

Putting you at the heart of our work

Customer engagement strategy




Housing Plus Group

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Introduction

We have a two-year plan to improve the way that we offer services and support to our customers. It has been developed in-line with the Housing Plus Group corporate plan, our vision, our values and with our customers.

We believe that a quality service is one that meets - or exceeds - your expectations. We know that to do this, we must understand them and work to learn to what extent they have been met.

That's why we want to involve you in the way we shape our services, to make sure the services we deliver are inclusive, effective and meet your needs.

The Regulator of Social Housing has set out new expectations of the services that landlords provide for their tenants and will hold us to account.

They have also recently introduced Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). These measures are designed to show how well landlords are doing at keeping properties in good repair, maintaining building safety, delivering respectful and helpful engagement, handling complaints effectively and managing neighbourhoods responsibly.

This document applies to all Homes Plus, Care Plus and Severn Homes customers.



What we're already doing

In recent years, we have made positive improvements to the way we work with our customers but we understand that your needs can change.

Our Customer Partnership Panel (CPP) is a group of involved customers. They make sure that your views are at the heart of everything we do. They help us to improve and deliver better services across Staffordshire and Shropshire. We are working to grow the number of customers on the panel and make sure they reflect the communities that our customers live in.

We will continue to make improvements to your experience as a customer. We have already been improving our approach to complaints and feedback and listening to our customers more, but this focus on improving services is becoming an important part of our culture.



Our commitment to improving your experience as a customer

We will continually improve and adapt, to make sure that you can get in touch with us easily and access high-quality, inclusive services. This will help us to meet your needs and resolve any issues that you may be experiencing.

We will create opportunities to listen to your views, understand your needs and review our services, so that we can use this feedback to improve.

We are creating a culture where the customer is at the heart of our organisation.

We will treat you fairly and with respect. Our communication with you will be open and clear.

We will continue to offer different ways for you to contact us so you can get in touch in the way that works best for you.

We will make sure that you can easily access all of our services.

We will aim to help you resolve your problem or request the first time you contact us.

We will encourage more customers to join our involved customer groups.

We will use data from our TSMs and complaints to find areas where service improvements are needed.



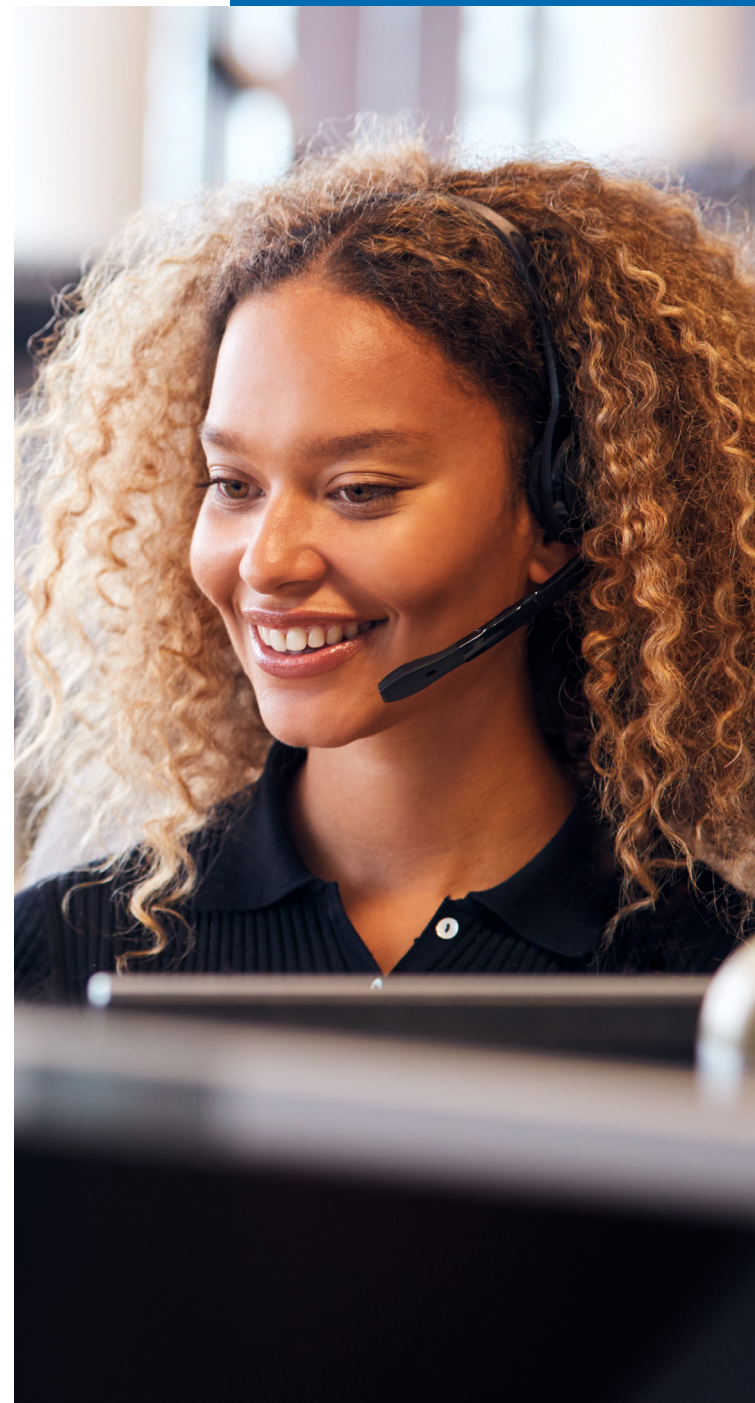
How we will meet our commitments

Improving your experience as a customer is our top priority and will help us to deliver better quality services.

We worked with the Customer Partnership Panel (CPP) to develop this document and we will regularly review and update it.

We will:

- ▶ Be accountable to everyone who uses our services. We will work with customers to understand how we can measure our performance against the promises we have made and we will share regular updates on our website and through other customer communications.
- ▶ Make improvements to our digital services in partnership with customers. This will allow us to have a clear understanding of customer needs and preferences and makes sure you remain at the heart of our services.
- ▶ Take steps to understand which customers find it difficult to interact with us. We will use this information to make sure we're always taking an inclusive approach to the way we deliver services.



Making these commitments part of our everyday work

Involving colleagues across the business

Each person in our organisation plays a key role in developing and improving our services. That's why we will make sure our colleagues understand the importance of customer feedback and accountability.

A customer experience team leads this work and they are responsible for:

- ▶ Making sure that our colleagues take responsibility for improving the experience of our customers
- ▶ Making sure that all colleagues collect important, quality information
- ▶ Analysing the information we collect and making recommendations for improvement
- ▶ Working with customers and colleagues to create our service standards
- ▶ Sharing news of how we've delivered our service standards
- ▶ Managing plans for improvement
- ▶ Making sure our boards and our customers receive regular reports about how we're doing

We will teach new skills to our employees, to help them to answer customer enquiries and resolve complaints effectively.



Making these commitments part of our everyday work

Customer involvement

Involved customers are at the heart of Homes Plus. We ensure that their views on the way that we are run and the work that we do are taken into account. They are helping us to deliver even better services across Staffordshire and Shropshire.

The Customer Partnership Panel (CPP) play an important role in developing our services. We are working to grow the number of customers on the panel from a broad cross section of the communities we serve.

We work with the Customer Partnership Panel to:

- ▶ Make sure our policies are customer focussed
- ▶ Develop our services
- ▶ Understand how you will be affected by key topics, such as the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)
- ▶ Communicate effectively with our customers
- ▶ Help customers understand how business decisions might impact the services we deliver

We're committed to continually improving the ways that we work. We will create opportunities for customers to get involved and share their feedback. We will also keep working to be more inclusive and make sure we take steps to understand which customers find it difficult to interact with us.

We involve customers in different ways

Customer Partnership Panel (CPP). The Customer Partnership Panel is customer-led and made up of involved customers. The group acts as a 'critical friend', who challenges our performance by reviewing services and making suggestions to help us improve.

The group gives customers a strong voice, by making sure that our performance and decision making are challenged.



Customer touchpoints. These are the ways that we interact with customers and they can include tenancy sign-ups and annual gas service checks. We will make the most of these opportunities to talk to our customers and make sure they are aware of important information.

Focus groups. When customers express an interest in giving feedback about a subject, or on one specific occasion, they are invited to join a focus group.

In the community. We have three Homes Plus Community Hubs in Castlefields and Meole in Shrewsbury and Burton Square in Stafford. We also attend community groups, family days out, fayres and events. We also work with local foodbanks and babybanks. We will work with customers in these places, to make sure they have the chance to be involved.

Making these commitments part of our everyday work

Virtual Customer Panel (VCP). The Virtual Customer Panel offers customers a way to have their say, online. Virtual Customer Panel members are asked questions about different areas of our business and about social housing. They give their honest thoughts, feelings and feedback about what we do and how we can make things better for our customers.



Surveys. You may be asked to complete a survey after receiving one of our services, such as a repair. Customers are contacted and asked for feedback on their experience and any suggestions they may have for improvement. We also receive feedback through the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). A random sample of customers are contacted directly by Acuity, a third party provider, to complete a perception survey where they will be asked how well you think we are performing across a range of areas. This feedback enables us to measure how well we are doing at providing good quality homes and services. We could also ask for feedback through text or on the My Homes Plus customer portal.

We will regularly review the effectiveness of the ways that customers can give feedback and we will change them, as required.

Our Homes Plus board works with the Customer Partnership Panel and shares information about the decisions they've made and their plans to further develop our services.

Members of our CPP have also formed a new Customer Experience Committee. This is a sub-committee of the Homes Board who meet quarterly to discuss key subjects such as the Consumer Standards and TSMs. This feedback is then shared with our Homes Plus Board through our new Board Co-Optee, who sits on both the CPP and the Board.

We will be exploring opportunities for customers to have a more central role in our performance as a business and key improvements being made as a result of customer feedback.



Making these commitments part of our everyday work

Customer communication

We will continue to communicate with you, to make sure you are kept up-to-date about our performance, the services we offer and matters that impact your home or community. We will share this information in an open and honest way.

Examples of the information we will share include:

- ▶ Changes to our services
- ▶ How your rent is spent
- ▶ External changes that could impact our services, including the rent cap
- ▶ How we maintain and improve properties
- ▶ Developments in your area and information about your local community
- ▶ How you can get help, advice and support
- ▶ How our business is performing

We will share this information in different ways, to make sure that you can access it in the way that works best for you. We will continually review the effectiveness of our communication channels and update them, as required.

- ▶ On our websites
- ▶ Through monthly e-bulletins
- ▶ In our annual report
- ▶ Through the customer portal

Our website offers 24/7 accessibility support. You can access speech, reading and translation assistance at any time by simply clicking the accessibility icon from any page of our website.

Our chatbot, Chatticus, can also give instant answers to your questions in seven different languages or put your query through to a member of our team, during office hours, if it can't find the answer to your question.

Making these commitments part of our everyday work

Customer service

We want to make sure that our services are accessible and customer-friendly. We're focusing on developing our digital channels, so that we can offer modern options that meet our customers' needs.

Customers can contact us by:

- ▶ Calling our customer service centre
- ▶ Registering to use the My Homes Plus customer portal
- ▶ Using Chatticus, our Homes Plus website chatbot and knowledge base
- ▶ Calling our 24/7 emergency out-of-hours service

Customers can also find information about our services on:

- ▶ The Homes Plus website

We also provide in-person support to customers through our three Homes Plus Community Hubs, Castlefields and Meole Brace in Shrewsbury and Burton Square in Stafford.

The hubs offer drop-in style services in the community, to provide customers with access to digital services and support to get back into work or deal with financial, debt and benefit issues. We will continue to look for more opportunities to provide accessible support in local communities, including in rural villages where customers may feel isolated.

Service improvement

We are committed to continually improving, to make sure we're offering value-for-money, high-quality services and customer satisfaction.

We will achieve this by listening to - and learning from - customer feedback by holding learning review workshops to help us better understand any service failures.

Our Service Improvement Committee (SIC), which is made up of senior colleagues from across the business, monitors our performance against service standards and customer feedback. They also check our progress against any actions we've agreed to complete.

Our Customer Experience Committee will also be holding us to account in delivering these improvements.




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