

Customer engagement and influence policy

Our policy to ensure customers can influence the work of the organisations at all levels

The basics

We're committed to placing the customer voice at the centre of governance and operations at Leeds Federated. This commitment is reflected in the following principles:

- We hear and act on the customer's voice. Colleagues in all roles across the organisation have a solid understanding of the importance of customer engagement and contribute to a culture where it is actively supported.
- We dedicate appropriate resources to support customer engagement, ensuring meaningful customer insight is gathered and used to improve services.
- We have clear structures and roles supported by effective governance to enable a wide range of customer engagement opportunities and activity
- Our engagement framework is well defined and promoted, empowering customers to participate in shaping our services in ways that suit them.
- Lived experience is integral to our approach to scrutiny, co-regulation, community engagement, and governance.
- We support customers to make sure they have the right skills and information to carry out scrutiny and governance roles effectively and confidently
- We evaluate, and report on our customer engagement, to ensure continuous improvement and transparency to both the Board and customers.
- We maintain a two-way conversation on safety matters which enables us to respond to customer concerns and provide clear, ongoing assurance about safety in their homes.
- We clearly explain how to access our complaints process and actively promote it to all our customers.

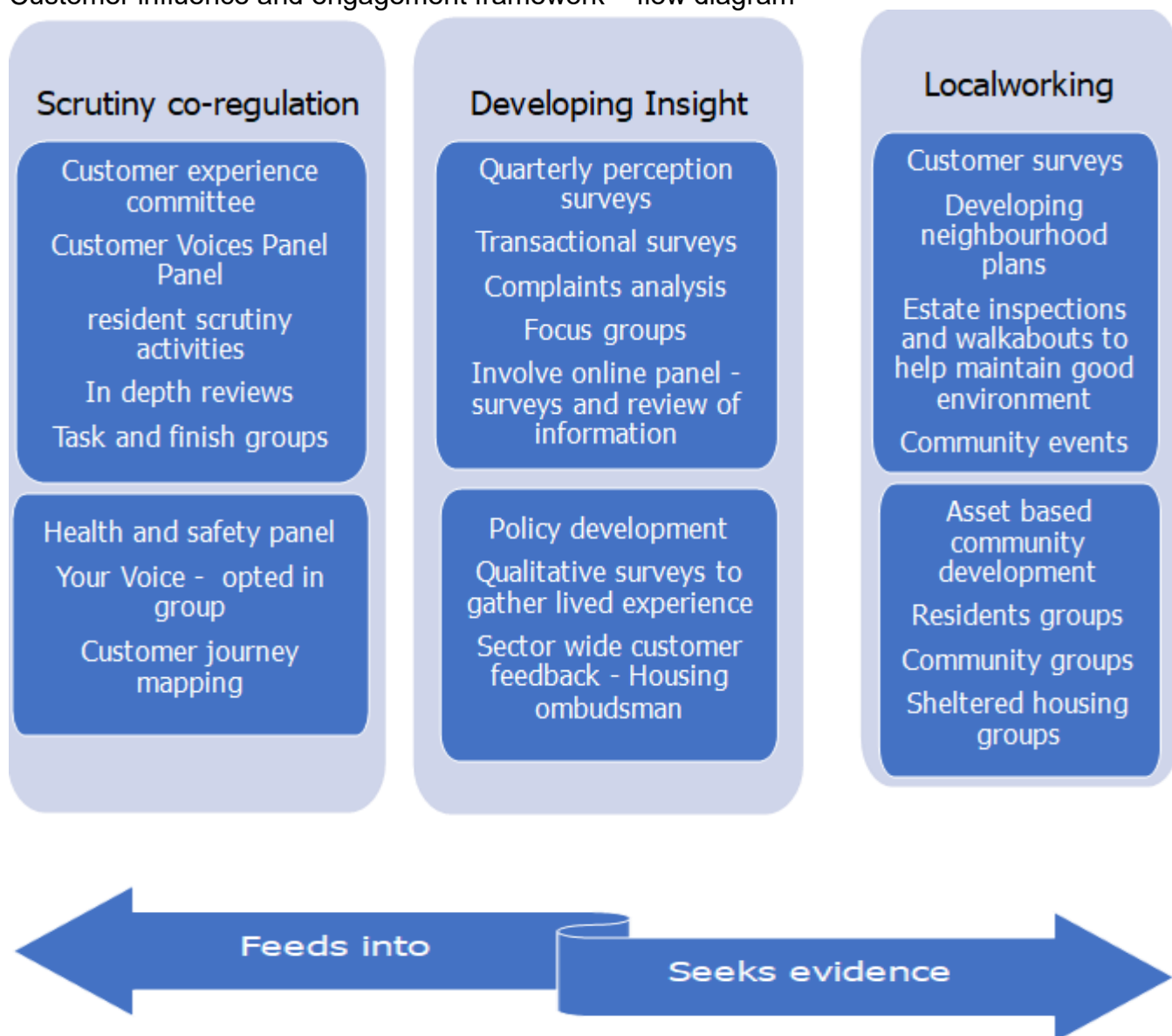
Our approach

We're committed to placing customer experience at the heart of our service design and delivery. Through a strong engagement and influence framework, we ensure that customers have meaningful opportunities to shape decisions and influence outcomes.

We engage with our customers in the communities where they live, using a range of engagement methods to encourage collaboration and active involvement in reviewing and scrutinising services. These include structured customer participation and data insights gathered from surveys, complaints and feedback. These are reported to the Customer Experience Committee, ensuring the customer voice is embedded in our governance.

Transparency, honesty, and accessible communication are central to our approach. We aim to provide customers with clear, relevant information, so they can engage confidently in shaping the services that matter to them.

Customer influence and engagement framework – flow diagram



Background

This policy has evolved significantly since its initial development in 2015 reflecting a growing recognition of customers as essential contributors to governance and service improvement.

2015–2019: Building the Foundations

- Our initial principles were informed by TPAS and the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).
- We engaged with customers as expert volunteers, tenant board members and members of the Challenger Panel. We incorporated tenant feedback through surveys and focus groups.

2019: Responding to National Standards Together with Tenants Charter.

- We increased resources to build customer influence and integrate their influence more directly into our work.
- **2021–2026: Strategic engagement through 'Engage'**
We introduced the strategic objective 'Engage' to our Corporate Plan.

- This led to the formation of a dedicated Customer Engagement Team with expanded resources. Initiatives included:
 - Adoption of the Together with Tenants charter.
 - Launch of regular customer e-newsletters.
 - Recruitment of new participants via behavioural insight methodologies.
 - Implementation of customer-led scrutiny frameworks.
 - Exploration of an asset-based community development approach, inspired by models from Leeds and Nationwide.

Our engagement strategy continues to evolve, focusing on meaningful, long-term involvement. It supports local empowerment and ensures the customer voice is embedded at the heart of the organisation.

Key points for customers

Customer centred approach

We're proud of our clear, customer-centred engagement framework that places customer experience, safety, and wellbeing at the heart of our decision-making. The flow chart above illustrates how we gather and act on feedback from customers through local conversations, surveys, and scrutiny activities.

This work focuses on three main areas:

- scrutiny and co-regulation
- customer insight
- neighbourhood engagement

We recognise that meaningful involvement at the local level builds trust and strengthens our commitment to the communities where our customers live. We understand not everyone wants continuous involvement, preferring occasional opportunities like surveys or one-off events. Our framework is designed to accommodate different levels of interest and remove barriers to participation,

We ensure that customer input directly shapes service improvements, through collaboration with our teams. From completing surveys or attending local events to feed into neighbourhood plans customers are encouraged to engage in meaningful ways and their feedback leads to change.

Customers are actively involved in monitoring and co-creating this approach via the Customer Voices Panel (CVP) and the Customer Experience Committee. These groups receive quarterly updates and initiate scrutiny reviews when needed. The framework is approved by our Board and formally reviewed every three years. Customer involvement shapes the review and future strategy. Responsibilities and reporting lines for all panels and forums are clearly defined in formal terms of reference.

We regularly report back to customers on how we're delivering against our engagement commitments through:

- Annual Report, shared in September to support the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- Annual update included with the rent review notice

- Monthly Customer E-News (available in print upon request)
- Performance and project updates from Heads of Service
- Survey results and analysis including Tenant Satisfaction Measures
Complaints analysis and service performance data
- Service updates
- Your Voice our online engagement platform.

We involve customers in shaping key publications through consultation with the CVP and other forums.

Accountability to our customers

We're committed to transparency and accountability to our customers across all levels of governance.

Our Board and Committees operate openly. Board Meeting minutes are published on our website. With redaction only where necessary for confidentiality.

The Customer Voice Panel is a vital part of this structure. CVP Members:

- Have an open invitation to attend Customer Experience Committee meetings.
- Receive quarterly service updates from Heads of Service
- Maintain a table of actions following each meeting
- Report to Committee and customers on an annual basis, tracking progress against action plans

We work collaboratively with customers to co-develop scrutiny models, that ensure outcomes are reported transparently into governance, business strategy, and service delivery.

To support this, we provide timely and accessible information including:

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Regulatory updates
- Benchmarking data
- Legal insights
- Risk and business planning
- Progress updates on service improvement

These present updates on governance, financial health, risk management, and value for money - plus real customer experiences. We engage customers in shaping our Annual Report through consultation with the CVP and other involved groups.

The CVP is linked to wider engagement activities and forums, including:

- Panels focused on safety and security
- Online projects and groups
- Clear terms of reference which guide all participation and reporting

We keep customers engaged and informed via:

- Our website and Your Voice (online engagement platform)
- Noticeboards in sheltered housing schemes
- Customer sign-up packs

- Printed materials and accessible formats
- Communications guided by a dedicated Community Policy and Plan reviewed by the CVP

Key points for colleagues

This policy supports a consistent and organisation-wide approach to customer engagement, aligned with:

- The NHF Code of Governance 2020, specifically around customer engagement in board election, selection, and appointment
- TPAS National Engagement Standards and best practice from the wider sector

The policy applies to:

- All colleagues across the organisation
- Senior Leadership Team members
- All Board and Committee members
- All legal entities within Leeds Federated that serve customers

This is a shared framework shaped by colleagues across the organisation and underpins our collective responsibility to ensure transparent, inclusive, customer focused practices. We will:

- Provide meaningful opportunities for customers who volunteer to engage and share their experiences of living in a Leeds Federated home.
- Listen to customers who suggest improvements via complaints and surveys and share those suggestions with both staff and standing panels.
- Support and enable customer led scrutiny overseen by Customer Voices Panel and reporting directly to the Customer Experience Committee.
- Provide a variety of options including digital surveys and social media that also support scrutiny, as we know customers do not want to take part in face-to-face meetings or panels and may prefer more practical activities
- Supplement volunteer customers experiences by gathering further evidence from our customer base using surveys and performance data.
- Listen to all staff who have engaged with customers and who want to share customers views and experiences as expressed to them.
- Collaborate with customers to develop improvements to services and improvement in communities recorded in consultation plans and neighbourhood plans.
- Recognise strengths thinking and value asset-based approach to partnership work in communities.
- Provide honest, open, and timely feedback.
- Keep all customers informed about proposed changes and how we are thinking of them in the way we implement change.

Key points for board/committee members and the regulator

Customer involvement in our governance

Customers play an essential role in shaping our strategic decision-making by participating directly in governance through Board membership. This approach ensures the customer voice is heard at the highest levels of our organisation.

We're committed to:

- **Promoting Accessibility:** Board vacancies are actively promoted to customers, with transparent, inclusive processes, designed to be straightforward and accessible to all.
- **Supporting Success:** Customer Board members receive a comprehensive induction, ongoing training, and dedicated support to enable them to succeed and thrive in their governance roles.
- **Maintaining Accountability:** This policy is approved by our Board and reviewed every three years to ensure it remains effective and relevant.
- **Engaging Customers in Policy Review:** Customers are actively involved in the review process, providing valuable insights into how governance and engagement are working in practice, and contributing ideas for improvement.

This approach reflects our core values around customer focus, accountability, and transparency. It aligns with regulatory expectations and wider sector standards for meaningful customer involvement in governance.

Complaints process

Our complaints process is designed to be transparent and accessible, shaped through customer feedback. All relevant details, such as how to submit a complaint, expected timescales, how we put things right, and sources of help and support are outlined in our published Complaints Policy, available on our website. Responsibility for handling complaints is clearly defined within this framework.

Customers who remain dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint can escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman. Our approach to complaints handling includes:

- The CVP receives an annual report on complaints performance and learning.
- The Customer Experience Committee monitors trends in the volume and themes of complaints, outcomes, and any cases investigated by the Housing Ombudsman.
- The Board is kept informed about recurring themes and resulting service improvements.

Learning from complaints is collated in a central repository and shared with individual complainants and the wider customer body. The Complaints policy is regularly reviewed with direct customer involvement, and structured self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, to drive ongoing improvement.

Policy updates

The Customer engagement team is responsible for updating this policy.

Policy updated and approved August 2025. Next review due May 2028.