



# Customer and Community Engagement Strategy



**Working for you,  
with you**

**Wolverhampton Homes is a social housing provider that manages around 21,000 homes on behalf of the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC).**

We are committed to delivering high-quality services and improving, where we can, the lives of our customers and communities. We recognise that customer and community engagement are essential for achieving our vision.

## Our aims

**Working together to create homes and communities where people want to live.**

## Our purpose

We are an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) formed in 2005.

We love our city and we aim to support the City of Wolverhampton Council by providing good quality homes, with services to our customers and tenants that meet their needs. It is important that we listen and act where we can, to ensure that we continually review and improve what we do.

Our **mission:**

To help  
people get  
on in life



Our **vision:**

Unlocking  
people's  
potential  
through  
housing, skills & technology



Our **Values:**



**Working  
together**



**Open to new  
ideas**



**Respecting  
differences**



**Delivering our  
promises**

# Background

**We focused on our customer service strategy alongside the city council's approach to customer engagement. From this, we created Our Future, the transformation programme that sets out our aims and objectives for involving our customers in the design, delivery and scrutiny of our services.**

In considering how we positively engage with customers, we created and launched our Customer Involvement Panel. So that we can continue to best serve our customers, and to support recent changes in legislation and regulation, we have reviewed our Engagement Strategy to ensure it is fit for purpose now, and in the future.

We want to ensure that engagement with customers reflects the requirements of the consumer standards and the expectations of the Regulator of Social Housing. With this in mind, we continuously review how we can improve the Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

Working with our CWC colleagues, we plan to deliver more opportunities for community access and engagement.





# Outside Influences

**The housing landscape has seen many changes over the years, but some significant impacts recently are designed to influence the customer voice and community engagement. These include:**

- The Social Housing White Paper, published in November 2020. This set out the government's vision for the future of social housing in England. It was designed to empower social housing tenants, ensure they are treated with dignity and respect, and have a safe, decent and affordable home. It proposed a range of measures to strengthen the consumer standards and the regulator's powers, to improve the quality and safety of social housing, to increase the transparency and accountability of social housing providers, and to enhance the voice and influence of social housing tenants.
- The Covid-19 pandemic saw profound changes to the lives and wellbeing of our customers and communities, increasing vulnerability and isolation, and worsening the existing inequalities and challenges they face. The pandemic also affected how we could deliver our services and engage with our customers. This meant we had to adapt and innovate our engagement methods and channels.
- The Regulator of Social Housing, which monitors and enforces the consumer standards, published new regulations that set out its approach and priorities for regulating consumer issues in the social housing sector. The review highlighted the regulator's focus on ensuring social housing providers effectively engage with their customers and respond to their feedback, complaints and concerns. The review also emphasised the regulator's role in promoting a culture of openness, transparency and accountability in the sector, and in supporting customers to exercise their rights and responsibilities.
- The revised consumer standards, in April 2024, reset four standards covering: neighbourhood and community; safety and quality; tenancy; and transparency, influence and accountability. These set out what social housing providers should achieve for their customers; emphasise that customers are treated with fairness, respect and courtesy; and that they have opportunities to participate in and influence the management of their homes and the services they receive.



# Our Priorities

**Our priorities for customer and community engagement for the next year are to:**

Continue to focus on a customer-centred approach with clear standards, guidelines and tools, supported by training and technology.

Review and refresh our approach to customer engagement by consulting with our customers and stakeholders, and by developing a clear and comprehensive action plan for launching the strategy.

Enhance the role and function of our Customer Involvement Panel, with additional forums and groups ensuring they are representative, diverse, inclusive and empowered.

Support the creation of new customer groups, such as the Resident Building Safety Panel, youth panels and Domestic Abuse Survivors' Group.

Improve customer satisfaction levels that are reflected in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and identify areas of improvement that are recommended through the TSM reports.

Improve the quality and impact of our engagement activities for our customers and communities. We will demonstrate the value and benefits of our engagement activities and will celebrate and share our achievements and good practice.

Increase our customer and community engagement activities, to ensure they are meaningful and positive.

Expand our engagement methods and channels, ensuring they are accessible, convenient and user friendly. We will use digital platforms, such as our website, social media, online surveys, webinars and podcasts, to reach as many of our customers and communities as possible.



# Outside Approach

**Our approach to customer and community engagement is based on the following principles and values:**

## **Customer-centred**

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do, and we aim to understand and respond to their needs, preferences and aspirations. We treat our customers with respect, dignity and courtesy, and we value their diversity and individuality. We tailor our engagement methods and channels to suit their different circumstances and preferences.

## **Co-productive**

We aim to understand and respond to customers' needs, preferences and aspirations. We treat our customers with respect, dignity and courtesy, and we value their diversity and individuality. We tailor our engagement methods and channels to suit their different circumstances and preferences.

## **Collaborative**

We work with our customers and communities, as well as with our shareholder, partners and stakeholders, to achieve our shared goals and outcomes. We build trust and mutual understanding with our customers and communities, fostering a sense of belonging and ownership. Working with our partners and stakeholders, such as the City of Wolverhampton Council, the Wolverhampton Homes board, the Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs), the voluntary and community sector, and other social housing providers, helps to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where we operate.

## **Continuous engagement**

We continuously engage with our customers and communities, seeking to establish and maintain long-term relationships with them. We monitor and evaluate our engagement activities and use feedback and learning to improve our services and engagement approach. By communicating regularly and effectively, we keep them informed and updated on our progress and performance.

## **Complaints**

We comply with the relevant legislation, regulation and guidance that applies to our customer and community engagement activity. In doing so, our aim is to continually learn from the outcomes of complaints, and to ensure that customers are aware of how to complain. We align our engagement activity with our corporate policy and strategy, including for example, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Value for Money, and our overarching Business Plan.

# Customer and Community

We recognise that our customer and community engagement activities are not only about improving our services and performance but also about enhancing our customers' and communities' quality of life and wellbeing.

We support our customers and communities to thrive and prosper, and to overcome the challenges and barriers they may face. We are also committed to contributing to CWC's wider social, environmental and economic objectives, and to playing our part in making Wolverhampton a great place to live, work and visit.

The size and scale of our work is driven by understanding what is needed and can range from local walkabouts to working with our large-scale strategic partners.



CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

## We are:

Innovating how we work with local customers alongside CWC, co-creating services and exploring new ways of collaborating and empowering communities about decisions on service delivery, planned improvements, regeneration and development.

Using local insight and data to ensure our activities have maximum customer and community impact.

Providing advice and support to our customers on a range of issues, such as welfare benefits, debt, employment, education, health, safety, digital inclusion and energy efficiency.

Working with our partners and stakeholders to deliver joint projects and initiatives, and to pull in additional resources and expertise for our customers and communities.

Providing opportunities for our customers to participate in social, cultural, recreational and leisure activities, and to enhance their health, happiness and wellbeing.

Using Corporate Social Responsibility to support projects that bring community-wide benefits and social value.

Providing opportunities for our customers to access training, education, employment, volunteering and enterprise initiatives, and to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence.

Working with our partners and stakeholders to influence and to advocate for the interests and rights of our customers and communities, ensuring they are involved and consulted in the decision-making processes that affect them.

Providing support and funding to our customers and communities so they can develop and deliver their own projects and initiatives, thereby addressing the priorities that matter to them.

Providing opportunities for our customers to connect and network with each other, and to build social capital and community cohesion.



## Health and Wellbeing



**Health outcomes and housing are interconnected, which means the relationship between the two cannot be ignored.**

Housing has a significant influence on health and wellbeing, and we support this priority through the work with partners and volunteers. In developing our understanding of community and customer needs, we can engage appropriately to connect them to the resources and information required, to help improve health and wellbeing, where possible.

## Digital Connectivity



**We understand the need for face-to-face contact for some customers and we provide this where required. In relation to our digital connectivity, our insight shows us that there is a high percentage of tenants whose preference is digital. Therefore, we continue to develop our digital presence with a view to freeing up resource to support our more vulnerable customers.**

In November 2023, we launched our customer app, My Account. This app allows our customers to complete a variety of tasks, including contacting us easily, booking repairs and bidding for homes. To date, we have more than 22,000 live accounts.

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion



**We continue to promote equity, diversity and inclusion across our engagement activities and wider services.**

We have a role to play in tackling the stigma of social housing and challenging some of the negative stereotypes that exist around it.

We work with customers and partner organisations to support our values, ensuring our services and the way in which we operate tackle such negative stereotypes.



# How will we know things are different?

**We will deliver our vision for customer engagement by achieving a range of goals set out against each of the key areas. We will:**

- Show how the customer voice has influenced our decision making and how we have committed to acting on what our customers tell us.
- Develop our Customer Involvement Panel further.
- Report our progress and performance quarterly to the Community Services Delivery Committee, board and the Customer Involvement Panel.
- See an increase in our customer satisfaction scores.



# Our Strategy

**Our strategy has been built on customer insight, using direct consultation methods, engagement surveys, transactional surveys and customer feedback. It is shaped through the four themes of:**

- Knowing who is behind the door
- Being accessible
- Hearing the customer voice
- Improving our service delivery and performance.

## 1. Knowing who is behind the door

**The last few years have seen unprecedented change. Some customers face significant challenges. It is vital that we design our services around our customers.**

Wolverhampton has a diverse population of more than 260,000 residents, some 45% of whom are from an ethnic minority group and under one-fifth of the population is classed as disabled. There are about 109,000 households in the city across 20 wards.

Our customers are varied, and by better understanding what motivates and challenges them will bring their voice to the organisation. By recognising differences and understanding what is common to many of our customers, we can deliver a more person-centred approach.

Our most recent survey provided insight into our customers' needs and challenges, and themes around how their preferences have changed.

Knowing who is behind the door will support us to understand and personalise our relationship with customers, and to understand and meet their needs now and for the future.

## 2. Being Accessible

**Some customers tell us they can find it difficult to contact us. Over the past three years, we have focused on improving our call waiting times, which have reduced by around 48%. We continue to focus on improving our digital offer to customers, whilst ensuring our non-digital customers also remain a focus.**

We will communicate and engage with customers in a way that meets their needs and will do so in an open and transparent way, projecting a positive, engagement and professional approach when dealing with our customers.

## 3. Hearing the voice of the customer

**We put customers at the heart of everything we do and that includes communicating effectively with them.**

To achieve this, we will use a range of tools to ensure customers can communicate with us and we will also deliver planned, co-ordinated events that are accessible to all. We will also work with our partners to connect more widely with customers and communities.

Listening to the customer voice is essential, but it is also vital that we hear those customers who are silent. We will do this by understanding customer behaviour and ensuring our service delivery to accessible to all.

## 4. Improving our service delivery and performance

**To continue providing a customer-focused service, we aim to be more accountable and transparent in our communication, service delivery and engagement.**

We will create a culture where all colleagues are clear on their objectives and understand the environment in which we work. This will help us to achieve our organisational priorities.

By creating an open and transparent environment, we encourage colleagues to be open to new ways of working. We will develop continual learning opportunities, ensuring we learn from any mistakes and making sure we feed this back to customers, detailing what it means and the impact it will have.

We are keen for our customers to hold us to account, to be aware of our performance and understand how we aim to meet the expectations of the regulator and our shareholder.





@wolveshomes

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