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CUSTOMER VOICE STRATEGY 2022 - 2025

Classification: Strategic

Status: Approved

Policy Lead:	Director of Community Services
Last Review Date:	June 2017
Review Due Date:	June 2025
Review Period:	3 years unless required earlier due to changes in the law, regulation, best practice or requirement of the Association

REFERENCE PAGE

Document Title:	Customer Voice Strategy 2022 - 2025
Aim:	To enhance the services for all the people and communities we serve by engaging, listening to, and collaborating with our customers.
Objective:	1 The Eildon Group will ensure that the highest standards of governance and partnership working are adhered to, including compliance with our regulatory frameworks
Scope of Policy:	All stakeholders
Nominated Officer:	Housing Services Manager
Approval Source:	Board
Legal & Regulatory References:	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 , Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 , Scottish Social Housing Charter , Keys to Life , National Care Standards: My Support, My Life
Procedural References:	N/A
Consultation Completed:	Yes - Staff & customers
Risk Implications:	Eildon is required by law to operate and publish a Tenant Participation / Customer Engagement Strategy. In addition to regulatory risk, the reputational risk of not operating a Strategy of this nature is high, not to mention the risk of lost opportunities through failing to engage with customers in an organised and meaningful way.
Equalities Assessment:	Equalities Impact Assessment completed, showing that this Strategy should have no adverse effect on protected characteristics, and noting a positive impact to remove barriers and promote diversity and understanding across groups, should it achieve its aims. The full assessment can be found at Appendix 2.
Accessibility:	Accessible electronically/online and in print. All documents can be translated and made available in audio, braille and large print versions upon request.

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Foreword

At Eildon we work across the whole of the Scottish Borders and provide a diverse range of services including affordable homes, supported housing for older people and people with a learning disability, and factoring services. Our affordable homes include those for social and mid-market rent, and low-cost home ownership. Our aim is to be among the top performing landlords in the country and to deliver an unrivalled customer experience across all our services.

Further, we work with a range of like-minded partners on projects and services with the aim of delivering inclusive growth for the people of the Borders: that's economic growth spread fairly across society which creates opportunities for all.

We cannot be successful in our aims without listening to and working with our customers. This Strategy builds on our past successes and aims to modernise further our approach to customer engagement. This is where 'Customer Voice' comes in, making sure that we have our customers' views to the front of our minds whenever we make decisions, whether that is building a new development, creating a strategy, or reviewing a policy.

An important new priority has been added to our [5-Year Strategy \(Delivering inclusive growth across the Scottish Borders\)](#): Responding to Customer Needs, Pressures and Aspirations. We are committed to exploring how we can expand or tailor our services to better assist our customers and put ourselves clearly 'on their side' as we navigate the range of social and economic issues being experienced throughout the country. We want to make a difference that goes beyond the home and helps our customers and communities to thrive; this means listening to and responding to their needs and involving them in the shaping of our services.

While the pandemic posed serious challenges for customer engagement, one positive was the acceleration in the development of digital engagement options for us and customers. From surveys to online focus groups and catch ups with involved customers, we've made use of these additional opportunities to connect, and this strategy aims to embrace these positive developments and to further develop our hybrid approach to customer engagement so we can more clearly hear the Customer Voice.

Introduction

This Customer Voice Strategy (the Strategy) sets out Eildon’s continuing commitment to customer engagement and outlines how we will encourage, promote and support this engagement with both customers and staff.

This Strategy is for all customers who have a tenancy or receive a service from us..

We have implemented the participation requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 as well as the scrutiny aspects of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010; this Strategy also complies with the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the ‘Health and Social Care Standards My Support, my life’.

Our Vision

Committed to excellence in providing housing, care and support services for the individuals and communities we serve.

Our Values

Caring – we care about what we do, the people we work with and the customers we serve.

Committed – We all work together to provide affordable, high-quality homes, care & support services.

Connected – We are part of the communities we serve, and we believe we can make a real difference.

Creative – We are ready to meet the challenges of the future with enthusiasm and new ideas.

Our Vision for Customer Engagement

To enhance the services for all the people and communities we serve by engaging, listening to, and collaborating with our customers.

Our Aims

- 1 Plan and embed customer engagement opportunities and requirements within organisational strategic and departmental objectives.
- 2 Provide flexible ways for customers to easily communicate with us to influence both local and organisation-wide issues, regardless of where they live, or any additional support they may require from us.
- 3 Proactively engage with customers to encourage positive and empowering relationships between customers and staff which facilitate collaborative working to improve services.
- 4 Promote the benefits of customer engagement by providing direct feedback about the difference made to policy and services by involved customers.

Our Approach

We want as many customers to engage with us as possible. Our approach to Customer Voice in this Strategy is, first and foremost, to remove barriers which may prevent or discourage customers from getting involved.

We will then focus our engagement activities on projects and services, clearly identifying our goals, working with customers to shape the outcomes, and then promoting our achievements.

We will make the most of digital opportunities to engage, remodel our engagement structure to remove inflexibility, and closely tie our engagement activities to the key elements of our strategic and departmental plans.

Internally, we will create a culture where engagement and listening to the Customer Voice is embedded in our projects and services and helps to drive change and enhance the customer experience for everyone.

Involvement Options

Collaborate and Involve

Customer Voice Group

The group will get together to discuss how we're performing, review consultation design and results and feed into our policy and strategy review work.

Focus Groups

Our aim is to hear from more customers about the important things we're planning and doing. Focus groups will help us bring a representative group of customers together to discuss and shape the big decisions that affect them, and the services they receive.

We will expand these focus groups to develop options for customers to get involved in Mystery Shopping which, alongside satisfaction surveys, will provide us with useful information about the customer experience.

Estate Walkabouts

We want to work with you to solve problems – or to spot things before they become problems in the first place. Taking part in an estate walkabout lets you meet our team members and work together to improve your local area.

Eildon Membership

Customers over the age of 16 can apply to become a member of Eildon. Once a member, customers will receive a copy of our annual accounts, invitations to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and any other general or special meetings held by the Association. Members have the right to vote on any matters at these meetings and can be nominated for election to the Eildon Board.

Engage and Listen

Customer Opinion Group (COG)

The COG is the place for you to have your say on policy reviews and to test out any new services we're offering – all from the comfort of your own home.

Local Welcome Meetings and Groups

Whether you've just moved into one of our brand-new developments, or if you and your neighbours have been in your Eildon home for a while, we'd encourage you to get together and get in touch. If you'd like to set up a Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO), we can help with that too.

Let's Talk

We also deliver high quality supported housing; if you live in one of our Sheltered or Extra Care developments, you and your family or friends can take part in our Let's Talk sessions where we meet in the lounge and discuss the things that are important to you; at Station Avenue, we meet either in smaller groups or 1 to 1, based on what best meets your needs.

Surveys

From our repair feedback survey through to our annual rent increase and satisfaction surveys, we're always keen to know what you think of the services we deliver. You can get in touch with a complaint, compliment or question any time through our My Eildon portal or on our website. Your feedback helps us to spot issues, find solutions and learn lessons to improve services in the future.

Inform and Provide Feedback

We'll provide feedback to show the difference your involvement has made to your fellow customers; we will do this via our Website / Social Media, the new 'My Eildon' online portal, or through our long-running Connect Newsletters.

We will also explore the development of an online SharePoint site where interested customers can get involved virtually and access information on current and previous consultations, focus groups and the work of the Customer Voice Group.

Equality and Human Rights

Eildon values diversity and is committed to ensuring equality for all our customers. We recognise the importance of eliminating discrimination, fostering good relations, and advancing equality of opportunity in our interactions with tenants, service users and the communities in which we work.

Eildon will ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to participate fully and equally and that there will be no direct or indirect discrimination against any person on the grounds of the following, which are considered "protected characteristics" under the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race¹
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

In addition to the protected characteristics specified in the Equality Act 2010, there will be no discrimination or indirect discrimination on the grounds of:

- care experience
- caring responsibilities
- gender identity
- parental status
- socio-economic disadvantage
- trade union membership

To ensure this commitment is met, Equalities and Diversity training is a core training subject for Eildon staff and will also be made available to customers who get involved.

Communication

Eildon is committed to providing high quality, meaningful information to customers and will provide that information in accessible formats that meet their needs.

Customers can tell us about their communication needs at any time and are encouraged to keep their details up to date so that we can provide them with the best service.

We will provide written information in plain English and provide this information in other languages, audio, braille, and large print, on request.

Further, we will develop Easy Read versions of our Customer Voice options leaflets and tailor our communications so that there are no barriers to accessing information.

Resources

Customer engagement requires resources as well as commitment to make it successful. In support of this Strategy, Eildon will make available a dedicated budget for this activity, agreed annually by the Board as part of the overall budget process.

We will continue to fund a dedicated Customer Engagement Officer to promote opportunities and co-ordinate customer engagement, and will commit further resources by strengthening the requirements for all staff to consider the Customer Voice when designing and delivering services.

This budget will be used to meet the aims of the Strategy by providing funding:

- To remove digital barriers by providing equipment, access and support for involved customers to get online.
- To cover the cost for customers of travel and childcare related to customer engagement events that could be a barrier to some getting involved.
- To cover the cost of training for customers who want to get involved.
- To enable membership of at least one of the organisations who provide support services to allow customer and staff access to best practice, training and other resources (i.e. Tenant Information Service (TIS) or Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)).
- To support new groups working to set up and operate as properly constituted bodies e.g., Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs).
- In the form of start-up grants and annual grants to RTOs which may be awarded to assist with the running costs of a properly constituted RTO.

Measurement and Review

To measure success against the aims of this Strategy, we will:

- 1 Create a Customer Voice Strategy action plan which is monitored and reviewed annually by our Customer Voice group and Executive Team (see Appendix 1).
- 2 Continue to consult customers annually on satisfaction with all our services (in line with our statutory obligations under the Scottish Social Housing Charter), including the indicators most specific to this Strategy around satisfaction with the quality of information we provide, and satisfaction with opportunities to participate in decision making.
- 3 Analyse customer contact data and feedback through surveys, complaints, enquiries through our Customer Experience Hub, and with front facing officers.
- 4 Continue to report annually to our Board on the delivery and achievements of the Strategy.

This Strategy will be reviewed every three years for relevance but may be revised more quickly should legislative change, best practice, or performance towards its aims require it.

Appendix 1 Action Plan 2022/23

Aim 1: Plan and embed customer engagement opportunities and requirements within Eildon’s strategic and departmental objectives.	
Action	Target Date
Promote the reviewed Strategy and the support available to staff members either at a staff briefing session or through a video on our internal Eildon Inside website.	September 2022
Embed consideration of customer engagement options within the development of our approach to all actions within our departmental plans – in tandem with our emerging approach to Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessments.	April 2023
Include a specific briefing on Customer Engagement as part of induction process for new staff across the organisation.	April 2023

Aim 2: Provide flexible ways for customers to communicate with us to influence both local and Borders-wide issues, regardless of where they live, or any additional support they require.	
Action	Target Date
Establish the Customer Voice options structure and create a suite of explanatory guides and leaflets to be shared online and externally with staff and customers.	September 2022
Examine customer data to ascertain whether there are underrepresented groups in our Customer Voice structure and then agree measures which would ensure better representation.	December 2022
Guided by the information on underrepresentation, ensure that the flexibility of options and the support we can provide is clearly promoted to groups of customers to encourage wider engagement.	April 2023

Aim 3: Proactively engage with customers to encourage positive and empowering relationships between customers and staff which facilitate collaborative working to improve services.	
Action	Target Date
Encourage greater involvement through the Customer Opinion Group by creating and sharing a programme of upcoming opportunities, including surveys, focus groups and events.	September 2022
Engage with customers locally where that is their preference and encourage local groups where there is an appetite or a specific subject relevant to a location (e.g., new development or large-scale refurbishment).	Ongoing
Continue to build relationships with and between tenants of new developments by holding 'Welcome Meetings' for neighbours to come together and hear more about our services and how they can get involved.	Ongoing
Continue to prompt consideration of Customer Voice options by customers taking part in our monthly tracker satisfaction surveys, with notes of interest followed up with contact from our Customer Engagement Officer.	Ongoing
As part of the development of modernising our welcome process for new customers, we will expand on our prompting of customers to get involved from the outset of their relationship with us, by including a specific communication from our Customer Engagement Officer.	Ongoing (December 2022 for welcome modernisation)

Aim 4: Promote the benefits of Customer Voice by providing direct feedback about the difference made to policy and services by involved customers.	
Action	Target Date
Standardise feedback reporting for consultations so that those involved know the impact of their contributions.	September 2022
Increase the profile of all the Customer Voice involvement options by feeding back through a bi-annual involvement communication to complement our general communications to all customers.	December 2022
Explore the development of an online SharePoint site where interested customers can get involved virtually and access information on current and previous consultations, focus groups and the work of the Customer Voice Group.	April 2023

Appendix 2 Equalities Impact Assessment June 2022

Title of policy/ practice/ strategy	Customer Voice Strategy 2022 - 2025
Department	Community Services
Who is involved in the EQIA?	Ally Ramage
Type of policy/ practice/ strategy	Existing (review)
Date completed	6 June 2022

Stage 1: Screening Record

What is the main purpose of the policy?

To enhance the services for all the people and communities we serve by engaging, listening to, and collaborating with our customers.

Who will the policy benefit and how?

The Strategy will benefit all customers of Eildon by allowing a range of flexible options for them to get involved in decision-making and to have their say on the services we provide. The flexibility will allow us to tailor approaches to engagement that remove barriers, allowing us to meet the individual needs of customers, as well as their preferences; whether that's arranging meetings locally, 1:1, tailoring communication methods to individual needs, or arranging / covering costs of transport where that is a barrier. It will further benefit customers by promoting inclusion and encouraging collaboration with their fellow customers and Eildon staff.

The Strategy will also benefit Eildon staff by outlining the support available to them to engage with customers which will in turn bring benefits to them in their role and the organisation as a whole.

For each equality group, does or could the policy have a negative impact?

Protected characteristic	Negative	Positive/no impact	Don't know
Age		X	
Disability		X	
Gender reassignment		X	
Marriage & civil partnership		X	
Pregnancy & maternity		X	
Race		X	
Religion or belief (including no belief)		X	
Sex		X	
Sexual orientation		X	

If you answered negative or don't know to the previous question you should consider doing a full EQIA.

Are there any potential barriers to implementing the policy?

No barriers identified but will require staff training and also promotion of the Customer Voice options to ensure policy aims are embedded internally and it will also require concerted effort to ensure that we identify all opportunities, and promote the options externally to customers.

	Yes	No
Is a full EQIA required?	X	

If you answered no to the above question explain why a full EQIA is not required:

No impact on equalities identified:	
Other:	

Stage 2: Assessing the impacts

How might the policy impact on people who share protected characteristics? Include both positive and negative impacts.

Overall, the specific commitment in the Strategy to provide equalities and diversity training to staff and customers – as well as Eildon’s mandatory induction and periodic refresh of equalities and diversity training presents a positive impact. This positive impact is noted here, rather than repeating it in each section below, as it is a benefit to all protected groups.

Protected Characteristic	Description of Impact
Age	<p>The Strategy should have no negative impacts based on age alone. One of its aims is to encourage wider engagement, including in underrepresented groups, family and carers, through offering a variety of ways to engage with us, and making any option chosen accessible to all.</p> <p>The Strategy also aims to avoid any indirect negative impacts on customers of working age by being open to holding meetings/events/workshops outside working hours and again by having flexible options where customers can choose how and when to engage with us.</p>
Disability	<p>The Strategy should have no negative impacts for those with a disability. All literature will be made available in multiple formats upon request, and an Easy Read version of the Customer Voice options will be created from the outset. We also encourage family members, carers and advocacy services to support customers to engage and participate. All venues chosen for meetings/events/workshops will be accessible and either taxi costs will be paid on account or travel cost reimbursement will be made for those with their own transport. The Strategy’s aim of inclusivity and representation should help to foster good relationships between groups and its options should encourage accessible engagement that helps to improve circumstances for customer groups and customers overall.</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>No specific positive / negative impacts but again, the aim of wider representation, focus on preference, and its range of options should mean that the Strategy promotes good relationships between groups and encourages engagement across customer groups and customers overall. The Strategy commitment to ensuring staff training on Equalities and Diversity, should lead to a positive impact by fostering understanding of</p>

Protected Characteristic	Description of Impact
	the reassignment journey in staff (and involved customers who take up the training).
Marriage & civil partnership	No specific positive / negative impacts.
Pregnancy & maternity	The offer to fund the cost of transport and childcare should have a positive impact on this one aspect of pregnancy & maternity. The range of options should allow for flexibility. However, we acknowledge that it may be more difficult to get involved when pregnant or with a young child. Our commitment to exploring engagement in underrepresented groups may offer some further ideas in this area.
Race	No specific positive / negative impacts but again, the aim of wider representation and its range of options should foster good relationships between groups and encourage engagement across customer groups and customers overall.
Religion or belief (including no belief)	No specific positive / negative impacts, although flexibility of options and agility of structure should allow for any negative impacts arising from timing conflicts of meetings/events/workshops to be anticipated and overcome.
Sex	No specific positive / negative impacts.
Sexual orientation	No specific positive / negative impacts but again, the aim of wider representation and its range of options should foster good relationships between groups and encourage engagement across customer groups and customers overall.

How does the policy promote equality of opportunity?

The Strategy acknowledges that every tenant is different and that different tenants will have specific interests and time available to get involved in the Customer Voice Options. It also recognises that different groups of customers may require different support to get involved and commits to looking at representation and how we can ensure we are not inadvertently excluding any individuals or groups from sharing their Customer Voice.

How does the policy promote good relations?

The policy promotes good relations in its commitment to provide clear information to both staff members and tenants so that all involved are clear about their responsibilities (staff) and their rights and expectations (customers). This Strategy seeks to widen representation throughout the framework of Customer Voice options, and will also encourage different groups to come together, share experiences and improve the customer experience for all.

Stage 3: Decision making and monitoring

Identifying and establishing any required mitigating action

If, following the impact analysis, you think you have identified any unlawful discrimination – direct or indirect - you must consider and set out what action will be undertaken to mitigate the negative impact.

Does the assessment show a potential for differential impact on any group(s)?	Yes		No	X
Is there potential for unlawful direct or indirect discrimination?	Yes		No	X

What arrangements could be implemented to reduce or mitigate any potential adverse or negative impacts identified?

There should be no negative or adverse impacts on customers as a result of this Strategy. However, more work is required to ensure that we fully understand our customer base and that we are meeting its needs; our action plan item to explore our customer data to check for underrepresentation and then establish routes to promote and increase involvement within underrepresented groups should allow for the mitigation of any unforeseen impacts across the groups.

Eildon’s commitment to Equalities and Diversity training at induction and then mandatory refresher training throughout the course of staff members’ time at Eildon, should help to reduce any negative impacts. The refresh of Eildon’s Equalities and Diversity policy in 2022 should allow for more focused awareness raising across the organisation, with involved customers and across the customer base.

Describing how Equality Impact analysis has shaped the policy making process

The Strategy development has been guided by customer feedback / involvement and with the aim of making our approach to Customer Voice / Customer Engagement clearer for customers and staff. Reflecting on the potential positive and negative impacts on different groups has helped to inform the language used and how we frame our inclusive approach to this Strategy and the associated literature and promotion (both internally and externally).

Monitoring and Review

The Strategy and EQIA will be reviewed every 3 years.

Stage 4 - Authorisation of EQIA

Please confirm that:

- ◆ This Equality Impact Assessment has informed the development of this policy:

Yes

No

- ◆ Opportunities to promote equality in respect of age, disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race and religion or belief have been considered, i.e.:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation;
- Removing or minimising any barriers and/or disadvantages;
- Taking steps which assist with promoting equality and meeting people's different needs;
- Encouraging participation (e.g. in public life)
- Fostering good relations, tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Yes

No

Declaration

I am satisfied with the equality impact assessment that has been undertaken for the Customer Voice Strategy.

Name: Amanda Miller

Position: Director of Community Services

Authorisation date: June 2022