

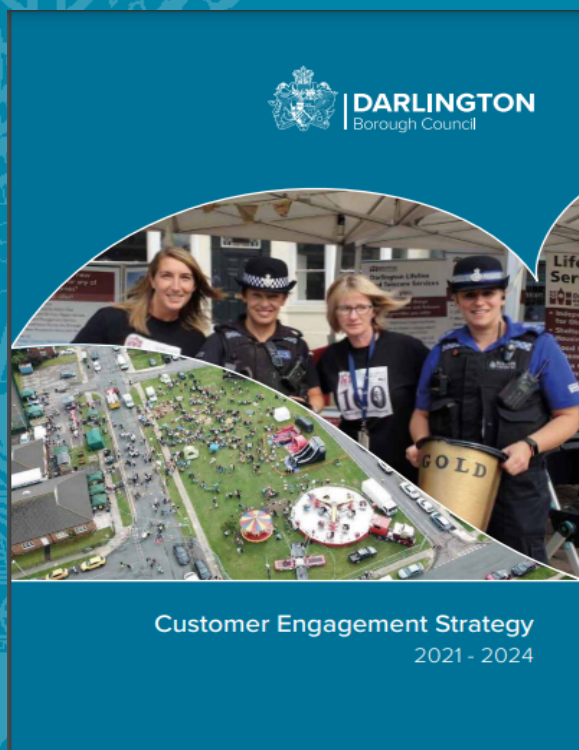
# Customer Engagement Strategy 2021-2024 Update

August 2023



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# Introduction to Engagement Strategy



We are now in the third and final year of our 3 year plan



Strategy sets out how we will continue to evolve and empower our tenants, ensuring they are at the heart of everything that we do



Set out new ways to engage with our tenants and ensure that no-one is left out



Strategy aimed to help strengthen and expand opportunities for our tenants to make a positive difference to our services and future direction



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# Our Aims



Provide our tenants with the right information and hold us to account



Ensure our tenants can give us their views in the way that they want and make their voice heard



Improve and expand the ways our tenants can be involved and participate in decision making



Improve the ways we can engage with our tenants through digital and social media channels



Empower tenants by providing training opportunities to ensure they have the right skills to make a meaningful contribution



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# Our Aims continued



Involve our tenants in making key decisions, such as improving safety and tackling climate change



Work with our tenants to improve services and help us implement change



Ensure we provide our tenants with feedback following consultation



Learn from complaints about our services, put things right and be open and honest when things haven't gone so well



Work with our partners to get the best outcomes for our tenants



# Increased Customer Engagement

- 2022/23 saw increased customer engagement events in a variety of locations across Darlington.
- New events took place in Lingfield and Heighington as well as continued success at locations such as Branksome Hall Drive and North Riverside
- Estate Walkabout also continued in 2022/23 with a set schedule in place that covers all parts of the town.
- Relationship with agencies such as the Police, Civic Enforcement and Streetscene stronger than ever



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# Engagement Examples – Lancaster Close

- Set up to combine welcoming tenants and combating reports of Anti-Social Behaviour in the local area
- Housing Services were joined by Police and Civic Enforcement to discuss issues such as noise and parking
- Surveys were handed out to residents to help us get to the root of any problems



# Engagement Example – Skerne Park Estate Walkabout

- Proactive approach to making our streets safer for our communities.
- Housing Services were joined by Local Councillors, Streetscene, Civic Enforcement and the Skerne Park Community Partnership.
- Reporting of Fly tips whilst on location.
- Set up after drug paraphernalia found in the area the week before



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# Tenant Participation Advisory Service (Tpas) / Inside Housing

- We continue to be a member of Tpas
- Tpas promote, support and champion tenant involvement and social empowerment in social housing
- Members of the Housing Team attended the Tenant and Resident Engagement Conference in May 2023



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# Webpage

- Throughout the last 12 months the website has been constantly updated with event information, good news stories and other important information
- In early 2023, all existing outdated information about Covid 19 was removed from the website
- Good News Stories page where we speak to tenants and highlight why they like being a DBC tenant

## Branksome Hall - Mr Wetherill



Branksome Hall resident Mr Wetherill has lived at the scheme for the last 4 and a half years returning to the town after spending his retirement years near Barnard Castle.

After residing in the Branksome area for a large proportion of his life and watching his family grow up there the scheme was a natural fit.

*What I love about my home is how sociable it is. I have met many friends since living at Branksome Hall Drive. We all get involved in the bingo and coffee mornings as well as garden fete's, celebrations and watching entertainers perform. I join in with everything and try to be as sociable as possible'*

*With it being a self-contained flat you can have your privacy, but I try and leave my flat as much as possible'*

As well as the tenants Mr Wetherill has an extremely good relationship with the scheme managers Penny and Lorraine.



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# The Tenants Panel Overview

- The Tenants Panel is made up of volunteers from within the community who represent all Darlington Borough Council tenants.
- Involved in making decisions about how our service is delivered.
- Scrutinise our performance and help us with our policies and strategies.
- Open door policy; only requirement is being a council tenants with a passion for their community.



# Tenants Panel Feedback

- Throughout 2022/23, the Tenants Panel has met bi-monthly and has spoken to key members of the housing team.
- They have reviewed information regarding the rent consultation, allocation policy and choosing the new name for our allocation platform.
- Reinforces panel's role in structuring housing policies



# Applications for Community Funding

- The Community Engagement Fund has been set up by Housing Services with the aim to support community projects in areas where Housing Services own properties.
- The fund offers a financial contribution to support tenant led activities and projects that make a difference to the community and helps to promote social, environmental, and economic wellbeing.
- 2022/2023 has seen the fund help numerous community projects; from Garden Projects to Community Centres.
- In March 2023, we launched the King's Coronation Community Funding, which looked to fund projects and street parties for this historic event.
- A dozen successful entries with applicants receiving up to £500 each.



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# Annual Report / Housing Connect

- Latest Housing Connect released in March 2023 with a second edition due in August 2023
- Both accessible online and delivered to every single tenant
- Articles in March edition included Damp, Mould and Condensation, Being a Good Neighbour, You Said We Did and Allocations



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# Engaging with our Refugees

- Between April 2022 and March 2023, we have welcomed 47 sponsorships from Ukraine, a mixture of families, couples and individuals.
- Ever expanding team who are responsible for the introduction of life in Darlington.
- Organised bowling trip with Afghan families in Feb 2023



# Customer Satisfaction Surveys

- Customer satisfaction is vitally important to the Housing Team, but how do we measure it.
- In 2023/2024 we are undertaking a Customer Satisfaction Survey on a big scale.
- Regulator led
- Concentrating on repairs, Building Safety, Complaints, Customer Engagement and Neighbourhoods
- Call to tenants to make sure contact details are up to date before Tenant Satisfaction Measures start

**Tenant  
satisfaction  
measures**



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# What are Tenant Satisfaction Measures

- The Regulator of Social Housing is creating a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.
- In addition to introducing revised consumer standards, this will involve a set of tenant satisfaction measures that social housing landlords must report on.
- People will be able to use these measures to understand how well landlords are doing.
- There are 22 tenant satisfaction measures, covering five themes. Ten of these will be measured by landlords directly, and 12 will be measured by landlords carrying out tenant perception surveys.



# Regulatory standards

- Government has given the Regulator of Social Housing two main objectives:
- Economic objective: to make sure that registered providers (landlords) are well-managed and financially stable
- Consumer objective: to make sure that tenants get quality accommodation, have choice and protection, and can hold their landlords to account.



# Investing in Staff

- Part of our plans for 2023 in last engagement review
- Important tool in ensuring staff are equipped in dealing with any issue that may arise
- Case Study – Asbestos Awareness Training March 2023
- Course aimed at recognising the three main types of asbestos and their properties, appreciate the use of asbestos as building material, appreciate the health risks and physical effects asbestos can have on the body, help to identify potential asbestos containing materials, working with asbestos and the precautions to take, awareness of the council's arrangements for managing asbestos.



# Further Training in 2022/2023

- The Housing Team attended lone worker training in late 2022 to ensure the safety of colleagues when on location.
- Domestic Violence Virtual Presentation for employees in a relevant role.
- All new employees complete Academy 10 training. This includes modules on Climate Change, Fire Safety and Equality and Diversity among others
- Role specific training – Refugee Resettlement Officer completing 'The Safeguarding of Refugees and Asylum seekers' training



# 2023 and 2024

- Using the TSM's to set the direction of the new strategy, setting aims and areas of improvement
- Embedding the new consumer standards in internal policies and processes
- Continuing to look for new ways to involve tenants – virtual meetings, online surveys
- Reviewing the website, increasing use of social media
- Working with Tenants Panel to promote their involvement and knowledge
- Building on the foundations set by the current strategy

