



**Derby Homes
Customer Engagement
&
Community Development Strategy
2021-2024**

VERSION 1

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FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR OF DERBY HOMES

The Derby Homes (DH) revised Customer Engagement & Community Development (CECD) strategy replaces the previous 2016-2019 CECD strategy, revisiting our purpose, objectives and goals for the future.



We write this strategy in the midst of a worldwide pandemic impacting both communities and the organisations that serve them.

At this time more than ever we recognise the need to engage with, and support our customers and communities, both to help shape service delivery and to respond to new and emerging community needs.

This strategy outlines our ambitions for engaging with customers, ensuring customers are at the heart of everything we do. We recognise that some people, some groups, and some communities are excluded by the way society and structures are organised. Our strategy is rooted in the belief that all people should have access to health, wellbeing, justice and opportunity and sets out our ambition to contribute to this belief through our work in community development.

At Derby Homes, customer engagement and community development are not one person or teams' role. In line with our Customer First approach, customer engagement and community development are embedded across many areas of our organisation.

We recognise the importance of tenant involvement within our governance structures; inviting tenant's representation at board level, hosting a tenant led operational board, supporting our scrutiny panel – 'customer voice', and continuing to maintain strong links with the Derby Association of Community Partners (DACP).

Every contact with our customers is an opportunity to engage with them, delivering excellent customer service and working to meet and sometimes exceed our customers' expectations. Our aligned Customer Service Strategy recognises the potential for engagement through good customer service.

Our Communications Strategy also recognises the need to ensuring we tailor how we communicate to facilitate understanding and involvement. Every time we communicate with someone, its an opportunity to influence their opinion of us.

We recognise that these engagement opportunities are not right for everyone and offer wider engagement opportunities through surveys, online meetings, complaints handing processes, print media, the website, customer portals and social channels.

We will ensure our engagement and development structures allow genuine engagement, creating a culture that supports real changes in the services we deliver.

We will continue to maintain and strengthen where possible our current methods of engagement, providing our customers with further opportunities to improve services and the way in which decisions are made.

This strategy outlines our ambitions to work towards changes that reduce inequality and poverty, by supporting communities to develop skills and confidence (capacity building) enabling them to have more influence over issues that affect their lives and matter to them.

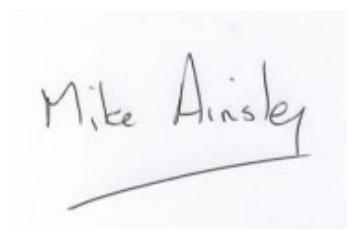
We will continue to support communities, of place and identity, to use their own assets to improve the quality of community life. We will work to empower customers to control and use their own assets and means to influence.

We will support customers coming together in groups or organisations to strengthen their voices.

We will work and learn together with communities, collaborating and sharing experiences.

We will regularly produce update reports for to our tenant led Operational Board on how we are achieving against our strategic ambitions, ensuring we are accountable to our customers for making real progress.

We believe that successful and sustainable communities are underpinned by people who feel they have a real say about decisions that affect their lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Ainsley". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Mike Ainsley
Chair of Derby Homes

KEY AIMS AND OUTCOMES

The key aims and outcomes of our strategic ambitions are:

To engage with customers on issues that directly affect them to drive service improvements

We will routinely collect and analyse feedback from our customers in all fields of our work and use this to identify areas for improvement. We will collate information in a timely manner, using feedback across different service areas to gain better insights into customer concerns. We will invest in better technology to give customers more opportunities to tell us about their experiences. We will increase and improve the levels of feedback we give to our customers.

Community Recovery

We are committed to developing and learning from the way in which the City Council, Derby Homes, the voluntary and community sector have responded to the unprecedented challenges of the Covid Pandemic since March – particularly in delivering an integrated approach to ‘supporting the most vulnerable’ – there is a robust consensus among partners that a new approach to working with communities is fundamental to overall Community recovery within Derby.

This builds on existing asset based work within Adult Services (Local Area Coordinators), Neighbourhood management teams, patch based housing officers in Derby Homes, early positive contribution made by Public Protection Officer resources , a clear need for a contextual safeguarding approach around protecting children and young people and a powerful partnership with the voluntary and community sector .

At its heart the principle of working ‘with the assets’ already evident in people and localities to develop their own solutions to issues /problems.

This will involve a fundamental shift in approach to identifying services across the council and Derby Homes and the operating model within which these teams will function. Teams will be involved in design opportunities and kept informed throughout the process.

To engage with customers in a range of ways that meet their needs

We will empower individuals of all demographics to be involved in decisions that have a direct and positive impact on our estates by ensuring that our involvement activities are accessible and reflect the specific needs and interest of our customers. We will support employability programmes and volunteer opportunities to help upskill local people and improve community resilience. We will embed an Equalities and Diversity customer panel and use a variety of feedback mechanisms to enhance accessibility and capture as much feedback as possible.

The ‘Customer Voice’ are a group of tenants and leaseholders who represent our customers and scrutinise our services. Supported by Derby Homes, the Customer Voice evaluate customer complaints, create a programme of topics and request feedback from Derby Homes to tackle specific services and concerns. Through benchmarking our services, writing reports and providing recommendations, the Customer Voice are vital in leading service improvements for our customers and demonstrating tangible change.

To engage with and support the development of younger people living on our estates

We recognise the importance of reaching out to younger people living on our estates. We will continue to give them opportunities to influence our services.

We will develop partnerships with Derby's Youth Alliance, dovetailing our approach with Derby City Council's Serious Youth Violence Strategy, Derby City Council's Voices in Action and through our own Children and Young People's Strategy.

Ignite and Connect are a group of young people living in our homes. They collectively come together from a variety of youth engagement activities that we facilitate. We deliver sessions and work with partner agencies to enable them to be involved in the decision making at Derby Homes on and around services that they use or could benefit from. Ignite and Connect are involved in shaping, changing and improving their communities whilst also giving them an opportunity to develop their own skills.

We will work towards upskilling and training young people to raise aspirations, increase educational attainment and encourage social development. We will support employability programmes and guarantee Derby Homes Apprenticeship opportunities.

To embed collective working.

We will continue to support the DACP tenant federation and other resident groups in bringing people & community groups together. Working towards common goals and forming strong networks, making connections to help people/groups collaborate, come together and achieve great things. We will work with internal and external partners to increase opportunity for employability, personal growth, empowering localised groups to act and tailoring our support for these areas.

To engage with our wider customer base

We will prioritise engagement at Derby Homes and continue to work closely with internal and external partnerships in order to align resources and maximise opportunities for improvement. We will routinely look to use more informal activities to better understand local priorities.

To engage with customers who are traditionally 'hard to reach'

Hard to reach groups are generally defined as groups or communities that are difficult to engage through conventional methods. These can include those from minority ethnic backgrounds, young people, those with learning difficulties or mental health issues and those who are in full time work. We will ensure that by delivering engagement and community development in partnership or in new innovative ways we will increase the number of customers that are engaging with us and will build community capacity. This increase will also strengthen our understanding of our customer profile and the needs of these groups.

To ensure customer engagement & community development opportunities offer value for money

Both Derby Homes and our customers want value for money (VFM) from all our services and customer engagement is no exception. It is vital, in respect of our customer engagement and community development activities, to be able to measure what is being achieved. In all of our engagement and community development activities we will set clear

objectives from the outset, so VFM objectives can be monitored and evaluated.

We will carry out impact assessments on customer engagement and community development initiatives. We will share the results with customers, allowing joint decisions to be made on the value for money of consultation and community development initiatives.

BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The benefits of effective Customer Engagement & Community Development for customers and Derby Homes are considerable:

- Continuous feedback on local service delivery and performance from service users will act as a **diagnostic check** on our operations. This enables DH to raise standards and achieve great value for money for existing services due to feedback giving us valuable information about how we are actually performing against the service standards we set.
- Effective customer engagement and community development produces **real customer empowerment**. The outcomes of engagement will produce better services based on actual customer experiences. Customers are empowered because we have listened and changed what we do, based on what they have told us.
- Empowering customers in this way ensures that customer engagement is **authentic**. It is this authenticity which gives customers the confidence to continuously work with us, knowing that we listen and learn from their experiences.
- Customer engagement and community development work will also be used to develop and launch new services and products by Derby Homes and partners. This '**market research**' will help Derby Homes to manage the risk of introducing new services, minimise waste and maximise value for money (VFM). Such **evidence-based** approaches will help us to get things right 'first time' based on customer need.
- DH's 'Local Customer Priorities' are better **tailored to meet local needs** and by proactively engaging with customers we are better placed to get their priorities right first time. We recognise that one size does not fit all. We will work at a local level with feedback received by customers to address their specifically identified issues.
- Customers & Communities who engage with us will be encouraged and supported in **developing their ideas along with new skills**. This has a positive effect on customers, boosting personal confidence, enhancing life opportunities and enabling them to contribute to the wider community if they wish.
- Customer engagement and community development enables Derby Homes to meet the **high standards of service** required in the Management Agreement with Derby City Council.
- We believe that effective and authentic customer engagement **improves the**

reputation of Derby Homes and the City Council, thus enabling the continuous reinvestment in the service and the housing stock to take place to secure its long term future.

- To bring about **social change by working with communities**, to identify their needs, offer opportunities, rights and responsibilities; plan, organise and take action and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of that action.

There is a strong business case for customer engagement, the people who use our services are the best placed to tell us how we are doing. Our strategic ambition over the next three years is to continue to be at the forefront of developing and delivering Customer Engagement & Community Development initiatives within the housing sector.

We will continue to ensure that our customers are at the heart of everything we do, with a focus on delivering positive outcomes that help to improve and sustain communities. We will achieve this by further strengthening our working relationships with customers at all levels and being proactive in our engagement activity. By working with our customers and allowing them to influence and take responsibility in decision making, we will gain their trust and confidence thus strengthening the future direction of our service.

MONITORING

We will monitor delivery and effectiveness of this strategy regularly. We will provide regular updates to our Operational Board and publish feedback to our customers through a variety of methods such as Derby Homes News, online resources and the Annual Report.

This strategy will be reviewed at least once every 3 years and sooner if strategic priorities significantly change.