

**Report of Chief Officer, Housing Management**

**Report to Housing Advisory Board**

**Date: 7th September 2015**

**Subject: Housing Leeds Customer Access Strategy**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

The primary priority for Housing Leeds is to fundamentally increase tenant satisfaction.

A survey of tenants and residents (STAR) took place in November 2014. Tenant satisfaction was reported at 77%, however the survey highlighted areas for improvement and we want to ensure all tenants receive excellent services.

Keys areas for improvement include:

- Dealing with enquiries and providing an effective and efficient service
- Tenants being treated fairly, being able to trust the landlord and listening and acting on tenants views

**Recommendations**

That the Housing Advisory Board:

- Approves the approach, which is to improve tenant satisfaction, in line with Leeds City Council Customer Access Strategy

# 1 Purpose of this report

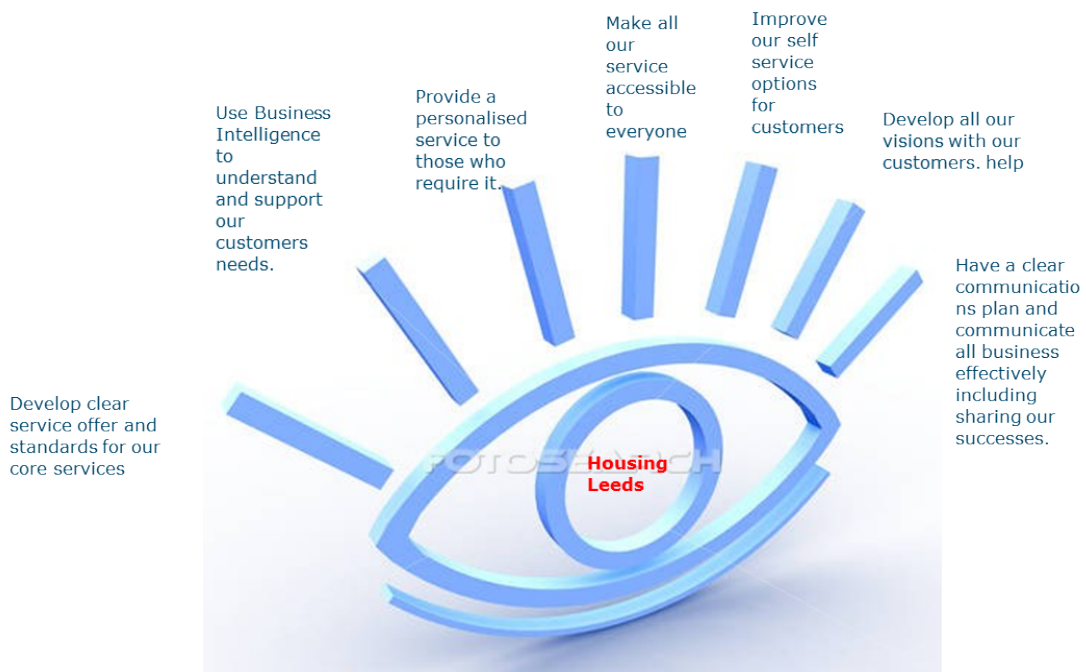
- 1.1 To update the Housing Advisory Board on progress made to improve tenant satisfaction

# 2 Background information

- 2.1 Whilst the 77% satisfaction figure remained the same as the previous survey, we want to improve service delivery
- 2.2 Housing Leeds aims to build an action plan based on the LCC Customer Access Strategy. (Appendix 1). To cultivate and embed this, there must be a commitment to it throughout the organisation, from the strategic leader to the front-line staff.

# 3 Vision & Strategy

- 3.1 As an established corporate customer services vision and strategy exists, it is proposed that Housing Leeds builds upon this work tailors it to ensure a step change in tenant satisfaction
- 3.2 Housing Leeds will include an outward customer vision to:



## 4 **Service Standards/Offer**

- 4.1 One of the corporate customer access strategy actions is to develop in consultation with customers, a set of service standards. If Housing Leeds is to support the corporate strategy it will need to adhere to these.
- 4.2 Housing Leeds is currently working with Citizens and Communities on developing corporate standards. One proposal is for Housing Leeds to develop the standards with customers and for the Customer Access Board to recognise these and adopt them corporately.
- 4.3 In 2010 customers created a Housing Service offer. This is now due for an overhaul and the intention is to create a working group, made up of tenants, residents and officers to update the offer, creating a new set of overarching customer service, service standards with specific standards underpinning them. This would be signed off by VITAL, (Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds) the new Strategic Tenant Body.

## 5 **Communications Plan**

- 5.1 Customers value accurate and comprehensive information that is delivered or available through the most appropriate channel for them.
- 5.2 An overarching communications plan has been developed, showing our options for communicating both inwards and outwards with both staff and customers.
- 5.3 A working group will be tasked with understanding deeper, these communication options and what works best for customers in different situations. Their task will be to:
  - Review the customer pathways using Service improvement volunteers
  - Consider further options for improving the self-service option available to housing customers
  - Develop a detailed plan for communicating with customers on general information, day to day tenancy management, customer involvement, consultation and feedback.

## 6 **Training/Delivery**

- 6.1 Housing Leeds has been working closely with the Contact centre to ensure that the telephony service is delivered effectively in partnership.

Actions taken are to:

- Undertake a review of processes with a view to streamlining them and making them more effective
- Regularly sharing information
- Provide regular updated contact lists
- Undertaking joint recruitment plans for new starters and apprentices
- Monthly liaison meetings to address problems before they escalate
- Shared projects and mail outs to ensure capacity can be met.
- Ensure they are linked in to our Hot Topics updates
- Advising of changes to policy and procedure in good time to ensure training can take place.

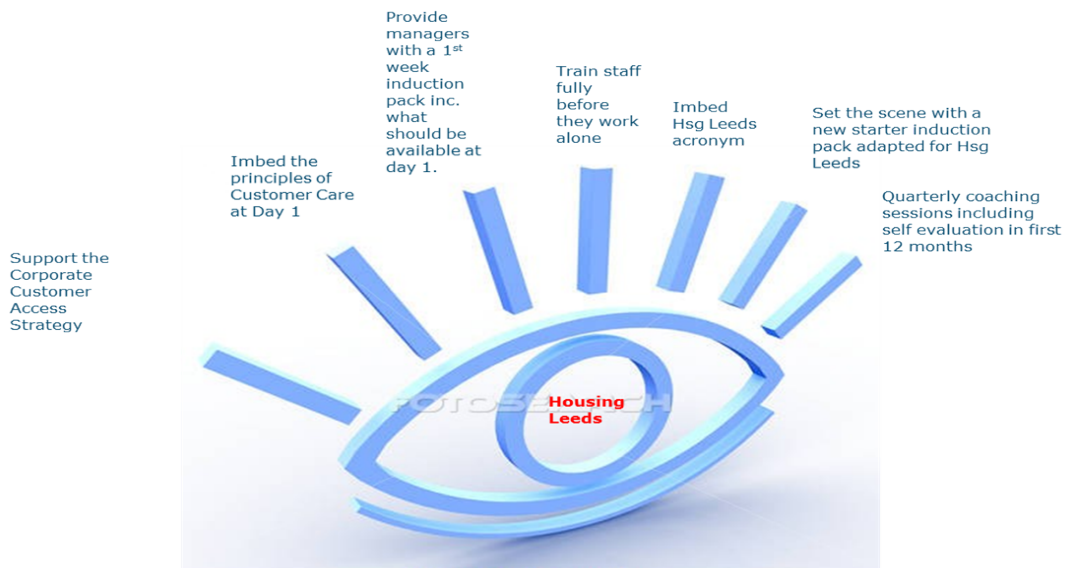
6.2 Housing Leeds is supporting the creation of the new community Hubs and the services they will support. We will ensure that we work in partnership with the centres to get better customer outcomes. Where we can, we will integrate our services into them to support the local communities.

6.3 Visits to the Centres of Excellence within Citizens and Communities, identified that robust customer service training was key to delivering the excellent customer experience.

6.4 Housing Leeds is currently working on an options appraisal as to the best training course available for front line staff. This needs to cover the full customer pathway from the greeting, to goodbye, to follow up. Consideration is currently being given to:

- An initial welcome pack being created to set the scene and expectations at appointment stage.
- Officers being taken out of the workplace to be trained making use of real life examples.
- Quarterly coaching sessions led by managers to ensure training has become common practice
- Train the trainer in order to have capacity to deliver customer service training whenever required for new cohorts of staff.

## 6.5 Housing Leeds will have an inward customer vision to:



## 7 Quality

### 7.1 The quality of the service Housing Leeds provides will be monitored by:

- Mystery shopping using our service improvement volunteers
- Feedback from Neighbourhood office customer experience surveys
- Staff feedback from our staff engagement surveys
- Type of complaints received
- Manager insight into staff performance
- Our citywide customer groups fed upwards to VITAL.
- Our service standards.

## 8 Corporate Considerations

### 8.1 Consultation and Engagement

8.2 Customers were consulted as part of the STAR survey as to their views on Customer Service.

8.3 The service offer created in 2010 was produced in line with customers' views. Any update will involve customers and be signed off by VITAL, the new Strategic Tenant Body.

- 8.4 Customer satisfaction surveys regarding the NHO service are being trialled in Moortown. It is envisaged that these will roll out to other offices once the initial analysis has taken place, due mid-August 2015.
- 8.5 Service Improvement volunteers will be utilised to undertake mystery shopping to evaluate the present and future position of our Customer Service.

## 9 **Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 9.1 As part of our strategy we will be reviewing the access to our services. This will ensure that all our customers can access our services in the way that they want. Whether this is for their convenience or due to a specific need i.e. translator, hearing loops, disabled access.
- 9.2 We have reduced patch sizes so our officers can provide a more tailored service to meet the needs of the tenants in their area. This will improve the customer service offer to our tenants.
- 9.3 We have consulted with staff and they have told us that understanding religion is important to them. Being aware of different beliefs can assist with the services provided and give both the customer and the officer a better experience. Awareness sessions are to be delivered on Buddhism as this was the religion staff indicated they knew least about.

## 10 **Council policies and City Priorities**

- 10.1 The work we undertake will enhance the Corporate Customer Access strategy and contribute to establishing the foundation blocks for understanding our customers better and designing access to our services with them and around their needs.

## 11 **Resources and value for money**

- 11.1 A leading business said 'if you invest in staff and staff are happy, they do a good job and customers are happy'.
- 11.2 Ensuring staff happiness will potentially lead to a more motivated workforce and reduced levels of sickness.
- 11.3 Equipping officers to assist customers at first point of contact reduces costs often caused by avoidable contacts, where the customer has to come back after being wrongly signposted, expectations not set, or ownership not being taken.

- 11.3 Giving officers the confidence to assess and deal effectively with any situation makes them feel valued. It also leads to increased satisfaction e.g. the customer feels that they have been listened to and their enquiry acted upon.

## 12 **Legal Implications**

- 12.1 Our service offer has been and will continue to be developed in line with The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing 2012. In particular:
- provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
  - the formulation of their landlord's housing related policies and Strategic priorities
  - the making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards

## 13 **Risk Management**

- 13.1 That our proposals and actions do not influence customer perception about our service
- 13.2 That future STAR surveys do not show an improvement in customer service satisfaction
- 13.3 That staff feedback does not indicate that they felt the customer service training helped them to improve the service they provide to customers.

## 14 **Conclusions**

- 14.1 Housing Leeds is very committed in contributing to the Corporate Customer Access Strategy
- 14.2 Priorities over the next few months will be to
- Deliver a robust customer service training programme to key officer
  - Work with tenants and staff to produce a new service offer
  - Develop an innovative communications plan

15      **Recommendations**

That the Housing Advisory Board:

- Supports the direction of travel

16      **Background documents**

16.1    Appendix 1: Customer Access strategy