

# Customer Engagement Strategy

## 2022-27



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# Introduction

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At Local Space, we believe engaging customers in the design and review of our services, is the best way to ensure we meet your needs, improve our performance, and make a positive and lasting contribution to the communities we serve.

This strategy sets out our approach to Customer Engagement, what we want to achieve, how it's going to work and what the benefits will be for our customers and the organisation as a whole.

# The environment in which we operate

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The impact of the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in 2017, as well as a series of other high profile news stories, have placed the microscope firmly over social landlords, questioning their integrity when it comes to listening to customers and understanding what's important to them.

The sector is reacting positively to this challenge, but exactly how we do this is complex. In 2020 the Government's [White Paper 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents'](#), set out their thoughts on the issues and how they think they should be solved. In relation to engagement, they want to see:

An empowerment of Customers:

- Landlords arming customers with information about how their landlord is performing.
- Landlords working with customers developing new ways to have their voice heard and having a meaningful influence over Landlord decisions that will affect customers.
- Landlords create the right organisational culture and promote customer focus and engagement ensuring customers are always treated with respect.

This document sets out Local Space's approach to Customer Engagement, in response to the challenges described above and it has been written in consultation with Local Space customers.

# The purpose of customer engagement at Local Space

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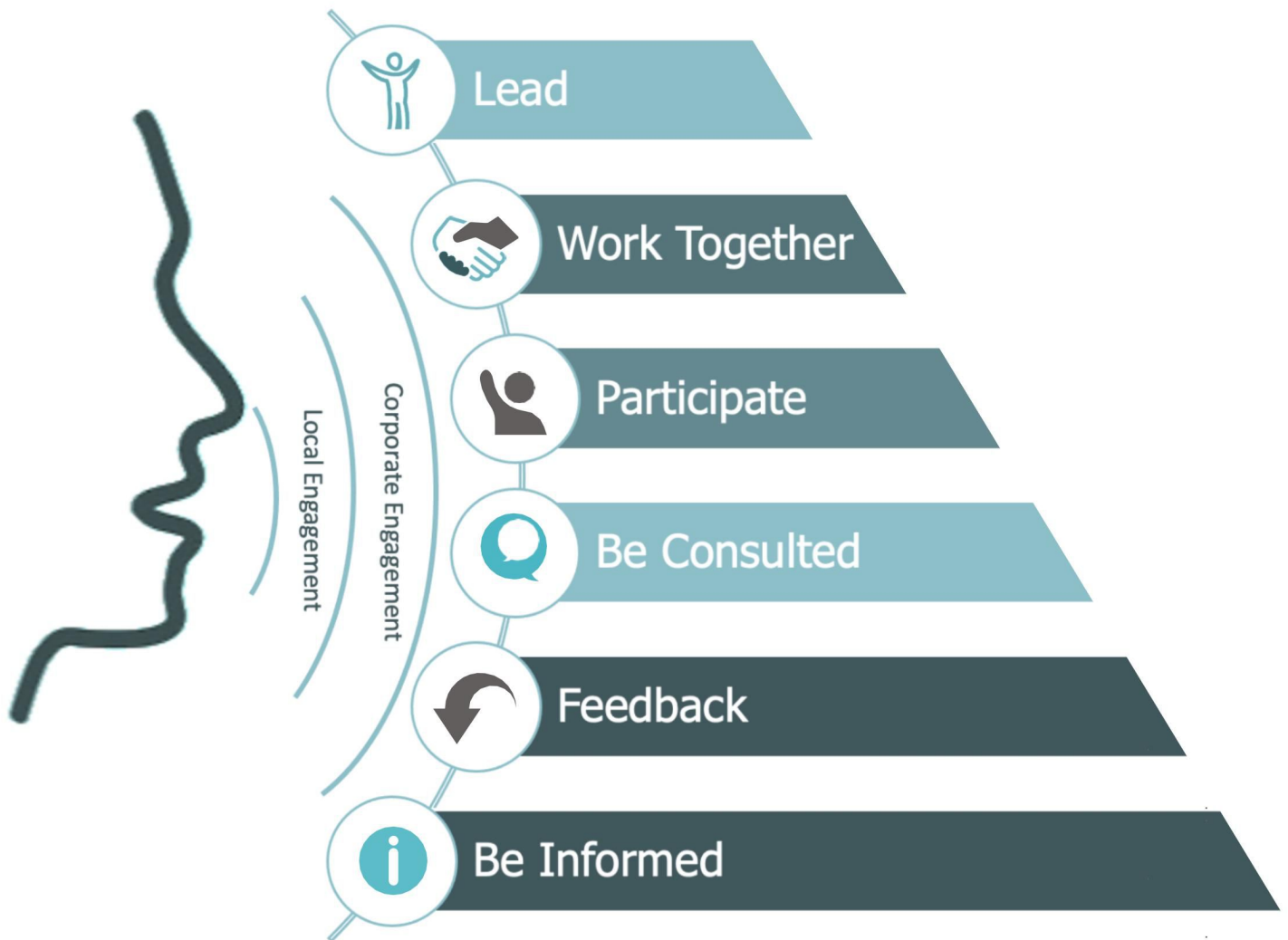
We believe that working with our customers is essential to us being a successful landlord, to designing better and more efficient services and to fulfil our mission of providing quality homes & services.

We know that customer engagement is important to you. We can see from our monthly survey responses that we need to be better at coordinating your repairs, be easier to reach quickly and be quicker to respond to your messages. We know that you want to be listened to and want to see positive change as a result.

We take improving our approach to Customer Engagement seriously. To achieve this we have set out some clear principles, based on what our customers have told us is important. These principles have shaped the strategy and how we engage in the future:

- We will make better use of technology to improve the convenience of engaging with us so that more customers can take part.
  - We know that not everyone wants to be involved in the same way. We'll provide a variety of ways to be involved covering our whole service or local issues in your home or building.
  - We will strive to ensure customers who are involved are representative of our diverse range of customers.
- We will ensure that our approach to engagement is embedded in our governance framework and services.
  - We will provide opportunities for customers to hold us to account when it comes to our performance.
  - We will demonstrate the impact involving customers has had on our service designs and performance.

# How customers can be involved



The diagram above illustrates how you can get involved with Local Space. If you live in a building that is managed by Local Space, you may wish to be involved at a local level only, influencing the decisions affecting that building and your home. You may wish to be involved with Local Space corporately, influencing decisions that affect how all the business is run & that affect all customers. Each block represents how you can be involved. The smaller options at the top require the most effort/time and are for fewest customers.

The larger options near the bottom require less time and effort and many more customers can be accommodated. As well as decisions that affect our customers, their safety, their home, and their building, we'll also invite you to feed into decisions around our corporate plan, strategies, and changes to policies. As you'll see, there are now several ways for Local Space to connect with customers on these key decisions.



## Be Informed

Being informed is the most straightforward form of engagement. When changes are made to the way we do things that affect you, we'll inform you. When we do we'll be clear that we're providing information about the change and are not seeking further feedback.

We'll use a range of ways to inform customers about changes. These include letters, email and our website. We'll also highlight key changes in our newsletters.

We will regularly publish news about how customers have shaped the way we do things. We'll include a 'you said, we did' section in newsletters and will also publish this on the Local Space website.

## Feedback

It's important that we make sure all customers have an opportunity to provide feedback as easily as possible. We use the information gathered to measure how well the organisation is performing, based on the responses our customers give us. Responses are also used to get a better understanding of what isn't working, as well as giving ideas and opportunities for improvements.

We'll ensure there are a range of ways that this feedback can be provided to us, including online surveys, letter, phone, email and directly through the website.

There will be times when we commission research from a third party. We'll do this when we need impartial and independent feedback, helping us to improve what we do to meet customers' needs.

Sometimes we get it wrong. Having an effective complaints process ensures that customers have a route to get problems resolved. It also helps us to identify improvements. This process includes capturing feedback from the Housing Ombudsman and other relevant external agencies. We'll ensure we learn from our mistakes and improve services as a result.

### Ways to give **Feedback** include:

- Respond to a survey online or telephone
- Provide feedback directly through the website, by email or over the phone including making a formal complaint if necessary
- Taking part in our STAR perception survey

## Be Consulted

We're committed to consulting with all our customers on changes that will affect them, their safety, their home or their neighbourhood. By consultation, we mean that we will contact each affected customer, providing information about the proposed change then giving at least two weeks to respond with feedback. Where we can, we will use each customer's preferred method of contact when we do this, but sometimes for legal reasons we may have to do this by post.

After the consultation period, we will review each and every comment. We will then produce a response to all customers summarising the results of the consultation, what has changed as a result of the consultation and, if applicable, the reasons why some things haven't changed.

Types of changes that fall into this category include changes to lettings arrangements, changes to services, changes to the way we maintain a building, alterations internally and externally to a home, and changes to the way a building and surrounding areas look.

We will make it clear when we are consulting so that customers are aware that this is their opportunity to feedback and have their say on the proposed changes.



## Participate

Local Space benefits from having customers who like to get involved in things beyond simple consultation processes. There are many people who help shape ideas and thinking while also providing more regular feedback that lets us test ideas and make improvements faster.

We know it's not always possible for customers to give up a lot of time to take part in regular and formal groups.

To be able to accommodate those who either want to participate at a time that's convenient to them, or to take part in activities less regularly, activities like those listed below have been created to ensure these people are heard.

### Ways to **Participate** include:

- Join our virtual sounding board community
- Examine a specific element of the organisation as a member of a virtual Scrutiny Group
- Take part in a 'Customer Journey Mapping' session
- Take part in a virtual focus group with a senior leader from Local Space



## Work Together

This is where customers work in partnership with us to achieve common goals. These include groups that concentrate on improving specific services and groups that give customers who may experience our services in a different way (such as customers with a disability) a place to discuss changes. There will also be groups who can gather feedback in their neighbourhoods and be a positive voice in their community (residents' associations and Community Champions).

Training will be provided for these roles. This provides an opportunity to those involved to benefit from skills development and will ensure that the groups deliver the best outcomes.

Customers involved in these groups will be asked to attend regular meetings and take time to read the meeting papers. They may also be asked to carry out some administrative functions

Community Champions will need to be even more active, spending time visiting their neighbours and presenting the feedback to Local Space.

### Ways to **Work Together** include:

- Attendance at Estates Inspections
- Assisting in the review of complaints
- Member of a Local Group/ Residents' Association
- Community Champion





This is about being a leading force in the community or helping Local Space to improve its services. Customers in these roles will be passionate about making a difference and be seen as a role model in the positions they hold.

A customer assuming one of these roles will be asked to take ownership of issues and be proactive to make a difference. An important part of these roles will be bringing people together, other customers and Local Space colleagues alike.

These roles require the biggest commitment of time from those involved but are also likely to be the most rewarding.

**Ways to Lead include:**

- Member of Policy & Scrutiny Panel
- Chair of a Local Group/Residents Association
- Organise and support the delivery of a resident-led community service

## Scrutiny at Local Space

Providing ways for customers to scrutinise what we do is not only a regulatory obligation, but something that we embrace.

The Policy & Scrutiny Panel is responsible for reviewing feedback from other engagement activities and the overall performance of the organisation. This group will work with Local Space to identify areas requiring greater attention and will commission a series of scrutiny groups to complete reviews.

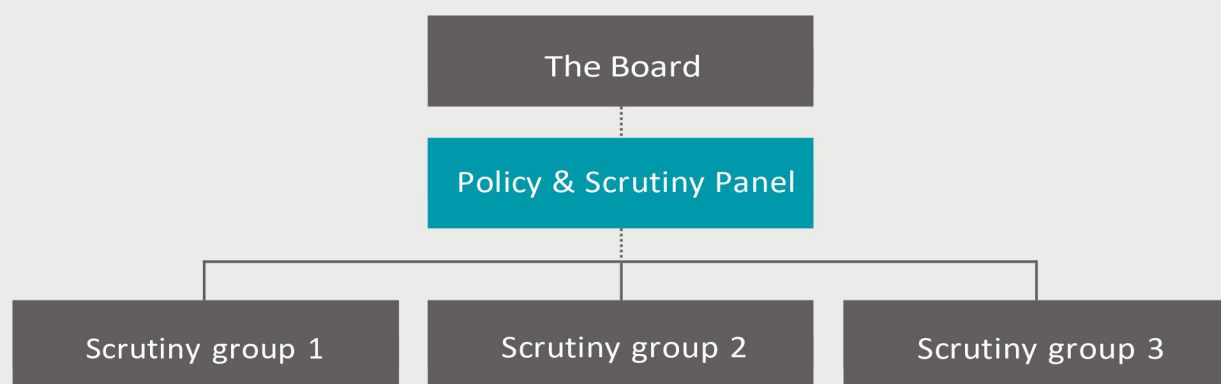
Each year, The Policy & Scrutiny Panel will publish a report to The Board detailing the involvement activities that have taken place, what the information is telling us and the impact that these activities have had on the organisation.

Each scrutiny group will exist only for the purposes of the review they've been tasked with carrying

out. Additional customers will be recruited for the particular task, based on skills, experience and enthusiasm in the subject matter. This means that for every scrutiny group, customers with the most appropriate experience will work to produce the best possible review. The scrutiny groups will be supported by Local Space colleagues, providing access to additional information, time with senior colleagues as well as facilitating workshops between Local Space and the group.

We will explore whether external specialist consultants could be brought in on a temporary basis to provide expert opinion and help the group to better understand technicalities

Wherever possible we will look to the use of technology, such as MS Teams to deliver virtual or hybrid meetings and maximise convenience for group members.



Suitable training will be provided to all members of the Policy & Scrutiny Panel. Consideration will be given to whether customers involved in the scrutiny groups will require additional training.



# Different ways to get involved

## Board

A member of the Policy & Scrutiny Panel will be invited to each board meeting. This will give panel members the opportunity to ask questions of the board and hold them to account when it comes to the organisation’s performance. The panel member will have the opportunity to feedback on the group’s activities. It also gives The Board a chance to ask questions so they can better understand what it feels like to be a Local Space customer.

## Estate Inspections

The quality and safety of customers’ blocks are as important as the homes in which they live. Customers who are interested in reviewing estate-based services and policies can register to join their tenancy & income officer on regular estate inspections to provide feedback about how their building is being managed and influence our services in this area.

## Complaints

We’ve created a new review method to help ensure that the process for managing complaints is open, transparent, fair and consistent. A sample of anonymised complaints will be available for review by customers who have expressed an interest in this role and a consensus view will be reached on whether the complaint was handled in line with our policies and procedures. Up to 6 places are available, with a skills-and experience-based selection process in place.

## Diversity & Inclusion Focus Groups

We serve a diverse range of customers. To ensure that our services are designed around the needs of all our customers, these groups will ensure that customers representing protected characteristics under the Equalities Act can help us better understand how our services can be adapted to be accessible for all.

Additionally, Local Space undertake Equality Impact Assessments when considering changes to policy or large improvement projects.

## Residents’ Associations or similar tenant groups

We will establish and support resident-led groups in our blocks. Where residents are keen for this to happen, we will help to recruit and set up groups. We will also offer training and support so these groups can become self-sufficient and genuinely led by the community they serve. There will be continued support for these groups with regular attendance from Local Space colleagues as well as access to funding.

## Community Champion

To help Local Space reach as many communities as possible, we will be recruiting a series of Community Champions across our blocks.

Residents in these roles will be a leading positive voice in their community. They will actively seek feedback and comments from residents who live in their block(s) and will share this with Local Space. They will play an active role within the resident group operating within their area and they will help shape our response to customer feedback.

They will also provide the block where they live with additional information, encourage residents to take part in conversations about our services and provide updates on the residents’ association activities.

# Measuring our success

Here are the main ways we will know whether this strategy is working:

- By Summer 2022 we will have published our getting involved fact sheet, including frequently asked questions.
- By March 2023, we will have engaged with at least 100 customers
- At the same time, we will ensure that the people involved remain representative of our diverse range of customers. We will use 'segmentation' of our customer database to monitor this and aim to have each 'segment' within 5% of the overall population of involved customers.

For example, if 10% of all customers are identified as being in segment 1, we would aim to have between 5-15% of all involved customers from segment 1.

- Each year, as a part of an annual review of engagement, we will demonstrate the positive contribution customer engagement has had on the organisation and its performance.
- We will check in with customers through the STAR survey monthly, to see how we are progressing.

We will ask: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Local Space listens to your views and acts upon them? We want to ensure that we remain better than average so we will ensure that we are in at least the second quartile of all housing associations in England when it comes to this measure.





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Local Space is a charitable registered society (Reg. Number: 29840R)  
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