



Lumen Housing

Tenant Engagement & Communications Strategy



August 2023

Purpose of the Document

At Lumen Housing, we believe everyone has a role to play in shaping and delivering the services we provide. Tenants have the power to highlight areas of improvement, suggest solutions and help staff to implement them.

Staff will work with tenants, listen to their feedback, and provide information and support to deliver on what has been agreed.

This strategy sets out how we will achieve this together.



Introduction

This Tenant Engagement and Communications Strategy has been designed as a guide for tenants and staff to utilise in developing and supporting engagement opportunities and how we communicate with each other within the organisation.

Lumen Housing is a registered social housing provider and a subsidiary company of Blackpool Housing Company (BHC) who is a wholly owned company of Blackpool Council. Lumen Housing has a mission to deliver high quality affordable homes aimed at meeting local housing need and contribute to the wider social and physical regeneration strategies in the area. All Lumen Housing's lettings, property and customer services are delivered through a skilled customer facing team 'My Blackpool Home' (MBH) which supports both Lumen and the parent company.

Lumen Housing currently has stock of approximately 50 units and has a plan to deliver approximately 20 units per annum, this may increase in the future. We have set out ambitious and exciting communication plans for the years ahead that involve collaborating with the parent to enable us to take a unified approach in both the social housing and private rented sectors.

Defining Tenant Engagement & Communication

Tenant engagement involves a range of processes designed to encourage tenants to become actively involved in how our services are delivered. This can include things such as informing tenants, listening to their thoughts and ideas, seeking input from them and supporting empowerment.

Communication as it sounds – how do we talk to one another? This can be anything from a quick update on the phone, meeting tenants at their home, newsletter updates, letters, social media, customer portal, text messages, surveys, inspections..... The list is endless.

Benefits of Good Tenant Engagement & Communication

Engaging with your landlord is hugely beneficial to both the tenant and housing provider. It helps provide an understanding of tenants' perspective, what they feel is working well or could be improved. For Lumen Housing it will help us to continually improve our services and introduce new initiatives.

There are also many personal benefits to customers becoming involved, it can be an excellent way to learn new skills. Being an active participant can also help increase confidence. It can provide tenants with the opportunity to build support networks and make new friends. It can also help them understand how Lumen Housing works and how they can make a difference to the way services are developed and delivered. Lastly, it can be fun too!

Communication is key in area of work. At Lumen Housing we aim to provide a range of communication methods, all designed to ensure that the tenant receives the relevant information in a timely, clear and transparent manner.

Tenant Engagement & Communication Service Standards

We have developed a set of service standards that are built around some key principles that we are committed to:

- Being open, transparent and honest
- Ensuring customers are at the forefront of everything we do
- Seeking to deliver the best possible experience of using our services
- Treating everyone fairly, politely and with respect
- Making it easy for customers to contact us and access our services

- Listening to customer views and acting on them in a timely manner
- Keeping customers informed and setting clear expectations of what we can deliver
- Training and developing our staff
- Actively promoting the values of diversity and inclusion
- Delivering high quality services and continuous improvement

When communicating with you we will:

Always be Polite and try to resolve queries the first time you contact us	Provide information in an accessible format	Offer you support if you need help to understand the information we provide
Provide you with details of the different ways you can contact us for help	Work with you to keep our records of data up to date	Deal with personal information in line with all relevant legislation and keeping your information confidential

Why do we Engage?

Engaging with our tenants is good practice and helps them to understand how Lumen Housing works and they help shape the way in which services are delivered. Engaging with tenants is also a regulatory requirement, The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 received Royal Assent becoming law on the 20th July 2023. This introduced a number of measures that will enable the Regulator to investigate consumer issues brought to their attention from April 2024 and will have the necessary powers to assess landlords more routinely.

A new consumer regulatory framework will be introduced and a revised set of consumer standards that set the requirements that registered providers must meet.

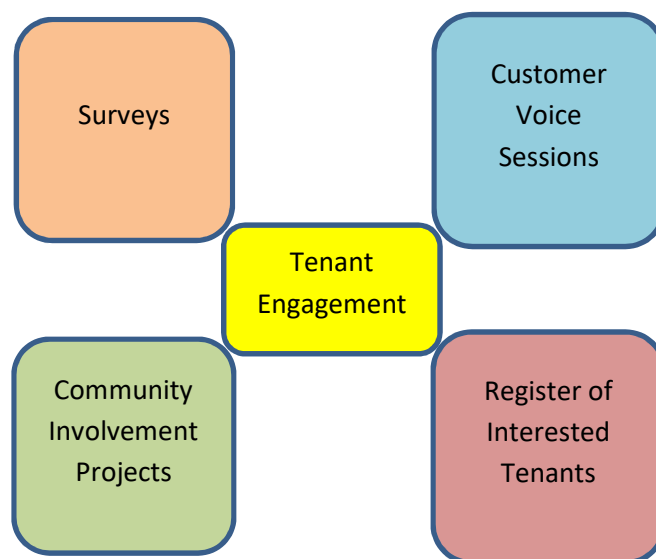
The proposed consumer standards are:

- **The Safety and Quality Standard** – requires landlords to provide safe and good quality homes.
- **The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** – requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account.
- **The Neighbourhood and Community Standard** – requires landlords to engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well maintained neighborhoods and feel safe in their homes.
- **The Tenancy Standard** – sets requirements for the fair allocation and lettings of homes and for how those tenancy are managed and ended by landlords.

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard encompasses the engagement with tenants standard which states that Registered providers must take their tenants views into account in their decision making about how landlord services are delivered.

How do we Engage?

At Lumen Housing, we have a range of engagement opportunities available for tenants to have their say including:



How do we communicate?

Here are some of the different methods that Lumen Housing use to communicate with tenants:

Website

www.lumenhousing.co.uk

This should contain all of the information you need and serves as a platform for updates about our services

Annual Report

Each year Lumen Housing produces a report that details how we are performing as an Organisation. This includes key figures and performance information

Social Media Platforms

We use these platforms to communicate with tenants via messaging services and we share information on upcoming events

Every Day Communications

Be it a phone call, email, visits, texts or letter it is important that the information Lumen Housing share is accurate, easy to understand and delivered in a timely and helpful manner

Engaging and Communicating through Social Media and Digital Technology

Utilising social media and technology is vital in delivering successful engagement and communication. Lumen Housing engage with our customers via My Blackpool Home's social media outlets Facebook and Instagram pages. Each of these platforms help to:

- Improve customer communications
- Increase awareness of the work we do and the services we offer
- Help to encourage tenant engagement through reply options and private message boxes
- Reflect well on Lumen Housing and its ethos of being open and transparent when sharing information
- Promote and increase customer satisfaction levels

Via these social media platforms we will share the following content examples:

- News and information about upcoming events and projects organised by Lumen Housing
- Engagement opportunities within Lumen Housing, directing customers to get involved
- Job opportunities within the parent company
- Links to local events, support groups, relevant national information, awareness days
- Links to publications such as the annual report
- Good news stories

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in how we engage and communicate with each other. This includes Microsoft Teams, on-line surveys and social media platforms. Lumen Housing will continue to broaden our range of engagement platforms to deliver the best possible services. It is our intention to introduce improved systems that will provide tenants with a portal that will allow for easier communications along with improved access to services, such as reporting repairs or raising issues with us.

Accessibility & Equal Opportunities

We want to provide opportunities for tenants to be heard and we will work hard to create a Customer Voice Network to make sure there are no barriers to engagement and communication. If barriers are identified we will provide some or all of the following to overcome them:

- Training, development and confidence building support to tenants
- Transportation to meetings where necessary
- Making meeting or event venues fully accessible
- Providing hearing loops when needed
- Providing large print documents
- Providing methods of communication in different formats and languages
- Translation services

Everyone is equal at Lumen Housing and we do not discriminate on the grounds of ethnic, gender, disability, gender marital status, sexuality, age, language, political and religious beliefs, social class or any other form of discrimination. We respect all tenants' rights to privacy and confidentiality.

Reviewing our Strategy

Reviewing the strategy and action plan will be a continuous task as our portfolio grows and as we develop our engagement and communication methods. We will review the strategy when the 2023 Consumer Standards are published then every 3 years with tenant involvement and input.

References: [Regulatory standards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-standards-for-social-housing)

Action Plan for Tenant Engagement & Communications: 2023 - 2026

Objective 1: To build and strengthen opportunities for tenants to be actively involved in Lumen Housings Service Delivery		
Task	Objective	Timeframe
Develop a Register of Interested tenants for engagement in the 'Customer Voice Network'. Engagement will be promoted to customers through transactional services. We will produce a leaflet which will be shared with customers during inspections, it will be included in the HUG pack and promoted when a tenant signs up and we will display the leaflet in communal areas of blocks.	This will enable us to build a strong panel of tenants who are keen to engage on a range of subjects.	Short Term
Improve reporting to Board on Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that cover the regulatory standards	Providing Board with a periodical update on key performance measures will provide oversight, scrutiny and assurances that Lumen is meeting regulatory expectations.	Short Term
Introduce the Customer Voice Network – 'Have your say' sessions with members of the Board and Exec Team. Initially this will be delivered via face-2-face sessions before a board meeting with option to engage by proxy. Opportunities will grow as the business and tenant involvement grows.	Inviting tenants to become more engaged with our services in whichever way they feel most comfortable helps to strengthen openness and transparency to working with tenants as well as an opportunity to information sharing.	Medium Term
Establish a panel of tenants/customers to review and scrutinise our performance, services, policies and procedures	Having this in place will give tenants a better understanding of how our services are delivered and the policies/procedures behind them. It will provide Lumen Housing with information on how our services and performance of the organisation are perceived.	Long Term

Develop and promote an engagement training program for tenants wishing to be more actively involved in reviewing the company's performance and governance.	The program will provide tenants with the confidence to engage at any level within the Organisation. It will be useful for tenants who maybe apprehensive about getting involved.	Long Term
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Objective 2: To develop engagement opportunities and partnership working within the community		
Task	Objective	Timeframe
Increase awareness and encourage involvement in community initiatives	This will help tenants create a stronger bond with the community around them, and in turn may give them the confidence to organize events themselves	ongoing
Promote and encourage greater tenant involvement in community clean up days	This will help tenants take care of their community in which they live and take pride in keeping their homes clean and tidy as well as encouraging them to report repairs	ongoing
Encourage third party involvement in community projects to maximise our impact on the community	Involve contractors, local services, partner organisations and the shareholder to contribute to community projects to maximise the impact	ongoing
Build a partnership of information sharing with local and national community groups and services around wellbeing and safety	Tenants face a range of challenges – health issues, poverty, domestic abuse to name just a few. By opening up to these local and national bodies, we can engage with tenants and provide suitable guidance	ongoing

Objective 3: Strengthen and develop communication methods within the Organisation		
Task	Objective	Timeframe
Include within the Annual Report tenant engagement and communication over the past year	This will help to give an overview of what has occurred over the past 12 months and what we hope to achieve in the year ahead.	ongoing
Continue to encourage the use of the Lumen website for customer communications and engagement	This will provide useful information about our services and highlighting key actions areas that tenants need to be aware of, as well as upcoming news and events.	ongoing
Encourage the use of social media for customer engagement and communications – continue to do this through the parent and add QR code to HUG pack to follow social media platforms	All staff can feed into the process by highlighting key action areas that tenants need to be aware of, as well as upcoming news and useful feedback received from tenants.	ongoing
Implementation of the new Housing Management System with integrated CRM and customer portal facility.	This will provide a consistent communication approach with an audit trail of conversations to enable the team to pick up previous communications and continue to provide the most appropriate support and advice	Medium Term
Promote to customers about keeping their contact information and communication preferences up to date	This will enable us to communicate with our customers in the most appropriate method	Short term
Customer Satisfaction Surveys: Tenant Perception (Bi-annually) Periodic customer satisfaction surveys via service delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property inspections • Tenancy support service • Repairs • Complaints • ASB 	The use of customer satisfaction surveys enables us to assess the tenants perception of the services they receive from the company and allows us to review and improve theses services	ongoing

Promote good engagement and communication practices within the Organisation	It is important that we share our successes, particularly when it involves satisfactory outcomes for tenants. Communicating this through media platforms will reflect positively on the company	Short term
Develop a range of competitions for tenants to participate in	By having a range of competitions, we can engage with tenants on a broad scale and continue to grow our profile locally through social media platforms, the website and customer portal (Homemaster)	Ongoing