



IMPROVING LIVES AND PLACES



Customer Involvement Strategy

2023 | 2026

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This Strategy can be made available if requested in different languages and in other formats such as in larger print, audio and Braille.

*Please contact the RCH Group on Freephone **0800 013 2196** and ask for the Communications Team.*

1. Jargon Buster

This section gives information on some of the unfamiliar terms used in the Customer Engagement Strategy:

ARC – Annual Return on the Charter. The ARC is an annual return to the Scottish Housing Regulator containing a range of information on performance and the context in which we work. It can be found online at <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/landlords/river-clyde-homes>

Corporate Plan – a formal statement setting out the goals of the Association and how these goals will be achieved. The plan can be viewed on the RCH website, in the ‘About Us’ tab under ‘Publications’.

Board – a group of representatives from the community and tenant members appointed from the General Membership who direct the Association’s activities. Information on the Board and who to contact if interested in becoming a Board Member can be found on the RCH website.

Code of Conduct – sets out minimum standards for behaviour for contact between the staff, contractors and customers. This can be viewed on the RCH website in the ‘About us’ tab under ‘Policies’.

Customers – our main customers are the tenants of the association and owners to whom we provide a factoring service. We also deliver some level of service to applicants for housing, leaseholders and owners in mixed tenure estates where we manage scheme repairs.

Monitoring – check progress. Measuring performance – assessment of the results at the end of any activity. Outcomes - a result we want to happen.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter has outcomes that landlords should achieve for the benefit of their customers and communities. The document can be found at www.gov.scot in the publications section.

Procurement - is activities related to purchasing goods, services and works at the best possible prices.

RTO (Registered Tenants Organisation) and **TARA** (Tenants & Residents Association) - an independent group of customers set up to primarily represent tenants’ housing and community related interests. If a group registers as a

RTO/TARA with their landlord, this supports the groups' rights to information and consultation. In Inverclyde it also allows them to benefit from an RCH funded admin grant and to bid for a project grant annually.

SHR (Scottish Housing Regulator) – The SHR regulates registered housing association landlords and protects the interests of current and future tenants and other customers monitoring performance and financial probity of social landlords.

TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) / **TIS** (Tenant Information Service) – both are national tenant and landlord participation advisory services promoting good practice in tenant participation throughout Scotland

Articles of Association – A document that specifies the regulations for our operations and defines the company's purpose

2. Message from the RCH Group Chair

At the RCH Group we are dedicated to the promotion and support of customer involvement and most of all, we value the support and feedback we receive from our customers. Customers remain at the forefront of our service delivery, and we will continue to ensure that there are multiple opportunities for each customer to be involved in a way that is suitable to them.

Involved customers have helped shape our current services and will continue to help develop services we will provide in the future. This strategy advises of our ongoing support to assisting customers to be engaged and informs of our commitment to hear and consider their views. We continue to support the long-established and continuing relationships we have and will build and expand customer involvement to make new relationships.

If you choose to connect with us from the comfort of your home, attend a local event, join a customer group, or take up any one of the many opportunities, you will be helping to improve housing and housing services in the Inverclyde area. Your feedback makes a real difference to your community.

By taking part in various consultations and offering comments and feedback we hope that all customers will work together with us in this partnership to achieve our purpose and values.



3. Introduction

The RCH Group looks forward to enhancing further the ways in which our customers can interact and influence our service delivery. Customer involvement enables the RCH Group and its customers to come together to share ideas, knowledge and build good working relationships, services and communities. We want to work in partnership with our customers to be able to deliver and improve the services that you want in a way that you prefer.

This Strategy outlines how we plan to continue to grow customer engagement opportunities. We want to enable all customers to be involved by whatever routes are the most convenient and suitable for them, so that together we can move forward in one direction and inform plans for better and affordable homes.

This Customer Involvement Strategy contains our essential commitment to meet the requirements and opportunities provided by the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The Charter emphasises the need to empower customers through the effective communication of and accessibility to a range of performance related measures and service outcomes. This information enables customers to hold RCH to account in a number of different ways. The Board welcomed this requirement and will continue to work with customers to influence the development of the business and the services they receive.

4. Why do we have a Customer Involvement Strategy?

Legislation

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a legal duty on registered social landlords (RSLs) to have customer participation strategies in place and to maintain a register of Residents and Tenants Organisations (RTOs). This Act also introduced a right for customers groups and individual customers to be consulted by the landlord on issues affecting them which are: Housing management, repairs and maintenance policies and the standards of service to be provided in relation to these. RCH will comply with all legislation in relation to Customer Involvement.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Charter was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2012 and is a tool to enable tenants and other customers to monitor the standard of performance that the landlord provides. The Charter has been broken down into sixteen outcomes. Outcome number three covers participation and states: "Social landlords manage their businesses 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."

This outcome describes what landlords should achieve by:

- Meeting their statutory customer participation duties;
- How social landlords gather and take account of the views and priorities of their tenants and other customers;
- How these views are reflected in the landlord's services;
- How landlords help and support tenants and other customers to build their capacity for effective involvement

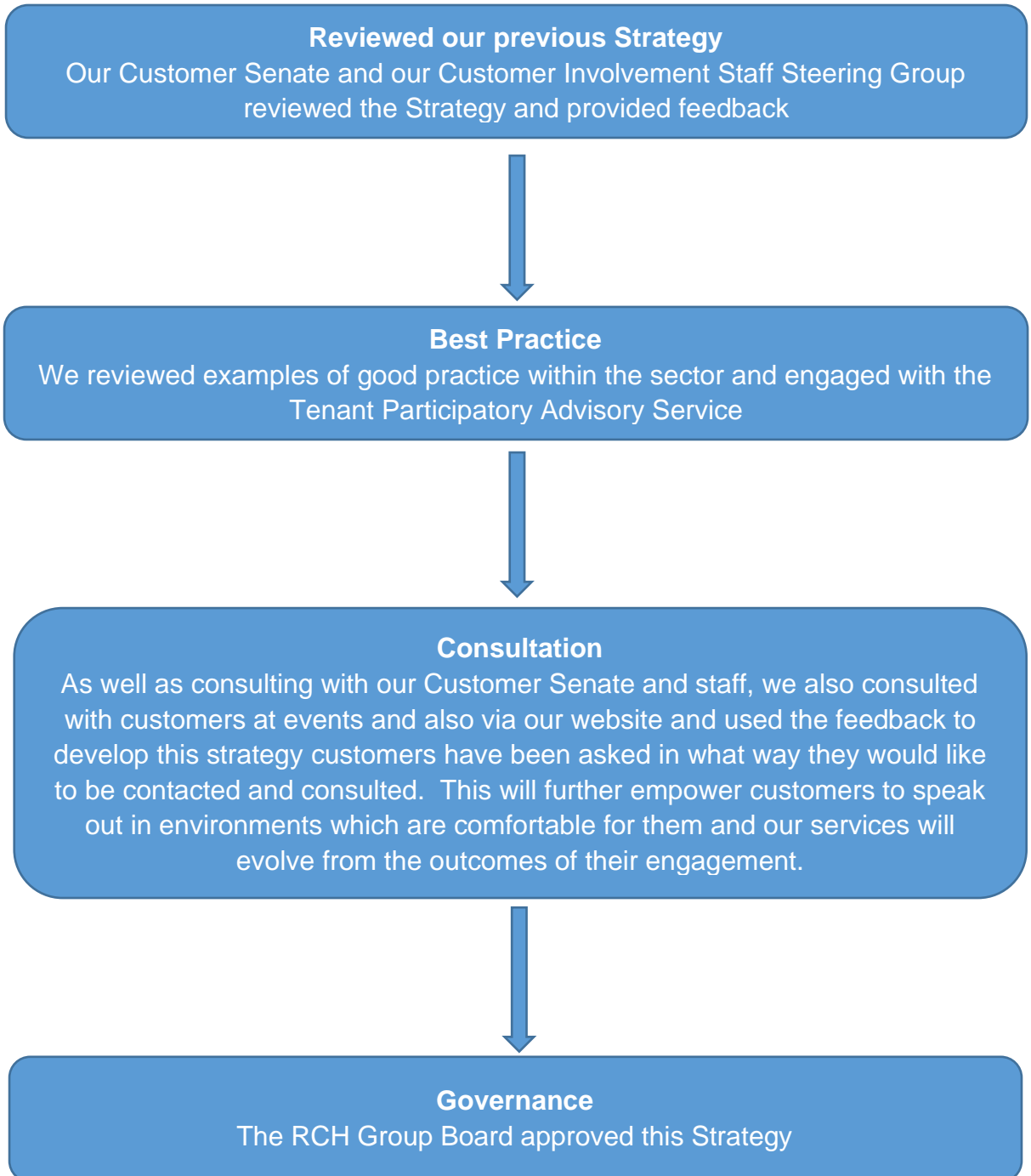
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

We are also required to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the SHR confirming that we are complying with all regulatory requirements and standards including those associated with customer involvement. If we do not meet these requirements, we must advise the SHR and say what we are going to do to address the issues. The Association gathers evidence from various sources to assess overall compliance and this is monitored on an ongoing basis. A report is submitted to the Board for approval. Once it has been approved, the Statement is signed and submitted to the SHR and then made publicly on our website:

5. Aims of this Strategy

- Aim 1** – Continue to raise awareness of Customer Involvement through improved communication to customers and customers groups and the communities they represent.
- Aim 2** – Continue to offer opportunities for customers to become involved with River Clyde Homes via various channels.
- Aim 3** – To offer a form of Volunteer Recognition.
- Aim 4** – Respond to requests and encourage communities to set up and develop tenant and resident organisations, offering guidance to assist in achieving group registration and funding, especially in areas where groups of people are underrepresented.
- Aim 5** – Ensure Customer Involvement is integral to River Clyde Homes' Services so we can:
- Achieve excellent performance of the outcomes set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter by supporting independent tenant scrutiny.
 - Consult tenants on locally agreed targets and definitions required by the Annual return on the Charter.
 - Involve tenants in shaping Corporate Plan priorities.

6. Development of the Strategy



7. Previous Strategy Achievements

We have in the last three years, delivered on our planned involvement Strategy in several ways including the following:

- ✓ We have funded junior football camps.
- ✓ We, along with Broomhill residents, organised and ran a nearly new children's clothing sale.
- ✓ We organised an evening for members of all the registered Resident and Tenant Organisations to come together to enjoy a fish tea.
- ✓ We have had stalls and held fun activities at local events including the Gourock Highland Games and the Comet Festival.
- ✓ We organised a free family cinema event for our customers.
- ✓ Our staff have taken part in a number of 'Working in Neighbourhood' initiatives including furniture painting at Sheltered Housing Complexes, supporting the Belville Community Gardens, redecoration of part of the local Hospice, area clean-ups and supporting local nurseries and primary schools.
- ✓ We have organised winter parties for our older customers.
- ✓ Sourced additional funding to support events for our customers.
- ✓ We have consulted our Armchair Critics on policy changes and to determine customer feedback on a number of matters.
- ✓ Community Partnerships to provide work experience and apprentice opportunities to local young people.
- ✓ Sourced and received grant funding to provide cycle shelters in some of our communities and for RCH customers to buy the basic essentials during the covid pandemic
- ✓ Engaged with our contractors to ensure community benefits are being achieved including for our '12 days of Christmas' campaign.
- ✓ Supported a local Community Arts Project as Customers and RCH staff were encouraged to take part in art workshops to design a mural for Bay Street Port Glasgow.
- ✓ RCH has continued to offer opportunities for customers to continue or become involved with RCH despite Covid restrictions, and made reassurance calls to customers, calls to newbuild tenants, and delivered devices and support to customers who needed them to keep in contact

with family etc. In addition, we offer confidential video calls to customers using a system called 'Near Me.'

- ✓ We were particularly keen to support our customers in sheltered housing during the pandemic and we organised for local musicians to attend complexes outside for residents to enjoy the music from within their homes or socially distanced outdoors.
- ✓ Christmas tea parties could not take place during the pandemic and we organised collection and delivery of 540 afternoon teas to residents over 80yrs of age and those living in sheltered complexes.
- ✓ We have made donations to community projects including the Men's Shed and Belville Community Gardens to arrange community events
- ✓ RCH has a web-based facility for applying for housing, paying bills etc.; a Twitter account; a Facebook page; and the Customer Experience team has commenced pulse surveys via CX Feedback text and we will continue to attend varied local events for wider communication and information sharing. The 'Up Close' magazine has been revamped to cover area specific news.
- ✓ Members of the Senate, the sheltered forum, other involved customers and staff took part in meetings and exercises, which supported RCH in achieving the Customer Services Excellence accreditation.
- ✓ We have contacted the various involved customer groups, attended local events and used our social media platforms to consult on our performance and customer involvement methods to inform our strategies and policies.
- ✓ To ensure that customers can contact us easily and conveniently we have enhanced our online services to allow rents to be paid, housing applications to be made and repairs to be requested at any time of the day.
- ✓ The Senate has continued to carry out successful investigations and reviewed policies throughout the pandemic restrictions by email and meetings via Microsoft Teams. The RCH Board has to date, accepted all recommendations made by the Senate to continually improve services.
- ✓ RCH has developed a customer involvement steering group with representation from all customer-facing teams across the organisation including HFS.
- ✓ We have recruited new customer Board members.

8. Links to other RCH Group Strategies

- Our Corporate Plan – the five-year Corporate Plan for RCH Group ‘*Our Journey to 2027*’ has been informed by the invaluable insight and help from our customers, wider stakeholders and partners, and our colleagues. It sets out our plans and ambitions over the next five years. [Our Business Plan - River Clyde Homes](#)

It sets out the RCH Group’s five strategic outcomes, each of which underpins the delivery of our vision, **Sustainable Homes and Communities**.



- Customer Services Strategy – this Strategy sets out how RCH management aims to achieve our Customer Services vision of providing “***excellent services for every customer every time***”.
- Value for Money Strategy - This Strategy sets out how RCH management aims to achieve our VFM vision of “***embedding VFM into every aspect of our business***”.
- Organisational Development Strategy - This Strategy sets out how RCH and Home Fix Scotland (HFS) senior teams aim to achieve our Operational Development vision of having “***engaged colleagues***”.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy - The Association strives to achieve equal opportunity and treatment in all that we do, and to work in a way that values and respects customers so that they get the support and services that they need to feel safe and welcome in their homes and across the communities we work in, but we want to do more and make sure that our approach is the best it can be.

9. RCH Group Customer Involvement Opportunities

Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs)

We have 6 active groups currently registered. RTOs are autonomous organisations made up of groups of residents who come together to represent the tenants housing interests and or communities for all residents. We can provide RTOs with funding to cover start-up costs, administration costs and once registered, groups can bid for a project grant annually. We aim to help source meeting places for customer groups and have a dedicated Customer Involvement budget. Customers are encouraged to join an RTO if there is a one local to them. The RTOs are supported by a Housing Officer and the RCH Governance team. We will try to bring all groups together at events to share information and ideas. All RTOs are consulted on changes to services, new services being implemented and review of policies.

We publish a list of all registered groups on our website. If you are interested in starting up an RTO in your area, please contact your Housing Officer who can assist you. We also offer external advice and support by subscribing to TPAS(S) and we facilitate and fund training opportunities for RTO office bearers.

Some RTOs have successfully applied for Project Grants from RCH to fund community projects. These have included garden and patio work, installing permanent benches and supporting exercise classes for customers.

Armchair Critics

These are customers who are consulted in their own homes using a simple method of completing short surveys. These surveys are used for the purposes of reviewing many RCH services, processes, and policies. They are either sent via email or text. This has recently helped RCH look at ways to raise awareness by better advertising methods of a particular RCH funded function, which is freely available to all customers. The time required of Armchair Critics should be no more than 15 mins every 3-6 months.

Customer Board Members

Board Members are required to attend meetings on a monthly basis and the critical function of the Board is to provide leadership to RCH, determine its vision and Corporate Plan, control the organisation's affairs and ensure legal and regulatory compliance. The time commitment is 4 hours approximately per month to attend meetings and read board and committee papers.

Customer Panels

These groups are established to assist in the organisation's service reviews. They are comprised of a small group of interested customers who meet as required. Customers taking part may be required to spend up to 2 hours a month being involved.

We want to encourage as many customers as possible, to have their say on how our services are managed and delivered. Therefore, we are continuing to develop a diverse range of options for customers to have the opportunity to meet with us and get involved.

General Members

All customers can apply to become a General Member. Applications require to be approved by Board. As a General Member you will be invited to attend the Annual General Meeting every year, be eligible to cast a vote on issues requiring member agreement and meet other like-minded customers, staff and board members at the AGM. Having an enthusiastic and representative general membership informs and supports our vision to improve lives and places.

WIN Events

The RCH Group allows all staff 2 days per year, to carry out voluntary work in the community. This can be an organised project in conjunction with a local school or organisation that is in our community or a personal individual voluntary project.

Local Events

Local events such as the Highland Games or Comet Festival and others, allow us to set up a stall where we can engage with customers face to face and hear their views or consult with them in an informal environment.

Digital Inclusion

During the Covid-19 lockdown we provided our older customers with digital devices to stay connected to family and friends and to take part in online virtual get togethers. The devices also allowed them to gain information from our website and social media and take part in online consultation. We are also offering confidential video calls using a system called - 'Near Me.'

Sheltered Forum

The RCH Group has six sheltered complexes, and they have a forum which meets bi-monthly. This is a platform for tenants who live in the complexes and receive similar services from the RCH Group. The forum meetings are attended by senior members of staff and it is a positive and productive forum.

Customer Senate

This is a group of customers who have come together to form a scrutiny panel and are called the Senate. The Senate meets approximately once a month for around 2 hours and carry out investigations into RCH's service delivery. The group meets with customers, RCH staff and contractors as part of the exercise. They also visit other Housing Associations to look at and share best practice. Using various methods, they review current processes and based on their findings present a report to the Board together with recommendations for change or improvement, where they have identified it is required. The Board then decides whether the recommendations are operationally possible to implement, and/or financially feasible.

The Senate has supported all RCH teams by reviewing policies from a customer perspective and helped form a complaints panel to look at how RCH deals with complaints.

The group also meets to discuss the annual performance and influences the look of the final publication. It also reviews it to ensure it does not contain jargon and is customer friendly.

Complaints Handling

In responding to complaints, we engage with customers about very specific issues and this helps us to improve services where we can. We are required to identify and log the lessons learned from each complaint and this is reported to our Senior Leadership Team. This also generates action plans to address the lessons learned.

Social Media

The RCH and HFS websites offer information on all areas of the business and customers can take part in online consultation. Customers can read news stories and leave comments on the RCH Facebook page and Twitter too.

10. How the RCH Group will support Customer Involvement

- The Governance Officer has specific responsibilities in relation to customer service and customer involvement and will be the main point of contact for customers interested in getting involved.
- The Director of Customer Services leads on Customer support on a day-to-day basis and has responsibility for implementation and delivery of the Customer Services Strategy, the aim of which is to deliver excellent services for every customer every time. Through their teams, they ensure customers are supported and that all complaints and suggestions for improvement are dealt with to a satisfactory conclusion.
- The Community Support Officer is the lead on accessing funding for community projects and supporting RCH customers. In addition, they liaise with local charities to organise events and with contractors in the provision of community benefits to enhance our communities.
- RCH Group staff are aware of their responsibility to support and encourage customer involvement and will attend RTO meetings. Staff are supported by their Line Managers.
- Customers' travel expenses to and from meetings organised by RCH will be reimbursed, as will attendance at these meetings or events.
- Further opportunities for customers to attend local and national conferences are available with travel reimbursed and any additional relevant field trips and study visits will be facilitated.
- Information on new legislation and policies affecting the Housing Sector will be provided to groups as it becomes available.
- We will reimburse carer expenses to attend events and or meetings as needed.
- On RCH telephone lines there is information available whilst a caller may be on hold.

11. Equalities

The RCH Group is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities and do not discriminate on the grounds of ethnic origin, disability, gender, marital status, sexuality, age, language, political and religious beliefs, social class or any other form of discrimination. The RCH Group is committed to monitoring data. As and when a new involved customer is recruited, they will have the opportunity to complete an Equalities Monitoring Form to assist us in determining how many customers are involved during the year who have a protected characteristic.

12. Monitoring and Review of the Strategy

This Strategy and Action Plan are working documents and their effectiveness and progress with the actions will be monitored and reviewed quarterly by the Customer Senate and Customer Involvement Steering Group. This will be reported to the Heads of Service. The strategy will be reviewed in entirety in 2026.

APPENDIX 1 - ACTION PLAN

What we will do	How will we do this	Lead Officer	Completion Date
Reinforce the role of staff members have in delivering the Customer Involvement strategy	Raise and discuss 1:1s, appraisals, inductions and targets	All in supervisory/managerial roles	Ongoing
Review the information available to customers regarding involvement.	Consult customers in reviewing the Customer Involvement strategy	Steering Group	August 2025
Attend local events to engage with customers and promote involvement	Identify community events where there will be RCH customers in attendance.	Steering Group and Coms Team	Ongoing
Consider implementation of incentives to encourage customers to be involved	Consult customers	Steering Group	August 2023
Increase numbers and diversity of involved customers	At all 'settling in' visits ensure customer involvement is discussed and offered to every tenant.	Area Team Leaders	Ongoing

Review the process for new customers to include customer involvement, as a key priority	Review the 'signing on' pack and identify key opportunities to have conversations about customer involvement.	Steering Group	September 2023
Consider staff training needs on customer involvement	Develop mandatory e-learning module for all staff.	Steering Group/Governance Team	April 2023
Work together to respond to recurring tenants' issues by supporting the development of issue-based customer panels	Review trends in complaints.	Steering Group	Ongoing
Volunteer recognition	Develop effective ways to recruit, motivate and reward Customer Volunteers	Steering Group	December 2023
Customer Senate	Consideration to be given to trialling a new format for customer scrutiny investigations with a view to increasing representation.	Steering Group and Customer Senate	March 2023
Continue to consult customers when carrying out options appraisals for neighbourhood plans	Ensure consultation continues to be a key part of the review process.	Head of Housing Services	Ongoing