



Delivering on our promises

Customer Strategy 2021 – 2025

1. BUSINESS PLAN 2025

ccha provide good quality homes and aim to provide high quality services to our residents. Founded in 1967, we are rooted in our local community and own or manage more than 1,500 affordable homes in Croydon, Sutton, Bromley and Merton. We specialise in providing homes for residents who require General Needs, Supported and Older Persons accommodation. We also provide access to home ownership through Shared Ownership, Help to Buy and London Living Rent. We are proud to create sustainable communities by forging strong local partnerships and working closely with residents. We are committed to providing excellent services and developing more homes to meet the increasing demand in our community.

2020/21 was the first year of our ccha2025 business plan which, following significant resident, staff, and Board consultation, identified five strategic priorities key to the future success of our Group:

- Resident Standards
- Staff and partner engagement
- Safety and security responsibility
- More affordable homes pledge
- Value for money offer

Our vision is “Delivering on our promises.”

Our mission is “We enable staff and partners to deliver excellent services for our residents and provide more quality homes for our community”.

Our values are:

- **Care** - We care about our customers, staff, and our wider environment
- **Adapt** - We adapt and embrace change to achieve our goals
- **Resilient** - We are resilient and effective in challenging times
- **Everyone** - Our strength is in our unity with everyone playing their part

2. AIM

This strategy supports our Resident Standards corporate business objective, ‘We will have a service which is shaped by our residents for our residents’.

Its aim is to put residents at the heart of our organisation, to listen to them, to be open and transparent with them about where we are and how we are doing and to better reflect the type of service they want from us.

Building on feedback we have received and the work already underway, our aim is to build a consistent, quality service, with good communication and to increase resident satisfaction. We recognise we are on a journey and there is more we would like to do

in the future. However, this strategy is about getting the basics right first and creating a strong foundation from which we can develop further in the next business plan.

3. BACKGROUND

Historically, we have had high standards of customer service and achieved 88% overall resident satisfaction in 2014/15. Since then, satisfaction has dropped. We were at 71% at the end of 2020/2021 with a further decline to 67% anticipated in 2021/22. Providing an excellent service to our residents, however, remains our top priority and we are committed to working hard to improve this and have set an ambitious target of 86% satisfaction by the end of this business plan.

We started this journey in 2019 by completing a mass door knocking consultation exercise, house meetings and text and telephone surveys with all our residents to consult on repairs, estate services, the development of the new business plan and customer service overall. This feedback was fed into the new Business Plan ccha2025 and led to our 'Residents Standard' objective and also influences a lot of this strategy.

Social Housing White Paper

Externally, our environment has been changing with much more emphasis on residents having a voice, being treated with respect and better transparency and accountability to help drive up standards. The 2020 Social Housing White Paper 'Charter for Social Housing Residents' aims to set out a new vision for the way that social housing residents are treated and sets out seven commitments that residents should expect from their landlord. These include:

- **To know how your landlord is performing**, including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
- **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly**, with access to a strong Ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
- **To be treated with respect**, backed by a strong consumer regulator, and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- **To have your voice heard by your landlord**, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board.

In addition to the new Consumer Standards, new Tenant Satisfaction Measures are being introduced. The Regulator of Social Housing has just completed consultation on these which include a mixture of satisfaction survey results and landlord performance measures. Once finalised, we will be required to measure ourselves against them from 1 April 2023 and publish the results.

The White Paper also strengthened the role of the Housing Ombudsman. A new Complaint Handling Code was rolled out in 2020, with further changes effective from 1 April 2022. As well as giving residents easier access to complaints and speeding up complaint resolution, the Ombudsman now has more power, and is better able to

highlight and help address systemic issues, and has been completing investigations and publishing insight reports, complaints data, learning points and case studies.

Together with Tenants

Together with Tenants is a sector-wide initiative led by the National Housing Federation (NHF). The ambition is for all housing associations to support the Plan and consider adopting the Together with Tenants charter. This will embed a culture across our sector that values the voice and experience of residents and strengthens the relationship between residents and housing association landlords.

As part of the Together with Tenants Plan, the NHF Code of Governance 2020 also introduces a requirement for boards to be accountable to their residents, ensuring the views and needs of their residents are at the heart of strategic decision making.

We plan to adopt the Together with Tenants Charter in 2022/23 which means we will need to commit to:

Relationships – Treating all residents with respect in all our interactions, with relationships based on openness, honesty and transparency.

Communication – Residents receiving clear, accessible and timely information on issues that matter to them, including important information about their homes and local community, how we are working to address problems, how we are run, and information about performance on key issues.

Voice and influence – Views from residents being sought and valued and this information used to inform decisions. Every individual resident feeling listened to on the issues that matter to them and able to speak without fear.

Accountability – Collectively, residents working in partnership with us to independently scrutinise and hold us to account for the decisions that affect the quality of their homes and services.

Quality – Residents expecting their homes to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.

When things go wrong – Residents having simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress and timely advice and support when things go wrong.

4. WHERE ARE WE NOW

Customer service

The business plan consultation highlighted that we needed to get the basics right and improve customer service. Results from our customer service surveys showed we needed to improve on customer service skills including response times and put clear standards and procedures in place.

Since then, all staff have completed customer service training and an embedding programme. Staff also attended workshops to review resident feedback in detail and looked at how they could improve overall service delivery. This included agreeing draft standards which would enable us to deliver a more consistent and responsive service and let residents know what to expect so they can hold us to account but also manage their own expectations. We have now consulted with residents on these standards which will go live from April 2022. A copy can be found in Appendix A. These are a starting point and will be developed and improved on over the lifetime of this strategy.

In addition to this, we have rolled out a number of other improvements as part of our action plan including:

- A new telephone system with better functionality and reporting
- Standard greetings, scripts, voicemail and call back arrangements
- Changes to our emails including auto acknowledgements, standard signatures and better use of out of office notifications
- Acknowledging queries received via our website
- New appointment arrangements for residents wanting to visit staff in our office

Resident Satisfaction

Over the years we have had different approaches to seeking resident feedback including who collects the information, how frequently and how we use it. Last year we used a specialist provider to contact all residents to complete a telephone survey and are on track to have spoken to 40% of our residents over the year. The results are fed through to us monthly and quarterly and the reports used to address themes and pick up individual issues where we have permission. As this has worked well, we have now tendered for a 3-5 year contract which will start in April 2022.

As well as sense checking where we are, the probing questions enable us to find out more information about what's not working and what we can do to improve. We have been able to use this feedback to improve things like our estate services and to inform where we need to spend more time or target resources such as our repairs service. Our questions have continued to evolve based on the feedback we receive, and we will be looking to align our questions to the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures when they are introduced in April 2023/24.

Since the business plan consultation, feedback continues to highlight customer service and our repairs service as the key areas to focus on. Whilst getting hold of the right person (68%), the way we handle enquiries (63%) and their outcome (60%) and satisfaction that we listen and act on views (62%) have all shown noticeable improvements in 2021/22 following changes we have made, they are still significantly lower than we would like them to be and remain a key focus for this strategy.

Externally, Housemark noted a clear drop in overall resident satisfaction of 7% through the pandemic and that housing organisations in the London area have satisfaction

levels on average 10% less than the rest of the country. In terms of our peers, our 71% satisfaction at the end of 2020/21 was the median average.

Complaints

To comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code we updated our policies and procedures and published our self-assessment online. Other changes included a new complaints leaflet, changes to our housing management system, new letter templates and training and awareness sessions for staff.

It's important that residents know what to do if something goes wrong and what to expect including how quickly we will respond. Over the last 3 years, we have seen an average of 50 complaints a year and have responded to 98% on time in 2021/22. This year, we are also seeing better resolution rates at Stage 1 which suggests that the changes we have made are working.

Complaints are important as they help us understand where things are going wrong and why which enables us to learn and improve what we do. Most of our complaints relate to repairs and maintenance (80% to date in 2021/22), with delays and communication being the main issue. We have used this information to improve what we do including changes to our policies, procedures and working practices. 8% of our complaints have related to customer service in the last two years. Based on our latest satisfaction survey results, 86% of residents found it easy to make a complaint but only 64% were satisfied that we kept them informed. This suggests we still have more to do to improve our customer service and communication.

Resident Engagement

The aim of our last Resident Involvement Strategy 2016 – 2020 was to get residents involved and give them the option to influence services leading to improved satisfaction and a sense of empowerment. We wanted to offer a variety of options for them to get involved if they wished, and to review and tailor these to prevent barriers.

Activities included our consultation group, estate actions days, satisfaction surveys and residents open days with mixed success. We also had a Resident Scrutiny Panel who were involved in activities like contract tenders, monitoring contractor delivery and working with the auditors to review service areas. Whilst we initially had 6 active members, this quickly dropped to just 2. The group also did not want to complete their own reports and were not comfortable attending board and committee meetings despite being offered training which meant a lot of the work fell on staff to complete.

Given the limited resident representation and outcomes, and the significant amount of work needed to support the group, alternative approaches were explored. In 2019 we decided to get all staff out of the office to talk to as many residents as possible to hear first-hand what issues they had and what their priorities were. The feedback received was fundamental in shaping ccha2025 and led to the development of this strategy and our longer term approach to Customer Service.

Feedback from residents told us that 92% were satisfied with the opportunities to get involved and that surveys were their preferred way to engage with us. Some residents were also interested in getting involved in the procurement of services and so took part in the evaluation and selection of our repairs and estate service contractors.

So far in 2021/22, 78% of residents are satisfied with our engagement with them. This decline is likely to reflect the lack of in person engagement events held since 2020 due to the pandemic.

Communications

The aim of our previous Communications and Marketing Strategy 2016 – 2020 was to identify ways to communicate more effectively with our residents, staff, and key stakeholders. We wanted to generate awareness, trust, and confidence in us and provide an enhanced resident experience through good communications.

We focused on promoting opportunities for residents to get involved right through to sharing the results of their outcomes and recommendations for service improvements. We also redesigned our website in line with what residents wanted to see and made it user friendly and easier for residents to contact us. Following its launch, we saw a 70% increase in hits and received extremely positive feedback. We have continued to improve the website and now consistently get over 3,000 users visiting the site each quarter and have achieved almost 20,000 pageviews in the last 3 months.

In 2018, we switched to digital publications in response to the reduced demand for printed publications. We also created a social media content marketing plan with focus on topics of interest identified by our residents via Facebook polls and engagement rates data. Content continues to be posted at optimal days and times, depending on when the target audience are most likely online, using social media analytics, and engagement is monitored and used to inform future content planning.

To improve the accuracy and consistency of our communication, we redeveloped our brand guidelines and our intranet which is now a main source of informing, sharing and gathering of documents for staff.

Through our satisfaction surveys, residents are asked, 'If we could do one thing to improve services, what would it be'. In Q3 2021/22, 19% of the comments related to communication and information, including communications in general, listening carefully and taking an interest. Residents who are dissatisfied with the repairs service are also asked to explain why and one of the main areas of concern over the last year has been around communication.

5. THEMES

To meet the aims of this strategy including improving resident satisfaction, and to ensure we 'have a service which is shaped by our residents for our residents', we have focused on the following themes:

Customer Service – To be an organisation that genuinely considers the needs and interests of its customers. Ensuring we are accessible, responsive, customer focused and reliable with clear standards so residents know what they can expect.

Resident Satisfaction – To utilise the feedback we receive from residents and seek to find solutions to ensure actions are taken to improve services through all departments and contractors that work with us.

Complaints – To deal with complaints professionally and in a timely way with reflection and learning being key to driving forward better services, steering us to become a landlord who proactively addresses issues and reduces complaints.

Resident Involvement and Engagement – To ensure we effectively engage with residents and involve them in decision-making and actions and seek to design experiences around their needs.

Communications – To communicate in clear and straightforward language, being transparent and honest in communications to residents in a timely manner, utilising a variety of platforms that meet the needs of residents.

The overall success of this strategy will be measured by an increase in overall resident satisfaction to over 80%. Progress and milestones will be tracked by monitoring a suite of performance and satisfaction measures and by the delivery of the specified projects and their required outcomes.

6. OBJECTIVES

Customer Service

The following objectives build on where we are now and help enable us to be an organisation that genuinely considers the needs and interests of its customers and has a quality service that is consistent, customer focused and reliable.

Objective 1: Ensure our service is easy to access and responsive with clear communication so residents understand what they can expect from us.

To achieve this, we will:

- Implement the new customer service standards from April 2022 and promote to residents on a regular basis
- Monitor and report on performance against the standards to residents and staff
- Utilise feedback from this and the relevant resident satisfaction measures, (easy to deal with), to identify areas for improvement and implement appropriate actions
- Work with our contractors to agree how our standards can be met and promote

Objective 2: Design and implement a new service delivery model to improve customer experience including looking at customer needs and contact methods and introducing new performance measures

To achieve this, we will:

- Identify and put in place a resource to complete a review of service delivery
- Research and review options for future service delivery
- Plan and implement the preferred service delivery model
- Put in place measurements to monitor and review its success

Objective 3: Ensure staff are customer focused and understand its importance and how this affects a resident's experience and satisfaction with us

To achieve this, we will:

- Include customer service as part of the application and interview process for all vacancies to ensure we are recruiting staff with the right attitude towards customer care, and who support our core values
- Develop the induction process for all new starters to cover the importance of customer care and what their responsibilities are to deliver a good service to residents including adhering to our service standards
- Work with our contractors to ensure our expectations on customer service and staff are met
- Agree how we will verify that customer service expectations are being met and put mechanisms in place to provide additional training and support where required
- As part of the tenant perception satisfaction survey, measure to what extent residents believe we treat them fairly and with respect, and action any learning

Resident Satisfaction

Improving resident satisfaction is the primary aim of this strategy. Our current results, require a lot more work. It is important that we get quality feedback from our residents, are open about it and use it to help drive improvements.

Objective 4: Have a robust framework in place to capture, review and communicate resident satisfaction and utilise feedback to aid transparency and help build trust

To achieve this, we will:

- Successfully appoint a provider for a minimum period of 3 years to carry out perception satisfaction surveys on our behalf by April 2022
- Transition the questions asked so they remain relevant and align with KPIs and Tenant Satisfaction Measures by April 2023
- Review the process in place for how results and feedback are shared with managers, staff and contractors to resolve issues and make longer term service improvements
- Undertake a review of all other surveys completed to ensure they add value

- Share results with residents, including areas needing improvement, what we are doing about this and highlighting areas that have improved because of resident feedback

Objective 5: Use resident satisfaction feedback to drive service improvements and achieve successful outcomes including increasing overall satisfaction

To achieve this, we will:

- Identify the least satisfied schemes each year and select at least one to complete a full holistic review and improvement plan including resident consultation
- Utilise the feedback to identify key themes and undertake at least one deep dive in years 4 and 5 of the business plan to develop a better understanding of the issues and agree an action plan with expected successful outcomes
- Regularly report to the Board and Senior Management Team to ensure they have clear oversight of key issues and concerns for residents and what is being done to address them. This information can then be considered when making key decisions and agreeing strategic direction

Complaints

It is important that residents have an effective way to escalate things when they go wrong, and complaints are an invaluable source of feedback, helping us to learn and improve services. We have already carried out a lot of work in this area and have further planned improvements. However, the Ombudsman has recently published an updated Code which we must adhere to by October 2022 and feedback from our complaint surveys suggests we still have areas for improvement.

Objective 6: Have an easy to access and effective complaints process which resolves issues in a timely way, complies with the updated Complaint Handling Code and utilises the opportunity to learn and improve services

To achieve this, we will:

- Complete phase two of our Complaints Action Plan including improving how we capture and track learning and refining how and what we report to residents, staff and the board
- Review the updated Complaint Handling Code and ensure we are compliant by October 2022
- Update our perception survey to include the draft Tenant Satisfaction Measures question for complaints to gain a wider understanding of how we are doing in this area and plan in actions to address any concerns
- Closely monitor performance against timescales and quality responses including working with our contractors to ensure they also meet these standards
- Utilise learning and trends to feed into the scheme based and deep dive projects committed to under Resident Satisfaction Objective 5

Resident Involvement and Engagement

We provide residents with a lot of opportunities to engage with us and be involved, give feedback and influence, shape and change services. However, we need to re-explore opportunities for more formal and focused activities which provide better scrutiny and accountability and ensure that the lived experiences of our residents continue to shape the strategic decisions that we make for our residents.

Objective 7: Build on our existing opportunities for residents to have their say, make recommendations for improvements, shape services and influence the decisions that we make

To achieve this, we will:

- Arrange a residents' event each year to bring residents, staff and contractors together to build relationships and address current themes or issues residents face
- Carry out a further door knocking exercise to utilise feedback where input from a wider group of residents is required
- Complete a minimum of one policy review each year with the Consultation Group
- Set up and undertake at least one resident led mystery shopping or audit exercise each year on our contractors to look at communication, customer care or quality
- Complete a full review of our older persons services using an initial survey to establish needs and inform decisions
- Look to recruit a small group of residents to work with us on how we can establish a more formal group or series of focus groups to provide better scrutiny on our performance and what we do (This would include what this might look like, how we encourage take up and how we ensure the group is reflective of our residents)
- Increase opportunities for board members to hear feedback directly from our residents and explore potential to establish links with any formal groups that evolve

Objective 8: Increase the skills and knowledge of those residents wanting to get more involved so they are able to maximise their potential to shape services and utilise their lived experience of being a ccha resident

To achieve this, we will:

- Promote free resident engagement events through our website and social media and to those known to be interested
- Give up to 5 interested residents, the opportunity to utilise our HQN Resident Network Membership
- Explore how we could invest in a small number of residents who express interest in establishing a more formal group or joining our board in the future
- For those residents willing to give up their time to get more involved in scrutinising or shaping services, look at how these commitments are recognised and rewarded

Objective 9: Sign up to Together with Tenants and ensure we meet the required commitments by March 2023

To achieve this, we will:

- Register our interest with the NHF and complete any application process
- Complete a gap analysis on the commitments and our Customer Strategy
- Implement any required actions to ensure membership by March 2023

Communications

Clear communication with our residents is key on many levels including service delivery as well as letting residents know how we are performing and why we are doing things. It is also a key focus of the White Paper, future consumer regulation and the complaints code. It should meet the differing needs of our residents and utilise different channels and platforms.

Objective 10: Communicate clearly with residents so they understand what to expect from us, how we are performing and what we are doing to improve so they can hold us to account

To achieve this, we will:

- Publish our service standards and residents' rights and responsibilities to ensure these are clear and easily understood
- Agree and deliver a prescriptive list of performance information to provide to residents including where to publish and how frequently
- Keep residents abreast of key lessons learnt, recommendations or actions and improvements made as a result of their feedback or scrutiny work
- Create a communications plan each year to ensure a focussed approach on information given to residents ensuring the most appropriate methods and communication platforms are used and to minimise information overload
- Look at how we can work with a small group of residents to assist us in the content planning for the annual report performance page, the actions/outcomes page of the newsletter and the quarterly satisfaction results to be published on our website

Objective 11: Develop a consistent approach to communicating with our residents

To achieve this, we will:

- Complete a review of our letter and email templates to ensure a degree of consistency, plain English and appropriate tone and set up a mechanism to monitor that our standards are being met
- Review new resident sign-up packs annually and spot check quarterly to ensure it is up-to-date and residents receive the information they need
- Complete a review of our rent and service charge templates and FAQs

- Develop an internal customer service communications plan which includes promoting the importance of communication to residents in a timely manner, how we are doing with our standards and areas for improvement / focus
- Complete a review of our new customer standards and look at how we can build and improve on them and roll out for year 5 of the business plan

Objective 12: Ensure all communication platforms are regularly reviewed and explore new options and alternative ways of communicating with our residents

To do this we will:

- Research the use and functionality of digital notice boards and run a pilot to determine the success and outcomes of investing in this method of communication
- Regularly review the website and newsletter platforms, currently in digital form and ensure those not digitally engaged do not have a negative experience of ccha

7. RISK

The main risks relating to this strategy are around non engagement from residents, satisfaction levels remaining low or declining further and not meeting our service standard targets. We also need to ensure appropriate resources and team structures are in place to enable the successful delivery of the strategy. Failure to deliver the required outcomes of this strategy could lead to intervention from our regulator, damage to our reputation and will negatively impact the lives of our residents.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

As part of this strategy, we will ensure everyone is treated fairly and without discrimination, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and age. We will promote inclusion, challenge discrimination, and seek to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that everyone can access our services and that no one is excluded inappropriately from any services or activities provided by us.

In addition to this, as part of our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy, we will be revisiting the information we hold about our residents. Through further fact finding and the collection of specific data, we will seek to improve our promotion of the different initiatives to take a more targeted approach. This should enable us to achieve greater success by helping to attract those who will benefit most from the various activities and objectives.

9. DATA PROTECTION

Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Human Rights Act 1998, all personal and sensitive organisational information, however received, is treated as

confidential. We are required to collect and hold certain types of data on residents to carry out our business requirements and fulfil our service obligations.

For the purposes of this strategy and how we manage the information that we hold about individuals as part of its delivery, ccha will comply with its obligations under GDPR including ensuring that the appropriate data sharing agreements are in place with all the partnering organisations we look to work with. A Data Protection Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the development of this strategy.