



Policy:	Tenant Participation Strategy
Governance	
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Your Voice in Your Community

Introduction

Each tenant, owner and waiting list applicant is an individual who will have different aspirations on the levels in which they feel their “Voice” is heard in their community. Our approach to engagement is designed to support a broad range of customers’ choice to understand the experience they want when engaging with Blochairn Housing Association (BHA). For some this may be as simple as receiving regular communications through a variety of mediums like our newsletters, annual report and website or for others this may be involvement in decision-making aspects through participating in Tenant’s Groups, Forums or the Management Committee.

The understanding of the customer experience can be obtained by empathy and understanding their situation so that to we can identify any barriers they may face. In addition, we need to establish what they hope to gain through any engagement process. Through detailed knowledge of our customers we have the potential to embrace the needs of the community and where possible co-design services which can improve customer experiences whenever they interact with us.

The strategy distinguishes between approaches to tenant participation as an “individual” view, where the communication channel is focused on the tenant as an individual and the “collective view”, where the focus is on group decision making as they relate to business strategy, policy and planning issues.

The individual aspect of tenant participation is a route to business improvement, as it views the tenant as a consumer in a similar way to any other service related enterprise. As an individual their focus is how our services directly affect them and their home environment. To encourage engagement we need to make the options for engagement accessible, in that there is no further commitment on their part and to ensure flexibility whereby the individual can express their views and seek information at a time and format which suits them.

In contrast, the vehicle for the collective view of tenant engagement will often be set within constituted groups and formal committee meetings. The parameters of collective engagement are often the focus of policy, strategy and area based decisions. Unlike the individual view, those who participate in the collective view are generally required to take a longer term commitment to learning and participation and with this dedication comes additional powers to make decisions.

At its core the purpose of seeking participation and engagement from any user of our services is to attempt to meet the overall needs of both the individual and the wider community by shaping services in a way which suits them, delivering what the community needs and wants and creating a more effective service within the bounds of legislation and regulation.

Regulatory and Legal Requirements

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, introduced the first legal framework for tenant participation by giving tenants the rights to participate and be consulted. Tenants' rights include access to information about housing policies and related services and the right to be consulted and participate in decisions on services and issues which affect their home.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 further strengthened landlord duties around tenant participation through the establishment of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) and the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The latter included two outcomes of particular relevance to this strategy.

Outcome 1: Equalities – *'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.'*

Outcome 2: Communication - *'Tenants find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.'*

Outcome 3: Participation - *'Tenants find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.'*

Development of our Customer Service Strategy

Excellent customer service is the foundation of any engagement strategy. As evident from the tenant survey conducted, many negative comments regarding tenants' engagement and participation in decision making are borne out of frustrations (or perceived frustrations) around service delivery. The success of our engagement strategy is therefore intrinsically linked to the development of core aspiration to deliver outstanding customer service.

Clearly there will be occasions when we may get this wrong and being a learning organisation which focuses on using negative feedback as an opportunity to enhance what we do is core to our long term goals.

Within this strategy we will focus on how front line staff listen to tenants and have the tools to find solutions to their issues.

Your Voice in Your Community Strategic Aims

The strategic aims of our engagement strategy include:

- We understand that tenants are at the core of determine the scope, remit and form of participation and engagement
- We will offer a range of ways to get involved which reflects their needs, interests and desired level of commitment
- We will demonstrate the impact and influence participation has on decision making through regular feedback

- We will encourage a participatory culture set within excellent customer care values
- We will seek to be the conduit in which tenants views can be expressed to other organisations and stakeholders within the community

The strategic aims are fundamentally about providing opportunities to participate and utilising the knowledge and experiences of our tenants to help shape future services and partnerships.

What we want this strategy to achieve is to:

- Enhance our performance and more importantly what factors of performance are important to our tenants and service users
- Achieve value for money by delivering the right service in the most efficient method
- Improve tenants' knowledge and understanding of our services
- Understand tenants' and service users experience of our services and aim to enhance their service journey
- Meet our regulatory and legal obligations primarily in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Maximise the potential to develop the individuals skills, knowledge and expertise across different areas, for example access to digital information

What Does Your Voice in Your Community Mean?

This strategy describes all the different ways that tenants and customers can influence and shape housing and related services. This strategy is not overly concerned about the use of terminology as there are different definitions used to describe engagement and participation. Although the strategy is more focused on the outcomes as detailed in the implementation plan in [Appendix 1](#), we do adopt the Scottish Government, Guide to Successful Tenant Participation (2019) definition

“It is about tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, conditions and related services. It is a two way process, which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve housing conditions and services”.

Engagement and participation opportunities can be grouped using a Participation Pyramid. Table I illustrates our approach by separating out the individual and collective aspect of engagement and the power and number of participants for each of these pillars of engagement.

Tenant Engagement & Participating in Decision Making

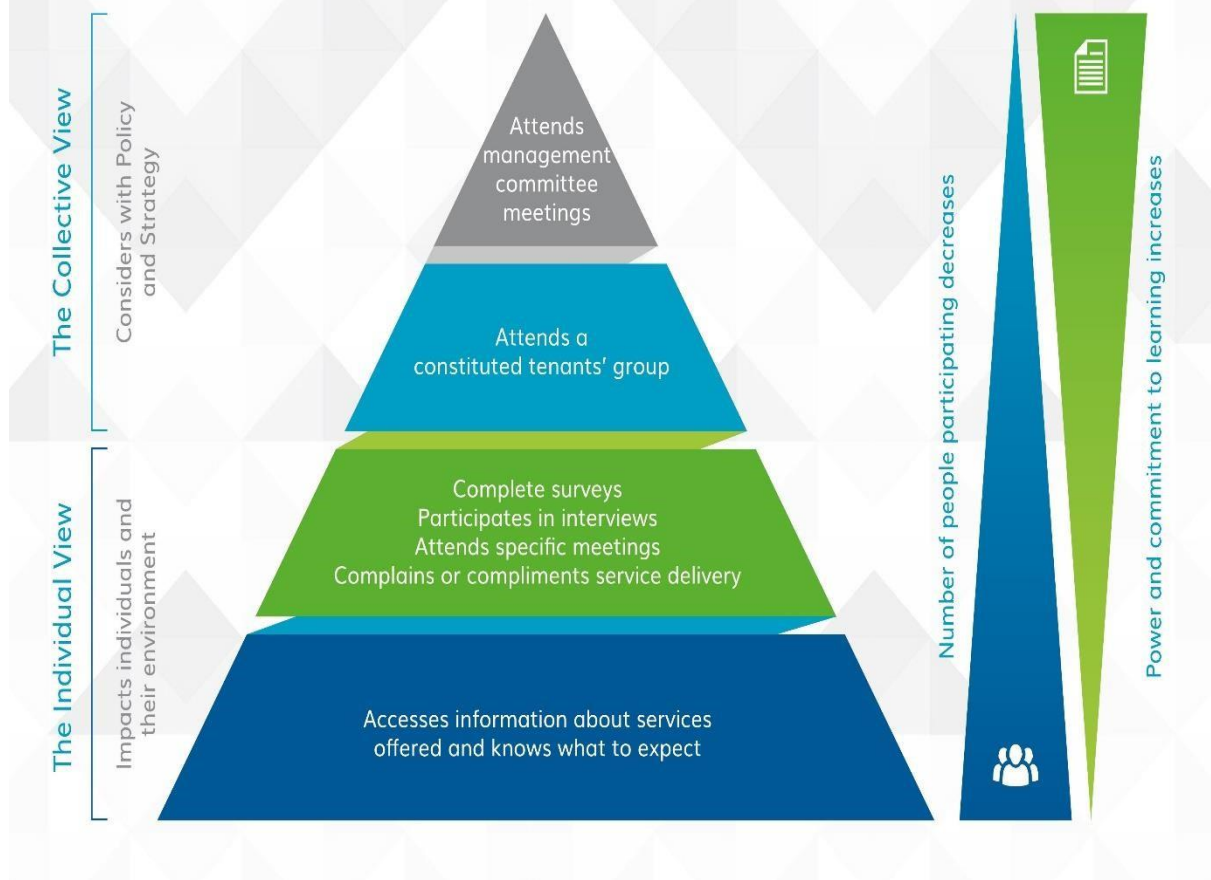


Table 1

The Framework for Your Voice in Your Community

There are five separate strands which support our engagement with tenants and customers as detailed in Table 2 below.

The processes attached to the implementation of these streams is a continuation of our successful approach to tenant engagement. Currently, 96% of tenants feel Blochairn is good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions and 86% are satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in our decision making processes.

Table 2 5 Strands to Engagement and Participation

<p>We inform You know</p>	<p>It is easy and accessible to know what to expect from our services</p>
<p>We listen You're heard</p>	
<p>We consult Together we co- design</p>	<p>We understand your experiences and use this to design and enhance services</p>
<p>We support You decide</p>	<p>We will support you to develop your knowledge, and understanding in order to make collective strategic decisions</p>
<p>We facilitate You develop</p>	<p>We help you to develop your skills and in doing so build capacity within your community.</p>

We inform & you Know

This is the foundation of any engagement plan or the bottom rung on the Participation Pyramid. The Scottish Social Housing Charter defines Communication as a process whereby

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

Communication and knowledge of our services, is tied into our culture of right first time and consistency of service. We will continue to invest in training and developing appropriate communication channels so that employees know what is happening across the organisation

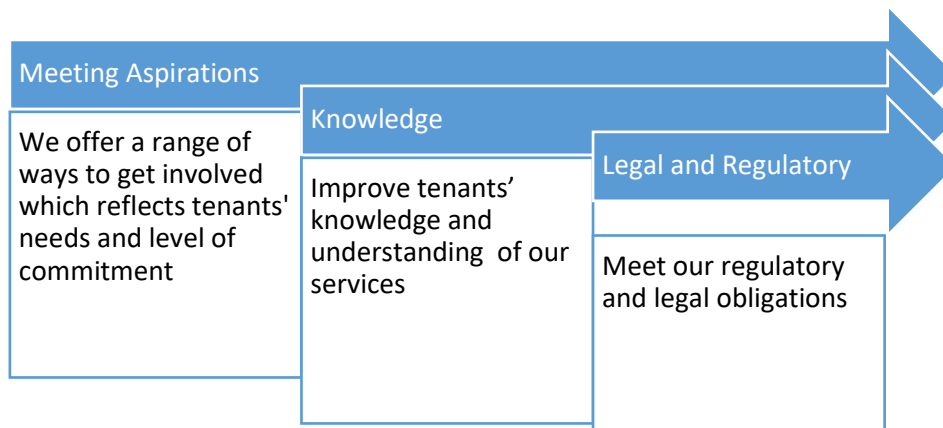
and also have access and knowledge of up-to-date procedures. This is linked to our objective of consistency of service delivery and right first time at the point of contact.

Other aspects of this stream is the importance of the newsletter on keeping tenants informed, as evident from the latest survey. However, email is a close 2nd preference when it came to finding out about our services. We will use our communication strands to target specific groups when appropriate and we will also look at developing the use of text messages and simplified survey forms, to generate as much participation as possible.

We will keep our website up to date at all times to enable Tenants and Service Users to be able to access up to date information at any time.

Other processes involved include the importance of getting up to date information on contact details and individual vulnerability requirements which we need to take into account when determining our services.

Outcomes: We Inform & You Know?



We Listen; You're Heard

This is a very individual or consumerist/transactional aspect of the service, whereby tenants and/or customers give feedback on aspects of the service which relates to them and their immediate environment. It is also the cornerstone of information gathering as a tool to enhance service delivery as it allows for the identification of particular trends and perceptions which we can then actively seek to focus upon. The association also undertakes full scale customer satisfaction surveys which seeks to understand the tenant's views at a particular point in time. This is a requirement under the Scottish Social Housing Charter however beyond that it gives an over-arching view from the community on how we are performing and can be used to focus on any areas where the satisfaction is lower than would wish.

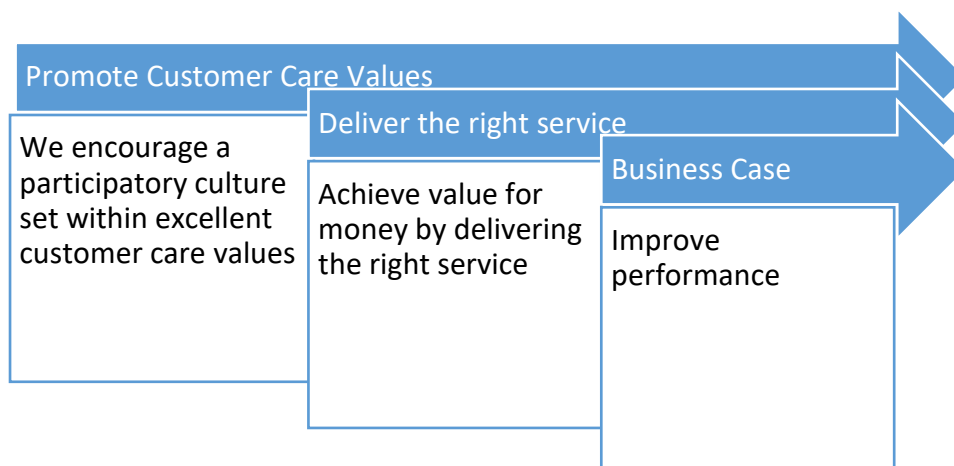
The key aspect of 'We listen, You're Heard' are service journey end surveys, which includes repairs, setting up home, antisocial complaints and financial inclusion services. These will be

issued electronically. Where the tenant does not have access to digital communications then surveys can be issued using different formats or they can be carried out over the phone. This evidence gathering can be linked to our self-assessment for our Annual Assurance Statement. The value of this service is that tenants give feedback after service delivery at time which suits them and acts as a platform where their views concerns, queries, complaints or compliments can be acted upon. This proposed increased volume of survey material s will ensure that our service are genuinely customer-led.

In addition to journey end surveys we will promote communications via telephone, email and the website, whereby tenants and customers can express what is on their mind rather than responding to focused questions. In a similar way we will also establish if there is any learning which can be taken on board through complaints made to the association.

We will also consider as part of the Customer Service Strategy, the culture and operational implications of encouraging all front line staff to listen to tenants in a manner which seeks to find solutions or alternative options to issues they have raised.

Key Outcomes: We Listen & You're Heard



We Consult & Together We Co-design

Part of the objective of our strategy is to demonstrate the impact and influence participation has on decision making. The impact can be measured by improving tenant's and service users experience of our services. Adopted techniques used in the service design demonstrates our commitment to this principle.

This range of activities covered in co-design or participatory design can be involved in policy proposals, project proposals, service enhancement or in development of new services. The principles of co design comes from the Service Design as promoted by The Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAtSD). <https://www.gov.scot/publications/the-scottishapproach-to-service-design/pages/foreward/>. This approach describes design as a way of exploring the problem space openly, collaboratively and with users, before a solution or service is decided. This approach adopts the following principles:

User Centred: There is a focus on the user experience and that we design service journeys around people and not around how we are currently set up.

Research Based: We need to understand the problem from a wider perspective. We adopt research from surveys, complaints analysis, literature reviews, good practice and practitioner/staff views.

Collaborative: We need a range of insights and perspectives. Participants have an open mind, free from bias and with a willingness to question based on a fresh outlook.

Insights: Triangulate evidence from different methods to discover insights, by identifying themes and patterns from the research.

Ideas: Create multiple ideas, without being precious about if they are good or bad. Narrow down ideas to those which solve problems our tenants and customers have.

Key Outcomes: We consult and together we Co-design

Aim	Action
Demonstrate Impact and Influence	Ensure understand tenants' experience, from their perspective.
Value for Money	Understand tenant's experience of our services and aim to improve their service journey.
Culture Change	We encourage a participatory culture set within excellent customer care value.

We Support, You Decide

This aspect of the strategy considers the Collective View of tenant engagement and participation, where tenants are involved in determining policies and strategies which affect all tenants' homes and their community.

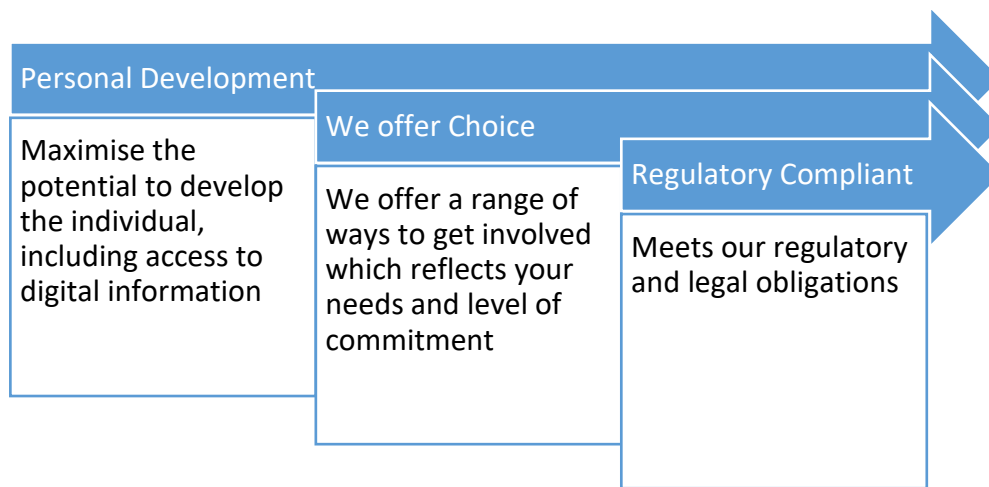
The primary purpose of the Management Committee of Blochairn Housing is 'lead and direct' the organisation. It is the decision making body for the organisation and focuses on developing the strategic outcomes which are then tasked to the Director to lead the day to day operations required to achieve these strategic outcomes.

Part of effective governance is to ensure that we seek to recruit a diverse range of Committee Members and provide them with support, ongoing training and personal development to

allow them to participate fully in the decision making process and ensure positive outcomes are achieved.

A strong Management Committee consists of those with the whole community at heart, strong business acumen, the ability to generate ideas, having appropriate expertise and primarily the values that align with the Business Plan of Blochairn Housing. There is no correct number of tenants, those with a particular expertise or those with a particular knowledge of housing which makes up the 'perfect' Management Committee. However it is recognised that having a strong collection of individuals with different skill sets, different viewpoints and differing experiences leads to the most effective decision making and we will seek to ensure there is appropriate representation across the different groups to meet our objectives.

We Support You Decide

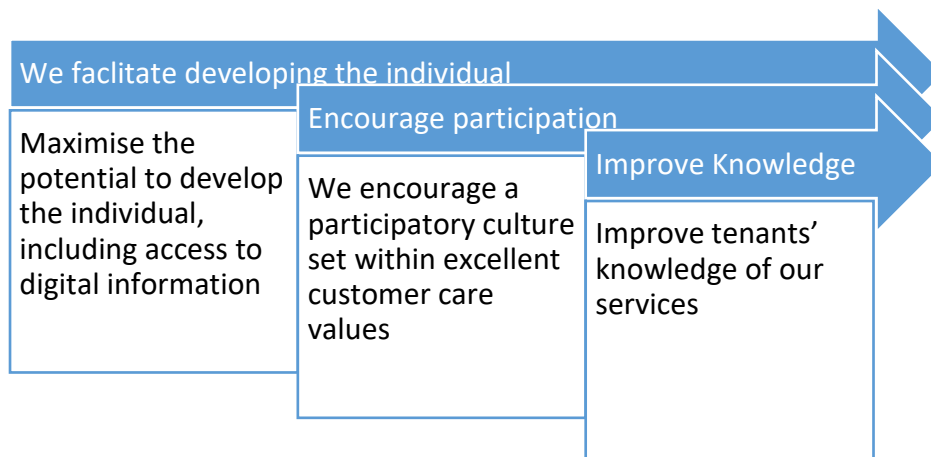


We Facilitate and You Develop

This strategy aims to utilise the potential of digital communications to maximise the number of people who engage with the Association. This push for digital communication is mirrored in wider society and has been fast tracked by Covid-19 restrictions. The advantages of digital communication is that can be instrumental in overcoming some of the barriers faced by residents. It is also convenient, instantaneous and flexible and encourages greater engagement.

However, we also need to recognise the potential that digital technology could potentially create barriers by preventing those without the technology, connectivity or digital confidence from accessing participation opportunities. We therefore aim to provide residents with a range of options for communicating with us.

Key outcomes: We Facilitate You Develop



Implementation of Strategy

A proposed programme of activity to implement this strategy is detailed in Appendix 1. This strategy is for two years as it recognises that we are introducing a range of new digital and IT services and also embedding cultural changes in terms of service design and a new customer care strategy. The programme will detail both cyclical and development activities over the course of the next financial year. The intention is that these activities will be reviewed in September of each year for the following year and will be aligned with any budgetary considerations.

Cultural Change

The implementation of the strategy will involve behavioural changes within the organisation in learning how to best utilise technology and also understanding tenant and service users experiences.

All staff will have a role to play in the promotion and implementation of this strategy.

Performance Framework

The intention of our implementation plan will improve performance by increasing the number of people who participate in decision-making. In addition, by incorporating our understanding into how we can improve the experience of service users we will enhance value for money and satisfaction levels.

The measuring satisfaction levels vary depending on the methodology. It has been suggested that satisfaction levels are often higher using face to face interviews as opposed to digital survey by approximately 15%. Therefore until we can establish a base level of satisfaction results using digital tools we will continue to monitor and report on satisfaction levels for this strategy using face to face interview, as per the current Scottish Housing Regulatory Guidance.

The performance framework will develop over time as we introduce the new ways of operating as detailed in the implementation plan. These additional performance indicators will be included in our annual review of the strategy.

Key Performance Indicators

Over 96% of tenants are satisfaction with our overall performance.

Over 96% of tenants are satisfied with how we keep them informed about services and decisions

Over 86% of tenants are satisfied with the opportunities to participate in the decision making process.

Monitoring

The actions identified in the implementation will be over a 2 year period, subject to review in Year 1.

The implementation plan will be reported to Committee in September each year and proposed changes to plan will be identified in this report so as to align with the budgetary proposals.

Conclusions

The purpose of an Engagement Strategy is to allow us to consider what we already do, understand our tenants and service users expectations and put in place differing objectives which can help us achieve greater engagement combined with enhanced performance across the different services we provide.

We recognise that 'engagement' is pivotal in that it allows for a greater understanding of our tenants circumstances, perceptions of the association and expectations of service and allows us to shape them in a way that truly meets their needs. As an organisation that performs to a good standard at the moment this greater understanding of both the individuals we provide a service to and the wider community will further enhance our day to day activities together with any longer term business strategies.

The Engagement Strategy sets out a range of themes with a variety of tasks / activities that will fall under them to support further engagement with our tenants and service users. It is only a relatively short term strategy over a two year period initially as these new approaches we seek to adopt can then be monitored to ascertain how successful they have been.

We are committed to involving our tenants and service users in the delivery of our services as they are the heart of the community in which we operate and understanding their expectations will be crucial in the ongoing development and success of the organisation.

Equality and Diversity Statement

Blochairn Housing are committed to ensuring people or communities do not face discrimination or social exclusion due to any of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex or sexual orientation.

This document complies with our Equality and Diversity Policy.

We will regularly review this Policy and consider any equalities implications taking the necessary action to address any inequalities (either directly or indirectly) that result from the implementation of this Policy.