

Service delivery and accountability statement

APPENDIX ONE

Service Delivery and Accountability Statement

1. Our Approach

- 1.1 As an organisation with a social purpose we recognise that our accountability to customers is central to our success. We take this accountability very seriously. Although we are accountable to many other stakeholders, customers will always be a key focus for accountability and engagement.
- 1.2 The relationship between us and our customers is essentially a contractual one, based on the tenancy or other occupation agreement and the rights and duties that it generates for both parties. These create legal obligations that should be honoured by both parties in a spirit of mutual respect.

2. Governance and Accountability

- 2.1 We recognise that our customer voice must have a link to the highest levels of governance, so we will have mechanisms in place to ensure that customer views, feedback, and insight are presented and discussed at Board and Committee meetings.
- 2.2 Our aim is to deal with our customers in a fair, open and transparent way. This means we:
 - positively welcome customer involvement in our work, maintaining a culture of openness, responsiveness and accountability;
 - make performance information readily available for our customers in a format they find accessible so they can see whether we are meeting our service targets;
 - periodically review and report on the level of performance that we achieve, predominantly on our website and through the publication of our annual report;
 - publish the outcome of government inspections and other kinds of regulatory activity where we believe it is in the interests of our customers;
 - are open to constructive challenge about our reported performance, both through customer involvement structures and by individual customers, and;

- ensure that all customers are treated fairly with regard to the principles of equality and diversity, and are given the same opportunities to use our services or become involved in our work.
- 2.3 We understand that being properly accountable relies on having a clear strategic approach, supported by effective delivery of our services, whether they are delivered locally or centrally.

3. Access and Communication

- 3.1 We will engage with customers about how they can exercise choice, individually and collectively, in the areas that they identify as being important to them.
- 3.2 We will publish key policies which provide details of the services customers receive from us and the choices they can exercise, in accordance with their tenancy agreement or lease.
- 3.3 Through our customer insight work we will identify and understand any service delivery issues and, where possible, have an action plan to improve those issues.
- 3.4 We will aim to have excellent two-way communication with our customers, providing the level of information required by customers at the time they need it. Whenever customers contact us they should feel that we have listened to them and understood their requirements.
- 3.5 Our approach to communication will contain the following core elements:
- A “digital first” approach to communication, encouraging customers to access the majority of our services online via our customer portal;
 - publishing clear information for customers about how to communicate with us in different ways, ensuring it is clear that material may be available in a range of languages and formats where appropriate;
 - communicating to customers their rights and responsibilities in relation to their home and neighbourhood;
 - regular provision of information about our performance in delivering services, and;
 - publishing our grades and results from government inspections and other kinds of regulatory activity where we believe it is in the interests of our customers.

- In addition, we will have policies and strategies, written in plain language, including:
 - our overall plans, budgets and priorities; and
 - how customers are consulted about, and exercise influence over, the issues that affect their homes and the services they receive.

4. Complaints

- 4.1 We will have a complaints process that we will make available to customers and applicants for housing; that is readily accessible to them and in a form that they find convenient to use.
- 4.2 We will make it easy for customers to complain when things go wrong, and offer different ways for them to make a complaint.
- 4.3 We will publish a clear and simple complaints procedure with timescales for how quickly we will respond to, and deal with, complaints.
- 4.4 We will seek speedy resolution of complaints and seek to reach agreement with the complainants wherever possible. We will offer appropriate redress when at fault.
- 4.5 Complainants will be made aware of the right to appeal to the Independent Housing Ombudsman if not satisfied with the result of our consideration of the complaint.
- 4.6 Complaints will be used as a learning tool (whether or not they are upheld) to identify strengths and weaknesses in our service delivery, communications with customers, or any other aspect of our work.

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 We will offer customers a range of ways to get involved in shaping service design. We recognise that we have a very diverse community, and therefore will engage with customers in a way that suits them.
- 5.2 We will use our Real Time Customer Feedback (text survey) tool and rolling general satisfaction surveys as the primary methods of 'touchpoint' engagement with customers. This will ensure that we can proactively capture and act on the causes of dissatisfaction in a timely way, as well as understand and monitor trends and patterns across different customer groups that can be used to influence strategic priorities.

- 5.3 We will work with our established group of Customer Advocates for more detailed engagement on a wide range of policy and service design. As required, we will also conduct focus groups and interviews.
- 5.4 We will encourage our customers to be involved in scrutinising and influencing the areas of our work that interest them. Customers will be made aware of the subject and purpose of any consultations and the constraints (legal, financial and regulatory) within which choices must be made. We will communicate decisions taken after each engagement, showing how their views were taken into account.
- 5.5 We will ensure that customers can shape services locally. They will be offered the chance to meet with representatives from their local Neighbourhoods teams, including inviting them to attend estate inspections.
- 5.6 Regardless of the format of our engagement, we will actively seek to remove barriers and support under-represented groups.