



Customer First Strategy

2022 - 2025

Our Vision

Excellent housing in vibrant communities

Our Values

Respect

We see the positive in everyone, especially our tenants. We treat everyone fairly, regardless of age, race, gender, sexuality or background. We ask for opinions even if we know we might not like what we hear. And we address people's concerns in any way we realistically can.

Integrity

What we say in public is the same as what we say behind the scenes. If we say we'll do something, we mean it. Our tenants can count on us to solve their problems and make sound decisions.

Aspiration

We want the best for all our current and future tenants. We're not afraid to strive for things that won't be easy – or try things that haven't been done before. We seek out opportunities and welcome change. If it doesn't turn out as planned, we learn and improve again. And then we try again.

Our Strategic Objectives

- A. Building and sustaining popular neighbourhoods
- B. Creating and supporting greater life opportunities for all
- C. Developing greener spaces and community wellbeing
- D. Being a dynamic and listening community partner
- E. Treating people equally and with respect

Underpinning these is our absolute commitment to excellence in our customer service and ensuring an inclusive approach that values diversity. These are central to our values and are woven through how we will deliver all of our objectives.

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1. Foreword

Welcome to the Queens Cross Group **Customer First Strategy 2022-25**.

Queens Cross Housing Association, the parent company in the Group, consulted extensively with customers in developing the Queens Cross Housing Association Business Plan 2020 to 2025: *Choose to live here, Choose to work here* and the complementary Business Plans for each of the Group partners. Throughout that consultation customers told us what matters to them and reaffirmed our Vision of *Excellent Housing in Vibrant Communities*.

As we emerge from the challenges of the pandemic, businesses and customers recognise that the customer landscape has changed. In particular, the removal of face-to-face contact opportunities expedited the transition to online services with the flexibility and wider choice that digital options and self-service can bring. This has informed our thinking around how we best serve our customers and prepare to meet changing expectations in the months and years ahead.

We are proud that Queens Cross Group was able to maintain our most essential services throughout this tough period. We adapted quickly to support and protect our communities and we accelerated the adoption of new technologies and processes, to maintain communication and ensure our resources, advice and support to our communities were effective.

The crisis also revealed areas where we might need to evolve and invest to ensure we meet customer expectations and deliver excellent services going forward.

We saw a slight increase in our customer satisfaction over the first year of the pandemic and welcomed the patience of customers and feedback that we were providing the support and services needed at the time.

As we moved out of lockdown our satisfaction levels dipped. This trend was not unique to our customer base and has been tracked across the social housing sector and we understand that how we respond to this is crucial.

Our aim is to deliver excellent services and we know that we need to listen, learn, and redesign what we do so that our customer offer evolves, and we build trust and goodwill. We know that our customers will work with us and we hope they will be patient as investment and change take time.

Our new customer service offer aims to blend the best elements of digital and human experiences to engage with a diverse customer base. To deliver this our staff will work flexibly through agile working practices which facilitate better service – the right service, at the right time, in the right place.

We recognise that excellent customer service delivers stronger business performance, and this Strategy will help us focus on improving all aspects of our customer's experience.

Andrew Burns

Board Chair

2 Who we are

The Queens Cross Group is made up of four partner organisations working together to improve lives through high quality housing and neighbourhood services; bringing employment and business opportunities, creating an environment that benefits local people and communities.

Queens Cross Housing Association: The parent company of the Group, the Housing Association provides high quality social housing, place-making, financial inclusion, community and wellbeing services for people of all ages and backgrounds with a strong emphasis on tackling inequality.

Queens Cross Factoring: Provides high quality property management services for private homes and businesses in Queens Cross and surrounding area.

Queens Cross Workspace: Supports the local economy, providing affordable business space, generating opportunities for employment and training to reduce the impact of poverty.

Queens Cross Community Foundation: A grant giving charity for local community projects, individuals and voluntary organisations to support those who are disadvantaged or have specific needs.

The Group's aim is to make Queens Cross the best place in Glasgow to live and work. Our neighbourhoods are a rich and diverse asset and our communities benefit from the combined strengths of the Group which enable us through partnership working to have influence beyond our individual specialisms and to connect with residents and the wider business community.

Our Business Plan to 2025 was developed in consultation with tenants, staff and other stakeholders and reflects their hopes and aspirations for the future. Our priorities of improving digital services, tackling poverty and improving the wellbeing of our communities have been shaped by our Customer First approach, listening to our customers and reshaping services to meet their evolving needs and expectations.

Through the implementation of this Strategy, we will strive to continuously improve on our journey to excellence.

3. Purpose of our strategy

The Customer First Strategy overarches the Association's approach to delivering excellent services across our organisation.

We want our customers to feel valued and we measure customer satisfaction as one of our key indicators of how we are doing.

Our Customer First commitments are relevant whether you are a tenant, prospective tenant, factored owner, contractor or partner agent. They are equally important in our professional relationships with Queens Cross colleagues; especially the behaviours that govern our approach to both internal and external services.

We want people to *Choose Queens Cross* ... to choose to live here and choose to work here. We believe people will choose Queens Cross if we have a great reputation for making sure our customers feel valued.

There are 8 ways that we will ensure customers are at the heart of everything we do and feel valued. They are a combination of what we will do and how we will do it.

We will:

1. Be **clear** about our '**Service Offer**' and make sure our **services are accessible**
2. Ensure our staff **understand and demonstrate the right behaviours** to deliver excellent customer services and adopt a positive approach in dealing with people.
3. **Understand who our customers are** and what particular requirements individuals may have – so that we can tailor our services to their needs.
4. **Actively seek the views of customers** so that we focus on 'doing best what matters most'
5. **Involve customers directly** in shaping and scrutinising our services.
6. **Establish clear standards for our services** so people know what they can expect.
7. **Publish what our customers tell us** and how we are responding
8. Drive **improvement by listening and learning**

This Strategy document explains each commitment in more detail and where we want to get to over the next three years.

An action plan for each partner in the Group sets out how we will get there.

This Strategy is also one of the key documents that underpin the QCHA Business Plan which sets out the Association's wider goals. It also underpins the delivery of all our other strategies being integral to the delivery of our:

- ❖ Tenant Participation strategy
- ❖ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy
- ❖ Digital Business strategy
- ❖ Investing in our People strategy
- ❖ Tenancy Sustainment strategy
- ❖ Digital Business strategy
- ❖ Value for Money & Procurement strategy
- ❖ Health & Wellbeing strategy
- ❖ Charter for Challenging Poverty

4. Where we want to be

Our Business Plan for 2020-25 sets out our vision for where we want to be in 2025 and how we plan to get there. We have an ambitious vision to provide excellent homes in vibrant communities. We seek to do this by challenging the existence of poverty in our communities, contributing to improving health and wellbeing and life chances and delivering excellent services and value for money for all our customers. At the heart of this vision are equality and fairness and recognising diversity.

Our eight Customer First objectives are designed to support the Business Plan in achieving our vision and business objectives:

Objective 1: Be Clear About Our 'Service Offer' and Make Sure Our Services are Accessible

We aim to provide excellent services that suit our tenants', factored owners' and other customers' lives. This means our service offer needs to be flexible. We will deliver flexibility through agile working which facilitates better service – the right service, at the right time, in the right place.

Our customer offer

We recognise that we operate in an increasingly digital world, that a significant majority of our customers are digitally connected and that many customers favour the convenience of being able to access services remotely. We also know that digital services need to be clear and simple to use.

An outcome of the Covid 19 pandemic has been the increased expectation of customers that more services will be available online. Developing self-service options allows customers greater flexibility and choice and enables us to better target resources to support those who need assistance.

We will provide:

- information that is clear and easy to use - jargon free
- clarity about the services we offer and when and how they can be accessed
- a range of convenient, self-service online options
- proactive support for those who cannot access digital services or require face to face assistance
- offices that are pleasant and accessible
- technology based options that are easy to use
- staff who value agile working as a means of improving our services

Objective 2: Ensure our staff understand and demonstrate the right behaviours to deliver excellent customer services and adopt a positive approach in dealing with people.

We expect our staff to respond positively and deal with customer issues promptly, courteously and effectively. To help people understand the behaviours they should adopt we have set them out in the Investing in Our People document and embedded them through staff training, appraisals and coaching.

We use these behaviours to recruit competent people. People who have both the knowledge to do their job and demonstrate the right skills, attitudes and behaviours.

The behaviours we expect from our people are:

Taking Ownership

When we are asked to do something or see a problem that needs addressed, we take responsibility for making sure it happens. If we can help directly, we do. If we can't, we find someone who can.

We know what we're responsible for and do everything we can to make it happen. We don't put things off or pick and choose the tasks we like best. But we do ask for help if something is beyond our limits and use the skills of others whenever it's appropriate.

We communicate clearly and lead by example.

Solution Focused

We take time and listen carefully to identify the real issue; what's needed and what we can do to help. We consider all options, challenging previous decisions where necessary.

We draw on our experience and expertise to find answers. If we are unsure, we ask others for advice, canvas ideas and do everything we can to get a result. We try new ways of working and take calculated risks.

That said, we're realistic. Compromise and collaboration is a necessary part of what we do. Where an ideal solution isn't possible, we identify and act on the next best thing. We welcome feedback, apologise when we need to and learn from our mistakes.

Making a Difference

We take action that delivers sustainable benefits to the people we work with, the communities we serve and the wider environment.

Every customer's situation is different. We get to know each one to make sure we help the best way we can. We listen to what they tell us, recognise their struggles, and act with understanding.

We learn as much as possible about our areas of expertise to make sure our advice is always relevant and informed. We get to know our colleagues well, so we can ask for the right support and provide the best possible solution.

We're proactive and go beyond what's expected – we persist where others would give up.

Teamwork

We all bring expertise in specialist areas. We talk to each other, listen, and find the best way forward. Crucially, we reach a decision and set targets for how to make it happen. We're always working towards common goals.

We act with respect and tolerance so everyone feels comfortable sharing their ideas and playing their part. If something goes wrong, we act together to make it right.

We focus on our work, but we never forget that others might need our support. If they do, we help – even if it means our day doesn't go exactly as we'd planned.

Objective 3: Understanding who our customers are and what particular requirements individual customers may have – so that we can tailor our services accordingly.

People want to be valued and recognised as individuals. No one likes a one size fits all approach.

We ask our customers to let us know if they have particular requirements around the way we provide services to them and aim to adjust our service to suit their needs.

We already have some information about tenants which we hold securely in our customer database and use this when dealing with individuals.

We will not make assumptions about customers and will not use their information without their permission.

Objective 4: Actively seeking the views of our customers – so that we focus on 'doing best what matters most'

The pandemic has changed customer expectations and impacted our ability to deliver all of our services as effectively as we would like. This has been reflected in lower overall satisfaction levels with a notable reduction in satisfaction with our repairs and investment services and neighbourhood management.

By asking customers to share their experience of our services and listening carefully to what they say we will learn what is important and what matters to customers. We will use this information to make improvements.

We will make it easy for customers to provide their views and feedback, reaching out in a variety of ways to capture a range of views.

We encourage staff to actively seek the views of customers and feedback what they hear in their day-to-day interactions.

Objective 5: Involving customers directly in shaping and scrutinising our services

We know that tenants and other customers who use our services are well placed to help us change the way we do things. We offer customers a range of ways to scrutinise what we do and work with them to help us to improve.

Our absolute commitment to this is underpinned by our community led Board of Management with a majority of places held by community representatives and our approach to **Tenant Participation**.

We recognise however that our tenants' satisfaction with opportunities to influence decision making could be higher and improving this will be a priority for us.

We will invest in training and development of tenants who want to build their confidence and skills so that they can challenge us effectively and help us reshape services.

Objective 6: Establishing clear standards for customer service and measuring how well we are doing.

By setting standards we help people to understand what they can expect from us. For example if we say we will respond to letters within 5 working days, you know when you should hear from us.

We agree service specific standards with customers for the services most important to customers. We monitor how we are doing and publish results in Focus magazine and on our website.

We also consider where we are failing to meet our standards and see what we can do to improve.

Objective 7: By publishing what our customers think and telling people how we are responding

We believe in being open and honest in our dealings with customers. Our tenants have a right to know how we spend their rent money.

We also know that we must demonstrate to our customers that their views are listened to and we make changes in response to their feedback.

When we do this well, more people will be satisfied with our services and some will be encouraged to get involved.

Objective 8: Drive improvement by listening and learning

We want to be the best so we need to learn from people who are more expert than us.

We ensure that we are aware of new developments in providing excellent customer service in other organisations and will regularly review our approach in the light of this.

We recognise the value of complaints as a tool for learning how to improve our services. We will encourage customers to complain if our service lets them down so that we can put things right and crucially, learn from this.

5. Monitoring and review

Our key measure of customer service excellence is customer satisfaction and evidenced through survey work.

We also gather and analyse data on other important metrics including the level and nature of complaints, demand for our services and business growth.

Each partner in the group has an action plan that supports delivery of this strategy, and the Executive lead overseeing progress will be the Director of Neighbourhood Services.

Each group board receives regular performance information, and an overarching progress report will be brought to the parent Board in 2025.

Contact Us



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