

Customer Involvement Policy

Responsible Officer	54North Assistant Director Customer Experience
This policy is applicable to	54North Homes customers, colleagues, Board and Customer Experience Committee members
Approved by	54North Homes Board
Date approved	28 May 2024
Frequency of review	Every 3 years
Date of next review	May 2027
Implementation date	June 2024
Key related documents (policy, procedure, customer literature)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karbon Homes Resident Involvement Framework • Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Policy • Customer and Stakeholder Survey Policy • Inclusion and Belonging Policy • Access to Influence Guidance
Sources of best practice or guidance used in developing this policy	<p>Legal requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory Standards – Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard • The Charter for Social Housing Customers (White paper) • Complaint Handling Code • NHF Code of Governance 2020 • NHF “Together with Tenants” Charter <p>Best practice and guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPAS National Tenant Engagement Standards

Version control

Version number	1.1	Author of Policy	Gavin Fisk, Director of Customer Experience
Equality Impact Analysis	Full	Author of EQIA	Gavin Fisk, Director of Customer Experience

Document change history

Version	Date	Changed sections
1	April 2024	New policy

1.1	October 2024	Updated to include reference to seldom heard groups and use of data to monitor representation
Consultation		
Consultation Group (if applicable)		Date of Consultation (if applicable)
Colleagues		March 2024
Union(s)		Not applicable
Customers		Customer Experience Committee 10/4/24
People & OD		Not applicable
Health and Safety Working Group		Not applicable
Data Protection		To be completed prior to launching any online platform
Other stakeholders (please state)		Karbon Customer and Community Engagement Team

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To ensure that the desire of the Board of 54North Housing to hear our customers' voice is widely understood throughout the Organisation and by its customers and reflects good governance guidance and practice.
- 1.2 To ensure that there is a clear framework of meaningful opportunities for customer influence in place, which is widely promoted to customers, and that complements our customer centric culture, listening to and working with customers on a day-to-day basis.
- 1.3 To demonstrate the clear structures and roles in place, together with governance oversight mechanisms, which support the customer influence vision and activity in the Organisation. This policy supports the delivery of the Karbon Homes Group Stronger Foundations strategy and the 54North Homes Corporate Plan.
- 1.4 54North is committed to extending opportunities for customer influence and methods of obtaining customer feedback, including hearing from seldom heard groups, and customer satisfaction measurement. This enables us to better understand current customer needs, how these change over time and how successful we have been in our delivery of successful customer outcomes. We do this by placing customer views and priorities at the heart of our decision-making.
- 1.5 Whilst engaging customers and enabling influence is an essential part of meeting legal and regulatory obligations, crucially, effective customer engagement also has wide ranging benefits for customers, colleagues, and the organisation. These include improved, more responsive services; increased customer satisfaction; improved decision making and better value for money. By working with 54North, customers have genuine opportunities to influence and challenge our services, strategies, and governance; and to make a real difference within their own communities, as community engagement also enhances community sustainability and improves access to services.

- 1.6 The policy sets out the method of ensuring an effective two-way dialogue between the Organisation and its customers on issues including safety, to allow the Organisation to understand the concerns of its customers and provide them with regular assurance on how the Organisation keeps them safe in their homes.

2. Policy scope

- 2.1 This policy addresses the requirements of the NHF Code of Governance 2020 in relation to Customer Focus, Accountability and Board Election, Selection and Appointment and RSH Consumer Standards. It also follows best practice principles drawn from the TPAS National Tenant Engagement Standards and sector wide practices.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all colleagues within the Organisation, all members of the leadership team and all Board and Committee Members.
- 2.3 This Policy applies to all legal entities within 54North Homes which have customers.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1 This policy supports the Group's vision to deliver an excellent customer experience, "strengthen customer voice" and "build meaningful relationships". In achieving this, we are committing to putting customers at the heart of everything we do, understanding our customers' needs, expectations, and aspirations, listening to and working together with our customers.
- 3.2 Minimising or removing barriers to customer influence is an important part of this commitment, and this policy aims to achieve this, along with being open and transparent.
- 3.3 In 2022 TPAS, a national consultancy was engaged to consult with customers and identified four key ingredients to ensure successful engagement and influence, each aligned to the Charter for Social Housing.
 - 3.3.1 **Everyone** – Our approach will be fully inclusive, enabling customers to engage as much or as little as they wish. It is important that the voices of customers are representative of our customer base. This ensures that the diverse needs of customers are taken into account.
 - 3.3.2 **Communication** - A broad range of communication channels, skills and culture is required for effective influence. This includes listening, hearing and truly understanding our customers' lived experiences. This also helps ensure customers have access to information to hold 54North to account.

3.3.3 **Reliability** – We will do what we say to continue to build up a relationship of trust and joint working with our customers and communities. This helps ensure we treat customers with fairness and respect.

3.3.4 **Impact** – Everything we do will have a purposeful impact that can be demonstrated, and shared. This ensures that we are accountable to our customers, and they influence the decision and priorities of 54North.

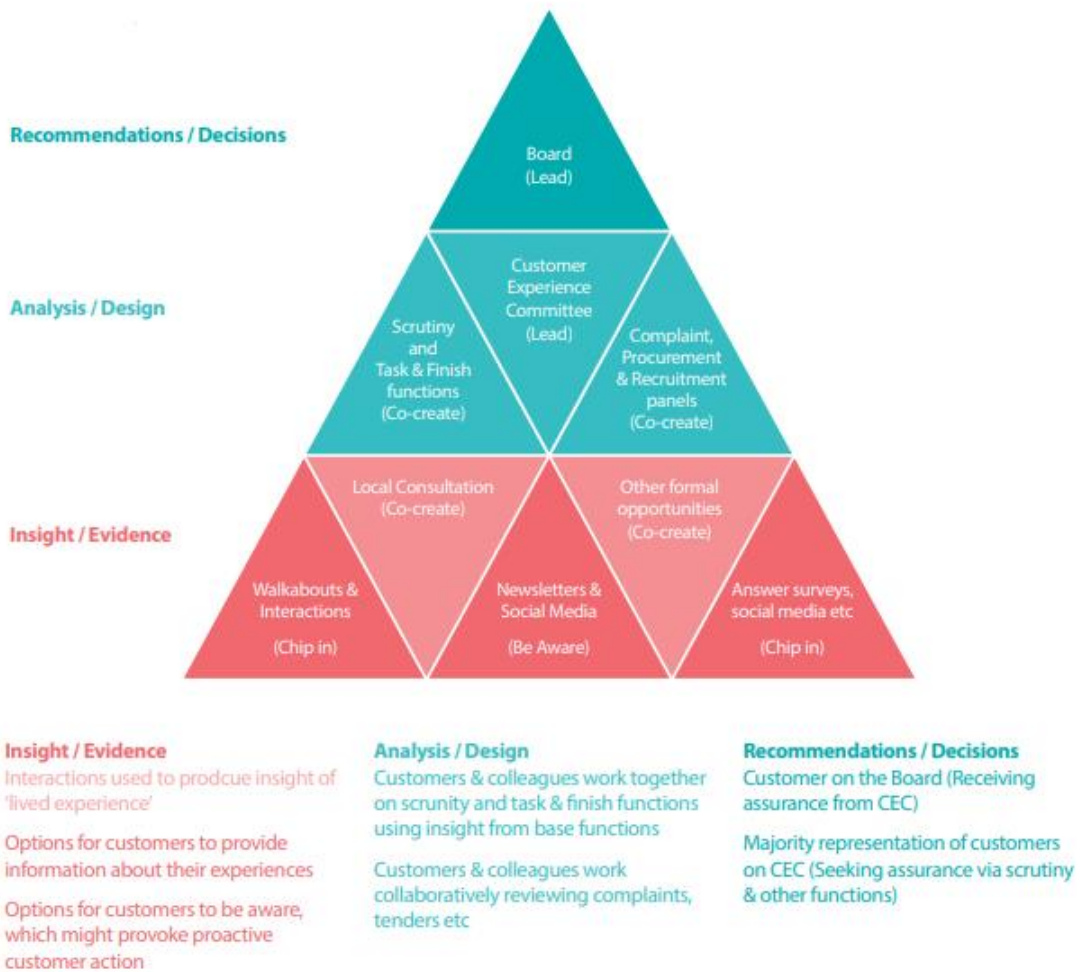


3.4 Our Board is committed to sustaining a customer centric organisational culture which is positive and focused on the needs of our customers and embeds equality, diversity and inclusion throughout 54North.

4 **Customer Involvement Framework**

Our Customer Involvement Framework consists of four tiers, which has been adapted from TPAS' best practice model:

- **Be aware** – 54North providing information in accessible formats for everyone.
- **Chip-in** – Customers can be consulted in formats, times and locations that are convenient to them, proactively contributing to consultation activities.
- **Co-create** – Customers are formally engaged with 54North, regularly contributing through formal mechanisms, reviewing, and designing services and making recommendations.
- **Lead** – Customers form part of 54North's strategic governance framework, making decisions.



4.1 Be Aware

54North will ensure that all customers have the opportunity to be aware of activity through the provision of information in accessible and understandable formats such as:

- Advice via interactions with colleagues and stakeholders
- You said – we did communications
- Social media campaigns
- Website
- Newsletters with local features
- Noticeboards
- Publicising engagement opportunities

This tier of engagement starts with our day-to-day interactions with customers, our desire to listen to understand the customer voice, and the value we place

on using this feedback to improve customer experiences. We want customer feedback from daily interactions to inform service improvements and influence how we work.

This tier is also outward focused, aimed at providing information to customers to improve their awareness of 54North, available engagement opportunities and community (customer led) activities.

54North will use this tier of engagement to demonstrate how feedback has been used to deliver reliable services, and the impact of engagement opportunities in addition to the more routine service interactions.

4.2 Chip-in

54North will provide the opportunity for all customers to put themselves forward to provide their views via:

- Customer experience & perception surveys
- Estate Inspections
- Tenant & Resident Groups
- Pop up events and opportunities to interact with 54North leaders
- Dedicated page on website

54North will undertake a range of customer satisfaction surveys – expected to be over 1,500 annually - utilising feedback to inform service improvement. All surveys will be carried out by a specialist research company assessing customers perceptions or their direct experience of services.

This tier of engagement enables all customers to ‘pick and choose’ how and when they want to actively engage. It is used to gain important insight and gain the views, opinions, and experiences of a broad and representative range of customers.

Opportunities to ‘chip-in’ will sometimes be incentivised to encourage as broad a range of views and opinions as possible, if this enables us to maximise our understanding of customer insight and segmentation.

54North will maintain a list of customers who have expressed an interest in engaging. Chip in activities will be planned and promoted in advance, with feedback to demonstrate impact and reliability programmed through the ‘be aware’ tier.

Supporting our local engagement priority, 54North will promote and support the establishment of local groups by providing capacity building training and running costs fund. Associations must meet an eligibility-criteria relating to governance and activities to continue receiving financial support. Specific

details of financial support, expenses and the rules governing these can be found in the Access to Influence Guidance.

There will be opportunities for customers to engage directly with members of the Board, Customer Experience Committee and Executive Team. This provides an opportunity for the organisational decision makers to have unfettered access to customer experiences.

4.3 Co-create

54North will offer formal opportunities for customers to engage, influence and make decisions about services that impact upon them through the following mechanisms:

- Customer involvement in recruitment & selection to key roles
- Customer involvement in procurement exercises and contractor selection
- Customer involvement in stage 2 complaint panels
- Scrutiny exercises
- Task & Finish or focus groups
- Access to Karbon Group forums

An annual review of customer voice, outcomes, successes, and areas for development will be undertaken. This will be used to inform service delivery activity over the forthcoming year.

Activity arising from the co-creation and chip-in tiers will be recorded to provide robust and actionable insight to support subsequent recommendations and decisions.

54North will support capacity building for individuals and groups through peer support, training and conference fees aimed at widening knowledge and exploring best practice in engagement activities which support strategic objectives. This includes a commitment to training colleagues.

The Customer Experience Committee are involved in stage 2 complaint panels, helping to review and determine outcomes as well as identify and track learning. The Committee will also receive a regular report on the number, nature and the Organisation's response to customer's complaints, including those determined by the Housing Ombudsman. The Committee is also advised as to any thematic issues recurring in complaints and what response/service improvements will be made as a result of them.

Customer Experience Committee will oversee our approach to customer scrutiny, commissioning reviews, setting terms of reference and approving recommendations. Our reviews will involve customers who have recent lived experienced of the service and be comprehensively resourced to ensure customers are supported and best practice is incorporated into review findings.

Task and finish or focus groups will be established for time limited periods to undertake specific, targeted pieces of work, such as policy and service development, procurement, recruitment and selection.

Customers also have opportunities to influence Group policy via involvement in Group forums including the Scrutiny Bank.

4.4 Lead

Placing customers at the heart of decision making and governance is an integral part to 54North's Customer Voice Framework. Customers can help lead the organisation, making strategic decisions that affect the running of 54North by:

- Customer representation on Customer Experience Committee, including ability to become Chair of the Committee
- Customer representation on Board, including opportunities to become Chair of the Board
- 54North involvement in the Karbon Group Residents Committee
- 54North's Customer Experience Committee Chair a member of the Group Customer Committee

54North aspires to hear and respond to our customer experience at the highest levels of organisational governance. We will do this in a number of ways, including by having customer representation in our governance arrangements. . Customers will not be differentiated from other Board members in status, although they will bring a unique perspective to Board decisions.

The Customer Experience Committee is delegated by the Board to seek assurance that the customer voice has been heard through effective engagement mechanisms to support decision making. The Committee has broad terms of reference and remain close to and informed by customer voice, receiving detailed reporting and analysis including:

- Customer satisfaction from TSM, Pulse and transactional surveys
- Complaints performance
- Customer engagement activity

Customer Experience Committee minutes are presented to the Board and customer influence on Board decisions is tracked on an ongoing basis, ensuring better governance and the production of 'you said, we did' customer communications.

Two positions on the Karbon Group Residents Committee are set aside for 54North customers. The Chair of 54North's Customer Experience Committee is a member of the Group Customer Committee who will receive reporting from 54North.

- 4.5 Our Customer Experience Committee regularly review the activities of the Customer Involvement Framework, ensuring it remains effective and in line with our strategy.
- 4.6 We report to our customers regularly on how we deliver our commitment to customer focus via our Annual Report to Customers.

5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 5.1 This policy is applied in line with our Inclusion and Belonging Policy. This includes the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 5.2 At the Karbon Group we aim to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations and define the nine protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- 5.3 All of our customer policies are available on the 54North website.
- 5.4 If you would like this or any other policies in different language or format, please contact hello@54northhomes.co.uk.

6 Data Protection and Privacy

- 6.1 We have a clear policy on data protection and sharing data with other partners/third parties under the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 and other associated legislation. This is clearly set out in the Data Protection Policy for the Karbon Homes Group which, along with its associated procedures, must be followed throughout the operation of this policy.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 Customers, colleagues, and members of both the Customer Experience Committee and Board have been involved in the co-design of this Policy.

8 How the policy will be implemented

- 8.1 The Customer Experience Manager is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this policy.
- 8.2 Regular training of colleagues, performance monitoring and reporting will be overseen by the Customer Experience Manager.

9 Outcomes & Monitoring

- 9.1 Successful engagement and customer influence is a foundation for delivering services that meet the needs of customers; 54Northviews this as a golden thread running through all service delivery.
- 9.2 We will use the data we record to monitor and ensure broad representation of customer views.
- 9.3 54North measure customer satisfaction and get feedback from transactional and perception surveys and will specifically measure and monitor the following key performance indicators in relation to the relative and direct success of the Customer Involvement Policy:
- Satisfaction that views are listened to and acted upon
 - Net promoter score
- 9.4 54North will report overall outcomes relating to how customer voice has influenced service delivery along with the results of key performance indicators in the Annual report to Customers.