

Customer Involvement Strategy

Statement of Intent

‘We will create opportunities and encourage our customers to work with us to enable full participation in all matters affecting their home and surrounding environment, at all levels within the organisation.’

Three Rivers Housing Association is committed to encouraging and creating opportunities for all our customers to work together to share ideas and information and be involved in decisions that affect their lives with regard to the home in which they live. We see involving residents as an essential ingredient of quality housing services and continuous improvement, performance and efficiency.

This Statement of Intent sets out how we will continue to create opportunities through which all of our customers can take greater control and ownership of the consultation process and, in doing so, help shape and improve the services that we will provide in future. The Statement begins with our overarching aims and aspirations in respect of customer involvement and consultation across the whole of our service. This is followed by a specific statement in respect of our Care & Support customers.

General Aims

Aim 1 - To provide opportunities for customers to influence the policy making and business planning process of Three Rivers

- To ensure that two tenant positions are made available on the Board with full voting rights.
- To ensure that the Tenants Advisory Committee is able to make proposals to Board on all key areas of service, policy and business.
- To organise an annual conference for all Three Rivers tenants to allow them the opportunity to comment upon and influence the business and financial issues of the Association.

Aim 2 - To establish a range of flexible systems to enable individuals, groups and communities to be involved in designing, delivery and evaluation of services

- To use focus groups where these continue to be an acceptable form of consultation with tenants.
- To undertake a major customer satisfaction survey every 2 years to gauge customer satisfaction with service and identify issues for improvement. Issues will then be addressed through an action plan.
- To undertake a number of smaller satisfaction surveys, across a range of service areas, on a continuous basis.
- To consult with individuals and communities throughout the process of new development and to continue the process of feedback and appraisal with all customers and stakeholders, beyond completion of the new development.
- To involve and consult with customers in areas where Three Rivers is undertaking regeneration work in order to allow local people the opportunity to influence the future plans for their community.
- To hold Care & Repair advisory committees to consider customer feedback and performance information of the Association's Care & Repair services.
- To investigate the possibility of a web-based survey site as a preferred method of consultation.
- To include tenant representatives within the selection panel for appointing external contractors to undertake planned improvements within a serial maintenance contract.
- To provide residents with as much information as possible, and required, in terms of different service standards and how a variety of options would impact upon our rental income requirements.
- To work with Residents Groups to identify what degree of influence and control they would like to have over the provision and management of services in their area.
- To consult with customers regarding planned or cyclical improvements to their home.

Aim 3 - To seek to deliver a personalised and responsive service to all customers and provide an effective complaints policy for those unhappy with the service provided by Three Rivers

- To deliver an effective and responsive complaints policy that allows the easy recording of complaints, rapid investigation and clear feedback/resolution.
- To provide a quality web site through which customers can access major services easily and 24 hours per day.

- To promote front line officers names amongst all customers so that they know whom their main contact is to deliver assistance, support or advice.
- To enable all customers to influence Three Rivers service and activities by delivering a personalised service that is most convenient to individual needs and circumstances.

Aim 4 - To promote, encourage and support initiatives that provide benefits for the communities that Three Rivers serve, ensuring the provision of sufficient resources, finance, training and expertise to support the work and activities undertaken

- To support and sponsor local community led projects in order to improve communication and consultation with our customers and to benefit the local community.
- To be involved with and support residents groups in local communities. To provide them with training, advice, experience and funding to enable them to operate effectively.
- To provide training to staff and Board members to ensure that we have the ability and knowledge required to provide the best possible customer service.
- To provide sufficient funds to support the Tenants Advisory Committee in terms of travel, child care, training and any other reasonable expense that members may incur.
- To encourage joint training between our tenant representatives and those of other local RSL's, to help identify common issues, generate shared confidence in consultation processes and procedures, promote best practice and improve networking between tenant representatives.

Aim 5 - To establish effective communication and consultation with all customers to provide them with information, advice and assistance on issues and changes that affect their home, environment or personal circumstances

- To publish approximately 4 editions of 'The Bridge' newsletter annually to inform customers of the activities of Three Rivers, and to ensure that tenants are represented within the editorial panel.
- To publish the 'Focus' newsheet to provide feedback to residents on involvement activity and to advertise for future resident involvement.
- To provide a wide range of other information and to consult through a range of media including letters, handbooks, meetings, telephone, web site and newsletters on major changes in Three Rivers policy and procedure.

- To provide an easy to understand leaflet on the Customer Involvement Policy to set out how customers can influence the policy and services of Three Rivers.

Aim 6 - To seek to ensure equal treatment for all in the implementation of the involvement policy irrespective of ethnic origin, colour, religion, gender, age or disability and to allow for diversity within the implementation of the strategy

- To review our Equality & Diversity strategy, ensure our policy and procedures remain compliant with Housing Corporation expectations, and are effective across all areas of service delivery.
- To ensure that a tenant representative and tenant board member are included within the Equality & Diversity Strategy working group.
- To ensure that all written material can be translated, published or taped to allow all those with language or physical needs to access services and information.
- To ensure that all offices and venues are accessible to all customers irrespective of infirmity or disability.
- To subscribe to and provide a Language line service to all customers to enable them to be involved in the design and evaluation of services.
- To have a separate Statement of Intent in respect of Care & Support customers.

Aim 7 - To effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of the Customer Involvement Strategy upon communities, service provision and individuals

- To monitor the overall effectiveness of, and satisfaction with, the involvement policy through the two yearly tenants survey.
- To work with residents to produce an 'Impact Assessment' on an annual basis detailing the effectiveness of the Involvement Policy and identifying issues and achievements where customers have been able to influence policy and service provision.
- To provide statistics on the satisfaction of tenants with their involvement in the undertaking of major works to their homes and community.
- To annually review the Involvement Strategy via consideration by the Tenants Advisory Committee and Board of Management.

Care & Support Aims

Aim 1 - To involve customers in planning, monitoring and checking how the service is delivered and to set and check the standards of that service.

- To involve customers at the design stage through a range of differing methods involving families and advocates.
- To involve customers at the design of the service delivery model via a steering group process for each supported housing project.
- To assist customers in setting service standards for the department through the service standards group.
- To evaluating the new Performance Monitoring Framework for Agency Managed Schemes.
- By meeting Supporting People requirements on consultation and involvement and developing these through the Service Development Group.

Aim 2 - To take customers views, wants and aspirations into account when making decisions about their homes and to listen to customers ensuring that we involve them in everyday decisions.

- Develop a customer database outlining who, how and what areas customers wish to be involved in,.
- To review the database taking into account turnover levels in short and long term schemes, and to gather information at 'sign up'.
- Continue to promote and use house meetings, one to one, telephone surveys, attendance at events, postal surveys, service standards groups, advocates and carers.
- Use information gathered in the Groups internal Care and Support Service Improvement group.

Aim 3 - To let customers know that we have listened to them by telling them how they have changed what we do by using our complaints procedure.

- Producing literature in appropriate formats which are easily accessible.
- Ensuring the complaints procedure, in whatever format, is effectively distributed and that staff have necessary training and place high importance on learning from complaints and compliments.
- Review the complaints and compliments procedure with customers every three years.
- Publish annually in the Three Rivers Housing Groups Newsletter any areas of improvement and service development as a result of complaint or compliment.
- Produce a compliment form.

Aim 4 - To make money available to train and assist customers to become involved.

- To cover out of pocket expenses such as childcare, transport, loss of earnings, and to explore payment for customers.
- To allocate a budget each year towards customer involvement managed by the Contracts and Service Standards Officer, and to involve customers in the management of the budgets.
- To formulate a training programme for customers around core skills required for involvement.

Aim 5 - To carry out regular satisfaction surveys, seek regular feedback and compare to other organisations.

- Carry out a very specific survey once every two years across all of our supported stock and use this information to inform service development.
- Use comparator information from other providers to benchmark our services both locally and nationally, interfacing with results from Supporting People reviews.
- Solicit feedback at every Supported Housing Officer visit to each scheme and feed this through the internal Service Development Group.
- Solicit feedback from each one to one Support plan meeting in our directly managed schemes and feed this through the internal Service Development Group.

Aim 6 - To ensure that customers have a voice in the wider community planning and management.

- Keep customer informed about local initiatives and facilities using notice boards and directories of events and promotion with Care partners.
- Ensuring that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities, making links wherever possible with local groups, organisations and representative members to ensure representation and assistance.
- Have a voice on local partnership groups via advocacy services or direct representation by Three Rivers staff or our agents.

Aim 7 - To help customers to take control of their services and decide who delivers them wherever possible.

- Ensure that customers are aware that they can influence and control our service delivery.
- Give customers the opportunity if appropriate for local control.
- Support customers to take control if it is appropriate and they wish to.

Aim 8 - To ensure that customers have equal opportunity to be involved, whatever their background or personal circumstances.

- Working with the Equality and Diversity Group to identify how best we can meet all cultural needs within the participative process.
- Work with partners such as the Darlington and Durham Race Equality Council for external consultation and their view.
- Support customers with a range of needs including those from BME Groups and ensure we are aware of their individual needs so that they will be able to participate.
- Review the current equality and diversity statements and practices within the Care and Support team together with our customers.

Aim 9 - To ensure that delivery of the strategy and action plan is maintained.

- To implement a set of performance indicators for monitoring arrangements.
- For overseeing of the action plan to be the responsibility of the Contracts and Service Standards Officer.
- Produce an annual report outlining the outcomes from the previous year.
- Ensure that a synopsis of the annual report to be published in the Tenants Newsletter.