

Customer Engagement Strategy 2021-2024 Update

December 2021



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

The aims of the Customer Engagement Strategy 2021-2024

- To provide tenants with the right information
- To improve tenants involvement in decision making
- To improve how we engage with our tenants through digital and social media
- To learn from complaints, put things right and be open and honest when things haven't gone so well
- To improve training opportunities for our tenants
- To give our tenants feedback following consultation
- To empower tenants to make a meaningful contribution to Housing Services and their community



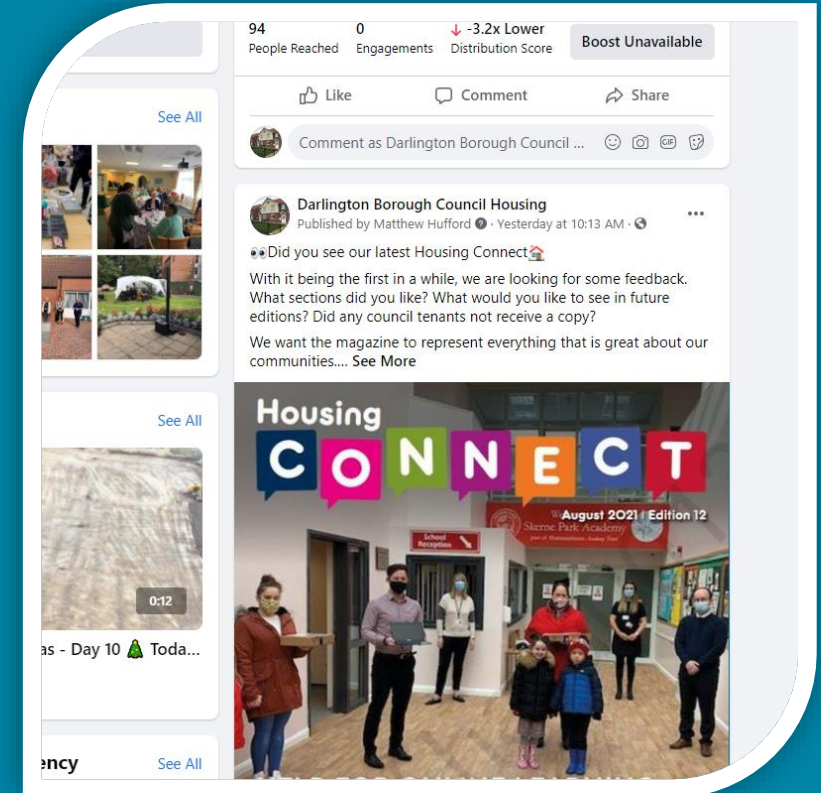
Priorities and how they are being addressed



Priority 1 – Providing the right information

What we have done so far?

- Introduced an ICT programme to help us to keep our online written communication easy to read
- Expanded the Housing Facebook Page – this is updated daily to give up to date and relevant information. Followed by 1000 subscribers (around 20% of Council tenants)
- Introduced Step by Step guide for programs such as Darlington Home Online within the Customer Services Centre
- Ensured we have a dedicated team of Customer Services Advisors available in the Town Hall for those who most need help to access services online
- Recently delivered the Housing Connect magazine to all our tenants



Priority 2 –Listening to our tenants

What we have done so far?

- Listened to feedback from social media, emails, phone calls and meetings to start to plan for future engagement events
- Signed our Tenants Panel up for the North East Tenants Voice and invited them onto training courses.
- Set up Community events in Park Place and Bank Top to look at Anti Social Behaviour and improving multi-agency work
- Housing Officers all involved with building and promoting resident groups



Building Safety

- Since Covid 19 we have realised that we needed to change how we communicate our Building Safety
- Hugely important in Engagement
- Fire Assessment, Electrical Safety and Gas Safety
- We want to liaise with our tenants and find out how we can communicate this
- Tenants Panel (Starting in 2021), Surveys and Mystery Shopper



Priority 3 – Making decisions with our tenants

What we have done so far?

- Set up events for tenants to be able to tell us what they want from us as a landlord
- Re-started estate inspections with professional agencies – tenants to attend in 2022
- When we're replacing doors and kitchens we've made sure tenants can have a choice
- Engagement champions within Tenants Panel to carry out fire safety checks – to expand in 2022
- We have consulted our Tenants about a new Tenancy Agreement and are reviewing their comments
- We are currently running a consultation with our tenants about next years rent charges



The role of the Tenants Panel

- To attend and help with estate inspections
- To promote fire safety to their neighbours and community through helping with fire safety checks
- To review our literature and website before it goes out to make sure its easy to read and understand
- To attend training courses to improve their skills around things such as ICT, decision making etc
- To promote and take part in customer surveys
- To attend Tenants Panel meetings
- To carry out Mystery Shopping on our services
- To give us their views about our policies and processes
- To challenge us where necessary



Priority 4 – Maximising scrutiny and accountability

What we have done so far ?

- Introduced interactive forums for consultation and feedback (Covid has taught us not to be so linear and to have numerous options)
- Provided regular Facebook posts about our performance and services and asked for feedback
- Started to provide ASB performance to ensure tenants know what we are doing to tackle problems
- Carried out a follow up Equality Impact Assessment and asked for feedback with residents around trees after further complaints
- Annual Report produced and advertised
- Introduced a new system for dealing with complaints and reduced the response time to 10 days



The affects of Covid 19 on our plans

- Unable to carry out face to face meetings, delayed our plans for these
- Tenants Panel Meeting started Sept 2021
- PACT and Community meetings suspended, now re-started
- More information online provided
- Estate Inspections and Fire Risk Assessments – tenants unable to attend
- Delayed training opportunities for tenants to attend
- Looked at more flexible ways of engaging



The Next 12 months

- Aim to set up Engagement Champion program for tenants to be involved in their area
- Set up a new webpage and report on our performance quarterly.
- Offer the opportunity for all tenants to attend more community events
- Improve our website to provide more information and show when we have learnt from issues and concerns from tenants (you said, we did)
- Introduce a new Housing Management Policy and review the Anti-Social Behaviour policy – giving tenants the opportunity to comment on both
- Introduce new IT systems to help us and our tenants such as DocuSign (a system which allows tenants to sign documents online rather than coming into the office)
- Carry out more customer surveys so we can get feedback from tenants to make sure we are on the right track and performing well

