



**Gardeen Housing Association Ltd**  
**Building a Better Future**

## **GARDEEN HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

# **CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

<b>Policy Implemented From</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Next Review</b>	<b>2022</b>

## Introduction

The aim of this strategy is to confirm Gardeen Housing Association's continuing commitment to customer engagement.

The Association aims to provide opportunities for all customers to play an active role in the management of their homes and the delivery of services. It also sets out a clear vision for the future and provides customers with a range of options to get involved both individually and collectively.

We consider a customer to be anyone who receives a service from us e.g. tenants, applicants, factoring owners but can be further broken down as detailed in the table below:

<b>External Customers</b>	Tenants, factored owners and housing applicants
<b>Internal Customers</b>	Management Committee and staff
<b>Stakeholders</b>	Partners, contractors, consultants, Scottish Government, Local Authority and Scottish Housing Regulator

## Our Values

The Management Committee of Gardeen Housing Association has reviewed and agreed the following core values:

Empathy	Commitment	Honesty
Transparency	Positive	Respect
Pro-active	Dedicated	Quality
Inclusive	Caring	Responsible and Responsive
Community Value	Belief	

We are committed to these values because they are focused on making the Association a continually improving organisation for customers who rely on the services we provide.

## Our Aims

Our Customer Engagement Strategy is linked directly to the objectives in our Business Plan which is a formal statement setting out the goals of the Association and how we plan to reach those goals.

We will meet the Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes listed in Appendix 1.

We will comply with the requirements set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

We will comply with the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Standards listed in Appendix 2.

We will provide clear options for customers to easily communicate with us, regardless of any additional support they may require. We will offer a wide variety of methods to engage with the Association.

We will encourage positive and empowering relationships between customers and staff to allow for partnership working to scrutinise and improve services. We also want to gain greater value for the money we spend.

We accept that we need to understand our customers to be able to make sure we can be responsive to their needs.

### **Options for Customer Involvement**

We aim to break down any barriers to engagement. Customers can engage online, through social media, over the phone or face to face – in either formal group meetings or at informal 1 to 1 meetings in their home. Customers need to know that, if they get involved, they can give as much or as little time as they can manage and that they can do this in a way that suits them.

Options open to customers include (but are not limited to):

- Become a member of the Association
- Join the Management Committee
- Develop a Tenant Group
- Tenant Satisfaction Surveys
- Join the Consultation Register
- Estate Walkabouts/Close Meetings
- Social Media
- Rent Consultation
- Repair Satisfaction Surveys
- Quarterly Newsletter
- Review of Complaints
- Areas for Development e.g. Community Garden
- Attend the Annual General Meeting
- Property Inspection/Tenancy Sustainment Home Visits
- Scrutiny of the Annual Return on the Charter
- Gardeen Housing Association's App

### **Equalities Commitment**

We want to create an inclusive environment. The Association is committed to actively promoting diversity and equality of opportunity, and rejects all forms of discrimination.

This means that we will never discriminate against anyone on the grounds of their: gender; ethnicity; impairment; marital status; age; race; language; responsibility for dependants; sexual orientation; employment status; religious or political belief; HIV or aids status or geographic location.

## Information and Communication

The Association is committed to providing good quality, meaningful information to customers and will, cost permitting, provide that information in accessible formats that meet their needs.

Customers will be asked, through our general communications, to provide details of any particular communication requirements and will be encouraged to advise us if their needs change.

We will provide written information and publications in plain English and provide this information in other languages, audio, braille, and large print, on request. We can arrange interpreters for meetings on request. We can use a card system in meetings upon request. Anyone who has difficulty with speech can indicate when they want to speak or ask a question.

We are members of the Happy to Translate initiative (HTT), will publish the HTT logo and promote easy access to the information we provide.

Customers who access information through our website will also benefit from the BrowseAloud function which can simplify what is seen on screen, convert website text to speech and translate text into different languages.

We will use a variety of communication methods for providing information, initiating consultation and for providing feedback. These methods include (but are not limited to):

- Information in our Tenant Handbook
- Individual letters
- Quarterly newsletters
- Carry out postal, online, telephone or face-to-face surveys
- Meetings (individual or group)
- Website [www.gardeen.org.uk](http://www.gardeen.org.uk)
- Social Media: Twitter (@gardeenh) and Facebook
- Email
- Texting Service
- Leaflets
- Annual Report
- Performance Report
- Engagement Plan
- Making changes to our policies and procedures, and telling our customers we have done so
- Internal and external audit
- Factored homeowners Written Statement of Services

## **Digital Communication**

Our Customer Engagement Strategy recognises the opportunities offered by digital communication.

We will develop digital communication to seek to engage with customers who would not normally get involved, such as younger people.

We will connect with customers to seek feedback on service issues through email, our website and our social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

We will explore the use of technology to enable us to send information electronically if requested.

## **Resources**

The Association is committed to ensuring there are resources to make it successful. It has a dedicated budget for this activity which is reviewed annually by the Management Committee as part of the overall budget process.

The Association does not directly employ specialist staff to carry out customer engagement activities, but all staff have a remit to engage with customers. This is part of their day to day work as well as having scheduled activities which are carried out from time to time.

## **Freedom of Information**

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 applies to registered social landlords (RSLs) in Scotland from 11 November 2019. This means:

- They must publish certain information about their activities;
- Members of the public are entitled to request information from them.

The Act covers any recorded information held by the RSL. Recorded information includes printed documents, computer files, letters, emails, photographs, and sound or video recordings.

The Act does not give people access to their own personal data. To obtain this a data protection subject access request must be submitted.

The Act does not give people access to the personal data of other persons. To obtain this, the other persons must consent.

## **Monitoring and Review**

The Customer Engagement Strategy will be reviewed at least every three years however to measure and identify if the overall aims of this Strategy have been successful we will measure our success in partnership with our customers.

We will monitor the responses to the tenant satisfaction survey in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes relating to customer satisfaction, participation and communication (detailed in Appendix 1).

We will consider the effectiveness of specific activities in light of the following:

- The number of customers who participated
- The resources required to obtain feedback
- The quality of the feedback obtained
- Satisfaction with methods of participation
- Whether the engagement activity successfully engaged a range of customers

## Appendix 1

### Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes

#### 1. Equalities

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

This outcome describes what social landlords, by complying with equalities legislation, should achieve for all tenants and other customers regardless of age, ethnicity, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, responsibility for dependants, employment status, sex, or sexual orientation. It includes landlords' responsibility for finding ways of understanding the rights and needs of different customers and delivering services that recognise and meet these.

#### 2. Communication

Social Landlords manage their businesses so that:

- tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their new landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

This outcome covers all aspects of landlords' communication with tenants and other customers. This could include making use of new technologies such as web-based tenancy management systems and smart-phone applications. It is not just about how clearly and effectively a landlord gives information to those who want it. It also covers making it easy for tenants and other customers to make complaints and provide feedback on services, using that information to improve services and performance, and letting people know what they have done in response to complaints and feedback. It does not require landlords to provide legally protected, personal or commercial information.

#### 3. Participation

Social Landlords manage their business so that:

- tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

This outcome describes what landlords should achieve by meeting their statutory duties on tenant participation. It covers how social landlords gather and take account of the views and priorities of their tenants, other customers, and bodies representing them such as registered tenant organisations; how they shape their service to reflect these views; and how they help tenants, other customers and bodies representing them such as registered tenant organisations to become more capable of involvement – this could include supporting them to scrutinise landlord services.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Regulatory Standards**

#### **Standard 1**

The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.

#### **Standard 2**

The RSL is open and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users, and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.

#### **Standard 3**

The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being, while maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford to pay.

#### **Standard 4**

The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.

#### **Standard 5**

The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.

#### **Standard 6**

The governing body and senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective.

#### **Standard 7**

The RSL ensures that any organisational changes or disposals it makes safeguard the interests of, and benefit, current and future tenants.