

**Plus Dane Housing**

**Plus Dane Housing  
Customer Voice Strategy**

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## **Introduction**

Plus Dane is committed to listening to our customers to ensure their voice is heard in decisions that affect their homes, their safety and their communities. This Customer Voice Strategy builds on the success of our work over the last three years to build our engagement opportunities and sets out how we will listen and engage our customers. This underpins our continued commitment to co-regulation by involving customers in governing, shaping, co-designing and scrutinising services.

Over the past three years we have transformed the way we engage and listen to customers. We have delivered an effective Customer Engagement Framework that has introduced and embedded customer scrutiny and enabled us to listen to voices from a diverse range of customers. We have made significant progress in changing the way we engage with customers, but we know success will only be achieved when customers clearly see the impact of us listening to them and acting on their feedback to change and improve what we do.

We remain committed to effective, genuine and meaningful engagement and this strategy will look forward to meet the aspirations of Plus Dane, our customers and respond to the regulatory changes on the horizon.

We will:

- Listen to customers
- Act on what customers tell us and make changes when possible
- Measure the impact of the customer voice
- Feedback to customers what we have done and share the impact their views have made.

## **Purpose and Scope**

The purpose of this Strategy is to set out Plus Dane's aspirations to amplify the customer voice across the organisation. It has been developed in consultation with customers to ensure transparency and accountability with the aim of delivering quality services that deliver what matters most to our customers.

## **Links to Corporate Plan, Values and other Strategies**

This Customer Voice Strategy will support the delivery of our Corporate Plan and Plus Dane's five strategic objectives:

- Delivering quality homes and services
- Co-creating solutions
- Making sure that Plus Dane is the best it can be
- Gathering insight and shaping local/national policy
- Commitment to reducing our carbon footprint

And will be underpinned in terms of delivery by our values:

- Achieving for customers
- Taking Ownership
- Work Together
- Learn and Grow

This Strategy has links with the following:

- Communication Strategy

This Strategy will support the delivery of the communications strategy and in particular its priority to enable and amplify the customer voice.

## **The External Landscape**

The way in which we listen and engage with customers is rapidly evolving. The ongoing debate is complex, taking in everything from the broad principles of customer engagement to detailed questions about how customers should be included in fire safety. This issue continues to be particularly prominent as a result of the current Grenfell Tower fire investigation.

To support this, a new regulatory environment is now emerging with the themes of accountability, transparency and trust central to the proposals set out in the White Paper.

We now understand...

**The new Building Safety Bill** ensures that residents and leaseholders will have access to vital safety information about their homes and new complaints handling requirements will be introduced to make sure

effective action is taken where concerns are raised. To oversee all this, and make sure that Accountable Persons are carrying out their duties properly, there will also be a new National Regulator for Building Safety, within the Health and Safety Executive.

In 2019 the NHF introduced its **Together with Tenants Charter** to embed a culture that values the voice and experience of residents, and seeks to strengthen the relationship between residents and landlords. The new Charter sets out in clear terms what residents can and should expect from their landlord. The Together with Tenants Charter pre-empted and now supports the regulatory changes outlined in the Government's Charter for Social Housing Residents, particularly on tenant voice, relationships, accountability, quality, and complaints.

In November 2020, the Government released its White Paper 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents' building on the lessons learnt from the Grenfell Tower fire. Requirements placed on social landlords expect that:

- Engaged customers should be a key part of any landlord's governance and customer-led assurance arrangements.
- Customers who don't want to attend meetings or join a formal group need to have ways to feed back to their landlord to make sure their voices are heard and their needs are identified.
- Engagement opportunities are tailored to customers' needs and interests, encouraging and supporting greater involvement

This Charter also requires that social landlords should publish and make available to customers information on how their landlord is performing in key areas of service delivery.

**The 2020 NHF Code of Governance** has been completely rewritten and restructured to reflect a changing world and emerging issues within the operating environment and the sector. Now, more than ever, there is a need to protect the interests of the communities that housing associations serve, and an increasing importance to be accountable to residents.

This shift in policy and regulation provides landlords with a series of opportunities to be more open, transparent and accountable providing customers with greater confidence. What is clear from the Regulator is that landlords should not wait for the White Paper to have legislative

approval before they act – the time to act is now and the expectation is that social landlords will:

- Adopt and demonstrate compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Code
- Adopt the Together with Tenants Charter and Plan
- Adopt the NHF Code of Governance

In addition, we are preparing for further requirements to emerge as the social housing white paper, the building safety bill and the anticipated review of the consumer regulations from the Regulator of social housing develop. Irrespective of this anticipated change, our approach is to continuously improve and evolve our ways of engaging with our customers to be ahead of the curve; to listen to and involve them because we genuinely believe that is the right thing to do rather than a means to meet regulatory or legal requirement.

There is also recognition that customer engagement needs to adapt to the rapidly changing ways that customers engage with information. The rate of digital change is accelerating, and many previously digitally excluded groups are increasingly accessing services online. Customers will increasingly expect their housing provider to offer convenient online engagement. In response our Strategy needs to be dynamic with the ability to flex, innovate and adapt to the changing environment, whilst continuing to provide opportunities for those unable or unwilling to engage digitally.

### **What do we want to achieve in this Strategy**

Engaging and listening to customers will continue to be ingrained in our culture, with customers influencing all that we do. Over the past three years we have taken positive steps towards greater engagement but during this time, the world around us has changed and there is a drive not just from the regulator but from us and our customers to strive for greater engagement, openness and transparency. We accept this challenge and this Strategy will carve the way for a refreshed relationship with our customers built on trust and accountability. At the heart of this Strategy is a desire for customers to feel listened to, valued and their views acted upon.

This Strategy is driven by a combination of input from customers, current and anticipated changes in legislation and an evaluation of positive practice, and observation from across the UK.

## **Our Vision**

The vision for our customer voice strategy is simple: to listen and engage customers and use their insight to improve services and guide future actions.

## **Our Objectives**

Over the past three years we have evolved the opportunities we offer to reach out to our customers, listen to what they say and improve services as a result of their feedback. However there is more that needs to be done and we plan to build on what we have achieved so far by setting out **four key aims** which are central to our new strategy.

- 1] To rethink and modernise engagement so that the customer voice is heard throughout the organisation and encourages customers to hold us to account.
- 2] To embed co-creation as a way of working - working together with customers to design and deliver services in a meaningful way.
- 3] That the voice of customers is heard, understood and translated into actions that improve services and better outcomes for customers and communities – sharing with customers how services have been improved as a direct result of listening to them.
- 4] To strengthen transparency, openness and accountability to customers.

## **Our Working Principles**

The following working principles will underpin our approach to how we will work in partnership with customers.

### **Trust, respect and partnership**

We will trust and respect customers and work in partnership to improve services. We will always do what we say we will.

### **Collaboration, sharing information and ideas**

We will share information and ideas and develop solutions together

### **Openness and accountability in decision making**

We will make decisions in a way that is open, clear and accountable. We will share with customers how their feedback has improved services.

### **Choice, flexibility and ease of accessibility**

We will offer choice and flexibility for customers, making it as easy as possible for their voice to be heard and to work with us to influence how we deliver our services.

### **Inclusive**

We will promote approaches and work in ways that are appropriate to different people and differing needs within our communities.

### **Our Expected Outcomes**

The expected outcomes to be delivered through this Strategy are:

**Rethink and modernise customer engagement so that the customer voice is heard throughout Plus Dane and enables customers to hold us to account.**

<b>What this means</b>	<b>Why</b>
<p>A comprehensive review of our existing customer engagement structure to identify gaps where the voice of customers' needs to be greater.</p> <p>Setting up new opportunities to address the gaps that exist to strengthen our offer</p> <p>Amplifying the voice of customers with our Board so they can take informed decisions based on customer insight.</p>	<p>It supports our Corporate Plan objectives of improved customer experience and being a thriving organisation</p>



Making the best use of technology to engage and listen to customers and increase accessibility.	
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**We will do this by:**

- Reviewing the effectiveness of our current engagement and customer voice methods with customers and colleagues to identify gaps in where the voice of customers' needs to be louder.
- Exploring the development of a new customer committee that provides assurance to the Board and customers that Plus Dane is compliant with consumer regulation and other standards.
- Exploring how best to listen to the voice of customers on issues relating to their neighbourhoods.
- Launching the refreshed Customer Voice Strategy sharing with customers what routes are open for customers to hold us to account and the menu of opportunities on offer.
- Developing and promoting a new Plus Dane Customer Voice Charter that reflects the commitments of the NHF Together with Tenants Charter and sets out clearly how we will work in partnership with customers, listen to their views and act on their feedback
- Delivering a blended approach to involvement, with the development of a new digital engagement platform offering digital methods of engagement to widen the pool of engaged customers.
- Providing support to recruit customers to Board and sub committees where appropriate. Working alongside Governance colleagues to develop a succession approach so that customers

interested in becoming Board members can bring their lived experience.

- Facilitating the voices of our customers to have input into relevant national debate.
- Ensuring that on matters of building safety and security, customers are confident their expectations about transparency and needs for information are met.
- Exploring external customer engagement accreditation.
- Developing meaningful customer engagement/voice performance indicators that measure the effectiveness of this strategy as well as sharing performance information with customers on what matters most to them.
- Working across the organisation to support compliance with the full range of customer engagement regulatory requirements and linking our actions to any new consumer standards.
- To look outward, benchmark, learn and gain inspiration from others.

**Embed co-creation as a way of working - working together with customers to design and deliver services.**

<b>What this means</b>	<b>Why</b>
<p>Customers working together with colleagues to design and deliver services.</p> <p>Being able to evidence where customers have been listened to and their views taken into account</p> <p>Supporting teams to strengthen the voice of customers in their own service areas.</p> <p>Supporting Board and Committees to facilitate the voice of customers so that they can make informed decisions.</p>	<p>It supports our Corporate Plan objective of co-designing solutions</p> <p>It supports our value of achieving for customers</p>

**We will do this by:**

- Meaningful involvement across our organisation, with customers, colleagues and Board working together as one team.
- Innovative and creative thinking - embracing change and continually exploring good practice.
- Using the formal customer governance structure already in place, customers monitoring and scrutinising service delivery, working with colleagues to make recommendations for improvement.
- Delivering mandatory training to support colleagues in delivering effective customer engagement and sharing the importance of the customer voice in delivering services – providing guidance and support to colleagues when engaging customers in their work.
- Building clear links between informal engagement, formal customer engagement and the use of customer insight with Board.
- Investing in training for engaged customers to help them develop the skills to better challenge and influence decision making.
- Raising the profile of the customer voice within the colleague induction process to set the right tone for how colleagues are expected to listen to customers and act on their feedback.

**That what is heard is understood, translated into actions that improve services and better outcomes for customers and communities. Sharing how services have been improved as a direct result of listening to customers.**

<b>What this means</b>	<b>Why</b>
Sharing with customers how their views have influenced services.  Demonstrate how changes, as a result of listening to customers, will be implemented and impact of service improvement measured.	So that customers know how we are using their voices and views to improve services.

**We will do this by:**

- Developing a new feedback framework which brings customer insight and data, together in one place so we can understand sentiment and trends and take appropriate action.
- Improving how we track service improvement so we can share with customers the difference and impact that their engagement has made.
- Holding teams accountable for embedding agreed customer improvements into their services.
- Using a variety of communication methods to share how services have been shaped by listening to customers. Producing an annual review of how the voice of customers has improved services.
- Creating an area on the new Plus Dane website dedicated to the customer voice and associated activities.
- Regularly reviewing the value created through engagement.

**To strengthen customer transparency and accountability**

<b>What this means</b>	<b>Why</b>
Increasing our transparency and openness, building trust and enabling our customers to hold us to account.	Transparency, openness and accountability are important principles. Being open with customers helps to build trust, allows for scrutiny and challenge and leads to improvements in services.

**We will do this by:**

- Customers will receive clear, accessible and timely information on the issues that matter to them, including information about their homes and their community, how we are working to address problems, how we are run, how money is spent and on information about performance on key issues.
- Having conversations with customers about what matters to them most and what information they want to see us share and how
- Creating a voice of customer charter demonstrating our commitment to transparency and openness.

- Adopting the NHF code of Governance underpinning our commitment to be more accountable to our customers.
- Sharing service standards with customers and working with our engaged customers to set standards and targets.
- Providing support for engaged customers to provide them with the tools and know-how to hold us to account.
- To continue to deliver a framework for engagement that holds us to account through collaborative yet independent tenant led scrutiny approaches.
- Where appropriate build in area based performance information that provides accountability about our delivery of services in neighbourhoods

### **Monitoring this Strategy**

It is important that customers hold us to account, that we do what we say we will do, and our performance against the commitments set out in this strategy are visible to customers. To do this we will:

- Produce a detailed action plan which will show how this strategy will be delivered.
- Develop a set of performance indicators to measure key aspects of the strategy.
- Produce regular briefings on tenant engagement activities.
- Produce a Customer Voice Annual Report setting out the progress and achievements against the four objectives in this Strategy.

### **What Success Looks Like**

Some broad indicators of the success of this strategy will be

- To have implemented 85% of customer's recommendations by the timescale agreed with customers
- Through the new feedback framework we will be able to demonstrate examples of customers influencing continuous improvement of services through co-design.
- 80% of customers through our STAR Survey say they are satisfied that we take their views in account by 2023.
- The diversity profile of engaged customers will match that of the wider customer profile (within 5%).