



Bury Housing Services

Customer Access Strategy

2022 – 2025

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Great Communities Excellent Services Inspiring People

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Foreword

Welcome to our first ever Customer Access Strategy.

Providing great customer services has always been at the heart of everything we do. For us, this means focusing on the services that matter most to tenants, delivering them right first time and to a consistently high standard.

This strategy is another milestone in our quest for customer excellence. It builds on our strong track record and strengthens our approach to customer access. It's been shaped by our customers, focuses on our priorities for the future and sets out how we will continue to be a customer focused organisation. One that actively listens to its customers, learns from the feedback we receive and ensures the services we provide are great and easy to access. Only by doing this, will we be able to continually improve, offer value for money and ensure we meet the changing needs and aspirations of our customers.

Our approach is embedded in our vision, strategic objectives, values and plans. For us, it's always been about Great Communities, Excellent Services and Inspiring People; as reflected in our Mission Statement. Openness, honesty and accountability remain central to our approach. Social purpose also remains at our core and the strong relationships we have with our customers will ensure they remain at the heart of everything we do.

For the purpose of this strategy, the term customer refers to all residents living in a Bury Council property. This includes tenants, leaseholders and family members living in their home.

Background

Technological advances, changing customer needs and expectations, increasing demands for services and rising deprivation levels mean we need to transform the way we do business. Demographic shifts, changes on the regulation front and the financial pressures experienced by our customers and the organisation also mean we need to think differently and adapt our approach to customer access.

The coronavirus pandemic has been a particular game changer for us.

Over the last two years, we have seen a surge in online activity with more customers using technological solutions to access services and information. Customers are now demanding convenient online options that are easy to access, secure and reliable. The pandemic has also highlighted the strength of local communities, whilst at the same time has led to increased polarisation, isolation and inequality in our communities.

We need to respond to these changes and embrace new technological solutions which enhance our customers' experience. This will include investing in new technology that will allow customers to self-serve, book repair appointments, update their records and access more services and information on-line. Driving forward our 'digital by choice' agenda will not only enable us to deliver services in new, more cost-effective ways, but also help us to manage demand more effectively and release capacity so we can provide additional support to those who are struggling or need our help to manage their tenancy.

Prevention and early intervention will remain cornerstones of our approach, as we know that by intervening early, our customers are more likely to engage and work with us; preventing the need for more costly interventions.

Understanding the diverse needs of our customers, strengthening our approach to customer insights and feedback, streamlining our processes, and investing in our staff will also help make the step changes required to become a truly customer focused company.

Our strategy has been developed against this backdrop, but also recognises that our communities are diverse, customers have different preferences and not everyone is digitally enabled. With this in mind, we want to ensure no one is left behind and all our customers have equal access to services, information and support. As such, we will continue to offer our customers choices, including being able to access services over the telephone and face to face in our communities.

Our strategy will be refreshed every three years, or earlier if new regulations or best practice emerge. We will continue to involve our customers and seek their views on any changes that we plan to make.

If we get it right, our customers will receive a great and more efficient service. In turn, this will ensure we make better, more informed decisions, build trust and secure higher customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Our vision is clear

Great communities. Excellent services Inspiring People

Our strategic objectives are focused

Customers at the Heart Homes for the Future
Places to be Proud of Dynamic business, leading the way

Our values drive us forward

Integrity Working Together Evolving
Passionate Trusted

Our aim

To provide a great customer experience, which ensures customers can access services and information as easily and as effortless as possible, in ways and at times that suit them.

Our commitments

To achieve this we will:

1. Provide services that are easy to access, simple to use, reliable, secure and cost effective.
2. Get things right first time, every time.
3. Measure customers' experience and act on the feedback we receive.

Our guiding principles

- Listen to, understand and learn from our customers.
- Embrace and respond to the changing needs of our customers to improve our services.
- Be sensitive and inclusive to make sure that every customer has equal access to our services.
- Solve customer enquiries swiftly and accurately, at the point of contact.
- Ensure customers are kept informed and updated.
- Improve customer experience by taking account of their needs and adapting our approach accordingly.
- Having a consistent customer approach across all services.
- Continuously improve and create consistency across all service delivery communications.
- Continue to work with our partners to help customers access services.

Our offer

We will provide our customers with a choice of access channels by embracing digital channels and self-service options, whilst ensuring that customers who need to access services in more traditional ways can still do so. We will also continue to provide one-to-one support for those who need it, including customers who are struggling or need our help to manage their tenancy.

Digital

We will make our digital channels as quick and easy as possible to use.

Telephone

We will answer calls as quickly as possible and aim to resolve enquiries there and then.

In person

We will visit our customers' homes when needed.

Commitment 1

Provide services that are easy to access, simple to use, reliable, secure and cost effective.

Our ambition is to provide services that our customers need and want to use. In particular, we want to make it as easy as possible for them to do business with us.

During the lifetime of this strategy, we will transform our approach to customer access by offering more choice using digital by design principles, whilst offering tailored support to those that need it. This will include investing in new technology that will allow customers to self-serve, book repair appointments, update their records and access more services and information on-line. Our aim is to complete enquiries in one contact and to do this digitally, whenever we can. To do this, we will expand our self-service options, automate our processes and provide more information online. This will help us resolve customer enquiries, faster, easier and more accurately, whilst reducing our costs at the same time.

Whilst we will enhance our digital offer, we know that our communities are diverse, customers have different preferences and not everyone is digitally enabled. With this in mind, we want to ensure no one is left behind and all our customers have equal access to services, information and the support they need, regardless of their circumstances. As such, our customers will still be able to contact us by telephone or ask us to visit them in their home if they want.

Over the next three years, we will:

- Invest in new technology that will allow customers to self-serve and access more services and information on-line.
- Ensure our website is user friendly, accessible and kept up to date so that it becomes the contact method of choice for our customers.
- Improve the digital knowledge and skills of our staff and community volunteers so they can champion our digital offer and support customers who need support to become digitally enabled.
- Re-engineer our processes using digital by design principles to ensure they are customer focused, accessible, efficient and effective.
- Strengthen our approach to collecting and using customer insights data so we understand their diverse needs and use this information to inform our working practices, service delivery arrangements and investment decisions.
- Review the way we engage, communicate and share information with our customers, ensuring we maximise digital communication channels to keep them updated.

Commitment 2

Get things right first time, every time

We will settle for nothing less than excellent customer services.

Listening, learning and using the feedback we receive to improve services has always been central to our approach. Our customers should only have to tell us once and be confident that we will get things right first time, every time. Not only does this build customer trust and loyalty, but it also makes us more efficient and means we can focus our energy on delivering the services that matter most to our customers. We will always treat our customers with respect and ensure our staff are trained to provide great customer services. When we make mistakes, we will always apologise and try to resolve things as quickly as we can.

During the lifetime of this strategy, we will review our target operating model. Going forward, our Customer Hub will ensure enquiries are triaged effectively and handled at the first point of contact, wherever possible. To achieve this, we will invest in new technology and ensure our staff have the knowledge, skills and information at their fingertips to answer queries when they contact us. Where this is not possible, they will refer onto the relevant colleague.

Going forward, we will ensure our procedures are designed to add value for customers and eliminate unnecessary waste. We will also work with our contractors and suppliers to ensure they have effective processes in place that lead to a great customer experience.

All of our processes need to be seamless, with the customer receiving a prompt response / service from all parts of the business.

Over the next three years, we will:

- Review our target operating model so that more enquiries are resolved digitally or handled at the point of contact through our Customer Hub.
- Empower our staff and ensure they have the knowledge, skills, competencies and information to hand to answer queries efficiently and effectively.
- Publish our customer offers so customers understand what standards they can expect to receive, how we are performing against these standards and what we expect from them.
- Review our practices for capturing, reporting and acting on customer feedback.
- Review our complaints procedure, ensuring effective monitoring and reporting arrangements are put in place for tracking performance, identifying learning and measuring outcomes.

Commitment 3

Measure customers' experience and act on the feedback we receive

We have a long history of involving customers, listening to what they have to say and using the feedback we receive to improve the services we provide. Only by working in collaboration, inviting feedback and creating solutions together with them will we provide great services.

This strategy builds on our strong track record and is closely aligned with our recently launched Tenant Engagement Strategy, which will ensure our customers have a genuine say in decisions that affect their home and the services we provide. Securing faster, real time feedback in ways that suit them will be the cornerstone of our new approach.

Going forward, we will ensure our customers' voices are heard and understood across the business.

Over the next three years, we will:

- Strengthen our customer engagement arrangements to ensure our customers have a genuine say in decisions that affect their home and the services we provide.

- Create a new Customer Feedback framework, aligned to our Tenant Engagement Strategy to learn and drive forward service improvements using both perception and transactional customer feedback.
- Seek out best practice and benchmark our performance against others to identify opportunities to improve further.

Year 1 - key priorities

Digital by design

We will launch our Digital Strategy and start to identify digital solutions that will improve customer access, automate core business functions and improve end to end processes. This will include investing in new technology that will allow customers to self-serve, book repair appointments, update their records and access more services and information on-line. We will also continue to upskill colleagues and community volunteers and review the way we engage, communicate and share information with customers through digital channels.

Customer feedback framework

We will create a new Customer Feedback framework, aligned to our Tenant Engagement Strategy to learn and drive forward service improvements using both perception and transactional customer feedback. This will include securing faster, real time feedback from our customers in ways that suit them.

Complaints handling

We will review our complaints procedure, ensuring effective monitoring and reporting arrangements are put in place for tracking performance, identifying learning and measuring outcomes.

Customer insights

Strengthen our approach to collecting and using customer insights data to inform our working practices, service delivery arrangements and investment decisions so that we can respond more effectively and predict future customer requirements.

Success measures and monitoring

This strategy will be monitored by the Customer Review Group and our Board. Our detailed delivery plan sets out the key activities, success measures and timescales required to achieve our goals. Key measures include:

Customer Satisfaction

We will measure overall satisfaction with our services as a landlord, as well as participation in customer engagement activities, feedback from customers and improvements made as a result of feedback

Colleague engagement

We will measure colleague engagement through our annual people survey and intermittent surveys in between, as well as feedback from employees through internal communications and informal mechanisms.

Our performance

We will measure our performance against Key Performance Indicators, highlighting key achievements, areas of poor performance and benchmarking results.

Complaints

We will measure the frequency of complaints, satisfaction at resolution and feedback from our Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) automated insight surveys. We will aim to reduce stage two complaints and escalation to the Ombudsman.

Efficiencies

We will measure service demand and cost savings from channel shift.

Author	Description	Change log	Version
John Merrick	Creation of Customer Access Policy	Creation	V0.2
Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Inform
John Merrick	Dir. Customers and Communities	Customer Review Group Tenants Senior Leadership Team Bury Housing Services Board	All business