



Improving Service Delivery Strategy

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1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

High Peak Community Housing (HPCH) is committed to putting the needs of our tenants and customers first. This means knowing and involving our customers in all aspects of designing and monitoring our services to ensure our service delivery addresses the needs of our local communities.

We have developed our Improving Service Delivery Strategy and Action Plan in partnership with customers as part of our commitment to continually improve the way we deliver customer service.

Our strategy will ensure that everyday excellence in customer service is achieved and becomes an integral part of the culture of High Peak Community Housing.

1.2 Scope

This strategy applies to all areas of the business and utilises the information gathered from a variety of sources to ensure we consider, and implement where appropriate, examples of best practice together with looking to implement customer driven, efficient and cost-effective, innovative ways of delivering all our services. This also requires that each member of staff is aware of, and involved in identifying and implementing better ways of working – but always keeping the customer focus as the key driver.

We have adopted a three strand approach to continuously improve:

- Customer Satisfaction
- Performance Management
- Utilising resources effectively and looking for opportunities to add value

1.3 Overall Aim

The overall aim of the Improving Service Delivery Strategy is:

“To work with our tenants, customers, stakeholders and staff to continually seek out better ways of delivering our services in the most effective and efficient manner. At all times we will be focussed on delivering services that reflect our customer base and needs to meet our company vision of

Better Homes, Better Communities, Better Lives”.

1.4 Relevant Documentation/Best Practice Research

In order to be regarded as a continually improving organisation, various research has been undertaken to ensure we can effectively deliver and continue to improve our service delivery.

The following documents have influenced and shaped this strategy:

- High Peak Community Housing Business Plan 2010-2015
- High Peak Community Housing Delivery Plan 2010-2011

- Audit Commission – Access and Customer Care, Diversity and Value for Money cross-cutting KLOE's
- Various guidance from Housemark, Housing Quality Network, Chartered Institute of Housing, the Audit Commission, Department of Communities and Local Government and the Cabinet Office has been used in formulating this strategy
- Use of feedback from our recent consultation event when we endeavoured to consult with each tenant by visiting all our properties and being able to consult with 52% of all our tenants (over 2000+ properties).

The following web sites have been used to source best practice in the field and, where applicable this has been incorporated into this strategy:

- National Federation of ALMOs : www.almos.org.uk
- Housing Quality Network: www.hqnetwork.org.uk
- Housemark : www.housemark.co.uk
- Chartered Institute of Housing Good Practice Unit: www.cih.org/gpu
- Audit Commission Good Practice Unit: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing/goodpractice>

2. SERVICE DELIVERY

2.1 Key Objectives

In order to achieve our overall aim of **Delivering Homes, Neighbourhoods and Sustainable Communities to be proud of**, the key priorities have been identified as follows:

- Making Better Places for People to Live
- Improving Availability of and Increasing Choice of Housing
- Putting the needs of tenants and customers first
- Being a successful and progressive organisation

2.2 Priorities for Action

Our key actions are shown in the table below:

<i>Theme 1 – Making better places for people to live</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working towards CLEANER neighbourhoods and communities• Working towards GREENER neighbourhoods and communities• Working towards SAFER neighbourhoods and communities• Working towards HEALTHIER neighbourhoods and communities• Working towards WEALTHIER neighbourhoods and communities
<i>Theme 2 - Improving Availability of and Increasing Choice of Housing</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure tenants continue to live in Decent Homes• Aspire to develop our own standard in excess of decent homes• Work with communities post Decent Homes• Be pro-active in preventing homelessness• Work in partnership to explore all options to increase the supply of affordable homes in the Borough
<i>Theme 3 – Putting the needs of tenants and customers first</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote tenant-led decision making and challenge• Continue to provide excellent customer service• Improve communications with our Customers and partners• Recognise, understand and work with our wider customer base• Recognise that young people matter by engaging with them• Promote Equality and Value Diversity
<i>Theme 4 – Being a successful and progressive organisation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be a top performing organisation• Look for opportunities to add value• Excellent reputation with everyone• Value and develop our brilliant team• Promote Equality and Value Diversity• Reduce our environmental impact

These feed into the business planning process by each team identifying the projects needed to be undertaken by their team to deliver the services, and then each member of the team being assigned duties to assist in the overall team delivery. Day to day core services are measured through the performance management system, which is incorporated into the organisation using performance management software.

2.3 Customer/ Stakeholder Consultation

All customer feedback is viewed as a gift – something that is invaluable in continually improving our service delivery in line with customer experiences. We continue to work closely with our customers on improving our service delivery and were pleased that this was acknowledged in our recent Customer Service Excellence Assessment where we received a compliance plus for customer consultation – the assessor commented “*The attention given to customer consultation is praiseworthy*”.

Our methods of consultation are various and designed in line with customer feedback and are detailed within the communications section of this strategy.

As we continue to develop as an organisation, our partnership working is developing and responding to changing needs in order to deliver Better Homes, Better Communities, Better Lives. We are also working with our group of tenants to develop the role of the resident inspector to review all our services and make suggestions for improvement in light of the customer experience.

We will use all forms of consultation to help identify where we might improve service delivery in an efficient and effective way, and continue to analyse all our functions to identify savings which should be re-invested to improve the services provided to our customers.

2.4 Service standards

Our Services standards are set in consultation with our customers and are aimed at delivering services in the most customer-focussed, efficient and effective manner possible. Service standards will be tested and reviewed on an on-going programme through our resident inspection programme. We also will publish every year a report on the assessment of how we are performing against our standards and how we aim to improve them.

2.5 Partnership Opportunities

This strategy recognises the need to embrace all opportunities to assist in delivering our commitment to being a successful and progressive organisation and always looking for ways to add value. This opportunity is also reflected in the Partnership Protocol recently signed with High Peak Borough Council to ensure that we work together with all partners, including the Strategic Alliance between High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, to take full advantage of any benefits and added value through joint working.

3. ACCESS AND CUSTOMER CARE

High Peak Community housing is committed to ensuring our services are tailored to meet the needs of the communities and individuals we serve, and regularly review our services to look for improvements to the customer experience.

3.1 Corporate Culture and Governance

One of our key themes is to put the needs of tenants and customers first and we endeavour to ensure this is reflected across all service areas.

Our service standards are set after consultation with our customers and, through the resident inspection regime we will ensure that these are regularly reviewed and tested from a customer perspective. This information is then fed through to both the Board and Tenants Forum to ensure our governing body is fully aware of where we need to improve. These results will also be published to all tenants.

3.2 Access to the service

We aim to deliver all our services in the ways that customers want and in the manner they want them. To do this we have to work in a flexible, effective way to ensure the resources are allocated to delivering the services across the wide geographic area. We utilise the information gathered about our customers during the summer of 2009 (the Xpress Yourself Tour) to assist us in ensuring the services are accessible in ways to best suit our customers needs and aspirations.

We will continue to review this information and adapt the customer access facilities in line with the

3.3 Information

We work closely with our group of tenants – the News, Views and Reviews Group – to ensure our information is clear and accessible to all. They work with us on all publications including leaflets and newsletters and assisted in the design of the website. We will continue to use this group to ensure information meets their needs and expectations. We also utilise the information gathered through our customer consultation to look at producing information in different formats for different groups and to that end are keen to produce newsletters for specific customer groups e.g. Young People.

3.4 Complaints

High Peak Community Housing views all customer feedback as a 'gift' to assist us in improving the customer service standards. We accept that sometimes things go wrong and it is important to learn from mistakes, change service delivery where necessary and make sure our customers know what changes have been made.

Our complaints process was designed by our tenants and allows for tenants to be involved in an appeal, where requested. The process also meets the ISO standard and has been approved through the Customer Service Excellence Assessment.

As part of the process we regularly report back to the Tenants Forum and Board against trends in complaints, lessons learned and changes made. We also publish information in the tenants newsletter and on our website.

3.5 Consultation and feedback

Using the information from the last tenant STATUS survey, we decided to respond to our customer feedback about the lack of interest in attending meetings, and to visit all 4000+ of our tenants. We held the Xpress Yourself Tour in 2009, reaching a total of 52% of our tenants and asked a variety of questions about different service areas to ensure that we can really use the information to tailor our future services. Those we could not speak to on the doorstep we carried out telephone surveys wherever possible.

The information gathered will be invaluable in delivering our Business Plan and services in the way our tenants and customers want. However, it is important to ensure that this focus

is maintained going forward and we give all customers the opportunity to give us their feedback in as many ways as possible to assist in designing and implementing future service delivery.

4. Equality and Diversity

High Peak Community Housing commits itself to fairness and equality for all, operating with professionalism, integrity and openness, a belief that everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness, regardless of their ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender, age and religion/belief or any other irrelevant factors.

We recognise that equality is an issue for us all and that to create a fairer society we need to recognise different needs and situations. We must work to remove the barriers that limit what people can do and be, and also ensure that our services are delivered in a way to address the different needs of our customers.

Our commitment is to treat everyone with openness, fairness, respect and honesty.

4.1 Corporate Culture and Governance

Our Board and executive are responsible for ensuring that all our services are delivered in a fair and equal way and the Board have shown their commitment with the appointment of an Equality and Diversity champion. They are involved in ensuring services are delivered in line with the current legislation and is part of the Equality and Diversity group to hear, first hand, of the issues affecting our customers.

4.2 Access and Customer Care

All our offices are DDA compliant and we offer our information in a variety of methods to meet our customer needs. We aim to use our customer profiling information to determine how to deliver our services on a tailored, individual basis and raise the need to do this with our Board, staff and partners. We work in partnership with Derbyshire County Council and High Peak Borough Council to deliver disabled adaptations to our tenants as requested and, where necessary, explore alternative funding options to assist with these adaptations.

4.3 Service User Involvement

The information gathered through our customer consultation in the summer of 2009, is being used to make sure our Equality and Diversity group are as representative as possible. If this is not the case, we are now able to carry out targeted consultation to give this feedback to the group for assistance with any decisions about service delivery across all areas of the business.

The Equality and Diversity group – consisting of both customers and staff and led by the Board Champion – review service delivery to each identified group and also receive reports on how we aim to deliver services on an individual basis, utilising the information gathered through the consultation carried out in the summer of 2009. They also review our approach to recruitment and selection and recently carried out a review of the Disability 'Two Ticks' scheme to ensure we recruit in a fair and equal way to all

4.4 Partnerships

Our Xpress Yourself Tour of 2009, involved various partners including tenants, the police, Board members, local councillors and local agencies in identifying the issues on a local basis within communities. We plan to use the information gathered to develop local plans for delivering services on a local basis in response to customers' needs.

Using the feedback from the Xpress Yourself Tour, we can work with our partners to ensure that our services assist in promoting and embedding community cohesion. Following feedback, we have already put a Community partnership team in place to begin delivering on some of these actions not just on our behalf but also on behalf of other partners, but it is important to monitor the effectiveness of this investment in the years to come.

We ensure that our contractors understand, and work, within our equality and diversity framework to deliver services in line with our aspirations and our tenants' needs. Our floating support worker is also working in partnership with a range of agencies to give a 'joined-up' approach to assisting vulnerable people in our communities.

4.5 Harassment

Our staff work closely with external support agencies e.g. mental health agencies and the domestic violence out reach service to ensure that people are treated fairly and equally.

4.6 Legislation

It is critical to the development of our Equality and Diversity strategy that the most recent legislation is applied within the company and we therefore carry out research across a wide range of organisations to ensure that our services are delivered in line with the current legislation. We work within a network of HR providers to ensure we meet legislation requirements on recruitment and selection and also when dealing with staffing matters.

We obtain briefings from a variety of housing information providers including the Chartered Institute of Housing, Housing Quality Network and Radar (the disability awareness network).

We also work closely with our partners at High Peak Borough Council to ensure we meet the Equality Framework for Local Government.

All this information is reviewed by the Equality and Diversity group to ensure that our services across all business areas are delivered reflecting the current legislation and offer fairness and accessibility to all.

5. Value for Money

High Peak community housing aims to deliver effective, cost-efficient services in an innovative manner as possible to obtain the best return on our resources.

5.1 Comparison of costs

It is essential that we are aware of all business costs and can compare with others, taking into account, any local context issues.

5.2 Management of value for money and procurement

6. Communications

Communication is key to ensuring our services are recognised and that everyone understands the key drivers for High Peak Community Housing and how we operate. We recognise that good communication is key to our service delivery both within the company, and to our external audience.

6.1 Internal Communication

Our internal audience includes staff and Board members. Various mechanisms are put in place to ensure that communication between our workforce and our various sites follows a consistent process, and we are also continuously reviewing how to improve the channels of communication. These channels include:

- All new staff attend an induction course and are provided with a 'Welcome Pack' resource.
- A staff conference is regularly held for focusing on key themes for the business and for seeking staff views on improving service delivery
- Regular team meetings are held and these are used to cascade information about what is happening in the teams and in the wider company.
- The company is working on producing a calendar of events to ensure all staff can access this information
- Staff notice boards are kept up to date with information
- A regular briefing session with the Chief Executive is also held for staff to attend.
- We consult with staff on a regular basis regarding the effectiveness of the main method of communication – the staff newsletter (available both electronically and posted to peripatetic staff) – to see if it is providing information in an easily accessible format.

6.2 Customer communication and partnership working

Our external audience includes all tenants, potential customers, partners and key stakeholders. The methods of communication are tested through our tenant group – the News, Views and Reviews Group, which monitors all publications including leaflets, tenants' newsletters and the website. All these forms have approval from the tenant group before being launched. The group meets on a quarterly basis to review information. The company has also carried out an analysis of other forms of communications and are engaging with a wider audience through the use of facebook and twitter. We are also looking to provide newsletters for different customer groups – we already publish a Carelink newsletter for our Carelink customers, and are currently planning a separate newsletter for our young tenants. All forms of communication are reviewed regularly to ensure effectiveness.

It is essential for our continual improvement that communications with our partners are effective and the company has a stakeholder engagement strategy which will be reviewed in light of the development of a community partnerships team – taking place early in 2010.

6.3 Public Information

Information regarding our services are produced in a Variety of methods, in line with feedback from customers, These are also reviewed for the information contained and the effectiveness of the communication. This information is detailed below:

- We have developed information leaflets about the services we offer. We are committed to the principles of plain language, and can produce our public information in other languages and formats upon request.
- We provide and display a range of public information leaflets, forms and posters which provide details of our services
- Our High Peak Community Housing website also provides detailed information on our services and links with other key information websites for our partners. The website also allows customers to communicate with us on-line, if they so wish.
- We give service users contact details and offer these in a variety of formats – visits to our offices, telephone, text message, website or text-phone.

6.4 Public relations and media management

The Business Services team is responsible for communication with the media in line with the media protocol. The Executive team and Board review, through the performance management system, the positive press ratings for the company.

In line with our desire to improve our partnership working, we work to establish good working relationships not only with the local press but also the local radio station, and have used these methods of communication to promote and publicise events within High Peak Community Housing to reach a wider target audience.

6.5 Website

Our new website was launched in November 2009, and was designed by our tenant News, Views and Reviews group. Feedback has been sought on initial impressions and this has been favourable.

The website was designed to ensure it can reach as wide an audience as possible and includes:

- Young Peoples section
- Access to housing information
- Community information
- Useful links to partner and stakeholder websites
- Has been designed to meet DDA Level 3 – enabling a font increase facility and 'browse aloud' facility.
- There is also information on Carelink and sheltered accommodation

The website is only as good as the current information and we therefore, regularly review and update in line with company policy.

7. Monitoring

7.1 Strategy Monitoring

This strategy goes through a process of consultation with relevant stakeholders and is then approved by the Board once they are satisfied that it reflects all our aspirations to improve service delivery. Monitoring of this strategy and the resultant action plan is then undertaken by both tenants and the Board to ensure that the company is not only meeting identified targets, but is also continually reviewing our service delivery to reflect changes in customers' needs and aspirations.

We will be able to measure the success of this strategy through customer satisfaction measures with our services and also through the monitoring of our services by external organisations e.g. the Customer Service Excellence Award regular visits, ISO 9001:2008 assessments.

7.2 Action Plan

Following approval of the key drivers within this strategy the action plan will be developed and then implemented through Covalent – the performance management system – to ensure on-going monitoring is achieved both through measures but outcomes as measured by the resident involvement inspectors.

8. Appendices

- (i) Customer Service Leaflet
- (ii) Equality Impact Assessment Form

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