

Customer Empowerment Framework

2024 - 2027

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Introduction

As a responsible landlord, Pine Court Housing Association (PCHA) understands the importance of effective customer engagement and is committed to promoting influence, transparency and accountability through its engagement opportunities in service delivery and strategic planning.

We fully embrace the ethos of greater customer influence and are committed to meeting the requirements that are outlined in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the revised Consumer Standards that are due to take effect from 1st April 2024.

As part of this commitment, PCHA have adopted the model Code of Governance produced by the National Housing Federation ensuring the Board of management take customers views and preferences into account in decision making processes and provide timely feedback of this influence.

The Customer Empowerment Framework outlined below demonstrates the different channels by which customer influence and opinion is obtained and how they receive feedback.

In a further demonstration of our commitments in this area we have fully adopted the 'Together with Tenants Charter' developed by the National Housing Federation. This includes evidencing how we meet the six key principles of:

1. **Relationships**: To treat all residents with respect in all their interactions and for relationships between residents and housing associations to be based on openness, honesty and transparency
2. **Communication**: To send you clear, accessible and timely information on the issues that matter to you, including important information about your home and local community, how the organisation is working to address problems, how the organisation is run and information about performance on key issues.
3. **Voice and influence**: To seek and value the views of residents and use this information to inform decisions. Every individual resident should feel listened to on the issues that matter to them and be able to speak without fear.
4. **Accountability**: To allow residents to collectively work in partnership to independently scrutinise and hold their housing association to account for the decisions that affect the quality of homes and services.
5. **Quality**: To ensure homes are good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.
6. **When things go wrong**: To provide residents with simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints, and seeking redress. And for residents to receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.

From April 2024 we will fully comply with the reporting requirements of the national Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) through customer surveys and landlord information and will explore avenues for making the performance information available by digital means.

In our role as a specialist black and minority ethnic housing provider we have also contributed to the 'roundtable' discussions for the 'Better Social Housing Review', commissioned by the National Housing Federation (NHF) and the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and will put in place an action plan to implement the recommendations. This will commence with workshops with our involved customers to determine a standard for an excellent repairs service.

This framework, which has been developed in consultation with customer representatives, sets out:

- Customer Empowerment Aims
- The support and resources that PCHA will make available to promote effective engagement
- The different methods of involvement and empowerment that are available that reflect the level of commitment required by the customer
- Our future goals
- Framework review

Customer Empowerment Aims

In providing support and active promotion of involvement opportunities PCHA will ensure it achieves the following aims:

- It is high-performing, competitive and achieves value for money
- It meets individual needs / expectations of a diverse range of customers
- It meets the requirements of the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing
- It sets challenging targets and continuously improves
- Action and resources are focused on customer priorities
- There are effective methods for addressing complaints and dissatisfaction

Support for Customer Empowerment

PCHA will provide specialist training and individual mentoring for customers that want to access empowerment opportunities at the high and medium levels (see table below). Each group has a Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct which clearly outlines the standards and expectations for each role.

The training will be tailored according to the type of involvement the customer wishes to participate in but in general will aim to build confidence, knowledge and skills so that they

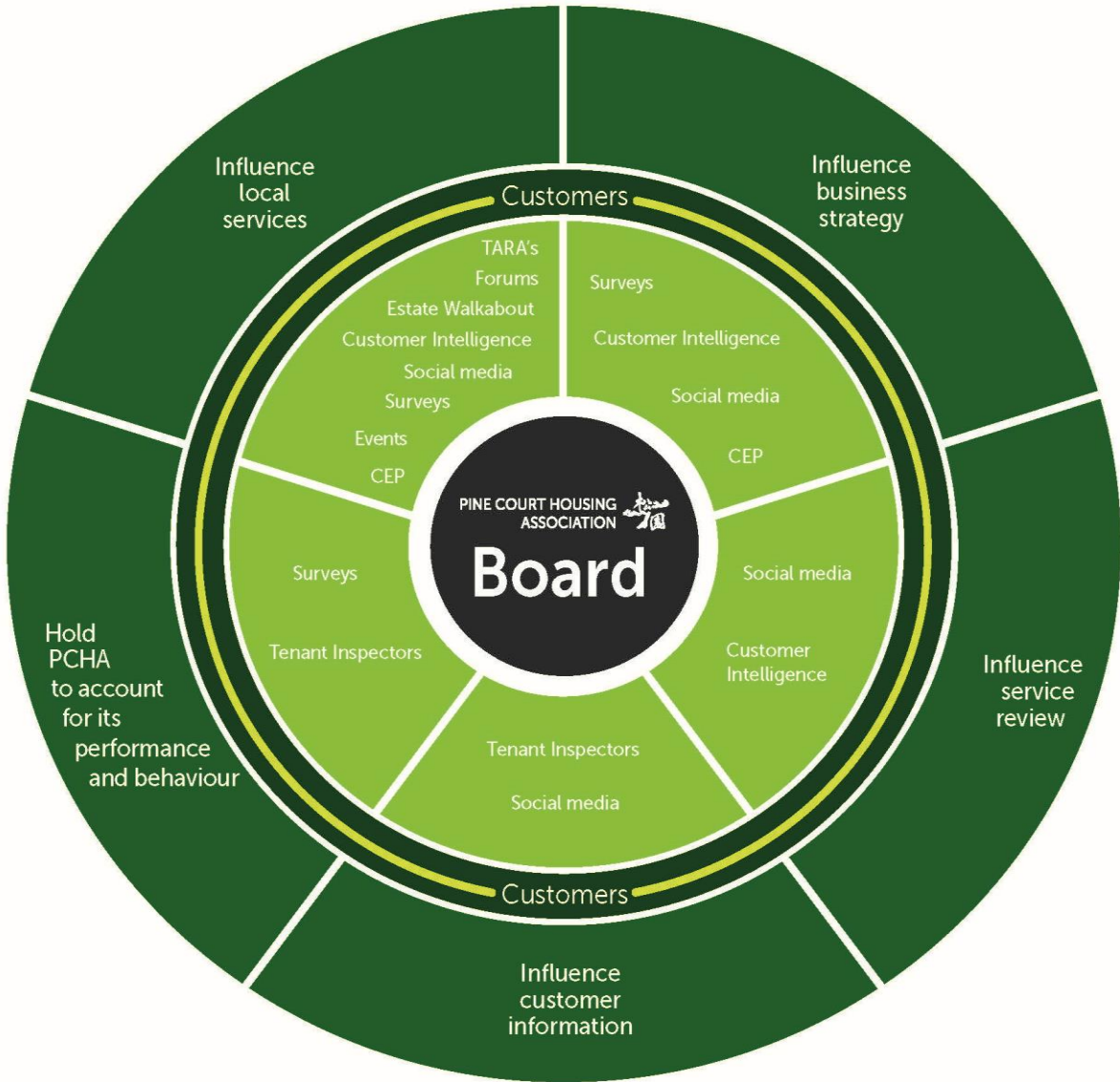
get the most out of the involvement experience and feel empowered to make telling contributions.

PCHA will cover all out-of-pocket expenses for those that take part in the higher forms of involvement including paying for travel to and from meetings and providing catering for meetings that span mealtimes.

PCHA will also support those that want to get involved in residents' groups through the provision of training, assistance with sourcing venues for meetings, constitutional and committee advice and assistance in accessing funding opportunities, if required.

Wheel of Involvement within PCHA

The structure within our organisation was developed in consultation with PCHA customers through the Customer Empowerment Panel (CEP). The structure provides an opportunity for customers to move around the structure and to choose the level of involvement they want and at a level they feel comfortable with. The structure is captured within our 'Wheel of Involvement', outlined below:



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PCHA Customer Empowerment Framework - Involvement Opportunities			
Involvement Level	Type of involvement	What commitment is involved?	Outcomes
High (Regular / scheduled attendance at meetings and specialist training provided)	PCHA Board Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview and selection criteria based on skills and experience for any vacancies that arise in paid positions for General Board Members – (note there are no longer reserved positions for Tenant Members) • Regular attendance at Board meetings, training events and away-days • Adherence to the adopted Governance Framework, Company Rules and Board Code of Conduct documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board has responsibility for high level strategic oversight of the business including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting and approving vision, mission and values ○ Effective risk management ○ Maintaining reputation, viability and regulatory / legal compliance ○ Approving constitutional changes ○ Approving high level investment decisions, acquisitions and disposal of assets

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	<p>Customer Empowerment Panel (CEP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involved customers receive training to be able to carry out detailed assessments on PCHA service areas identified as being a priority by dips in performance or escalations of complaints. The assessments are programmed and a minimum of one review will be carried out each year (in one) of the following areas: Housing Support Services including: Community Safety, Customer Access, Neighbourhood Services, Independent Living Repairs and Maintenance including: Repairs, Void Works, Compliance, Communal Cleaning, Grounds Maintenance, Home Improvement Works The Panel will also review all customer facing Policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where performance information indicates there is a concern with a service area, the CEP will carry out an investigation from a Tenants perspective and make recommendations for improvement CEP will have full access to back-office functions and cooperation from PCHA staff in their investigative processes The Panel agree and assess performance against a suite of performance indicators and service standards The Panel can expect explanation and remediation plans where performance or service delivery does not reach the expected standards or targets The Panel can recommend investigation by the Scrutiny Team for a failing service area The Panel make recommendations for policy amendments
	<p>Tenant Inspectors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained involved customers work alongside PCHA Officers or independently, to reality check service delivery and processes, on a programmed basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback provided from the customers perspective, highlighting both examples of good practice and areas for improvement, and reports are fed back via the CEP

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PCHA Customer Empowerment Framework - Involvement Opportunities			
Involvement Level	Type of involvement	What commitment is involved?	Outcomes
Medium (Frequent attendance at meetings, training provided)	Residents Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organised groups formed to represent and promote local interests Training and advice provided on forming a committee and adopting formal constitution documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representative structures established to meet with PCHA, Statutory Service Providers and other stakeholders to promote local interests Groups that reach certain operating criteria (e.g. constituted, meeting financial rules) can access funding opportunities for local activity / improvement projects / social isolation campaigns

PCHA Customer Empowerment Framework - Involvement Opportunities			
Involvement Level	Type of involvement	What commitment is involved?	Outcomes
Low (No formal training or extensive time commitment required)	Customer Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal, open access events on an ad-hoc basis (at least one event will be held annually) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to promote greater partnership working and involvement options Link into local and national campaigns to raise awareness on issues such as social isolation
	Customer Feedback – Surveys / Market Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone surveys to those that have received a specific services e.g. repairs or on random basis (to reach acceptable response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer intelligence used to inform contract management, resource planning based on customer priorities and continual

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		rates) on wider service delivery issues including Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) including Tenant Satisfaction Measures	improvement through revised target and performance indicator setting
	Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad-hoc meetings on specific topics or projects to meet a need within the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth views and qualitative information gathered to shape service delivery issues
	Customer Empowerment Panel (CEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings held to assess applications for PCHA Community Development Fund (£10,000 available annually) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding distributed to local groups that promote projects that contribute to the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safe and secure communities ○ Promotion and support for cultural projects ○ Engaging local communities ○ Support and guidance to enable residents to become economically active and financially stable ○ Strategic partnership working
	Other Informal e.g. Suggestions, Neighbourhood Walkabouts, General Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General feedback and involvement in PCHA service delivery (without any group involvement or commitment) – including complaints and appeals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal feedback received on service delivery issues and used to drive continuous improvement

Links with PCHA Governance Structures

The PCHA Board will receive collated periodic reports on all customer intelligence information (similar to that reviewed by the CEP) and will use this to inform business planning, risk management and strategic direction.

Recommendations made by the CEP will also be included in a report to the Group Risk Assurance Committee (RAC) that supports the work of the PCHA Board, twice yearly. The RAC will ensure any recommendations that are to be enacted, are assigned to individual PCHA Officers as actions in Service Delivery Plans within the Performance Monitoring System.

Our Future Goals

We are constantly striving to enhance the customer experience of empowerment opportunities and will, over the period of this Framework (2024-2027), look to:

- Increase engagement through digital channels, including use of social media and email for instant feedback on services, projects and target setting
- Make training more accessible at times that are convenient to customers by investing in E-learning
- Develop specialist expertise of involved customers in specific areas of service delivery to work alongside our Performance and Customer Insight Team in an improved approach to service review

Framework Monitoring and Review

The CEP will monitor the on-going effectiveness of the provisions PCHA has in place for customer empowerment. This will include:

- Annual review of the budget available for all customer empowerment activities
- Satisfaction with training provided for high level empowerment opportunities
- Benchmarked information on the total spend on customer empowerment per property
- Monitoring the profile information of involved customers and making proactive recruitment / awareness raising efforts with under-represented groups across all protected characteristics

The CEP will also conduct a review of the Customer Empowerment Framework annually to ensure that involvement opportunities remain fit for purpose and are effective at achieving the Aims (as set out on Page 3).