



Halton
Housing

Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Halton Housing is committed to proactively engaging, involving, and listening to customers, working in partnership to manage the homes and communities they live in and to shape the services that they receive.
- 1.2 The aim of this Policy is to support and improve customer engagement and embed customer voice in decision making and service improvement across all areas of the organisation. The customer engagement framework will allow customers to engage with us in a way that meets their needs and on the things that matter most to them.
- 1.3 Under this Policy we define “customer engagement” *as “working in partnership with customers to shape the homes and communities that they live in and the services that they receive”* . We want customers to feel listened to and respected and that their voice has helped to influence and improve service delivery
- 1.4 To enable effective and inclusive customer engagement, we will use customer data and insight to develop a rich understanding of customers and communities and develop channels of engagement that meet their needs.
- 1.5 We are committed to engaging with the communities that we operate in as well as Halton Housing customers and we will use a range of methods for effective community engagement, together with key local stakeholders such as Halton Borough Council.
- 1.6 Where specific reference is made to ‘customers,’ this refers to all tenure types, including tenants, shared owners, rent to buy, leaseholders and those who reside in supported housing.
- 1.7 We recognise our on-going legal responsibilities under the Consumer Standards specifically the Tenant Empowerment and Involvement standard. The main focus of the policy is to ensure customer voice is being heard at every level of the organisation in line with recommendations set out in ‘The Charter for Social Housing Residents: The Social Housing White Paper’ and the pending Social Housing (Regulation) Bill.
- 1.8 This policy document sets out what we aim to achieve from effective customer engagement and how this will be delivered.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 Through the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 2022/2025 we are committed to ensuring that all customers will have the opportunity to have their

voice heard and engage with us formally and informally, as individuals or as members of groups, at a level they feel comfortable with and in a way that meets their needs.

2.2 We believe that customer engagement is the primary tool to improve services and develop communities and can be achieved through:

- Transparency of information regarding customer voice, service performance and decision making
- Rich insight on customers and communities to enable targeted and tailored engagement opportunities
- A range of methods for customers to engage with us in way that suits them and meets their needs, including digital engagement and local community engagement
- Support, development, and training to enable customers to engage and effectively scrutinise our performance
- Strong community presence, building relationships of trust with customers and communities

2.3 The Customer Engagement Policy is underpinned by the recommendations set out in The Charter for Social Housing Residents: The Social Housing White Paper and in the requirements of “Together with Tenants” (published by the NHF (National Housing Federation) in October 2020). The policy has also been influenced by Tpas National Tenant Engagement standards and the Better Social Housing Review.

2.4 We are keen to maintain good partnerships with Halton Borough Council (HBC), other Registered Providers, community stakeholders and local community groups to pursue and achieve common goals.

2.5 This Policy will be implemented in line with the regulatory requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). All customers engaged in a recognised group are expected to follow the requirements outlined in the “Customer Code of Conduct for Involved Customers”.

2.6 The policy provides a clear framework to embed customers’ views into decision making and to ensure that the outcomes are reported through our governance structure and to all customers.

2.7 The way in which the policy will be implemented has five clear dimensions:-

1. Transparency of information to customers to enable effective scrutiny and hold us to account.
2. Rich customer and community insight, to understand customers, their needs, and their experience.

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3. Targeted and tailored engagement methods, to encourage a voice that is diverse and representative of our customer base and the communities we operate in.
 4. Collaboration, working with partners to shape and continuously improve the services that we deliver.
 5. Embedding customer voice into decision making across all levels of the organisation.

Transparency

2.8 To build relationships of trust with customers, to enable effective customer scrutiny and increase our accountability, it is essential that we proactively share information with customers about how our key services are performing, how we are listening to customers and what we are doing as a result. We will achieve this by:-

- Regular performance information published on our website including, annual report, monthly performance against lifeblood measures and learning from complaints.
- Publishing our annual performance against Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH) in April 2023.
- Regular "you said we did" features in customer communications including our customer magazine and social media channels.
- Publishing summary notes from Customer Forum meetings highlighting key topics of discussion and key actions as a result.
- Publishing key summary notes of Customer Scrutiny Panel reviews including agreed action plan.
- Clear and widely publicised ways that customers can engage with us and hold us to account for service performance and decision making.
- Information in a range of formats about our service offers and standards.
- Regular communication about the outputs from customer engagement, and how that is being used to improve services.
- We will consult at least once every three years on how to engage and involve customers in how we manage and maintain their homes and communities.
- Clear and well publicised complaints policy and SA against the HO (Housing Ombudsman) complaint handling code
- We will publish all customer facing policies and procedures on our website.

Understanding our customers

2.9 To increase the diversity and breadth of customer voice, methods of engagement must be reflective of our customer base and suitable to their needs. We will use data and insight to measure the representativeness of the customer voice, understand any barriers to customer engagement and continue to develop the customer engagement framework to overcome them.

2.10 The customer Insight Framework will use multiple data sources including contact, property and customer voice data to understand the needs of customers and communities, and proactively shape our services to meet them.

2.11 We capture customer feedback through a variety of channels including:

- Annual Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) surveys
- Touch point satisfaction surveys after key customer interactions e.g., Onboarding, Complaints, ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) and Repairs
- Complaint reporting and learning outcomes
- Compliments
- Social media sentiment tracking

2.12 We will continue to develop customer insight to:

- Understand the needs of customers and communities
- Improve the diversity of customer voice
- Drive service improvement and shape service design
- Shape the ways in which customers can engage with us and influence decision making

Targeted and Tailored customer engagement

2.13 We are committed to working with customers to develop a customer voice that is representative of our customer base and communities and is used to shape the services that we deliver. We will provide a range of opportunities for customers to have their say and where appropriate, support them to develop any skills needed to help them do this. We want customers to feel listened to, and to have a real say in the management of their homes and the services we provide.

These methods include:

2.14 **Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP)** - A group of customers who report directly to Board. They will review key areas of service delivery from a customer's perspective and make recommendations directly to Board and the Director of the relevant service area. We provide extensive training and the necessary skills to actively investigate, challenge and make recommendations for improvement. CSP conduct a further review of the services the following year, to ensure that the recommendations have been implemented and all actions are monitored and managed via the Audit and Risk Committee.

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- 2.15 **Customer Forum** - A panel of customers that meets six times a year. The Forum provides an opportunity for customers to scrutinise performance, influence policy and procedure and make recommendations for improvement to services.
 - 2.16 **Customer Focus Groups** - Spotlight conversations with customers to review services we deliver e.g. Repairs Focus group.
 - 2.17 **Digital Engagement** - Email, social media, electronic surveys and customer portal.
 - 2.18 **Local Engagement** - Engagement with Halton Housing customers through neighbourhood surgeries, neighbourhood walkabouts and local engagement with the Neighbourhood Officers.
 - 2.19 **Community Engagement** - Broader engagement with all Halton Borough residents (not just HH (Halton Housing) customers) local community groups, local MP's, Councillors and charities.
 - 2.20 **TSM Surveys** - Annual Customer Satisfaction survey (at least 600 surveys per year, with responses representative of our customer base).
 - 2.21 **Transactional Customer Satisfaction Surveys** - Touchpoint surveys completed after key customer interactions e.g. Onboarding, Complaints, Repairs, Reporting of ASB.
 - 2.22 **Customer Inspectors** - Carry out mystery shopping of key service areas e.g. call wait times, live chat functionality, cleanliness of communal areas.
 - 2.23 **Customer Champions** - a spokesperson nominated to represent customers living in their neighbourhood, who will engage with HH to provide collective views on policy issues and services.
 - 2.24 **Customer Editorial Panel** - review and make suggestions on the content of customer communications.
 - 2.25 **Community Events** - Events may be held to promote a service, raise awareness, provide information, consult on a major issue or for social/community reasons. We also attend events held by other organisations such as community awards, service launch events and public information events. This allows face to face contact with customers to comment on any current housing issues and to enable HH to give information on any future changes in service delivery that may affect them. It is also an opportunity for customers to find out more about engagement activities and to sign up to take part.

Collaboration

- 2.26 We want to work in partnership with customers to develop strategies, policies and services. We will aim to involve customers as early as possible in shaping strategy, policy and service design. Using a range of methods to enable customers to influence decisions in a way that suits their needs.
- 2.27 We will ensure that customers are provided with clear and easy to understand information, to enable them to effectively scrutinise performance and make recommendations for improvements. We will do this using a variety of methods including (but not limited to):
- Neighbourhood walk abouts
 - Face to Face conversations in customer's homes and communities
 - Information sheets
 - Training events
 - Website
 - Social Media
 - Customer Forum meetings
 - Press Releases
- 2.28 The customer engagement framework will offer customers various levels of engagement to suit them from one off engagements on specific topics, to membership in independent customer groups.
- 2.29 In all engagement with customers, we will:
- Provide easy to understand, easy to digest, accessible information.
 - Allow enough time for customers to consider information and respond.
 - Summarise and communicate customer feedback and how it was used.
 - Treat customers with respect and look to build positive relationships based on openness, honesty, and transparency.
 - Ensure that consideration is given to engaging all customers including those who are vulnerable and/or lonely/isolated.

Embed customer voice in decision making

- 2.30 We are committed to embedding customer voice into decision making across all levels of the organisation, to ensure that we are not only listening to our customers, but we are acting on what they say.
- 2.31 The Listen, Learn, Act Customer Insight framework will enable the voice of the customer to feed into both operational and strategic decision making.
- 2.32 We will achieve this through:

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- Developing, regularly updating, and communicating customer and neighbourhood profiles to all colleagues, so that all colleagues understand who customers are, what their needs are and what is important to them.
 - Developing and communicating quarterly customer insight reports, so that all colleagues understand how we are performing from a customer's perspective.
 - Reporting on key Customer Experience metrics operationally, through our lifeblood measures and to HH Board via the quarterly Customer Experience Report.
 - Including customer stories and case studies as standard in our board reporting.
 - Developing and embedding the customer insight tracker and pipeline that will document the key recommendations from customer insight, what decisions have been taken as a result and what impact those decisions have had.
 - Customer Scrutiny Panel and Customer Forum attendance at Board meetings
 - Annual meeting between Chair of the Halton Housing Board, Chair of Customer Forum and Chair of Customer Scrutiny Panel
 - Actions from Customer Scrutiny recommendations are tracked and reported through our Audit and Risk Committee
 - We have appointed a lead Board Member for complaints, who meets every other month with Director of Customer Experience to discuss complaint performance and learning, with broader complaint performance information reported to Board twice yearly.

3. Regulatory and/or Legal Compliance

- 3.1 The RSH's current Regulatory Framework came into force in April 2012 and has been subsequently updated in 2014. This policy is underpinned by the Consumer Standards, more specifically The Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Standard

"Required outcomes"

1.2 Engagement and empowerment

1.2.1 Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be engaged in:

- *the formulation of their landlord's housing related policies and strategic priorities*
- *the making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards.*
- *the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might improve the management of their homes, and where applicable the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a*

range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and agreeing local offers for service delivery.

- 3.2 We will look to meet these regulatory requirements by the effective implementation of this Policy.
- 3.3 We have signed up the Together with Tenants Charter and we will ensure that our approach to engagement meets and/or exceeds the requirements of this commitment. We will review our approach annually against this Charter to ensure that we remain compliant.
- 3.4 Tenant Satisfaction Measures became a regulatory requirement in April 2023 providing visibility to tenants and the regulator on how landlords are performing and enabling tenants to hold their landlord to account. We started to record performance against the TSM's in April 2023, we will report our performance annually to Board and the ROSH as well as publish our performance on our website.

4. Diversity Considerations

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Screening Assessment was undertaken in 2023. It concluded the following:
- The Policy is not directly or indirectly discriminatory
 - Customer segmentation, targeted customer engagement and a range of engagement opportunities will help to strengthen the diversity of customer voice and inclusivity of customer engagement opportunities

5. Links to Strategies, Policies and Associated Documents

- Customer Experience Strategy
- EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) Strategy
- Leasehold Consultation Policy
- Customer Handbook
- Tenant and resident association funding application forms
- Getting Involved leaflet
- Customer Involvement leaflet
- Leaseholder Handbook
- 'Talk to Us' HH Policy and Procedure
- Customer Code of Conduct



Translations available on request by phoning **0303 333 0101** or
via email at **info@haltonhousing.org**

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