

Customer Experience Strategy

2025 - 2028

Introduction

This strategy sets out to achieve the key elements of our Corporate Plan in terms of ensuring **“a consistently great service offer for customers that’s easy for everyone to use” and by “designing our services in collaboration with users and colleagues”**.

Customer Experience refers to how we, as a business, engage and connect with customers and how customers feel after interacting with us. We want customers to feel listened to, informed, understood and supported. We will engage with customers around their needs, and how they want to see services designed and delivered - and we will design customer experiences based on understanding, via data, insight and our customer voice. We will implement customer led processes that are easy to understand and navigate, and ensure the right culture, capacity, systems, technology and wider business support is in place in order to support colleagues to deliver right first time service and great customer experience.

This strategy articulates our required focus and ambitions for the next three years. Delivery will be in line with four key pillars:

- **Fair and Equitable outcomes**
- **Customer Driven Services**
- **Great Customer Experience**
- **Operational Excellence.**

Delivery of this strategy is the responsibility of all colleagues - customer facing and non-customer facing. We will work to aligned cross-organisational goals and ensuring we present to our customers as one business with a Customer Experience culture at our core. Customer experience is also reliant on delivery via our partners (including contractors/third party providers who deliver services on our behalf). In line with our corporate plan, we will hold our partners to account to ensure they are meeting their responsibilities towards our customers and develop wider partnerships and networks that support and enhance our offer.

Our end goal is to improve customer experience based on delivering brilliant basics consistently – leading to improved satisfaction, positive feedback and reduced complaints. Insight and data, including feedback via Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and complaints, highlights that we have differing levels of customer capabilities balanced against inconsistency in our service delivery. We have pockets of brilliance and areas for improvement. We will develop our delivery to do the basics well for all customers – based on needs.

The Customer Experience Strategy is a tier one strategy within our strategy hierarchy and is key to delivery of the “Great for Customers” element of the Corporate plan. It provides strategic context for customer facing strategies such as Repairs and speaks to all other key Great Places strategies including IT and People Strategies.

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Context

This strategy has been developed in line with our Corporate Plan “Here for Customers” aligning with our vision of **Great Homes, Great Communities and Great People** and our values:

We are fair We care We appreciate We partner We innovate

It is developed based on extensive customer feedback – including a bespoke engagement exercise with circa 1000 customers which highlighted the top three things that are most important around experience:

- We keep our promises and do what we say we will do
- We provide a timely response
- Customers feel listened to and informed

Diverse customers

Great places has a diverse portfolio with circa 26,000 homes owned or managed. Census data tells us we work across some of the most diverse, and at times disadvantaged, communities in the North of England. Within our homes we have a diverse customer base - and their varying needs are considered in this strategy.

We hold 77.6% of EDI data for general needs and Independence and Wellbeing customers (February 2025). Our known data highlights that whilst we have a mainly white population, we have a significant population of Asian or Asian British and Black and African, Caribbean or Black British customers. We also have an ageing population, and a number of customers that have a physical or mental disability. Tailored support and adjustments needed by our customers include such things as adaptations, coaching and support provision - or different communication and access arrangements – including around neurodiversity, visual or hearing impairment or language issues.

In line with our Corporate Plan, we will continue to work hard to ensure we hold the right information about customers so that our colleagues can tailor how they work with individuals and are able to offer additional support where it's needed. We will design and deliver homes and services in line with customer requirements, in a flexible and accessible way that reflects our diverse communities and wide geography.

External environment

This strategy reflects regulatory and statutory requirements. This includes Housing Ombudsman guidance – particularly the code and spotlight reports on “Attitudes, respect and rights” and “Knowledge and Information Management”. It considers the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards – particularly the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard. Consideration has been given to the Better Social Housing Review which noted that many tenants face structural inequalities, especially people from black and minority ethnic communities, those with disabilities and single parent households.

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This strategy should be considered alongside other factors such as the wider external operating environment for the housing sector such as ongoing financial, supply chain, skills, and resourcing pressures, technological advancements, cost of living crisis and increased customer awareness and expectations/demands on services.

Customer Experience - What we do

Customer Experience is not limited to a single team or touchpoint. It's the sum of interactions along a customers' journey with us starting with awareness of our services. Interactions span across all front facing services and our ability to respond well, relies on support from our central teams as well as contractors and partners. How we deliver services and communications for customers informs experience - whether that be allocating homes, providing support and advice, carrying out repairs or tenancy visits dealing with ASB, complaints or contacts via our Hub. Customer experience is everyone's job - The resources needed to deliver this strategy are widespread.



Our Service Delivery Framework (SDF) is clear about how we should deliver in practice - via six guiding principles:

- We start from the home
- We are easy to do business with
- We do things with not for our customers
- We create successful neighbourhoods and help our customers become part of their communities
- We work with partners for our customers benefit
- We support our customers to explore options

The above principles are reflected through the objectives within this strategy.

Aims & Objectives - where do we want to be

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This strategy is built around 4 key pillars and together these guide our way forward for customer experience.



FAIR AND
EQUITABLE
OUTCOMES



CUSTOMER DRIVEN
SERVICES



GREAT CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE



OPERATIONAL
EXCELLENCE

Fair and Equitable outcomes.

This part of our strategy sets out our EDI commitment and the key outcomes we wish to see with regard to customer related Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Our EDI Commitment: At Great Places we are committed to improving equality and inclusion across our services and communications to ensure all customers feel they have fair access and feel treated with fairness and respect. We celebrate diversity and recognise that our customers are individuals with different needs and we aim to tailor our services accordingly. We appreciate that customer circumstances or related vulnerabilities are not static - we will respond accordingly and support customers in a flexible way.

Aim – To ensure fair and equitable outcomes for our customers by knowing who our customers are and tailoring delivery in line with what they need

Objectives - In delivering fair and equitable outcomes as part of this strategy we will:

- Improve collection of customer data, insight and information, ensuring good record keeping, to develop improved understanding of customer needs, circumstances and satisfaction with delivery
- Use customer data and insight effectively to tailor services and communications according to need, including those delivered by contractors and third parties
- Ensure accessible service delivery and communications
- Consider our customers of the future – designing our homes and services with future customers in mind

Fair and Equitable - Three year milestones

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- Develop and deliver a customer data improvement plan that ensures we build on the EDI information we hold for customers including their needs - and that ensures data is reviewed and used to inform service improvement and support to meet customer needs
- Develop approach to customer segmentation (demographic/psychographic) to design and deliver services and processes
- Use customer data and insight from a range of sources to develop a “Customers of the future” action plan
- Ensure oversight of EDI related plans via the Customer Support Service Excellence group (SEG)
- Ensure business wide visibility of EDI performance via launch of a data dashboard
- Review communication with customers to ensure it is clear, accessible, relevant, timely and appropriate to our diverse customer needs. Develop “so what” story-telling around EDI activity to encourage customer engagement in data collection
- Review and revise relevant policies and processes based on customer information to ensure accessible and inclusive services – to include how to deal with complex cases/customer needs
- Develop approach to customer journey mapping to understand the challenges and barriers that customers face and review our delivery and offer in line
- Embed monitoring of EDI related delivery and adjustments within contract management arrangements

How we will measure success

- Customer Satisfaction – fairness and respect (TSM)
- Data collection - % core 4 data

Customer Driven services

Customer Driven services have been embedded into law through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Consumer Regulation will see landlords held to account in new ways. Insight, customer voice and co-production will drive the design and delivery of services at Great Places, reflecting regulatory requirements.

Aim - To ensure we deliver services that customers want and need by listening to our customers.

Objectives - In delivering customer driven services as part of this strategy we will:

- Provide a range of opportunities for customer engagement, including within our governance structures
- Work with customers to design and improve service delivery and communications
- Learn from complaints and satisfaction feedback
- Ensure diversity in customer voice
- Ensure customers feel listened to and informed

Customer Driven Services - Three year milestones

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- Embed the work of our Customer Committee to strengthen the influence of customers in determining how Great Places operates
- Continue to develop our Scrutiny Group – with a clear plan of scrutiny and engagement
- Develop “GP 300” to widen customer involvement in influencing and designing services, harness the voice of our diverse customers, develop a succession approach for our scrutiny group and customer committee and develop our approach to reward and recognition for customer engagement
- Develop approach to customer involvement in Building safety including customer panel
- Deliver the findings from our complaints review to ensure an improved approach to early problem resolution, complaints handling and learning
- Develop approach to service improvement based on TSMs via relevant SEGs
- Review transactional satisfaction surveys with customers – approach, service areas and outcomes
- Review customer communication methods and content to ensure customers and colleagues receive regular and relevant information in the right way including:
 - learning from engagement and how customer views have been taken into account
 - how customers can use landlord services and understand what to expect/responsibilities
 - relevant insight and performance information including TSMs, complaints and spend
 - how we are meeting regulatory and legal requirements
 - How to make a complaint, our policy and process and relevant Housing Ombudsman information

How we will measure success

- Customer Satisfaction – Listens and acts (TSM)
- Customer Satisfaction – Informed about things that matter (TSM)
- Customer Satisfaction – complaints (TSM)
- Transactional satisfaction - complaints

Great Customer Experience

Customer Experience is informed by every interaction a customer has along their journey with us. A customer's journey with us can be property or service related – but can also be one that includes changing life experiences such as health issues, retirement, having children, job changes - which will have an impact on the services needed or how they are delivered. We will design experiences based on what is important to customers.

Aim - We want customers to feel they are receiving consistently great services from us that meet their needs.

Objectives - In delivering great customer experience as part of this strategy we will:

- Provide choice and flexibility around access to services including digital and non-digital channels
- Focus on right first time service delivery and doing what we say we will do for our customers
- Manage customer expectations and provide clarity about the service offer in place
- Link our service offer to tenure and need – with a “one size does not fit all” approach
- Develop proactive versus reactive service delivery based on data and insight

Great Customer Experience - Three year milestones

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- Review digital offer including review of our portal and chatbot and the development of a mobile app, to ensure an easy to use digital offer for customers. Support customers into digital inclusion where possible via direct support or third party initiatives
- Develop and deliver a Hub improvement plan to improve access for customers and ensure resources in place to deliver first point of contact resolution
- Review the effectiveness of our customer, housing and neighbourhood management and support services to ensure the right resources are in place to deliver right first time services for customers. In designing services we will consider insight to understand the levels of capability of our customers and therefore the service and support needed.
- Deliver findings of the repairs review to ensure efficient and effective delivery
- Ensure effective contract management arrangements are in place for key contractors to ensure right first time delivery
- Review customer commitments and service standards with customers and colleagues to provide clarity regarding our offer linked to tenure and need, ensuring alignment with our SDF and ensuring effective performance monitoring arrangements are in place.
- Ensure learning based on feedback related to “how easy it is to do business with us” with SEG oversight
- Ensure effective customer communications – including delivery in line with our 48 hour acknowledgement SLA and keeping in contact with customers regularly where needed
- Complete policy reviews including adaptations, tenancy management and ASB

How we will measure success

- % customers digital
- Hub performance metrics
- Ease of doing business score (our internal Signal For Success (SFS) score)
- Overall Customer Satisfaction – (TSM)
- Customer Satisfaction – Repairs (TSM)
- Customer Satisfaction – ASB (TSM)

Operational excellence

In order to deliver brilliant basics for our customers – we need to work as one business to align our processes, systems, technology and culture and make sure that they’re underpinned by customer data and insight about how customers interact with us. In making services easy for customers to use – we need to harness technology and make our processes simple. Our partners and contractors will need to support our ethos of doing the basics brilliantly.

This strategy needs to read across to our IT strategy – ensuring appropriate use of digital and AI technology to ensure accessible services, that provide instant support and deliver streamlined experiences for customers. We also need to provide better tools for our colleagues to support them to be more effective - including easy-to-use systems and processes.

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The People strategy will be key to ensuring we build a culture that ensures we are “here for our customers” and that service delivery through colleagues supports great customer experience. We will embed a customer-centric attitude and approach across all our teams and with our partners and contractors, so we deliver with empathy – and ownership. It’s important that customers can trust us to deliver what we say we’ll deliver. We will work on our culture to ensure a focus on working effectively together and breaking down silos to do the right thing for customers, with good two-way communication at the heart of this. Supporting our colleagues to do this will mean putting in place the right training, development, and leadership as well as ensuring we have the right capacity to deliver the right things.

Aim – To provide the foundations for colleagues to deliver brilliant basics

Objectives - In delivering operational excellence as part of this strategy we will:

- Ensure effective systems, technology and processes based on data, insight and feedback
- Ensure brilliant basics delivered via contractors, partners and third parties
- Ensure resources in place where needed most – reflective of our diverse customer base
- Ensure a “one business” customer centric culture – that ensures ownership and empowerment

Operational Excellence - Three year milestones

- Deliver IT Strategy to include review of key systems and innovation opportunities to support effective delivery for colleagues
- Complete process review, through customer and colleague lens, to ensure processes are simple and accessible and effectively documented - supporting consistent delivery
- Deliver review of contract management arrangements to ensure effective procurement and management of third party delivered services
- Review budgets, VFM and ROI of service delivery to ensure focus on what matters most, spend on the right things and sufficient capacity to deliver brilliant basics for customers – reflecting on the Better Social Housing Review, consumer standards and Ombudsman code
- Review culture to ensure customer centric and focused on learning – as part of People Strategy. To include ensuring colleagues understand what delivering great CX means for them and how role relevant
- Develop training academy that ensures the right knowledge and skills for our colleagues as part of our People Strategy. As a minimum our offer to colleagues will include the knowledge and skills to:
 - Ensure leadership development
 - Develop customer relationships and understand customer barriers through coaching conversations.
 - Manage expectations and have resilience if challenged.
 - Ensure effective communication – Listening, verbal and written communications including tone of voice
 - Navigate systems and processes effectively – to deliver basics consistently
 - Ensure effective record keeping.
 - Be subject matter experts (role specific) and ensure understanding of what is their role – and what is the role of the wider business to deliver and support
 - Equip colleagues to support diverse customer needs through training and development

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- Ensure learning from sector and wider to inform improved customer experience

How we will measure success

- Delivery of IT Strategy and People strategy
- % engaged colleagues
- % colleagues satisfied with opportunities for learning and development
- % leadership roles filled by someone with diverse heritage
- Colleague Agreement Score: “I have the systems, tools and ways of working needed to do my job”
- % accurate data (Signal For Success (SFS) score)

Overall target for strategy - Achieve C1 rating

Financial considerations/Value for Money implications

Managing budgets and VFM is key in delivering this strategy – to ensure we use budgets for biggest impact, based on what customers need. We must focus more on ensuring our spend is on delivery of quality services and a proactive approach rather than dealing with failure demand and a reactive approach and consider automation and the efficiencies that technology can bring.

Customer retention is important in terms of reduced turnover costs as is the right support and access to services for customers to enable them to pay rent and other charges.

The key costs in delivering this strategy include:

- Proportionate colleague and day to day delivery costs
- Investment costs such as technology and systems
- Costs of colleague training and support
- Costs of meeting regulatory and statutory requirements
- Costs of meeting customer needs and tailored services
- Costs linked to customer communication and engagement

The costs of delivering great customer experience span the whole organisation – and will be reflected through the costs of delivering all front facing activity as well as the work of central teams to support activity around culture and leadership, systems and technology, communications and processes.

Through working with customers to improve services we hope to ensure efficient and value for money services and reduced waste through delivering brilliant basics. Through procurement and effective management of relevant third-party services we will ensure focus on value for money.

There will be cost implications of meeting the needs of our diverse customers through tailored services and investing in service improvements, technology and systems etc - we will need to review our offer alongside business priorities and spend in the round and factor this into the Business Plan review process – ensuring a reasonable, and affordable approach to tailored delivery. We will experience costs in relation to meeting Housing Ombudsman requirements and recommendations as well as those of the Regulator of Social Housing

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Risk - The risks involved in pursuing this strategy include

- Customer related – unmet expectations impacting satisfaction and failure to address identified need
- Digital exclusion
- Financial – including the need to fund other Great Places priorities
- Colleague related – lack of resource and capacity including recruitment and retention challenges
- Data quality and governance not being where it needs to be
- Sector and political change
- Legal and regulatory compliance
- External economic conditions

These risks will be mitigated by regular review of progress against Corporate Plan priorities in line with business planning and budget assumptions. Regular review and reporting through our risk register will ensure the Board have assurance that, if the risks do materialise, mitigating action will be taken.

Performance monitoring

This strategy will be monitored in line with the delegations set out in the Code of governance, ensuring relevant oversight by Board, Customer Committee and other relevant committees, Executive team and directors.

Operational delivery and performance will be monitored via Customer Service Directors Team on a quarterly basis – with relevant Service Excellence groups (SEGs) ensuring oversight of relevant individual actions within the delivery plan and related performance.

A C1 Regulatory grading would be recognition of success alongside the measures outlined above. This strategy informs the approach with regard to the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard – other strategies including the communities strategy and Asset management strategy also influence this outcome.

This strategy will connect with our annual communication plan and campaign planner.

This strategy links to the following policies:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| • Customer Feedback Policy | Remedies and resolutions policy |
| • Inclusive Services Policy | Service with Respect Policy |
| • Repairs Policy | Scheme and Neighbourhood management policy |
| • Tenancy management Policy | ASB policy |
| • Adaptations Policy | Allocations Policy |

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Implications for customers - We will hear and respond to the voice of customers' ensuring engagement and feedback shapes services. We will design and deliver services in a way that creates a great experience – and when we get things wrong, we will acknowledge this and put things right. We will ensure that we reflect the different needs of our diverse customers in the way we design and deliver services.

Equality & diversity implications - Our customers will continue to feel valued and respected by the organisation. Services delivered will be tailored to their needs. Services will be accessible, and information will be available in alternative formats. We will ensure that our customers are treated fairly, and their differences are recognised and celebrated, creating diverse and inclusive communities.

Environmental implications- In delivering this strategy, and associated improvement plan we will be enabling our customers to live in their home and communities in a sustainable and independent manner. Customers will be supported to manage their homes in an environmentally friendly manner, and information on the actions that we are taking to reduce our carbon footprint will be communicated in an accessible way.

Conclusion

This Strategy sets out Great Places' commitment to EDI for customers as well as how we will use customer voice to design and drive service delivery to ensure great customer experiences. Delivering this strategy is everyone's job - including customer facing colleagues and central support teams. Delivery from partners and contractors is also key to ensuring customer satisfaction and ensuring customers feel valued and treated with respect.

Strategy Approval Date:	May 25
Equality Impact Assessment Date:	March 25
Reducing Carbon Impact Assessment Date:	
Safeguarding impact:	
Strategy Review Date:	May 28
Lead Team:	Customer Experience
Level of Authorisation Required:	Board