TENANT VOICE AND INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY
2022 – 2025

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Approved By:	STAR Housing Board
Date Approved:	12.07.22
Date for Review:	12.07.23
Replaces Previous Version:	
Version Number:	
Linked Policies:	N/A

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1. Introduction

STAR Housing manage over 4000 properties on behalf of Shropshire Council. We work to support the Council in achieving their vision for housing which is set out in their Housing Strategy 2020-2025, as well as achieving our own vision of "Listening to our residents, together we create quality homes and vibrant communities". This Vision is at the heart of everything that we do.

Our work is guided by our vision and our priorities are set out in our [Business Plan 2020-2024](#).

Good customer engagement has clear benefits. It enables better communication, improved customer experience and satisfaction, better allocation of resources, and value for money. It creates trust and meaningful relationships between tenants, customers and landlords.

This Strategy focuses on developing STAR Housing's aims to be accountable to customers, reduce inequalities and build strong, collaborative relationships through developing inclusive, modern and insightful engagement that places customer influence at the forefront of business planning.

It builds on the achievements of the Resident Engagement Strategy 2019-20, which focused on improving how our customers can be involved in shaping our services.

This Strategy aims to strengthen STAR Housing's established engagement structures and strong community foundations through developing opportunities to capture the customer voice across the broadest cross section of STAR's customer base. This will be achieved by using more flexible approaches, embracing technology and better utilising customer insight to evidence clearly how customers influence service design and delivery.

2. Context

National Context
There are several national and regional frameworks governing and guiding customer engagement, as set out below.

Regulatory Framework

The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) sets out statutory requirements for social housing providers, including economic and consumer standards, and will oversee the introduction of a new inspection regime that will include inspecting Council landlords. The RSH is also developing a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

Among other things, the system will involve a set of tenant satisfaction measures that social housing landlords must report on and they are also reviewing the Consumer Standards. We will ensure that we review our Business Plan and related Strategies and Policies once the framework is launched.

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (2017) forms part of the consumer standards, which include providing a wide range of opportunities for tenants to influence and be involved in the formulation of their landlord's housing-related strategic priorities, decision-making, and scrutiny.

National Policy

The sector is going through a period of significant change, and STAR Housing will remain responsive to emerging requirements and best practice guidance to ensure we continue to engage residents effectively.

Following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, there has been a national focus on resident safety, and an enhanced regulatory regime through the upcoming Building Safety Act will ensure residents have a stronger voice in the system. The Government's social housing White Paper (published in 2020), 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents', includes a focus on stronger resident engagement and ensuring that residents have their voice heard by their landlord. The RSH's Consumer Standards and, in particular, the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, provides a framework for the way in which we deliver services, with a particular focus on ensuring that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in service delivery, scrutiny of performance, and the formulation of policies and strategic priorities will help to focus our work so we strengthen the way we meet these standards and continuously improve our services and assess how we are doing each year.

Tpas – The Tenant Engagement Experts

Tpas is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving tenant involvement and empowerment across the country by working with residents, landlords, and contractors to promote, support and champion tenant involvement. Tpas support over 200 Housing Associations, Local Authorities, resident groups and contractors covering over 2.5 million homes. In February 2020, Tpas published a redefined set of national standards for engagement that highlighted the need for better transparency, openness and accountability between tenant and landlord and reflect the renewed importance of the resident's voice.

Local Context

STAR Housing manages over 4000 properties on behalf of Shropshire Council, the majority of which are in the Bridgnorth and Oswestry areas. We have begun to expand in to other parts of Shropshire, and contribute to the aims set out in Shropshire Council's Housing Strategy 2020-2025 of creating the right home in the right place.

Being a rural county with limited transport links it can be more challenging with formal methods of engagement, such as meetings which, traditionally, can present a barrier to involvement. Adopting modern, inclusive and informal methods to capture the customer voice, utilising customer insight and exploring in depth those that do not engage will open-up opportunities for customer influence.

3. Consultation

STAR Housing really do value their customers' opinions and we are positive about our statutory requirement to consult (Housing Act 1985, S105). This is demonstrated by our Area Panels who have the opportunity to comment on and influence STAR Housing policy

In May 2022, STAR consulted with all tenants, by way of a survey, to gauge the desired level and method of involvement, as well as looking at preferred communication methods.

The results of the survey are important to us and help us to modify how we communicate with and involve our customers. They highlighted that the majority of our tenants want to be kept informed of changes that affect them directly and about their local neighbourhood. A large proportion of residents wanting to use less traditional methods of engagement such as email or text message, as and when topics of interest arise

In addition to consultation, customer insight is gathered on an ongoing basis via complaints and compliments, satisfaction surveys, and day to day feedback from customers. Further information has been gathered through extensive telephone surveys asking our customers their views on services, communication and opportunities to influence and make decisions. This has enabled customers that wouldn't usually engage with formal consultation to influence service design and delivery. Good communication, being kept informed and access to clear and timely information emerged strongly as a theme in the feedback from customers.

4. STAR Housing Approach

Our approach is our values in action; in the way that we approach our stakeholders, customers and interact with each other. They are our guide to the way we do things and our four golden rules of success, which can be found in the STAR Housing Business Plan 2020-2024, are:

Caring and Respect
Keeping our Promises
Be Positive
Learning and Development

We continue to make a positive difference in Shropshire. As outlined in [Shropshire Council's Corporate Plan](#), 'Shropshire is a fantastic place in which to live, work, and visit'. Our services are delivered to make a positive impact on Shropshire and Shropshire communities.

Customer engagement at STAR Housing is well established with many ways that our tenants can influence the business. Our existing resident involvement and community engagement activities include:

- Area Panel
- Residents Groups
- Tenant Board members
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- Block Champions
- Summer Skip Events
- Information (website, social media, newsletters, Annual Report etc.)
- Consultation
- Satisfaction Surveys

Whilst these traditional methods of engagement still have their place, we aim to build on these and expand our digital offer to make engagement accessible for all, allowing our tenants' voices to be heard throughout the business, whilst also balancing the need to cater for those who do not have or do not want to use digital methods.

In order to ensure that we are offering the best opportunities for the tenants' voice to be heard, we will look to engage with Tpas to provide an audit of our Tenant Voice and Involvement Service.

We will continue to work with our communities. This includes supporting community groups with practical advice and our Community Chest grants for a wide range of projects. We will also continue to empower our residents to be able to make suggestions and develop neighbourhood projects on our estates.

5. Our Priorities

Our strategy provides a framework through which we aim to genuinely involve customers in shaping decisions that affect their homes, communities, and services they receive, to be open and responsive when listening and communicating with customers, and to recognise the needs of customers and the skills they bring in finding solutions.

Priority One: Amplifying the Tenant Voice and Value of Engagement

STAR Housing aim is to strengthen the links between engagement and business planning, ensuring the customer voice is listened to and clearly visible in all strategic planning and decision making.

Where engagement is understood and valued by all staff, this will underpin the creation of more opportunities for customers to be involved decision-making and collaboration.

Internally, involvement will be strengthened to ensure responsibility for engagement is valued as part of everyone's role and there is robustly evidenced accountability for engagement throughout the organisation.

Taking action to challenge negative perceptions of social housing will also contribute to nurturing a culture of trust and respect.

Priority One actions:

- Review governance procedures, such as cover reports, to bring the customer voice to the forefront of reports to Board.
- Introduce cross-service engagement opportunities to embed customer influence in every service.
- Embed engagement in recruitment, induction, training and values conversations so all staff understand meaningful engagement and the benefits it can bring to the organisation, residents and the wider community.
- Demonstrate a commitment to tackling stigma in social housing.
- Engage with Tpas to review our tenant voice and engagement services are working well

Priority Two: Delivering Continuous Improvement by being Accountable

We want customers to be able to help us to make the best use of our resources and we want to provide more engagement choices and opportunities to help us reach a wider range of customers, including diverse groups.

Our approach is focused on delivering services that meet the needs of customers and communities, whilst making the best use of resources. Making sure that we can be held accountable for the decisions we make is important to strengthen customers' trust and increase satisfaction with our services.

We need to manage our decision-making processes effectively and be transparent in what we do, whilst creating opportunities for customers to be involved and engaged in co-designing services and influencing our priorities. By demonstrating accountability and openness we can ensure better governance and service delivery, and help customers and communities to achieve better outcomes.

Priority Two actions:

- Build upon our existing opportunities for involvement.
- Be responsive to the emerging requirements of the social housing White Paper and developments in legal and regulatory requirements.
- Take a planned, purposeful approach to involvement and engagement to manage expectations, make sure tenant and community needs are considered, and make sure we demonstrate outcomes to those taking part.
- Consult with tenants around the rebranding of the current Area Panels.
- Monitor our engagement and involvement activities to ensure they are inclusive,
- Work to engage diverse, 'hard-to-reach', and under-represented groups by using a variety of innovative and flexible approaches.
- Build on our use of digital technology to increase engagement online.
- Continue to support our customer scrutiny groups, and improve our performance reporting to ensure customers receive clear, accessible, and timely information on the issues that matter to them.
- Continue to strengthen our stakeholder engagement and consultation to support our growth activities.
- Look at improving ways of communicating and gaining feedback from customers and service users that have high support needs.
- Undertake reviews of our services, working with customers to make sure they are person-centred and designed to meet their needs and priorities.
- Make use of the data available to us to design effective services, including improving our use of customer insight to make more informed decisions.
- Positively embrace using Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) and other performance indicators to tell our tenants how we are performing and how we compare with others.
- Continue to benchmark ourselves against other social housing providers using the TSMs and other measures to highlight areas for improvements and focus on the needs of tenants and residents.

Priority Three: Supporting Wellbeing and Maximising Customers' Skills and Potential

We want to support our customers to develop their skills so they can influence our services as well as improve their quality of life. Our approach is intended to address barriers to successful engagement activity. We want to make sure that customers have the skills, knowledge, and confidence to be involved and to ensure that customers are able to participate on an equitable basis. We also aim to improve the wellbeing of our customers and communities and to empower and support communities to develop their capacity to tackle issues they face.

Priority Three actions:

- Build on our successful community development and financial inclusion work.
- Support customers to be effectively involved through appropriate training.
- Work with partners where possible to address challenges including digital and financial inclusion, including fuel and food poverty;
- Work with partners to reduce social isolation and loneliness affecting the elderly and vulnerable.
- Provide financial advice and housing support for residents to effectively manage and sustain their tenancies.

Priority Four: Investing in Communities to Deliver Improved Outcomes

We recognise the importance of our partnerships, and that we can achieve better outcomes for all when collaborating effectively with our customers, communities, and stakeholders. We want to work with customers, organisations, and others in communities to make the best use of the resources that already exist, to build relationships, and to explore how joint working may benefit our customers and our business.

Our approach is intended to demonstrate the value of customer and community engagement, and to build sustainable communities that are cohesive and resilient. Our initiatives need to be good value for money, provide social value, make use of internal and external partnerships, and ensure that services that may already exist are given a customer focus.

Priority Four actions:

- Provide our staff with training and support to make sure customer and community engagement is embedded within our business.
- Adopt a localised approach to engagement that is driven by the greatest need.
- Work in partnership to develop and support the delivery of a variety of community development activities that promote inclusion and communities functioning in harmony.
- Involve our customers to scrutinise the key functions of our business to ensure accountability.

- Continue to engage and involve the local community in the design and building of new homes.
- Continue to listen to our customers and measure satisfaction to better understand local issues, support needs, and areas for improvement.
- Address community safety concerns through the delivery of neighbourhood project and partnership working.
- Measure and monitor the social impact of our community engagement activities.
- Maintain appropriate resourcing to deliver our priorities.
- Continue learning best practice in community engagement and customer involvement from our peers, stakeholders, and customer feedback.
- Continue to encourage our tenants to take the lead on Neighbourhood Projects and have access to the Community Chest Fund.

Priority Five: Keeping Our Promises and Using Feedback to Improve Services

The most vital way that we can instil trust and continually improve relationships with our tenants is through us keeping to our word.

Priority Five actions:

- We will be realistic and honest about what we can achieve and then make sure we do what we say we will do.
- We will take personal responsibility for making sure that STAR Housing deliver what we promise and tell our customers what we have done.
- If something does go wrong we will be honest about any mistakes, say sorry and put it right as quickly as possible.
- We will aim to "get it right first time".
- We will continue to promote and utilise our Complaints Procedure and use customer feedback to learn lessons, prevent repeat mistakes, improve the customer experience and develop our business.

6. What will success look like?

We will know that our Strategy has been successful when:

- We can see a year-on-year increase in customer satisfaction, demonstrating customers believe we have listened and acted on their views;
- We have improved our insight about who our customers are, and can demonstrate we have tailored our support based on their needs;
- We can measure a year-on-year increase in customers who are actively involved in helping to shape our existing and future services;
- Our customers are satisfied that engagement and involvement activities are inclusive, and we can demonstrate how their involvement has influenced our service delivery;
- Local people are satisfied they have the support they need through capacity building, training, and funding, and feel equipped to play a greater role in being leaders to make real changes in their own communities;
- We can evidence that we have addressed and reduced any inequalities of outcome by listening to our customers and responding to what our data and insight has told us;
- Our staff are satisfied that they feel supported and are confident to effectively engage, listen to, and involve our customers to help improve their services;

7. Measuring the impact

It is important that we understand the impact of the work we undertake to ensure we know what works, what difference has been made, and how effectively our resources are being used.

We will understand the impact of our work to deliver this strategy and strive for continuous improvement by:

- Monitoring customer and staff satisfaction;
- Regularly seeking customer feedback about our involvement activities;
- Measuring the social impact of the projects we undertake with our contractors by quantifying and applying a monetary value to their outcomes and impact.
- Measuring the difference our services make to customers through case studies and annual reviews of customer engagement outcomes;
- Reviewing our involvement activities for impact, effectiveness, popularity, access, diversity, and value for money.

Our approach will be supported by strategic and operational delivery plans throughout the life of this strategy. We will regularly share information about the progress of our work, the outcomes achieved, and the impact on customers. This will include regular reports to our rebranded Area Panel, STAR Housing Board, and will include updates for all customers through our resident newsletter, Annual Reports for Residents, social media and our websites.