

Customer Experience Strategy

Title:	Customer Experience Strategy
Person responsible:	Director of Customer Experience
Business Strategy Objective	All – Growing, Greening and Transforming
Financial/ Resources	To be delivered from existing budgets
Customer consultation	Tenant Committee
Key Strategic Risks addressing	#27 Compliance: regulation and legislation #19 Customer Satisfaction #1 Asset Management: stock condition #3 Asset Management: building safety #11 Community Investment #16 Energy Efficiency
EIA required:	Yes
EIA completed (date):	TBC
Approved by:	Board
Approval date:	11 August 2022
Links to other key documents:	Business Plan Asset Management Strategy
Review date:	August 2025

Document management		
Version	Date amended	Amendments
1		

About South Lakes Housing

South Lakes Housing (SLH) is a registered provider (housing association) and was formed in 2012 and is celebrating our 10th Anniversary this year. We own and manage approx. 3300 homes across a wide geography in South Lakeland and Lancashire.

Our Business Strategy – Our Direction, 2020-25 has reaffirmed SLH’s vision – “Quality homes, a platform for life” and key strategic themes of Growing, Greening, Transforming.

Our Values are Sustainability, Learning, Inclusivity, Challenge, Excellence (SLICE).

- Sustainability- Reducing our impact on the environment and conduct our business in a socially responsible and ethical manner.
- Learning- Learn from our mistakes and successes. Seek and provide honest feedback. Open to personal change and continuous improvement.
- Inclusivity- Committed to creating an inclusive culture where we treat our customers, colleagues and stakeholders with respect, honesty, empathy and fairness.
- Challenge- Challenge what we do, seek out and test new approaches and ideas, collaborate with others and share our learning. Listen to our customer’s needs and challenges.
- Excellence- What we do, we strive to do well, to deliver a great customer experience/outcome.

Our Behaviours Framework is:

- Genuinely care- Cares about delivering high quality services for our customers, colleagues and stakeholders.
- Take responsibility- Takes ownership for delivering high-quality outcomes.
- Have respect- Respects diversity; listens to and has empathy for colleagues and customers.
- Be adaptable- Responds flexibly to get things done.
- Work together- Works collaboratively across teams and services to deliver.
- Be curious- Curious about new approaches and ways of working.
- Make it happen- Prioritises work, uses initiative and is solutions focused.
- Always improving- Continually learning and always looking for ways to improve

Strategic Context

We welcome the renewed focus on resident voice and influence and the customer experience across the sector in recent years, reflected in a number of regulatory and legal requirements, changes and good practice. These have included the Consumer Standards set by the [Regulator of Social Housing](#) (2017), the Housing Ombudsman's [Complaint Handling Code](#) (2020), the [Social Housing White Paper](#) (2020), the new [NHF Code of Governance](#) (2020) and other initiatives such as the National Housing Federation's ['Together with Tenants'](#) (2019) which is designed to strengthen the relationship between customers and housing association landlords. Other key legislation the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022 were introduced to raise building safety standards and to require landlords to listen to and act on residents' safety concerns.

Social Housing White Paper, now the draft Social Housing Regulation Bill

The Government published proposals in the [Social Housing White Paper](#) (2020) entitled "The Charter for Social Housing Residents" aimed at resetting the relationship between social landlords and their residents, ensuring social housing tenants have a voice and are listened to and treated with dignity and respect. It made clear the standards that every social housing tenant in England is entitled to expect from their landlord, with the introduction of proactive consumer regulation from April 2023.

In June 2022 the [Social Housing Regulation Bill](#) was introduced into parliament. The Bill aims to deliver the proposals set out in the Social Housing White Paper by introducing a number of measures to give tenants greater powers, improve transparency and access to swift and fair redress, and enhance the powers of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). It also creates a set of [Tenant Satisfaction Measures](#) (TSM's), against which social landlords will be expected to publish performance from 2024.

Strategic Aims

We are committed to putting customers first and providing an excellent customer experience and to ensuring we make every contact count. We are also committed to providing excellent service between colleagues and externally with contractors and partners. This strategy provides the framework for putting customers first, ensuring we listen to and hear the voice of customers, treat customers with fairness and respect and continue to improve the customer experience and customer satisfaction. We have consulted involved residents via our Tenants Committee in developing the strategy.

Customer experience can be considered as the ultimate measure of service performance as it is those actually in receipt of services who experience the reality of service delivery. Whilst SLH uses a variety of approaches to measure organisational performance, customer

experience can highlight the realities of the effectiveness of service delivery - where it worked well and where it did not, enabling organisational learning for how we need to adapt to meet customers' needs and aspirations.

It is of note that the [Index of Consumer Sentiment](#) has dropped significantly in 2022 and it is thought there is a strong correlation between very low Index of Consumer Sentiment scores and significant recessions, and particularly that there is a strong link between fuel costs and consumer sentiment.

SLH Service Delivery

Our core services include:

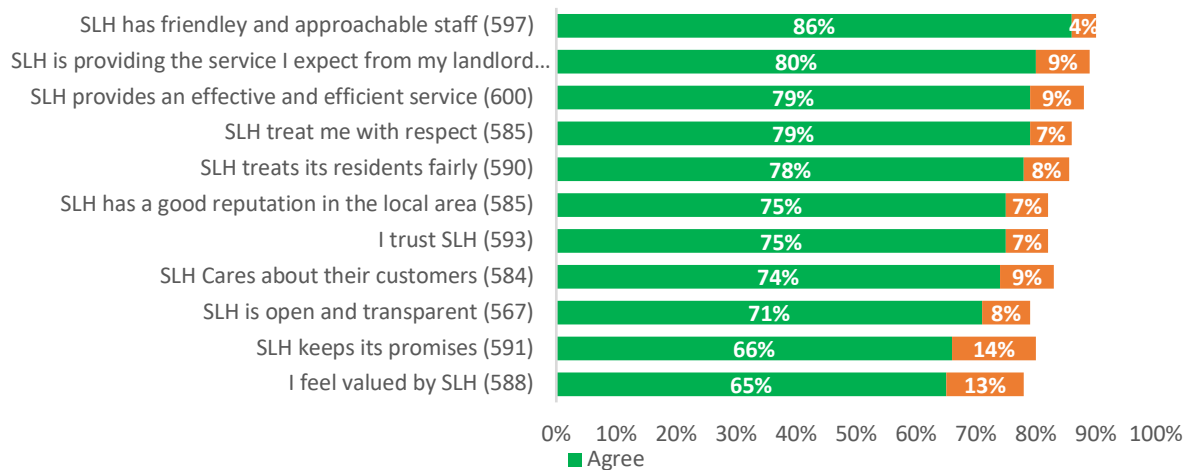
- Customer services
- Allocating homes
- Repairs and maintenance – our most requested service
- Maintaining estates, including landscaping and cleaning
- Building safety
- Rent collection and financial inclusion support
- Sheltered housing
- Support to resolve neighbour disputes and tackle domestic abuse
- Community activities
- Developing new homes

Customer Feedback

We listen to customer views and collect feedback in a number of ways:

- Perception Surveys – we use the Housemark Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR)
- Transactional surveys for key service areas – responsive repairs, complaints, planned improvements, anti-social behaviour, building safety
- Groups/ Consultation – Tenant Committee, Residents Associations, Digital via Facebook group, Estate Walkabouts, Consultation, such as environmental improvements, Grant Applications Panel
- Formal Scrutiny - group's aim is to 'co-create' improvements to services, by ensuring that SLH understands and designs services that meet our customers' needs.
- Complaints – we report performance and learning to Board
- Governance – we currently have 2 Board members who are residents and have lived experience of being SLH residents. We reserve up to 2 places on the Board for persons who are residents (max 1 leaseholder) and who meet the Board's skills requirements. The majority of our Board Members also live within our communities.

We carried out a customer satisfaction perception survey (STAR) from Sept to November 2021. We received 648 responses approx. 20% and key results were:



The Net Promoter score was +33. There were some variations, based on geography, property type, age, disability and whether living in general needs or sheltered housing.

The key areas for improvement are:

- Quality of home
- Easy to deal with
- Keeping you informed about services and decisions
- Service charges provide value for money
- We care about you, and you feel valued

The results have informed our transformation plans and this strategy.

Customer Profiling

As a community-based housing association the majority of our colleagues live in our communities and we know many of our residents. We hold some key customer profiling information, which provides an overview of the diversity of our customers, such as age, ethnicity, disability, household composition, preferred communication methods, but recognise there is more we need to do to know our residents better. This includes better understanding the needs of more vulnerable customers to ensure we provide inclusive services and can tailor services for residents to receive our services in the way they want.

We have developed some Personas or archetypes of people that live in our homes to help us better understand people’s behaviours, goals and preferred forms of communication so we can better flex our service and understand the impact of any changes we make on our residents.

The Journey So Far

SLH has recently undergone organisational redesign, with a new structure in place, investing in the customer experience. This has included the creation of new posts of Director of Customer Experience, Customer First Manager and Customer Insight Partner, which together with the Customer Engagement Partner will support us to focus on the customer

experience, listening to the customer voice and engaging customers in how we continue to improve. We have a dedicated customer hub and team of operatives via our Subsidiary Cumbria Housing & Property Services (CH&PS) who deliver repairs and maintenance. We are a hybrid working organisation, providing flexibility for both colleagues and customers.

We are now emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, having adapted service delivery to be more person centred, agile and flexible, having spent less time in residents' homes and communities, working in partnership with SLDC and a range of agencies to provide wellbeing and financial inclusion support. We have learnt about our ability to change, found new ways to engage with residents and with learning and an understanding of the disproportionate impact covid-19 had on some customers and communities, again being impacted by the recent cost of living crisis. Despite the impact of covid-19 since we launched our Business Strategy in 2020, we have continued to transform our service:

- Launched our new Resident Engagement Strategy, developed with residents – communication, consultation, participation, involvement
- Continued to work closely with our Tenants Committee, reporting performance and consulting over service improvements and policies
- Scrutiny Panel have reviewed and made recommendations to improve repairs and maintenance, customer service, choice and complaints, grounds maintenance
- Launched My Account customer portal, making it easier for residents to access and request services
- Involved customers in shaping key customer facing strategies/ policies such as Resident Engagement Strategy, complaints, reviewed compliance with the HOS Complaint Handling Code, Consumer Standards, Building Safety, Rent and Service Charge Setting and increases and approach to achieving Net Zero
- Improved our safeguarding case management
- Reviewed key processes to improve the customer journey, such as use of texts when booking a repair, a reminder 24 hours before the appointment and when the operative is on their way
- Introduced Customer Call back monitoring to ensure customers receive a response within 48 hours if we are unable to resolve a service request or query at the first point of contact
- Retendered our cleaning contract, revising the specification to improve value for money for residents
- Worked with partners to improve Cumbria Choice Based Lettings, streamlining the application process, improving customer control, transparency, communication and efficiency

Implementation

The Customer Experience Strategy will be delivered over the next 3 years and key actions are: –

- Customer First Training Programme – focussing on culture, behaviours, tools and techniques to deliver great customer experience
- Review and agree Customer Service Standards, in consultation with residents
- Complaints - Compliance HOS Complaints Handling Code and improve complaint handling, resolution and learning
- STAR Survey – Deliver the Action Plan and then complete perception survey annually, to include new RSH Tenant Satisfaction Measures and publish results

- Co-Regulation – continue to consult, engage and listen to the Customer Voice via the Tenants Committee and complete Scrutiny Reviews to obtain resident feedback, insight and recommendations to improve our services and prepare for RSH proactive consumer regulation
- Develop and publish Neighbourhood Plans
- Estate Walkabouts – visible local presence
- Sheltered Housing service review
- Continue to improve My Account customer portal, information available and self-serve capacity, including repair diagnosis, reporting and the ability for residents to book appointments at a time that suits, apply for exchanges etc
- Omni-channel software, so all contacts (portal/ telephone/website/social media/email) can be managed, monitored and reported from one system, agreeing prioritisation with residents
- Review Customer Satisfaction Transactional Surveys and centralise to promote and improve rate of return and evidence follow up actions
- Review Out of Hours service provision
- Improve Customer Profiling data & Insight, including Vulnerability Policy
- Maintain Decent Homes compliance and develop SLH standard which will ensure we can achieve Decent Homes Standard 2
- Develop Sustainability Strategy, which includes ensuring all properties achieve EPC C rating by 2025 (with exception hard to treat rural properties), 5 years earlier than Government target of 2030, which will improve energy efficiency and ameliorate some of the impact of rising fuel costs
- Develop our approach to Building Safety, including engaging residents in how we can best communicate key messages and working with us to ensure our homes and buildings remain safe and secure

Measuring Success

Success will be measured by delivery of the action plan and maintaining/ improving a range of key Tenant Satisfaction Measures and performance indicators.

Monitoring and Review

Implementation will be monitored by EMT, Board and involved Customers via the annual Customer Experience update. This strategy will be reviewed every three years, or where there has been significant changes to regulation, legislation, operations or best practice to warrant a further policy review.