

Lancaster City Council

Housing and Property:  
Council Housing

# Communications Strategy

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## Welcome

The landscape for social housing is changing. With a new regulatory framework, commitment to listening and acting on customer voice, and increasing demand for services, good communication and engagement has never been more important. Through effective communication with our tenants, leaseholders, colleagues, stakeholders and partners, we can tell our story and help them to understand the work we do, our main challenges and successes, and ultimately develop stronger relationships, built on trust.

## Our Values



Our values define who we are and, importantly, where we want to be in the future. Our Values are embedded in the Council Plan and the vision for the future.

By working with our staff to define our values and embedding them in our daily working lives, we will achieve enduring excellence in delivering positive outcomes for our communities. Our values will support our purpose of working in partnership with our communities to create a district where people can flourish.

## The Seven Pillars of Social Housing

The seven pillars of the Charter for Social Housing Residents set out what our customers can expect from us:

<p><b>To be safe in your home.</b> The government will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.</p>	<p><b>To know how your landlord is performing,</b> including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.</p>	<p><b>To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,</b> with access to a strong Ombudsman.</p>	<p><b>To be treated with respect,</b> backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved Consumer Standards for tenants</p>
<p><b>To have your voice heard</b> by your landlord, for example through</p>	<p><b>To have a good quality home and neighbourhood</b> to live</p>	<p><b>To be supported to take your first step to ownership</b> so it is a</p>	

regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board	in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair	ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow
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## Our Approach

### Purpose:

We want our tenants, colleagues and other stakeholders to understand our business and the landscape we are operating in, recognise the biggest challenges and opportunities, and take the necessary actions to support us to deliver on our promises.

### Objectives:

The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of our tenants and stakeholders through effective targeting of information relevant to them.
- Establish Council Housing as a leading brand for housing, that listens and acts on the customer voice.
- Create communications that tell our story and create opportunities for two-way dialogue to help us to learn from our audiences.
- Be open and honest about how we are delivering against our targets and values, so customers, colleagues and stakeholders understand what we are doing and how it affects them.
- Develop existing and new channels to provide customers with easy access to information and where possible self-service options.
- Support effective partnership working with the Lancaster City Council as well as other local partners through clear messaging.
- Ensure we're able to effectively communicate in the event of a crisis, keeping affected audiences updated and informed if something goes wrong.

### Our Promises:

**Inclusivity:** Our communication will be inclusive, reflecting our deep understanding of our tenant's needs and preferences. We strive to accommodate these wherever possible, ensuring that our messaging consistently reinforces our vision and values, which are central to all our efforts.

**Transparency:** Our communication will be open, honest, and factual, always serving a clear purpose. We are committed to developing and maintaining a professional corporate identity—our brand—for consistent use across the organization.

**Open:** Our communication will be accessible, using plain English and free of jargon, ensuring the information we provide is easy to read and understand. It is driven by customer needs and aligned with our business plan.

**Accessibility:** Where required we will provide information in other languages / formats as per our Customer Access Statement.

## Communicating Our Story

Our communication will focus on these promises to support the Charter for Social Housing Residents and our own objectives and values

- Providing good quality, safe homes in thriving communities.
- Developing consistent and transparent methods for communicating our performance against regulatory measures that help keep customers safe and informed.
- Supporting our customers.
- Creating two-way dialogue with opportunities for customers to be consulted and to have their say.
- Promoting our colleague offer and career opportunities with Council Housing to retain local talent in the city and become an employer of choice.
- Provide excellent communications on a cost-effective basis, providing high-quality online services that encourage customers to move to digital by choice.

## Our Audience

As a local authority, we strive to be inclusive and accessible in our communications, reaching a wide range of audiences, including tenants, leaseholders, staff, and community groups. Our strategy focuses on targeted communications, ensuring that our messages are tailored to resonate with each group and provide them with the information most relevant to their needs.

Customers and Communities	Stakeholders and Partners	Our People
Tenants	Lancaster City Council	Colleagues
Leaseholders	Public Sector Organisations	Senior Managers
Housing Applicants	Elected Members	Council Body
	Industry Bodies	
	Regulator of Social Housing	
	Suppliers and contractors	
	Local Media	
	Community / Voluntary groups	

## Getting Our Story to You

We use different ways to share important information with our diverse audiences, making sure it's delivered in the way that suits them best.

### Website and Self-Service

Our website, updated in 2024, is the main place to find information about our services. We encourage residents to visit the website first for any questions.

### Targeted Email and Text Messages

We are improving our email and text messaging to send important updates, making sure residents get the information they need. This also helps us reduce the use of printed materials, supporting our environmental goals.

### Social Media

Social media is a great way for us to share information with our community. We use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X to send out important messages and to talk directly with residents. Our communication officer and customer services manage these channels to keep the conversation going.

### Face-to-Face Meetings and Events

We support community groups as part of our commitment to the community. Tenant groups meet regularly across the district, giving residents a chance to speak directly with our staff. Our Customer Engagement Team, ensure that residents' voices are heard, and their concerns are addressed.

### Digital Screens and Printed Materials

We are putting up digital screens in all our independent living schemes to keep residents, who may not have access to the internet or have a smartphone, updated on important and relevant matters. While we focus on digital communication, we still use printed materials like posters, leaflets, and newsletters when they are the best option.

### Internal Communications

For our staff, we use a SharePoint intranet, Microsoft Teams, and regular newsletters, along with digital screens in offices. We also hold in-person and online briefings to keep everyone informed, with targeted emails for important updates when needed.

## Our Brand

Our brand is much more than just a logo. It captures who we are and what we do, it is our reputation as a supplier of good quality housing, and as a landlord who cares, listens to their tenants, stakeholders, and partners, and as a landlord who acts on the feedback we receive.

Our brand is one of our most valuable assets and is seen on our vans, our uniforms and in our photos. It is how our tenants, stakeholders and residents in the district recognise us. Our brand reflects our beliefs and values, as well as our personality.

It's a brand to be proud of, and to ensure the brand remains strong and trusted, we need our communications to be written and designed in a consistent way.

### Who is responsible for our brand?

Everyone in Council Housing is responsible for our brand. We will improve it through:

- Delivering a good customer experience.
- Addressing reputational issues quickly.
- Using the appropriate logo and branded templates.
- Following corporate guidelines for language, sentence structure and tone of voice.

We will update and promote our brand guidelines and toolkits to ensure all colleagues can use the branding appropriately. Managers must ensure that all staff apply the brand guidelines and house style in their work with the help of the communication officer.

## Our Goals

As the voice of Council Housing our communications play a crucial role in conveying key messages to our tenants, stakeholders and colleagues. The Communication Officer support all messaging outputs whilst working with the various internal services and external partners (such as community groups, residents' panels etc). Ensuring that we are proactive, organised and efficient without outgoing communications.

Strategic planning is crucial to this enterprise and our strategic approach will support the delivery of the following goals:

- We will deliver effective communications to tell our story – strengthening our partnerships and helping customers get the best out of their relationship with us.
- We will communicate in line with our values, so that we are clear, open and honest.
- We will tailor our communications to support the wider objectives of the business.
- We will continue to build our brand, positioning us as a community-focused housing supplier.
- We will use a wide range of external channels to offer choice and convenience to our customers.
- We will deliver engaging and informative internal communications, exploring innovative ways to reach our team.
- We will monitor and measure the success of our activities so that we can continue to improve.

## Review and Monitoring

This strategy document will be reviewed every 2 years, or immediately following any major incident or legislative change.

