

**Let's
Go!**

Telling our story

**Communications Strategy
2020 - 2025**



**watford
community
housing**

Telling our story

It's good to talk. We do important work to change lives and enhance communities, so we want to tell our story – helping to foster better relationships with our customers, as well as key partners and other stakeholders.

By engaging with residents, we can help people to understand everything we do and how they can get the most out of their time as our customer, making sure nobody is left behind.

Targeted communications are central to our success. They will play a key role in achieving the objectives set out in our Business Plan and our other strategies – supporting our partnership work through stakeholder engagement, growing our brand and building our reputation as a forward-thinking community business.

Our vision and values underpin all of our work, so we will ensure that these are firmly embedded throughout our communications too.

A growing business

Over the next five years, we expect to keep growing in line with our ambitious goals. We plan to build even more homes, develop our services and work in partnership with more organisations than ever before.

We will also face challenges such as the continuing rollout of Universal Credit and the growing need to deliver more energy-efficient homes in line with the green agenda.

We will deliver effective communications to navigate these changes successfully, helping our customers to understand the impact on them and the opportunities on offer.



As a Community Gateway housing association, we put people first. This is reflected in the way we communicate, so there are some key principles we stick to.

Our approach

As well as reinforcing our brand and our values, all our communications will be:

- driven by our Business Plan objectives and the needs of our customers, members and stakeholders
- clear, honest, open and friendly
- tailored to the target audience
- accessible, in line with our audiences' needs
- appropriately branded and professional
- responsive, in line with the expectations of our customers and partners
- inclusive, reflecting the diversity in our communities
- proactive, with comprehensive and considered communications plans in place for bigger projects and challenges, to ensure we are thinking ahead

We want to spread our message far and wide, so there are several distinct audiences we will aim to reach.

Our audiences

Customers

Our customers include tenants, leaseholders, shared owners and other people who use our services – such as those who hire our community hubs or rent our garages. By engaging effectively with them, we will communicate key messages that ensure successful tenancies, deliver a great customer experience and maintain a thriving membership.

Stakeholders and partners

We are committed to partnership working, which means getting our message out to existing and potential partners, as well as other key stakeholders. This includes local organisations such as the police, health services and charities, as well as other housing associations and development partners.

We also look to reach MPs, local authorities and councillors, industry bodies, regulators, lenders and funders.

Our communications will help to ensure that we are in position to attract the right partners when opportunities arise and have strong relationships with local councillors and MPs. They will also enhance our reputation so that we are viewed as a forward-thinking, innovative and valuable partner.



Our people

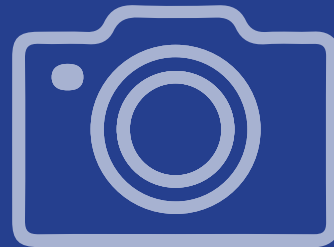
Through effective internal communications, we will help our staff, Group Board and the Gateway Membership Team to work together more effectively, so they can deliver for our customers. We will also drive employee engagement and develop our external brand to help attract the best people.

The wider community

As a Community Gateway housing association, we are committed to engaging effectively with the general public to nurture our community areas and drive engagement with services such as those offered through our community hubs.

Press and media

We will engage proactively and responsively with the press and media, to enhance and protect our reputation, raise awareness of our work and the services we offer, and grow our brand.



Our brand plays a key role in telling people who we are and building a strong reputation. As well as showing that we are a friendly and professional community-focused business, it positions us as bold, dynamic and forward-thinking.

A *dynamic* brand

Our brand is much more than just our logo. It's also about the images and colours we use, the vans we drive and the uniforms we wear. Even more importantly, it is about what we stand for - the quality of service we provide and the way we treat people.

We will continue to develop and embed our brand in line with these principles to build recognition, cultivate trust and inspire our staff to uphold our values.

We will put in place support and toolkits to ensure that all employees can use our branding appropriately, accurately and confidently.

Developing our group brands

As our commercial subsidiary and the partnership vehicle for our joint ventures, Clarendon Living is also a key brand for us. We will develop the Clarendon Living, Hart Homes and Three Rivers Homes brands, and support their growth through promotion and proactive communications.

We use a range of external channels to communicate, to maximise our reach and give people convenient choices that work for them.

Choice and convenience

Our websites and online services

We will continue to develop our main Group website and the Clarendon Living website to ensure they meet customer and stakeholder expectations and deliver the information people need.

As our services evolve – in line with our Digital Transformation Strategy – we will ensure that it is as easy as possible for people to manage their tenancy online.

Social media & digital newsletters

We are active across a range of platforms, keeping us in touch with a variety of audiences. We will continue to use these to promote our work and our key messages, as well as interact with people in a way that suits them.

These will be developed and reviewed regularly over the next five years, ensuring that we keep pace with the preferences of our customers and partners.





Printed materials & newsletters

These are still the most reliable way to reach our customers, especially those who are less comfortable with digital communication options. When it helps us achieve our objectives, we will continue to use leaflets, posters, postcards and mailings – as well as our Voice newsletter – to communicate key messages and share our successes.

However, we will remain mindful of our aim to deliver ‘digital first’ services and minimise our impact on the environment, while offering customers choices that suit their preferences.

Maximising exposure

To build our brand and reach a wider audience, we will continue to issue stories to the local press that help to tell our story to customers, the general public and local stakeholders. To reach existing and potential partners, we’ll also target trade press with relevant information.

We will develop our relationships with key publications and other media outlets to identify opportunities for greater exposure. We will also maintain a comprehensive crisis communications plan so that we can ensure we communicate effectively in the event of a major incident.

Engagement, events & membership

Face-to-face communications play a central role in building relationships with partners and keeping customers at the heart of our work. We will hold events that allow us to communicate directly with customers and partners, and which support our efforts to secure press and media coverage.

In line with our Digital Transformation Strategy, we will introduce online solutions that allow customers to engage with us more easily, such as holding virtual meetings and streaming events so that they are accessible for people who cannot attend in person.



Our internal communications channels are vital in helping our people to perform – fostering employee engagement and ensuring that we work together as one team.

Engaging and informative

We will upgrade and relaunch our intranet to provide a facility that puts the information our employees need at their fingertips. It will help individuals to work more efficiently and teams to operate more effectively together.

In line with our People Strategy, we will utilise innovative methods to drive employee engagement and encourage collaboration.

We will maximise the use of screens and explore other digital communication solutions, as well as making use of posters, emails and printed materials.



We want to help more people discover the great work we do and the opportunities we can offer. We will deliver marketing services and work with partner organisations to enhance our reputation and support our commercial activities.

Positive promotion

Enhancing areas through development

We are proud to build new homes that give people amazing opportunities. We will work with selling agents and other partners to ensure that our developments and their associated marketing materials are appropriately branded, to boost our reputation in the local area and support the sale of shared ownership homes and properties sold on the open market.

We will also provide comprehensive communications support around all our developments, to help local communities understand our plans, how they will enhance the area and how we will work with them to minimise the impact of the works.

Employer of choice

In line with our People Strategy, we will promote our exciting employee offer, accreditations and our brand across a wide range of channels to position ourselves as both an employer of choice and a responsible, forward-thinking community business.

Valued services

Our community hubs provide an array of activities and services that enrich people's lives, so we will promote these opportunities to help more people discover what's on offer. We will also help to advertise the availability of garages for rent in our communities.



We want to deliver services that work for our customers and partners – and that includes our communications. Wherever possible, we will monitor and measure the success of our activities so that we can continue to improve.

Evaluating success

Monitoring engagement

We will develop more sophisticated monitoring of our communications activity where it is measurable, so that we can deliver what people want. This will include more detailed usage analytics for our website, intranet, social media and digital newsletters.

We will also explore ways to capture customer feedback on our wider communications, including our Voice newsletter, and analyse the level of engagement across different campaigns to inform our work.

Customer feedback

We will continue to ensure that all comments made through our social media channels, including those on customer satisfaction and performance, are recorded and captured within our central feedback process.

We will also work closely with the Gateway Membership Team to gather feedback on key communications such as mailings, newsletters and our digital channels – using wider focus groups to gain additional insights as needed.

The big picture

We will continue to produce regular communications reports on our media coverage, events, campaigns and key online statistics for the Group Board, to ensure there is ongoing oversight of our communications activity.

Always improving

After we complete larger projects or campaigns, we will review the success of our communications to learn from both what went well and anything that was less successful.

Let's Go!

Our key goals for 2020-2025

- We will deliver effective communications to tell our story – strengthening our partnerships and helping customers get the best out of their relationship with us.
- We will communicate in line with our key principles, so that we are clear, open, honest and friendly.
- We will tailor our communications to a wide variety of audiences to support the Group's wider objectives.
- We will continue to build our brand, positioning us as a community-focused business that is bold, dynamic and forward-thinking.
- We will use a wide range of external channels to offer choice and convenience to our customers and partners.
- We will deliver engaging and informative internal communications, including a new intranet site that makes life easier for employees.
- We will provide marketing support to ensure the success of our commercial activities.
- We will monitor and measure the success of our activities so that we can continue to improve.





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