelife magazine, the Charter Performance Report and other performance leaflets.

Customer Involvement Action Plan 2018-2019

Agreed by Scotland Viewpoint team 3rd April 2018

Customer involvement plan 2018 – 2019

Charter and performance management – communication and reporting

| What will we do? | How will this be achieved? | Lead | Charter outcome | When will we do it? | Outcome |
|--|--|------------------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| Charter Performance Report for customers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers involved in design and content of Charter Report | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcomes 2, 3 and 13 | 31st October 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer focused report Increased customer involvement in performance reporting and scrutiny |
| Quarterly performance report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standing item on Viewpoint agendas | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcomes 2 and 3 | Q1 Aug 18 Q2 Nov 18 Q3 Jan 19 Q4 May 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased customer awareness of quarterly performance 2018-2019 |

Customer satisfaction

| What will we do? | How will this be achieved? | Lead | Charter outcome | When will we do it? | Outcome |
|--|---|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--|
| Customer Satisfaction Survey 2017 – customer communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication to customers on highlights of survey | Customer Involvement advisor | All outcomes | October 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication sent to all customers Communication available digitally |
| Customer Satisfaction Action Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan developed to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voids • Customer self-serve • Communications • Tenancy sustainment • Repairs • Involvement • Estate inspections • Communications | Customer Involvement advisor | All outcomes | April 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plan developed – complete Viewpoint to monitor plan |
| Customer Satisfaction Focus Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus groups to be held | Customer Involvement advisor | All outcomes | April 18 – April 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual improvement plans produced and monitored by Viewpoint |

Customer consultation

| What will we do? | How will this be achieved? | Lead | Charter outcome | When will we do it? | Outcome |
|---|--|---|-----------------------|--|--|
| Annual rent, affordability and value for money consultation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter to all customers • Survey monkey on website • Consultation on anyone@home • Promote rent consultation on social media • Value for money forum | <p>Customer Involvement advisor</p> <p>Customer Involvement advisor</p> | Outcomes 12,14 and 15 | <p>November 2018 – February 2019</p> <p>June 2018 – March 2019</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased customer understanding of rent setting. Increased Home Group understanding regarding affordability and value for money |
| Customer Involvement Strategy 2018-2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New strategy produced in line with Scottish Government requirements • Menu of involvement activities | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcomes 2 and 3 | July 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Customer Involvement Strategy reflecting new ways of working with Home Group |

Customer Involvement activities

| What will we do? | How will this be achieved? | Lead | Charter outcome | When will we do it? | Outcome |
|--|--|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Customer Involvement Recruitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events held to recruit customers for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewpoint • Customer Promise Assessors • Register of Interested Customers • Bring a friend to Viewpoint • Ongoing recruitment including digital opportunities | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcomes 2 and 3 | 25th April – Dundee May - Glasgow | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of customers taking part in involvement activities |
| Customer Involvement Recruitment – Mid-market rent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-market rent involvement opportunities developed • Rent and service charge • Estate inspections | Customer Involvement advisor | | July 2018 – March 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of customers taking part in involvement activities |

Customer consultation

| What will we do? | How will this be achieved? | Lead | Charter outcome | When will we do it? | Outcome |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| Viewpoint team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six meetings per year | Customer Involvement advisor | All outcomes | May 2018 July 2018 Sept 2018 Nov 2018 Jan 2019 March 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved service to our customers Performance measured against Charter and customer promise Increased colleague understanding of customer viewpoints on specific issues Development of scrutiny activities for customers |
| Customer Promise Assessments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four Customer Promise Assessments – neighbourhood to be agreed by Viewpoint Re-assess Robertson Gait in Edinburgh as it scored bronze in 'safe place to live' | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcomes 1,2,3 and 6 | June 18 – March 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased customer satisfaction and involvement in scrutiny of services within neighbourhood Quicker resolution of neighbourhood issues around appearance |
| Estate Inspections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estate Inspections held 6-8 weeks in identified states: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rosyth Whitfield Forest Park <p>Other neighbourhoods to be confirmed through customer promise assessments and customer satisfaction insight</p> | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcomes 1,2,3 and 6 | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased customer satisfaction and involvement in scrutiny of services within neighbourhood Quicker resolution of neighbourhood issues around appearance |

Customer consultation

| What will we do? | How will this be achieved? | Lead | Charter outcome | When will we do it? | Outcome |
|---|--|------------------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| What Happened Here sessions | Hold What Happened Here groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints – learning from complaints Health and safety - review health & safety incidents focussing on risk to life incidents Anti-social behaviour – review closed asb cases | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcomes 1,2,3 and 6 | May 18 – March 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use groups to: Identify learning from complaints in line with Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Validate rating of past Health & Safety incidents Quality assess resolution in asb cases and identify learning |
| Equality and diversity - Develop the Human Library | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Human Library in Scotland Work with TPAS | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcome 1 | March 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of diversity Priorities for equality and diversity identified Increased involvement of customers from diverse backgrounds Increased understanding of the needs of different customers Services tailored to meet the needs of different customers |
| Scottish Housing Issues - Involve customer in wider Scottish housing issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer delegates at conferences Blogs, articles etc. on social and traditional media | Customer Involvement Advisor | All out-comes | TPAS – Nov 2018 CIH March - 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers gain additional knowledge on Scottish housing issues Increased networking opportunities with tenants and customers from other landlords |

Delivering 90% of our customer services digitally

| What will we do? | How will this be achieved? | Lead | Charter outcome | When will we do it? | Outcome |
|--|---|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--|
| Self-serve Involve customers in self-serve programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and design Testing Implementation | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcome 2 | April 2018 – March 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence how customers have shaped the overall design and solution Number of customers involved Measure impact |
| Digital involvement Further develop digital involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anyone@home Recruit digital champions Pilot technology to aid involvement | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcome 2 | October 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to encourage more customers to share their email address |

Build 10,000 homes

| What will we do? | How will this be achieved? | Lead | Charter outcome | When will we do it? | Outcome |
|---|--|---|-----------------|-------------------------|--|
| Develop model to involve customers in design, development and regeneration of housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Development to develop model for neighbourhoods and regeneration Use Viewpoint teams and promise assessment feedback to help shape new schemes Recruit and skill up customers to help shape design | Development Customer Involvement advisor | | April 2018 – March 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence involvement in design and regeneration and include in reporting (e.g. impact report, involvement news etc.) |

20% more efficient

| What will we do? | How will this be achieved? | Lead | Charter outcome | When will we do it? | Outcome |
|--------------------|---|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--|
| 20% more efficient | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise digital involvement | Customer Involvement advisor | Outcome 2 | October 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase number of involved customers Identify key business activities where customers can influence efficiencies (outside involvement) |
| TPAS accreditation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work towards TPAS accreditation | Customer Involvement advisor | All outcomes | 2019/2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPAS Accreditation Achieve GOLD standard |

The Action Plan will be developed and updated on an annual basis during the lifetime of this Strategy.