

# ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



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Rochdale Boroughwide Housing Limited is a charitable community benefit society.

FCA register number 31452R.

Registered Office: Sandbrook House, Sandbrook Way, Rochdale OL11 1RY.

Registered as a provider of social housing. RSH register number: 4607

## **1. Introduction**

This strategy outlines Rochdale Boroughwide Housing's approach to how it engages with tenants, residents and other customers in the delivery of its services in order to achieve its vision of *"Succeeding together to offer great services and places to live and work"*. The term customer when used is done so to reflect our diverse customer base including tenants, residents and applicants for housing. Our Together with Tenants Commitments focus on our relationship and work with tenants. RBH is committed to engaging with all our tenants, residents and other customers regardless of their specific relationship.

## **2. Context**

Engaging tenants effectively is a key consideration of successful housing organisations. It is a cornerstone of RBH's unique operating model, being the first tenant and employee co-owned mutual housing society in the country. RBH want to have a clear understanding of our customers experience and needs and that understanding to be at the heart of and informing everything we do.

This strategy builds on the landlord and tenant relationship sharply highlighted following the tragedy at Grenfell and the recent Green Paper - "A New Deal for Social Housing" as well as 'Together with Tenants', an approach adopted by the National Housing Federation of which RBH are an early adopter.

The strategy supports the delivery of the corporate strategy 'Together' 2018-2021.

## **3. Aims & Objectives**

### **3.1 What is Engagement**

Engagement includes all the interactions and communication people have with RBH which then forms the individual and collective voice of the customer. This is a two-way process and involves any interactions or communication that customers may have with RBH while in receipt of services and also any interactions and communications RBH may have with people to engage them about existing or new services. This provides valuable customer insight to ensure that RBH continues to provide services that are of a high quality and are valued by people.

### **3.2 The aims of the strategy are:**

- To ensure that the voice of the customer is present and influences everything that RBH does. This requires a clear understanding of what matters to tenants, residents and other customers, what they expect and how they feel about the quality of the services they receive from RBH. The voice of the customer will then be used to improve services, deliver value for money and bring about lasting change in communities.
- To provide a variety of ways for people to engage with RBH and allow individuals to choose the way that they wish to engage and for RBH to keep that under constant review.
- The main focus of engagement is not just about improving services for tenants, residents and other customers and making sure they are satisfied with the services they receive, although that is important, it is also about ensuring people are able to trust RBH.

### **3.3 The objectives of the strategy are:**

We will seek to understand our customers based on the interactions we have regularly with them without having to ask them at each interaction, this will include but is not limited to:

- Data about people's individual needs, age, gender, ethnicity, household size, communication preferences based on up to date and reliable information.
- Details of any contacts people have had with us to date via the portal, contact centre or through the delivery of services such as repairs and neighbourhood services for example.
- Data about tenants homes, the age and condition of tenants homes , the age of all of the components in homes and when they require replacements, the timings for cyclical servicing such as gas, water and electrics.
- Details of the rent and service charges payable by tenants and residents and their preferred methods of payments and payment cycles.

We will seek to gather people's views on their satisfaction levels and experiences of our services at the various touchpoints through their customer journey as close to their interactions as possible. This will include how accessible services are, how easy it was to make contact, whether their query was adequately resolved, how listened to they have felt, the timeliness and quality of responses and the levels of customer

service experienced. These experiences will be explored across a range of touchpoints such as;

- at all contact points, face to face, online and over the phone,
- as a new customer in a new home,
- following a repair
- following improvement work or adaptations
- following a complaint
- following a complaint of anti-social behaviour
- following environmental or neighbourhood improvements or
- as a leaseholder

RBH will demonstrate achievement of performance against service standards using tools such as surveys, text messages, and online or face to face forums on specific topics. It will publish those results in an open and transparent way to allow scrutiny by all customers.

Where RBH have made positive changes as a result of listening to feedback or insight gathered from an analysis of customer experience it will communicate those changes in an open and transparent way.

We will provide the information customers need in ways that meet their preferences and using a variety of different channels. Information will be accurate and appropriate to individuals and not a one size fits all. This will be in many cases digitally enabled and individualised through the online portal.

RBH will seek to actively and regularly engage people where additional customer focus, insight and influence is required specifically in relation to although not exclusively limited to:

- The review of existing or design of new services
- Adherence to the regulatory standards
- Key areas of performance
- Development or review of key customer facing strategies
- Service improvement activity

These engagement opportunities will not be based on fixed structures or groups rather they will be flexible, current and responsive and developed at the point engagement is required. One such example might be when development or regeneration is taking place in a local area and specific local engagement of tenants, residents and

the local community is required.

#### **4. Engagement Methods:**

RBH will adopt a comprehensive approach to engagement to ensure it makes best use of the vast range of interaction and communication opportunities there are with tenants, residents and other customers through a range of approaches and in a variety of different settings. It will utilise a range of channels so that people can choose the channel most appropriate to them and their preferences. The type of engagement undertaken, and the tools used will be determined by the purpose of engagement and the diversity of views and influence sought.

People will be able to get involved and influence RBH at the level of, or in the way that, they choose. RBH welcomes the engagement of all of its customers and recognises their value in informing improvements to RBH services. By using a wide range of consultation channels, we will ensure that we reach the widest possible range of our customers and that no one group is excluded.

RBH recognise tenants and residents as assets to their communities who have a range of strengths and contributions to make and will make it as easy as possible for them to influence and provide feedback on the services and interactions, they have with RBH.

#### **4.1 Informal Engagement mechanisms**

##### **Social Media Channels**

With many of the popular social media channels now being the primary applications used by many smartphone users, RBH will utilise a range of social media channels to communicate with and invite engagement from customers. The technology is something that many users are familiar with and it cuts across socio-economic and age boundaries. It is therefore an ideal way to communicate with the widest range of users. The popularity of these channels also helps ensure the widest possible consultation is taking place and the views of many are being captured. Where possible RBH will explore how social media channels can be used to support service requests and service delivery.

Written/video blogs by the Chief Executive will be developed after each board meeting and from a representative body member after each representative body meeting to ensure there is transparency over what has been discussed and how decisions are made.

## **Text messages**

Two-way text messaging will be used to capture satisfaction levels at the point of transaction and also to gather views from customers utilising campaigns as part of the newly enabled portal which can be tailored to capture specific feedback and views from customers.

## **Surveys**

RBH will make use of on-line surveys as a way to obtain the opinions of a group of customers without the need for people attending meetings and forums. These surveys will be focused on specific topics to receive the feedback ready for analysis. Customers also find the completion of surveys in this way intuitive and response rates are often high; particularly if a customer has voluntarily signed up to the process or there is an incentive to doing so.

The use of online surveys will be linked to the use of other social media channels, promoting the survey to RBH customers who have social media accounts and therefore increasing the coverage and likelihood of the survey being completed.

RBH will utilise innovative methods to overcome any feelings of apathy within the customer base and to incentivise the participation in the surveys.

Responses will regularly be monitored across a range of channels in relation to the demographic of the customer base to ensure representative views and where there are gaps alternative approaches to capture those views will be sought particularly from the harder to reach groups.

## **Community Reporters**

Tenants and residents will be invited to share their stories from across the society on what they have seen and heard and witnessed. RBH will provide appropriate training for those individuals who wish to capture and record events and write about them for wider distribution and promotion.

## **Community Development**

Feedback will be captured from a range of tenants and residents who participate in community development work happening across the society in its neighbourhoods and localities.

RBH seeks to build on the strengths within communities enhancing their capacity and where possible supporting the local economy through employment and volunteering opportunities.

### **Interest forums/On- line communities**

New web functionality will include the creation of online web forums. The use of vlogs and on-line forums will be used to generate conversations and material in a fairly informal way. Facebook and other appropriate social media platforms will be used for sharing vlogs to give the widest coverage and reach the widest range of users.

Customers will be encouraged to and supported to form groups of interest either in person or online which are relevant to the aims of the society or be of benefit to the local community. This will likely lead to an increase in the engagement of customers wishing to influence and improve the delivery of RBH services as a result. This might include groups of tenants in independent living schemes for example.

### **Video Conferencing**

The use of video conferencing tools has increased in popularity and RBH hopes to harness the use of these video tools to engage a wider group of customers. Rather than forcing people to attend physical sessions, this would allow the views of people who may not be able to or may not wish to leave their homes or attend in person to still be heard and for them to partake in discussions shaping the future of the organisation.

### **Pop up engagement**

RBH will take advantage of opportunities to talk to and listen to the view of its customers. This will take place at community events and places where RBH tenants and residents may be, such as community centres, local festivals or interest groups and partner events.

Board members will be encouraged to actively attend in their ambassadorial role as many customer focused events as they are able to hear the views and voices of customers. RBH will engage with local members to hear the views of local elected representatives.

This type of engagement can also be carried out digitally in spaces and forums where customers may already engage. Activities could include surveys, questionnaires or community board or noticeboards to gather as many views as possible. The approach will depend on the issues RBH are seeking feedback or influence on and which customers we are hoping to gather feedback from.

### **Neighbourhood Engagement**

RBH will utilise the new website portal to provide tailored information about individual homes and information, activities and resources in the local area, including making it easy to contact someone who can help with any queries they may have.

Tenants and residents will be engaged in determining local priorities in their neighbourhoods and their feedback will contribute to the development of neighbourhood plans across all areas.

## **4.2 Formal engagement mechanisms**

### **Membership of the Society**

If tenants choose to join the mutual society then they have enhanced opportunities to influence and engage with RBH. They are able to elect tenants to the representative body who in turn hold the board to account.

### **The Representative Body**

This includes tenant members of the society as well as employee members of the society. They are actively involved in the governance of RBH and are responsible for holding the board to account on the delivery of the corporate strategy and appointing or removing non-executive members of the board. RBH will work with interested tenants to boost capacity and to help support a succession plan for future representative body vacancies.

### **The Board**

The customer voice at the board will be represented by regular performance information on the quality of services delivered and the experiences of customers and their satisfaction levels. It will also include data from complaints including the numbers received, the themes and response times and importantly the learning and what has changed as a result. A voice of the customer dashboard presented to the Board will include satisfaction across the range of touchpoints, levels and response rates to complaints as well as complaint themes including referral to the customer panel or ombudsman alongside the key customer facing performance indicators.

### **The customer complaints panel**

This will be a formal panel made up of tenants which will receive appropriate training and support in order to hear appeals from customers who have exhausted RBH's internal complaints process. This panel will also explore the themes and learning that arise as a result of complaints.

## **Scrutineers**

A formal scrutineer panel will be developed to include tenants and employees recruited to support an annual programme of scrutineer activities whose recommendations will be reported directly to the board. Topics for scrutiny will be agreed upon by the representative body based on the insight available to them. Tenants and employees will then be sought to carry out the scrutiny activity based on their interest, knowledge and experience of services or areas subject to scrutiny.

## **5. The policy fits with the mutual values of RBH:**

### **Responsibility**

We take responsibility for where possible meeting the needs of people and offering a range of ways for tenants, residents and other customers to engage with RBH via a method/channel of their choosing. We know that offering a choice in terms of the ways to engage leads to greater satisfaction.

### **Equity**

This policy will help ensure a fair approach to engagement by allowing people to select the ways they wish to engage. This strategy will also be monitored to ensure that a diverse range of views and feedback are captured to inform service delivery and or improvements.

### **Democracy**

This approach has been developed in partnership with members through the consultation that has taken place with colleagues and representative body members.

### **Pioneering**

This policy supports a forward-thinking approach to engagement using modern methods of engagement and providing some future proofing to the approach.

### **Openness & Honesty**

Through the policy we will explain clearly to customers when and how their engagement with RBH will be captured and used to deliver great services.

### **Caring**

This policy will ensure that all tenants are made aware of the process and how through their engagement RBH will listen and respond to their feedback.

## **Vision:**

‘People succeeding together to offer great services and places to live and work’

## **6. Monitoring**

Responses will regularly be monitored across a range of channels in relation to the demographic of the customer base to ensure representative views are gathered. Where there are gaps, alternative approaches to capture those views will be sought particularly from the harder to reach groups.

## **7. Review**

All RBH strategies, policies, service standards and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis in order to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' and comply with all relevant legislation and statutory regulations.

This strategy will go through the full policy approval process every 3 years and will undergo a desktop review annually. This is to ensure that it is fit for purpose and complies with all relevant and statutory regulations.

## **8. Links with other RBH Documents:**

This strategy links to the following relevant documents:

- Customer Experience Strategy

- Customer Insight Strategy