



CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

2024 – 2027



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Introduction

This plan sets out how Hanover will listen to, consult, and engage with our customers over the next 3 years to ensure that we have mechanisms in place to do this effectively and reflect our customer profile.

The plan was developed to build on previous customer engagement and participation approach and will expand and modernise the ways residents can engage with us.

We strongly believe that customer engagement leads to better decisions, empowered customers, and improved services. This creates an environment of robust accountability and keeps us focused continuous service improvement.

Happy Customer Strategy

Good customer engagement can contribute significantly to our strategic goal of Happy Customers, and this plan is aligned to deliver our Happy Customer Strategy with its clearly stated ambition that **customers are happy with how they engage with us.**



Customer Engagement & Satisfaction

Outcome 3 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter is ‘tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy for them to participate in, and influence, their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with’.

Evidence for this outcome is gathered through the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) indicator 5 which asks customers their ‘satisfaction with opportunities to participate in their landlord’s decision-making’. In our last satisfaction survey (2021) customer satisfaction with indicator 5 was **64.9%**, this has dropped significantly since - our most recent survey (concluded in winter 2023) reports this is **51.8%**.

When we ask our customers what’s important to them, getting involved in decision making is never at the top and often doesn’t feature on their list at all. What they do want if for us to listen to their feedback on services.

So a big focus for us over the period of this strategy is to develop a range of new customer engagement and satisfaction indicators that reflect what our customers want.

The Regulator requires that Housing Associations conduct a satisfaction survey at least every 3 years. This means that in making comparisons for benchmarking, we may be comparing our 2023/24 data to data collected by our peers in 2020/21. However, from the most recent data collected.

The data shows that declining overall satisfaction matches a wider decline across service industries as well as the housing sector. We anticipated a decline in these results due to a particular price increase we passed on to our tenants in 2023/4 that was unavoidable, but it also reflects a dissatisfaction with our ability to catch-up on our planned maintenance programme post-Covid.

The key objective for our Customer Engagement Plan over the next 3 years is to support the work being done to increase customer satisfaction, and particularly with opportunities to participate by 13.1%; getting back to our pre-COVID satisfaction level of 64.9% or beyond by the end of the plan.

What our Customers Say

Two thirds of our customers are 75+ and females who live on their own. Over 80% of our housing developments are sheltered housing models where a range of support services are provided.

We do have a number of general needs and amenity housing where we provide the standard landlords services, but these have no communal areas, social activities or support services provided as part of the package.

As we go forward, we will amend our KPIs and satisfaction questions to reflect these very different service types to help us understand how we can tailor our engagement opportunities to these groups to maximise the success.

Our customers have told us that feeling safe and secure is particularly important to them and that they value face-to-face time with Hanover employees. We know that social isolation and loneliness are key issues for older people, made worse by the pandemic however as a landlord with site-based employees at many of our developments, we have an opportunity to re-focus their activities on enhanced engagement with customers.

The table below illustrates how the age of our tenants is a factor in their satisfaction with participation. Our youngest customers – those who do not expect us to provide anything other than a standard landlord service – express the highest level of satisfaction. Customers most likely to be in sheltered housing are also the least satisfied with our current offer. Therefore, a focus on how we promote and provide engagement and participatory activities in our sheltered developments is essential to improving satisfaction overall.

Age range	Satisfied	Neither satisfied/ dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
16-44	66%	22%	12%
45-64	56%	27%	17%
65-74	50%	29%	20%
75-84	49%	34%	17%
85+	54%	38%	9%

**Note percentages have been rounded to whole numbers*

Challenges

We face a number of challenges to increasing engagement give our customer profile and specifically;

- some unstaffed developments – our amenity and general needs population is harder to engage with using informal methods as there are no communal areas or staff on site.
- our properties are widely spread over Scotland which means that accessing external community support can vary widely. For example, our partnerships with IT skills agencies are concentrated in the central belt, with fewer options for those living in rural areas.
- digital exclusion – around 50% of our customers aged 75 – 84 do not use the internet and make up a third of our total customer base, meaning that digital methods can only be part of a suite of options.
- a lack of understanding amongst customers as to what is meant by participation and engagement and the benefits of taking part.
- The negative impact on the level of social interaction that our tenants want to engage in post covid and how to address this to encourage people to get more involved.

All of these challenges have influenced our thinking in terms of preparing this plan.

Developing the Plan Consultation and engagement process

We have involved a range of customers, employees, and peers in developing this Customer Engagement Plan to make sure it captures a wide range of views.

Customers were asked about their preferences regarding customer engagement in several ways. A pulse survey was undertaken, and discussions were then held at 2 regional focus groups, and a further 3 semi-structured groups. The Satisfaction Survey 2023 has provided valuable customer insight into their preferences and requirements, and as such the plan demonstrates our Happy Customer principle that we ‘listen to what customers want.’

A selection of employees across the organisation have formed a working group to ensure that this plan meets the needs of other business functions and will continue to meet. There are regular meetings in place that enable collaboration and feedback across Hanover. Going forward, significant publicity and marketing is required to ensure that participation and engagement remain a key concern for all Hanover employees.

Our peer group of housing associations have provided insight into our focus on socialising and informal gatherings. They note similar challenges to customer engagement – particularly the reluctance to engage and to travel to central locations and are moving towards informal approaches focused on the local level to drive engagement. Some other housing associations and several local authorities are moving away from hosting in-person events altogether given the low levels of interest. We don’t feel this would be appropriate approach for Hanover as our customers have told us they really value face-to-face time.

Our Plan for the Next 3 Years

Customers have told us that they value face-to-face engagement over other methods. Those who are digitally engaged are keen to move to online methods where appropriate – particularly in terms of activities like large surveys, consultation, and communication.

A common theme from our satisfaction survey 2023 suggests that many of customers are keen to take part in social activities, and events/ opportunities happening locally. Customers did not ask in the satisfaction survey for the more formal opportunities to participate. This was also reflected in the results of a survey conducted on our behalf by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and the feedback from customers who scrutinised this plan.

Digital engagement across Hanover varies by age. Around 96% of those in our youngest age bracket use the internet, this falls to 70% for those aged 45-74 and is lowest for those over 85 where it drops to 28%.

During the period of the plan we will focus on delivering the key activities and services our customers state they want as set out in the 4 main categories below:

- More social gatherings in their own developments
- advice surgeries and drop-ins in collaboration with, for example, our Welfare Rights Service
- entertainment to help provide fun and interesting activities.
- IT skills and help to increase digital skills and inclusion.

We will continue to offer formal engagement opportunities through the following key routes:

- working groups (both in-person and online) to participate in any major projects and we will produce a plan each year to share with tenants on what is planned and how to get involved.
- Procurement working groups to help shape and decide on contractors for services that have direct impact on our tenants – we will produce a plan each year to show what is coming up and how to get involved.
- support to existing or newly constituted committees and Registered Tenants’ Organisations
- short-life working groups to respond to external consultations.

To meet our regulatory objectives we will also encourage our customers to get involved in scrutiny activities. In particular we will promote more active engagement in:

- preparing the annual charter performance report, ensuring it meets the needs of our tenants.
- Using the performance report to identify and undertake scrutiny activities.
- Designing and keeping up to date, the website containing our performance results.
- Working more closely with Board by meeting up annually to review the performance report and agreeing the scrutiny activity.

OUR OBJECTIVES AND KEY MILESTONES

There are several key milestones for each year of the plan that will support our 3 key objectives summarised below.

1

Increase social activities at developments to improve engagement and satisfaction levels.

2

Continue to promote and support more formal engagement opportunities.

3

Meet our regulatory duties around customers' opportunities to influence our decision-making.

To measure these 3 key objectives by the end of the plan we hope that:

- Customer satisfaction with opportunities to participate will increase to pre-pandemic levels of 69.4%
- Customer engagement will be embedded across Hanover, with all employees aware of their responsibilities to promote, encourage and seek customer engagement in their work.
- Level of engagement across all three types (social, formal and regulatory) will have increased with the focus on social activities in the early year.

Year One Build on the Foundations

Year One focuses on the foundations of what we need to be in place and includes the work required to start an organisational culture shift towards engagement. In year 1, we will understand the level of activity currently happening in our developments and improve on our communications with customers, ensuring that they are well-informed about how they can get involved. We will increase the number of communication routes to customers, using digital screens for example. By the end of the year, employees will have increased knowledge and understanding of how they can support, promote and encourage customer engagement.

Year Two Build the Partnerships

Year Two focuses on the expansion of more of the activities that customers want from Hanover, with a renewed focus on formal engagement opportunities through embedding scrutiny work and encouraging close links between customers' input and the work of the Board. We will develop partnerships with external groups to support our customer engagement to help develop the community engagement piece. We will review and celebrate our success from year 1, maintaining a level of enthusiasm from both customers and employees in Customer Engagement.

Year 3 Communication & Evaluation

In year three, when we must report to the SHR, customer satisfaction with opportunities to participate will be at pre-COVID levels of 64.9%. Our improved data-gathering will enable us to understand how well the plan is working and the increased level of engagement (both formal and informal) across Hanover. Our communication channels to share engagement opportunities and their results will be well-established and enable customers to have a good understanding of what customer engagement is in Hanover. We will again celebrate our previous success to promote the benefits of customer engagement and help support ongoing buy-in.

RESOURCES, BUDGET AND
TIMESCALES

The key resources required for the plan are employee time and effort. The Customer Experience team will work in partnership with customer-facing staff to deliver local engagement activities, and these are costed within the current Customer Experience budget of £10,000 per annum, to achieve these opportunities to participate.

A review of the structure of the Customer Experience team (including the Volunteering Service) will be undertaken to ensure its effectiveness, given the ambition of our plan, and the geographic spread of our developments.

Given the aim of increasing size and scope of the service, there will be additional requirements for staffing to ensure delivery. Additional resource will also be required to purchase a digital engagement platform, of approximately £12,000, although may be offset by the current costs of outsourcing the satisfaction survey being brought in-house.

There are potential funding opportunities that will be explored to support additional activities and the running of these, with a Lotto application proposed for financial year 2024/25 to provide additional resource.

RISK MANAGEMENT

In terms of managing any risk associated with the delivery of this plan, the table below captures the key risks and their mitigation. We will assess these annually as part of our review of the action plan and budget requirements.

Risk	Mitigation
Lack of employee engagement	Employees are involved and included in designing engagement opportunities throughout, to ensure that they see the benefits of Customer Engagement and have the time to do so
Lack of customer engagement	Customers have been asked for their preferences and wishes, following through on the satisfaction survey comments will ensure that customers receive the opportunities they prefer. Good communications to ensure that all customers are aware of what’s going on across Hanover
Geographic spread of developments	Working collaboratively with Development Managers to empower them to deliver engagement at a local level Collaboration with the Volunteering Service to provide tailored support where required
Cost of activities as a barrier to uptake	Provision of a small social budget to developments to reduce cost barrier CX team to apply for relevant funding streams where available to provide further income

MONITORING AND REPORTING

We are required to report on our customers’ satisfaction with opportunities to participate through the Annual Return on the Charter. This uses the data gathered from the Satisfaction Survey. To compare against the baseline from the 2023 survey, a pulse survey will be undertaken in year 2.

Customer feedback forms at each engagement activity will allow monitoring of what is going well and what could be improved on, so that activities can be adapted and refined as required.

A Key Performance Indicator (KPI) has been set to measure the level of engagement (CX2) – number of customers engaged with by the CX team monthly.

The Customer Experience team will report to the OMT (operational managers) and SMT (senior managers) meetings on customer engagement and progress against the KPI.





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