



Blackpool Coastal  
Housing

# Customer Engagement Strategy

2023 -2025

INSPIRING PEOPLE TO BUILD BETTER COMMUNITIES

## Document Information

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<b>Objective</b>	To outline how engagement activities, communication and customer feedback will be implemented and delivered by BCH.	
<b>Who needs to know?</b>	All employees, customers	
<b>Documentation</b>	BCH Complaint Policy and Procedure	
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## Amendment Record

Date	Issue No.	Section/Page	Details of Change	Authorised By:

### Amendment Notes

- Documents at draft status are to use letter designations to denote issue status: a, b, c etc.
- Documents at full issue status are to use number designations to denote issue status after full revision: 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, etc.
- For an amendment to a full issue document, you are to use number designation to denote issue status: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, etc.
- On full issue the draft amendment record should be deleted from the above table.
- Notification of the amendment must be sent to the person maintaining the Central Register.

## Introduction

Blackpool Coastal Housing's (BCH) purpose is to 'inspire people to build sustainable communities'. Since the organisation was established there has been a dedicated Customer Involvement Team who support the organisation to have customers at the heart of what we do.

A strong and consistent commitment to resident engagement has been at the core of BCH since the organisation came into existence. Our tenant-led approach forms the foundations of our organisation and is a thread that runs throughout the organisation. Developing this strategy presents an opportunity to review the core elements of successful engagement, reflecting upon our strengths and development areas.

Blackpool Coastal Housing is recognised as a top performing arm's length company and has experienced and resourceful staff who are committed to delivering the best provision possible for our customers.

BCH has an active role in contributing to the quality of the lives of tenants through working within our communities. The role of customer engagement at BCH is to listen to and understand the views, needs, expectations and aspirations of our customers so that we can continually improve the services we deliver. We are able to achieve this through involving customers in our decision making processes, carrying out wider consultation, assessing customer satisfaction, keeping our customers informed and offering opportunities to develop skills and take part in learning programmes.

This strategy outlines how our approach to customer engagement and involvement aligns with our ambition in providing good, stable affordable housing and making a real impact on people's life chances and how BCH will meet the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard and the Social Housing White Paper in our approach and to achieve what is set out within our Business Plan.

## Legal and Regulatory Framework

The legal and regulatory frameworks that are relevant to the strategy are:

- The Homes and Communities Agency Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard - 2017 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612227/tenant_involvement_and_empowerment_standard_2017.pdf)
- The Homes and Community Agency Neighbourhood and Community Standard [Neighbourhood and Community Standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612228/Neighbourhood_and_Community_Standard.pdf)

- Social Housing White Paper – The Charter for Social Housing Residents

[The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612229/social_housing_white_paper.pdf)

## Key Principles

### 3.1 What does the regulator expect from community engagement?

In our journey to evolve and improve, it is key to come back to the regulatory standards. The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (TIES) comprises of three overriding elements that registered providers need to achieve:

- Customer service, choice and complaints
- Involvement and empowerment
- Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

The specific outcomes and expectations of the standard are noted in Appendix A below.

This strategy has been developed with the TIES at the core of the approach and the regulatory guidance must always be key in decision making regarding development and direction of our engagement work. Looking ahead, the Social Housing White Paper points to future changes to strengthen the power of the regulator to ensure compliance with the standard.

### 3.2 The Neighbourhood and Community Standard

Please refer to BCH's latest ASB and Neighbourhood Management Operational Strategy, which describes how BCH will meet the Neighbourhood and Community Standard and how the strategy aligns with our approach to customer engagement and involvement to meet our aim of being an excellent provider of housing and building sustainable communities.

### 3.3 The Social Housing White Paper

The Government published its Social Housing White Paper on 17 November 2020. Called 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents', it comprises seven chapters, each relating to an element of the charter. The White Paper points to several actions that will come from the Government and RSH in the future, yet the aims of the White Paper are clear.

The most critical charter elements for this strategy are two, three, four and five:

2. To know how your landlord is performing, including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
4. To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.

5. To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.

The Government have outlined clear intentions for stronger resident engagement and for organisations to be continually improving the way they engage with social housing tenants. Consumer regulation will be strengthened with a code of practice that clearly states what landlords are required to deliver. There is a key focus on providing more detailed performance information to tenants, focussing on values around transparency and accountability.

For BCH, this means reviewing and engaging in conversations around the accessibility of our engagement structure and considering how best to communicate performance and engagement successes beyond the annual report minimum.

This strategy outlines BCH's commitment to becoming an organisation that looks to proactively strive for best practice, going beyond basic levels of compliance during the five-year strategy period.

### **3.4 Links to the BCH Business Plan and Involvement and Communications Service Plan**

This strategy links directly to the BCH Business Plan and the Involvement and Communications Service Plan, which sets out our commitments and accountabilities for the year. The Business Plan sets out our strategic aims, vision and priorities over the next 12 months. These priorities have a direct correlation to the priorities that Blackpool Council has set in its vision which demonstrates that BCH is strategically aligning its work with that of the council.

The Service Plan details Involvement and Communications priorities for the year. The Service Plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Involvement and Communications Manager and progress against actions is recorded.

## **Achieving our meaningful customer engagement**

We offer a number of ways for our customers to get involved to improve the services we provide. We aim to be inclusive and accessible, by offering training and support to make it as easy as possible for customers to engage with us in a way that meets their needs and we also offer financial support to cover some of the costs of getting involved such as transport and childcare.

All our formal engagement activities offer customers the opportunity to influence and improve services. Tenant Board Members and TOWER Scrutiny Panel Members have influence at Board level and are involved in decision making, governance and holding BCH to account.

Customers receive ongoing guidance from our dedicated team and gain access to relevant training, helping to develop knowledge of BCH services as well as keeping up to date with local and national changes affecting the housing sector.

## Involvement and Engagement

### Aim

The function of this service is to emphasise the role of the customer voice and influence, achieving greater accountability to residents:

- Placing customers at the centre of service and business improvement through more targeted involvement and use of customer insight.
- Developing and delivering a range of involvement opportunities that are accessible, including digital methods promoting joined up consultation and engagement.
- Contributing to the quality of life of our residents to promote learning and development, aspiration, inspired communities, empowerment and accountability to ensure that the Involvement and Empowerment Standard is achieved.
- Supporting community inclusion and improvement by delivering the Tenant's Project Fund.

### Objectives

We will:

- Continue to provide a range of involvement and engagement activities face to face, digitally and community or home based to make involvement as accessible as possible, offering choice and flexibility for our customers as well as enabling wider consultation.
- Carry out impact assessments to ensure activities are meaningful, provide value for money and have clear outcomes.
- Continue to develop recording mechanisms to identify under representation and deliver involvement activities that promote service development and improvement for the benefit of all customers.
- Explore technology to support recording of involvement activities to report on participation, outcomes and customer profiling data to recognise any areas where diverse customers are underrepresented or activities are not accessible.
- Promote the customer voice and empowerment by continuing to work with services across the organisation to ensure that customers have the opportunity to improve service delivery, hold services to account and are consulted with regarding matters that affect them.
- Continue to strengthen the role and influence of TOWER in decision making across the organisation, including increasing membership with an aim of it being more representative of BCH's customer profile.

- Continue to assess involvement representation and identify targeted activities to engage younger or harder to reach groups.
- Ensure that a clear feedback process is in place to evidence the impact of customers' feedback to service design and delivery.
- Continue to work towards mainlining TPAS accreditation for quality assurance and organisational aims.
- Review the TPF process and put more focus on evidencing and promoting outcomes.
- Continue to deliver and review the Community Learning Programme to increase skills, knowledge and training whilst enhancing the lives of our customers and communities. To explore additional learning and development to support digital inclusion.
- Work with partners to deliver community based initiatives which aim to reduce the reliance on other services such as NHS, Police etc.
- Provide more opportunities for young people in the communities we are based, which reinforce key messages and promote positive life choices.
- Deliver intergenerational activities which support community cohesion and social inclusion.
- Roll out specific focus groups or roadshows to focus on specific issues such as climate change and the cost of living and to ensure that younger people and hard to reach groups have the opportunity to engage with us and give their views about issues that matter to them.
- Support BCH services to engage with customers to ensure they are satisfied with the services they receive, for example the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's)

## Complaint Management

### **Aim:**

To promote the customer voice and ensure that there is a clear, simple and accessible approach to complaint handling that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly. To promote continuous learning from complaints to support service improvements, quality assurance and customer satisfaction. To adhere to the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and ensure that the complaints policy is reflective of requirements.

### **Objectives:**

We will:

- Build on to recording all complaints using Orchard to enable enhanced reporting, performance monitoring, learning, trends and specific case studies.

- Continuously review the complaint policy to ensure it remains consistent, accessible and in line with regulation, strengthening the role of complaints in offering customers opportunity for redress while encouraging organisation wide learning from complaints as a way to shape and build trust in our services. We will offer opportunities for customers to be involved in this through our Complaint Hearing Panel Members.
- Embed knowledge and understanding of the complaints process across all services to ensure that complaints are regarded as key and lessons are learned where necessary. To also ensure that there is consistency of complaint handling and a culture of respect when customers raise concern.
- Continue to publicise the complaints process and Housing Ombudsman service with customers, including measures to feedback on complaint data, lessons learned and performance.
- Ensure there is a robust performance and outcome reporting mechanism for complaints that is reflective of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, including demonstrating lessons learned within services.

## Overarching objectives of the service:

We will:

- Provide a good quality, accountable, productive and value for money service to the tenants of Blackpool Council, internal colleagues and stakeholders.
- Continuously seek improvement by benchmarking against other landlords for good practice, learning from complaints and listening to the views of our customers and internal colleagues.
- Ensure our customers can access our services as easily as possible and improvements will be made to the ways customers can access our services digitally, including promotion of the self-service portal (SSP) and website use.
- Contribute to any improvement actions identified through the complaints or performance monitoring processes
- Invest in staff training to ensure our services act in a professional, knowledgeable and respectful manner and can deliver services in line with standards
- Consider technology to make efficiencies, improve communication and collect and store customer profiling, complaint and involvement activity data.

## Measuring Impact and Outcomes

We use a number of indicators to monitor our performance:

**In maintaining quality in our core services we will measure our impact in the following ways:**

- Number of customers engaged – tenants / leaseholders
- % of customers who attended customer events and rated them good-excellent
- % of customers satisfied that we listened to and acted on their views.
- Number of Clean and Green Warden surveys carried out
- Average satisfaction ratings from Clean and Green Warden surveys.
- Overall volunteer hours completed
- % of customers satisfied with the outcome of their complaint
- % of customers satisfied with how their complaint was handled
- Number of days taken to resolve a complaint
- Lessons learned from complaints
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Impact Assessments following involvement activities

**In providing opportunities for our customers to enhance their skills, knowledge and training to enhance their life chances we will measure our impact in the following ways:**

- Number of customers who have accessed our Community Learning program
- Number of customers achieving qualifications
- Number of customers who have progressed to further training/volunteering/employment

**In contributing to building and sustaining community resilience we will measure our impact in the following ways:**

- Number of projects funded by the Tenant Project Fund
- Number of people benefitting from projects delivered by the Tenant's Project Fund
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures

We use consultations to evaluate customer perceptions of key projects.

Where we can directly evidence, we will also measure engagement in relation to levels of customer satisfaction and cost savings achieved.

## Informing our Customers

The Involvement and Communications Team are responsible for keeping customers and stakeholders informed and engaged using a wide range of channels, including the BCH website, social media, targeted campaigns, newsletters, written correspondence and flyers, whilst giving consideration to digital inclusion and any diverse needs.

### Objectives

**We will:**

- Raise the profile of the organisation and promote the vision, values, achievements and organisational information.
- Continue to build on and promote the BCH website ensuring that information is relevant, timely and accurate.
- Maintain a presence on social media to raise the profile of BCH, keep customers informed and work collaboratively with other stakeholders and agencies and to protect the reputation of the organisation.
- Build on relationships with services across BCH to ensure that relevant information can be shared and promote communication with customers is a key responsibility.
- Promote local and national campaigns that are relevant to our customers, BCH and our wider communities and stakeholders.
- Develop reporting mechanisms for website and social media engagement.
- Build on reporting mechanisms of customer profiling data to ensure that communication is accessible.
- Increase targeted communication to relevant customers and groups, such as new customers, specific groups, such as young people, or to geographical communities.
- Take measures to identify and communicate with customers in the way they want to be communicated with and whilst we drive for digital methods, ensuring that we are responsive to customers who need written or physical interaction, with a commitment to at least two printed newsletters being delivered to all customers annually.

## Expected Outcomes linked to Vision & Values

“Inspiring people to build sustainable communities”

We believe all at BCH have a pride in what they do, they care about their customers and work hard to deliver positive outcomes in all that they do, in short they demonstrate:

### **P Positivity**

- Continuing to promote the BCH brand
- Embedding a positive outlook on complaints and customer feedback across the organisation

### **R Respect & compassion**

- Continuing to promote the complaints process, ensuring the tenant voice is heard in a fair and respectful way
- We aim to prevent discrimination and promote equal opportunities in all our dealings with customers and treat everyone fairly.
- We will give our customers choice in how they access our services where possible.
- We will show empathy and understanding.

## **I Integrity**

- To ensure that communication internally and externally is honest and accurate.
- To promote customer feedback and lessons learned across the organisation and externally to customers.
- To provide performance information and 'you said, we did' feedback to customers.

## **D Dynamism**

- To continue to provide an efficient informative approach to both internal and external communication.
- To involve customers in services to raise the customer voice and aim to recruit new customers, particularly from diverse or underrepresented areas.

## **E Energy**

- Exploring new and innovative ways to engage customers.
- To take a proactive approach to communication and fact finding.

## **Equality & Diversity**

BCH is committed to the principles of equality and diversity throughout the organisation. We ensure our services are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future customers and that all sections of the community can access our services when they need to.

BCH will ensure that it meets its responsibilities under the 2010 Equality Act. The Equality Act 2010 stipulates that people and organisations cannot discriminate, harass or victimise a person who may be identified under any of the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race and religion.

BCH have a Reasonable Adjustment Policy that supports complaint management.

End users using hard copies of this document are responsible for ensuring that their copy is up to date.

Communication can also be provided in alternative formats upon request.

## Reviewing the Strategy

Progress towards implementing this strategy will be reported quarterly to the Chief Executive.

This strategy shall be reviewed at least every two years, and sooner if there are significant changes in legislation or regulation. Revisions to the policy will be ratified by the Board.

## Appendix

### Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

#### Required outcomes

##### 1.1 Customer service, choice and complaints

1.1.1 Registered providers shall:

- a. provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- b. have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.

##### 1.2 Involvement and empowerment

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

- a. the formulation of their landlord's housing-related policies and strategic priorities
- b. the making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- c. the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved
- d. the management of their homes, where applicable
- e. 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
- f. agreeing local offers for service delivery.

##### 1.3 Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

1.3.1 Registered providers shall:

- a. treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- b. demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.

#### Specific expectations

##### 2.1 Customer service, choice and complaints

2.1.1 Registered providers shall provide tenants with accessible, relevant and timely information about:

- a. how tenants can access services
- b. the standards of housing services their tenants can expect
- c. how they are performing against those standards

- d. the service choices available to tenants, including any additional costs that are relevant to specific choices
- e. progress of any repairs work
- f. how tenants can communicate with them and provide feedback
- g. the responsibilities of the tenant and provider
- h. arrangements for tenant involvement and scrutiny.

2.1.2 Providers shall offer a range of ways for tenants to express a complaint and set out clear service standards for responding to complaints, including complaints about performance against the standards, and details of what to do if they are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint. Providers shall inform tenants how they use complaints to improve their services. Registered providers shall publish information about complaints each year, including their number and nature, and the outcome of the complaints. Providers shall accept complaints made by advocates authorised to act on a tenant's/tenants' behalf.

## **2.2 Involvement and empowerment**

2.2.1 Registered providers shall support their tenants to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment, including by:

- a. supporting their tenants to exercise their Right to Manage or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate
- b. supporting the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups and responding in a constructive and timely manner to them
- c. the provision of timely and relevant performance information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in a form which registered providers seek to agree with their tenants. Such provision must include the publication of an annual report which should include information on repair and maintenance budgets
- d. providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved.

2.2.2 Registered providers shall consult with tenants on the scope of local offers for service delivery. This shall include how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants and arrangements for reviewing these on a periodic basis.

2.2.3 Where registered providers are proposing a change in landlord for one or more of their tenants or a significant change in their management arrangements, they shall consult with affected tenants in a fair, timely, appropriate and effective manner. Registered providers shall set out the proposals clearly and in an appropriate amount of detail and shall set out any actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer term. Registered providers must be able to demonstrate to affected tenants how they have taken the outcome of the consultation into account when reaching a decision.

2.2.4 Registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service.

## **2.3 Understanding and responding to diverse needs**

2.3.1 Registered providers shall demonstrate how they respond to tenants' needs in the way they provide services and communicate with tenants.