



**Derby Homes  
Customer Engagement  
&  
Community Development Strategy  
2013 – 2016**

**VERSION 3**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Derby Homes (DH) Customer Engagement, Community Development strategy replaces the previous Resident Involvement, Community Initiatives and Junior Warden strategies.

This strategy outlines DH's strategic ambitions for engaging with, and developing our customers, also ensuring that our approach complies with regulatory requirements; that co-regulation and scrutiny are at the heart of the way we work. Our strategic ambitions seek to increase our wider accountability at a local level, embracing the intentions embedded within the Localism Act 2011.

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

We will build upon our current methods of engagement, provide our customers with strengthened opportunities to scrutinise performance of services received, challenge decisions and influence change.

We will develop an Annual Action Plan, to accompany this strategy, which will detail how our strategic ambitions will be implemented. We will regularly monitor and review progress against our strategic ambitions with partners and involved customers to ensure we are making progress.

## 2. WHY DO WE NEED A CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY?

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

**Customer Engagement** is about listening to people who are receiving our services and responding to their views to ensure we deliver the services customers need.

**Community Development** starts with the issues that residents in communities identify as being important to them. We will develop community skills and confidence so that they can have more influence on issues that affect their lives.

As well as this, we know that some customers want to know about accessing employment and be involved in training and educational opportunities.

For most of our customers receiving regular information about services is enough, others will want to be more actively involved and take part in decision making such as the City Board, Tenant Panel or other volunteering roles.

We will develop authentic relationships with our customers by establishing clear channels of communication between those delivering our housing service and our customers.

In order to enable our customers to be meaningfully involved, we need to develop the skills and capacities of both our staff and customers. We also need to ensure our engagement and development structures allow this to happen and create a culture that will bring about real changes in the services customers receive.

In summary, customer engagement and community development is about putting our customers at the heart of everything we do to ensure the services we provide meet their current and future needs.

### 3. BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The benefits of effective Customer Engagement & Community Development for both DH's and our customers are considerable:

- Continuous feedback on local service delivery and performance from service users will act as a **diagnostic check** on our operations. It will help DH to raise standards and achieve good value for money for existing services because the feedback will give 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**, because 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 make customer engagement **authentic**. It is this authenticity that will give customers the confidence to continuously work with us.
- 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'.
- DH's services/local offers can be better **tailored to meet local needs** and priorities if we proactively engage with customers. We recognise that one size does not fit all.
- Customers & Communities who engage with us will be encouraged and supported in **developing new skills**. This will have a potentially positive effect on customers, boosting personal confidence, enhancing life chances and enabling customers to contribute to the wider community if they wish.
- Customer engagement and community development will help 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, opportunities, rights and responsibilities; plan, organise and take action and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of that action.

#### **4. DH'S STRATEGIC AMBITION FOR CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Locally, we recognise the value of Customer Engagement and Community Development. Involving customers is not an end in itself. We involve customers to achieve the outcomes they have told us they need, to provide them with an excellent standard of service and to help us to continue to operate as a top performing Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) for Derby City Council. There is a strong business case for customer engagement, community development and 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 be at the forefront in the housing sector for Customer Engagement & Community Development. Ensuring that our customers are at the heart of everything that we do and delivering positive outcomes to improve and sustain communities. This will be achieved by further strengthening our working relationships with customers at all levels and being more proactive in engaging at a local level, increasing customer confidence, influence and responsibility in decision making and the future direction of our service.

#### **5. KEY AIMS AND OUTCOMES**

The key aims of our strategic ambitions are:

- **To engage with all of our customers on issues that directly affect them to drive service improvements** – we will routinely collect and analyse feedback from our customers in all areas of our work, and use this to identify areas for improvement.
- **To ensure customer engagement & community development opportunities offer value for money** – We will carry out impact assessments on customer engagement and community development initiatives, and will share the results with customers, allowing joint decisions to be made on the value for money of consultation and community development initiatives.
- **To engage with customers in a range of ways that meet their needs** – we will ensure that our involvement activities are accessible and reflect the specific needs and interest of our customers.
- **To ensure sustainability**, working with and investing in the capacity of people and groups so that lasting change may be achieved whilst also using environmental resources responsibly
- **To engage with younger people living on our estates** - we recognise the importance of reaching out to younger people living on our estates. We want to give them opportunities to influence our services. We will do this by strengthening our existing areas of youth work, such as the Junior Wardens scheme, Day trips,

Intergenerational Days, Residential trips and by introducing a new Youth City Board. This Youth Board will work with our existing City Board who will support mentor and assign them relevant project work to deliver on our estates.

- **To ensure Participation**, helping individuals to get involved, sharing power throughout communities to increase peoples influence over decisions which affect their lives.
- **To embed collective working**, working together towards common goals and forming networks, making connections to help people collaborate and come together in groups.
- **To engage with our wider customer base** – we will prioritise engagement at a local level and routinely look to use more informal activities to better understand local priorities. Typical examples will be, mobile engagement, face to face interaction, joining up with existing groups & partners, surveys and estate engagement days.
- **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 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 that all staff understand what customer engagement is and have the appropriate skills** - we will introduce a Customer Engagement & Community Development training plan for all frontline staff. Educating and training our staff will ensure that they are able to fully engage with our customers within their daily duties.

Our Customer Engagement and Community Development strategic ambitions will deliver the following outcomes:

1. **Customers are able to influence our business priorities and local delivery plans** – we will provide customers with the opportunity to comment on our key policies, strategies and local offers, and demonstrate that we have carefully considered their comments and incorporated suggestions where appropriate.
2. **Customer feedback is integral to service improvements** – we will use a variety of methods to involve our customers within all service areas and demonstrate how services have changed in response to customer feedback.
3. **DH embeds the culture of co-regulation, customer engagement & community development** – we will continue to develop and support our approach to tenant scrutiny, widening this approach to incorporate City Board members. We will ensure appropriate training and capacity building opportunities are available to those involved. We will provide on-going support, continuously evaluating skills acquired and ensure that there

are further development opportunities for those involved. We will have robust processes in place which will integrate with our strategic and performance frameworks.

**4. Change to our working culture** – we will strengthen our mobile engagement work directly on our estates. This will involve all DH frontline teams working together to ensure that we are focused on delivering services that fit our customers' individual needs and are further developing positive working relationships. All staff members will have an induction and specific service objectives for customer engagement.

**5. Community Capacity is strengthened** – We will work with communities to respond to emerging needs, providing support to newly formed and existing community initiatives which support community sustainability.

#### **6. DELIVERY/ MONITORING AND VALUE FOR MONEY (VFM)**

We believe we must constantly challenge ourselves to improve our services and make sure that our customers have appropriate opportunities to be involved in ways that suit their interests.

We will monitor delivery and effectiveness of this strategy regularly. We will produce an annual Action Plan to support the delivery of our strategic ambitions.

Progress against the annual Action Plan will be reported twice yearly to the City Board and will be published through the use of social media and our website.

Both DH 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.

Our performance framework will therefore focus on the following measurable outcomes:

- The impact and reach of the activity on both customer and DH's
- The cost of the activity and costs arising from specific initiatives
- Any efficiencies or money/time saved as a result of the activity
- Social Return on Investment
- Improved customer satisfaction with opportunities for participating in decision making
- Improved customer satisfaction that DH takes views of tenants into account
- Improved customer satisfaction with DH keeping tenants informed