



ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
2024-2027

at home with...

fife 
housing
group

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Contents

Section	Page	Section	Page
Introduction	3	Estate inspections	8
Vision and values	3	Community events	8
Stakeholder analysis	4	Consultation	8
Strategic objectives	4	Tenants' and Residents' Associations	9
Delivering engagement and involvement opportunities	5	New engagement opportunities and initiatives	9
Available engagement and involvement opportunities	6	Roles and responsibilities	10
Shareholding membership	6	Performance management	10
Becoming a member of our Board	6	Regulatory compliance	10
Resident-led scrutiny	7	Equality and diversity	10
Resident Inspectors	7	Review	10
Mystery Shoppers	7	Appendix 1 - Action Plan	
Volunteer Bank	8	Appendix 2 - Co-production Ladder	



Introduction

At Fife Housing Group (FHG) we believe that effective tenant and customer engagement enhances our business and helps us to understand how we can improve the ways in which we deliver our services.

As such, we are committed to strengthening the voice of our tenants, owners and other stakeholders to influence the services we provide.

To do this, we need to ensure that tenants, factored owners, community representatives, local groups and other stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in certain decision-making processes that relate to housing and the wider community.

This document sets out our strategic direction for tenant and customer engagement. It reflects our core values and recognises that the best opportunities for us to succeed are created when colleagues, tenants and all of our customers work together to achieve common goals.

The strategy:

- creates a framework which encourages a diverse range of tenants and other stakeholders to be actively involved in shaping, improving and scrutinising our services
- makes sure all tenants and customers have the opportunity to have their say
- aims to ensure what we do is outcome-led

This strategy should be read in conjunction with our Complaints Policy, Income Maximisation Strategy, Membership Policy, Communications and Marketing Strategy, Corporate Social Responsibility Statement, Rent Setting Policy and Factoring Policy.

Vision and values

Our vision of 'Your home... our priority' was shaped by tenants, customers, colleagues and stakeholders. It reflects our commitment to continuous improvement, outlining our ambitions and focus for the future, delivery of which is supported by our brand values of being:



Accountable



Firm but fair



Open and honest



Versatile

Stakeholder analysis

It is important to identify key stakeholders in order to understand the influence that they may have with regard to strategic decisions and to clarify how their interests can be most effectively managed.



Keeping our key stakeholders engaged and informed will be one of the primary functions of this strategy as their understanding of our aims and objectives will influence both successful delivery of these and the prevailing opinion surrounding them.

Strategic Objectives



This strategy sits predominantly under our strategic objective of Engagement, which focuses on fostering positive and supportive relationships with our tenants and stakeholders to understand their priorities and aspirations, although there will obviously be some overlap with the others detailed above.

Through this strategy, we aim to:

- continue having honest dialogue with residents through various channels and with a principle of mutual respect and trust
- maximise the opportunities for tenants and other stakeholders to work with us in improving homes, neighbourhoods and related services
- emphasise our commitment towards working collaboratively
- promote the key principles of tenant and stakeholder engagement
- learn from good practice seen within other organisations

Delivering engagement and involvement opportunities

The Scottish Social Housing Charter imposes a statutory duty on social landlords to manage their business so that: **‘tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with’**.

To do this, we will strive to follow the general principles of tenant participation, information and consultation detailed below:

- Tenant participation requires a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, elected members and committee/board members and Housing Officers at all levels, working together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services
- Tenant participation practice should be seen as a continuous process where information, ideas and power are shared, common understandings of problems are strived for and a consensus on solutions is worked out

- Good tenant participation allows all parties to contribute to the agenda. All participants require to have all the information needed to consider issues properly; that information requires to be clear, timely and accessible and to take account of equal opportunities concerns
- Processes of decision-making should be open, clear and accountable
- Adequate time should be given to tenant representatives to consider the issues properly. Tenants should have the opportunity to work out a common view in advance of meeting landlords’ representatives
- Participation must meet the requirements of the legislation surrounding equal opportunities. Good practice in participation removes barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, geographic location, special needs, language difficulties, age, sexual orientation, or disability

Irrespective of the legislative requirements, we see engagement with tenants and other stakeholders as best practice and a normal element of how we operate. This should be a two-way process of working together and sharing ideas and information, with the overall aim being to improve homes and services for tenants.

We want to continue building on our approach to involving and engaging tenants, owners and other stakeholders where their views help to drive forward service improvements. This strategy, therefore, provides a wide range of engagement options so that we can be flexible in the ways we respond effectively to both external and internal challenges.

We will take steps to ensure that all of our engagement opportunities are fully accessible and inclusive and we will make it as easy as possible for tenants, owners and other stakeholders to provide feedback and engage with us.

We will also provide clear routes into involvement and evidence how we have improved services as a direct result of tenant and customer feedback.

Our aim is to embed resident engagement throughout Fife Housing Group so that each colleague understands and appreciates that they have a responsibility, irrespective of their role, to ensure that proper and timely engagement takes place within our key activities.

Available engagement and involvement opportunities

In order to meet our aspirations, we need to meaningfully engage with tenants, owners and other stakeholders to scrutinise and shape the services we provide.

Our approach is based on the premise that we are accountable to tenants and other stakeholders for services we deliver. This involves creating a culture of transparency and adopting a robust approach that includes evidence-based self-assessment, external challenge and regular reporting to tenants.

All involved residents are provided with the training required to allow them to participate effectively in the volunteer role they have chosen. We also provide ongoing learning and development opportunities to help them learn new skills or develop existing ones. This may include attendance at relevant courses, conferences and working groups.

In the sections below, we outline some of the wide range of engagement opportunities that exist for tenants and other customers to participate in our decision-making processes, options which have been developed to take into account the varied backgrounds of residents, their appetite for involvement, and the diverse needs of customers and the communities they live within.

Shareholding membership

We continue to encourage all of our tenants and customers to become members of Fife Housing Group. Those who agree to join us will be entitled to be formally consulted on some key issues and receive invitations to various events and consultations.

Applicants for Shareholding Membership are required to pay £1 and be approved by the Board - in return, they receive a share certificate, a copy of our rules and an invitation to attend our Annual General Meeting (AGM).

We aim to make becoming a shareholding members appealing and rewarding and will continually review how this is communicated and how shareholding members benefit from engaging with us.

Becoming a member of our Board

Our Board of Management is a group of up to 15 members (tenants and non-tenants) who all possess different skills in relevant areas. The Board normally meets six times a year with an additional strategy day. Meetings can be held in person or online.

The Board is responsible for agreeing on all the major decisions affecting Fife Housing Group. This includes the Group's annual rent setting, investment programme and business plan. The Board, therefore, plays an essential role in making sure Fife Housing Group is run effectively and efficiently and is accountable to its tenants and other stakeholders.

Any shareholding member who is keen to take their membership further and feels that they have the skills or experience to be involved in the Board of Management may consider applying for Board Membership. Before deciding on submitting an application to join the Board, there is an open invitation for those interested to come along and observe a Board meeting taking place.

Resident-led scrutiny

Much of our emphasis over the past few years has been on the development of our scrutiny group, 'Resident VOICES'.

Resident VOICES is a group of volunteer members who meet in person every month to discuss a range of issues that are important to our tenants and to give feedback on how we are meeting these needs.

This group is made up of a maximum of 12 members who may be tenants, factored owners or members of the local community.

Being a member of this group involves identifying areas of our services to be reviewed and then independently scrutinising and examining them to ensure all customers are receiving a good service. As part of this role, they will highlight areas where we could improve or learn from others. They play a vital role by contributing this learning towards our programme of service and standards improvement.

Additionally, we regularly consult with Resident VOICES regarding changes to our policies and procedures, and also seek their input regarding our events, communications and consultations.

We will continue to work with the group to offer learning and development opportunities and to explore new ways of conducting scrutiny activities.

Resident Inspectors

Our Resident Inspectors help us to ensure that our homes meet the highest standards in regard to property maintenance and repair by providing an insight into the expectations of our tenants.

They do this by visiting properties before they are relet and providing feedback on their findings, including any suggestions for improvement.

Inspections usually last 1-2 hours and take place during normal office hours (9am to 5pm).

Mystery Shoppers

Mystery Shopping is a way for us to measure the quality of the customer service we provide across the organisation on a daily basis.

We have recently moved away from testing fabricated scenarios to instead encourage our Mystery Shoppers to tell us about the real-life interactions and experiences they have with our colleagues and services each month.

This has not only increased the quantity of feedback we receive but also the quality as it is now both realistic and relevant, allowing actual service failures to be identified and actioned in a timely manner.

Mystery Shopping is a flexible role which only requires participants to commit 5-10 minutes each month and can be done from the comfort of their own home or by visiting us in the office.



Volunteer Bank

Our Volunteer Bank is made up of a group of tenants and other customers who want to help and influence change within Fife Housing Group but are unable to commit to one of our other, more structured volunteer roles.

This is the most flexible option for those who want to get involved without any specific time commitment or obligation. Instead, they can pick and choose what activities they want to get involved with on an ad hoc basis, from online surveys to in-person focus groups.

Estate inspections

We deliver a comprehensive programme of estate inspections throughout Fife each year. These are organised by our Housing Officers and, where interest in participating is expressed by tenants, residents' associations, local representatives and other partner organisations such as the Fife Community Wardens, they can attend to highlight issues that need to be dealt with and agree solutions.

It is our intention to improve the communication and engagement around these inspections by offering tenants the opportunity to report issues requiring attention in advance, even if they are unable to attend, and by sharing any issues identified and actions agreed with tenants residing in the local area.

Community events

We will continue to offer a minimum of four large-scale events in our communities each year.

These events will aim to address areas of concern identified by

tenants (such as the cost of living crisis) or to target specifically impacted groups (such as the elderly) to combat social issues like loneliness.

They will do this by offering tenants and other residents the opportunity to come and talk to us in a relaxed environment about any concerns they may have and to meet with a range of useful partner agencies who can provide information on support available.

Where possible, we endeavour to obtain additional funding which will allow us to increase the amount and type of support we can offer at these events.

We also arrange local skip days whereby areas identified by Housing Officers or residents as being in need of a clear-up are provided with skips so tenants can dispose of their rubbish for free. Colleagues have also recently been undertaking litter picks during our skip days to help improve the overall aesthetic of the areas in question.

Consultation

We will continue to consult with tenants where we are considering making a significant change to a service or policy that affects the management of or services to their homes – for example, each year, we will carry out a major consultation regarding the level of increase that we are considering applying to tenants' rents.

Such consultations will be carried out in a manner that enables tenants the opportunity to provide their views and gives sufficient time for comment. Where practicable, we will also endeavour to provide the opportunity for tenants to discuss the changes proposed with colleagues through focus groups and online forums etc.

The Fife Housing Group Board will always be made aware of the responses received from these tenant consultations.

In addition, we will commission a Customer Satisfaction Survey a minimum of every three years. The outcomes of this survey will be reported to the Board, tenants and the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) through the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

We will also continue to routinely carry out satisfaction surveys following repair and maintenance work, including the renewal of major components such as windows, kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems etc. This is another opportunity for tenants to have their say – whether positive or negative, all feedback is appreciated.

Likewise, tenants and other customers will be given the opportunity to provide us with their input and feedback through a variety of ad hoc surveys on current issues and proposals.

Additionally, we are committed to exploring co-design and co-production opportunities to further improve the quality of our consultation and engagement activities (see Appendix 1 for further information on this process).

Tenants' and Residents' Associations

We will continue to support existing Tenants' and Residents' Associations (TRAs) and to promote the development of new ones where it is established there is an interest in people coming together to take up issues of common interest in relation to housing, community and the general environment.

For any of Fife Housing Group's tenants wishing to set up a Tenants' and Residents' Association, we will offer an initial grant for specific set-up purposes of up to £500 in the first year and up to £200 a year thereafter.

We will also continue to assist these groups with booking venues for meetings and support them to source funding opportunities.

New engagement opportunities and initiatives

We are committed to seeking new initiatives and approaches to encourage engagement and involvement from a diverse range of tenants and other stakeholders and, to this end, have already expanded the opportunities available to include flexible options which require different levels of commitment, can be accessed through a variety of channels and are available at different times of the day/week.

We do, however, remain conscious that a limited demographic currently engages with us and, as such, are exploring options to develop relationships with underrepresented groups. These include:

- Working with local schools on our Rising Community Voices project
- Trialling new monthly drop-in sessions in some of our smaller communities
- Removing the barriers to digital inclusion by giving tenants who are not currently online the skills, confidence and equipment to engage in this arena (see our Communications and Marketing Strategy for further details regarding this)
- Developing targeted recruitment campaigns to promote opportunities which are likely to appeal to different demographics as well as the benefits of engaging with these
- Launching a new programme to incentivise and reward involved residents
- Surveying our tenants for ideas and looking at co-production opportunities which might encourage engagement from these groups

Roles and responsibilities

The Board has ultimate responsibility to ensure that engagement and involvement processes are accessible and fairly applied.

The Group's Director of Housing is responsible for ensuring that this Strategy is consulted on with tenants, customers and board members and for its review, implementation and proper application.

Performance management

Any concerns regarding the adherence to this Strategy will be reported to the Board.

We produce a range of performance indicators, including our performance in relation to engagement.

Our Customer Satisfaction Survey includes a range of questions relating to engagement, with the outcomes of this reported to the Board, tenants and the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) through the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

Regulatory compliance

This Strategy complies with the following Charter outcomes:

Outcome 1: Equalities – 'every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.'

Outcome 2: Communication – 'tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides'.

Outcome 3: Participation – 'tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with'.

Equality and diversity

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken.


This strategy is expected to have a positive impact on equality and diversity, offering improved accessibility and additional support for tenants to engage both online and offline and encouraging involvement from currently underrepresented groups.

Where required, we will also provide all necessary documents in other languages and formats (such as large print, audio and Braille).

Review

This policy is due to be reviewed every three years or earlier if a material change or regulatory standard requires this.





'No decision
about me,
without
me...'

South African saying

Strategic Objective - Engagement

Theme - Involvement

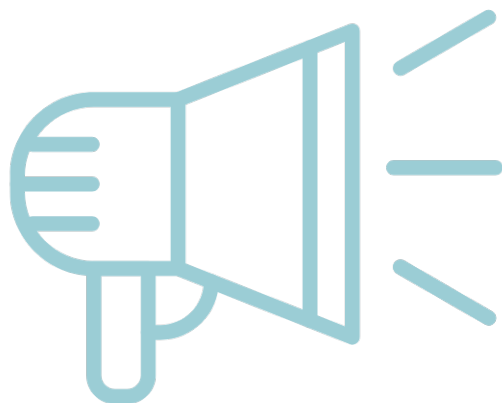
Task	Action	Outcome
Carry out involved resident recruitment campaign and develop volunteer bank	Raise awareness of opportunities and benefits of getting involved by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting different levels and types of engagement • Developing targeted recruitment campaigns to promote opportunities which are likely to appeal to different demographics • Launching reward programme and publicising other benefits 	Increased understanding of opportunities available and improved participation from more diverse demographic
Support Resident VOICES scrutiny group on their journey to independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide facilities and resources for Resident VOICES to meet and operate effectively • Deliver annual Personal Development Reviews supported by individual training plans • Work with relevant organisations to learn from best practice • Provide regular updates on action taken following approval of recommendations made as part of scrutiny reports 	Scrutiny group is better able to carry out its role
Carry out annual programme of Resident Inspections and provide report on findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to undertake four Resident Inspections of ready-to-let properties each month • Share any issues identified or positive feedback with relevant colleagues • Compile an annual report detailing the results of each inspection and exploring any trends identified 	Swift action can be taken to resolve any issues identified Assurance provided that properties meet re-let standard Increased satisfaction with quality of home at move-in

Facilitate Mystery Shopping programme and provide annual report on findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue monthly survey to registered Mystery Shoppers • Share any issues identified or positive feedback with relevant colleagues • Compile an annual report detailing the responses and exploring any trends identified 	<p>Swift action can be taken to resolve any issues identified</p> <p>Assurance provided that expected service levels are being met</p> <p>Increased satisfaction with service provided</p>
Encourage the establishment of new residents' associations and provide support to existing groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend relevant meetings • Review the grant claimable by registered residents' associations in line with budget-setting process 	Ensures that residents' associations are properly supported to do their work.
Support recruitment of Tenant Board Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide/share relevant and accessible information • Equip colleagues to discuss Board Member opportunities with interested parties 	Raises awareness and signposts for tenants to apply to get involved.
Review offer for Tenant Members and update registration process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review membership documents and provide option to register online • Promote benefits of membership (i.e. new reward programme and invite to events such as AGM) 	Improved awareness of benefits should increase registration and could also lead to an interest in applying for Board membership.
Consider introducing new topic-specific working groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify specific areas of interest which may encourage engagement • Offer alternative timings and methods of participation (i.e. online meetings in the evening) 	Increased opportunity for those who cannot engage with current formats to get involved.
Deliver a minimum of four large-scale community events each year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of themed events delivered in large hubs across Fife • Involved residents present to promote benefits of volunteering 	Raises awareness of organisation, supports tenants, improves perception and provides opportunities to engage and signpost opportunities to get involved.
Trial smaller-scale monthly drop-in sessions in a selection of our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monthly sessions held in local community hubs offering the opportunity for tenants to drop in and chat to colleagues about any issues they are having or support they require 	Engagement levels should improve as tenants become familiar with us being in the same location on a specific day each month as opposed to only hosting an event in the area perhaps once a year.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sessions will focus on a specific theme or topic each month and include a social aspect by providing basic drinks/snacks/soup to combat loneliness/isolation and improve wellbeing 	Also offers the opportunity to engage with tenants in person around digital inclusion, participation and consultations.
Deliver a minimum of four skip and litter pick days each year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to free skips in areas identified by tenants or colleagues as in need of a clear-up Colleagues will also undertake a litter pick in these areas while the skips are in place 	Improves the aesthetic of the area in question, supports tenants and promotes a positive perception of the organisation.
Publish and support delivery of annual programme of Estate Inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Housing Team to promote calendar of Estate Inspections Update process to include push message notifications before and after event 	Makes tenants aware of estate management activities and keeps them informed about issues identified and actions taken.
Engage with schools and local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review 'Rising Community Voices' primary school project to establish how this could be taken forward Consider opportunities to engage with high school students 	Participants better understand the function of and opportunities provided by Housing Associations within their communities and are more likely to engage with them in the future, thus increasing participation amongst a younger demographic.
Work with Communications and Marketing colleagues to design and deliver a digital inclusion programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and deliver programme which addresses the three main barriers to digital participation - confidence and motivation, access and affordability and basic digital skills 	Barriers to digital inclusion are removed giving tenants who are not currently online the skills, confidence and equipment to engage in this arena
Explore other engagement opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek new initiatives and approaches to encourage engagement and involvement from a diverse range of tenants and other stakeholders Learn from good practice seen within other organisations Consider co-production and co-design opportunities for service improvement 	Ensures both opportunities for involvement and probability of engagement are maximised

Theme - Communication

Task	Action	Outcome
Publish two tenant magazines per annum plus monthly e-magazine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include articles and interactive features to encourage involvement from tenants• Provide opportunity for tenants to share feedback and influence both content and design	Tenants are informed about engagement opportunities, current issues, plans and important advice/guidance and empowered to influence how this is communicated
Publish bi-annual factored owners e-newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include articles and interactive features to encourage involvement from owners• Provide opportunity for owners to share feedback and influence both content and design	Owners are informed about engagement opportunities, current issues, plans and important advice/guidance and empowered to influence how this is communicated
Ensure accessibility of engagement activities and related communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote events and opportunities through a variety of on and offline channels• Produce our documents and communications in plain language, accessible formats and other languages as requested	Information and advice is fully accessible to everyone who requires it



Theme - Consultation

Task	Action	Outcome
Consult with tenants where we are considering making a significant change to a service or policy that affects the management of or services to their homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out annual rent consultation • Undertake ad hoc consultations as required • Consider other areas where consultation could be used to understand tenants' priorities and aspirations 	Opportunity for tenants to have their say, to provide feedback and to influence how we deliver our services
Complete and report on a full customer satisfaction survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent survey to be commissioned and undertaken at minimum every three years • Outcomes reported to Board, tenants and SHR 	Vital feedback gathered which will help us to improve and influence how we deliver services in the future
Carry out and report on a satisfaction survey for factored owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey to be undertaken at minimum every three years • Outcomes reported to Board, owners and SHR 	Important feedback gathered which will help us to improve and influence how we deliver services to owners in the future
Offer regular opportunities for tenants to provide feedback on satisfaction levels, current issues and new proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routinely carry out satisfaction surveys following repair and maintenance work, including the renewal of major components such as windows, kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems etc • Seek regular and structured tenant and service user feedback and share outcomes • Issue ad hoc surveys as appropriate 	Variety of feedback gathered which will help us react timeously to improve and influence how we deliver services going forward
Consider co-design and co-production opportunities for service delivery and improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Scottish Co-production Network to understand the benefits and challenges of the co-design and co-production processes 	Those who use services have genuine influence on their design and delivery and may even share strategic decision-making about policies

The Ladder of Co-production

Where are you on the ladder towards co-production?



7 Co-production

Co-production is an equal relationship between people who use services and the people responsible for services. They work together, from design to delivery, sharing strategic decision-making about policies as well as decisions about the best way to deliver services.

6 Co-design

People who use services are involved in designing services, based on their experiences and ideas. They have genuine influence but have not been involved in strategic decision-making.

5 Engagement

Compared to the consultation step below, people who use services are given more opportunities to express their views and may be able to influence some decisions about how services are designed or delivered, but this depends on what the people responsible for services will allow.

4 Consultation

People who use services may be asked to fill in surveys or attend meetings, however this step may be considered tokenistic if they do not have the power to influence or affect change.

3 Informing

The people responsible for services inform people about the services and explain how they work. This may include telling people what decisions have been made and why.

2 Educating

The people who use services are helped to understand the service design and delivery so that they gain relevant knowledge about it. That is all that is done at this stage.

1 Coercion

This is the bottom rung of the ladder. People who access services are made to attend an event about services as passive recipients. Their views are not considered important and are not taken into account.

Co-production: It's a long-term relationship

Based on Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, the TLAP ladder of participation describes a series of steps towards co-production which can be used in strategic commissioning across health and social care. It is designed to support greater understanding of the various stages of access and inclusion before full co-production is achieved.

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