

Making a Difference

Trusted to deliver

Customer Experience Strategy
2025-2030



watford
community
housing

Providing **quality homes** is only the start. There is **so much more** to us than just bricks and mortar.

Our aim is to be a trusted and valued part of our communities, so that our customers know we are here for them when they need us – whether that's for issues in their home or neighbourhood, help with their tenancy, or support with the bigger challenges that life can throw at us.

As one of the first housing associations to be awarded a C1 rating by the Regulator of Social Housing, we know that we need to remain fully customer-focused and build on our success in order to retain this status.

Our Customer Experience Strategy sets out how we will continue to enhance our offer to customers. We will always put customers at the centre of our work – on top of delivering a reliable repairs service and excellent housing management, we will act on residents' feedback and work to make communities safer and more attractive.



A vital source of support

We want everyone in our communities to get the best out of life.

For some people, we can help to make this a reality just by providing good services and checking in with them from time to time. For others, a little extra support can go a very long way.

By developing a housing management service that our customers can trust in when they need us most, we will help people to live better lives.



The power of local knowledge

As a community-based business, we are proud to play a valuable role in the areas we serve. We want to support communities and our housing management service will reflect that, maintaining a visible presence that offers confidence and reassurance to our customers.

The service will be built around a team of housing officers, each with a local focus. They will know their area and its unique characteristics, challenges and needs. Likewise, we'll make sure our customers know who their housing officer is, what support they can provide and how to contact them.

Our team get to know the people in the area they serve, including any additional support required by our residents. Wherever possible, they'll visit customers in their homes – by providing a personal service, we will be trusted as the people to turn to in a crisis.



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Housing options

We know that people's circumstances can change, so we'll continue to develop our rightsizing and mutual exchange services to make it as easy as possible for customers to move to a home that is affordable, is appropriate in size and suits the way they live.

We'll work closely with our local authority partners to offer more options, helping people to remain independent and happy at home. In doing so, we will also make the best use of our properties, freeing up family homes for people who need them most.

Easy access to services

Everyone should find it easy to engage with us and get the support they need. For people whose first language isn't English, we will improve access to translation services, so that key information can be provided in alternative languages and formats.

As well as helping with housing, neighbourhood and tenancy issues, we will make sure that our customers have all the support they need by directing them to our valued local partners, who can provide professional support with a wide range of issues such as mental health, personal finances, relationship breakdown and addiction.

'Everyone should find it easy to engage with us and get the support they need.'

A team of skilled professionals

The government's drive for professionalisation in the housing sector is designed to improve the competence and conduct of those delivering housing services across the nation. We are embracing this challenge, supporting our employees on the journey to professionalisation and giving them the backing they need to be amongst the best in the sector.

By expanding the knowledge and capability of our team, we'll deliver an enhanced service to residents across all tenure types, including leaseholders and shared ownership customers.

Extending our reach

We're proud to be able to offer a range of services to our customers and communities. We know that the support we provide will evolve as we grow, to meet the needs of future customers.

Partnership working is already a key strength of our organisation, and it will remain central to how we operate, opening doors to work with others so that we can provide our services and make a real difference to even more people.

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A reliable repairs service

We all want to know there's someone we can rely on when things go wrong.

Our customers consistently tell us that a good repairs service is one of their biggest priorities – and we are determined to deliver for them.

By focusing on doing the simple things right, we will make it easy for people to request support, make sure that we carry out repairs quickly, and keep customers updated from start to finish.





Getting the basics right

We're committed to ensuring that our homes are in good condition. When repairs are needed, our customers should find it easy to let us know that there's a problem, and feel confident that we'll help them to get it sorted out.

The government has confirmed that Awaab's Law will be introduced in phases from October 2025. We fully support its aim to drive improvements in the safety and quality of social housing, and we will ensure that we are able to deliver repairs and fix problems such as damp and mould within the timescales set out by the new law.

Offering choice

We know that everyone has different needs, so we'll continue to adapt our service to offer more choice.

We'll make it easy for our customers to request a repair or raise a concern in a way that suits them – whether that's through our website, social media, email, by phone or in person – and to arrange a repair at a time that is convenient. We'll provide regular updates and we'll make sure we have the resources and expertise to deliver the repair on time – our aim is to resolve over 80% of repairs on our first visit.

As we look to enhance our repairs service, we'll continue to partner with customers to agree the standards we work to, review our performance together, and ensure that we have a plan for continuous improvement. We'll also provide clear information on what's covered by our service, as well as providing guidance and advice to empower customers to carry out smaller tasks that we don't cover.

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Investing in our team

Our repairs service is built around our in-house team of skilled operatives. We'll ensure that the team has the resources and expertise to deliver for our customers and carry out a wider range of repairs. We're proud to provide opportunities for people in our communities, so we'll also offer apprenticeships within our repairs team and advertise vacancies in our local areas.

Our aim is to make sure repairs run smoothly from start to finish. If appointments need to be rearranged, we'll speak directly to our customers to make sure that the new time is convenient, and we will keep people updated at every stage of the repair. We'll also align the operating hours of our repairs and customer service teams, to make sure they work together effectively.



An intelligent approach

We want to take a more innovative approach to managing repairs, using historical data to understand the most common causes of repairs and proactively manage our service. By anticipating where problems are likely to occur, and addressing them before they lead to bigger issues, we'll deliver a better service for customers as well as reducing our repairs workload.

We believe in being forward-thinking, so we'll also embrace modern technology where it allows us to deliver a more effective service, such as carrying out drone surveys of guttering so that we can target our efforts where there is a greater risk of leaks inside people's homes.

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A consistently great service

Our customers should be able to expect the same high-quality service every time. To help make this a reality, we will work with residents to establish a pool of recognised contractors who meet the service and safety standards we demand, giving people more confidence in the work that is carried out in their homes.

We will also change how we record repairs carried out by our specialist contractor partners, so that customers receive the same level of communication as they do when jobs are carried out by our own operatives. Following these improvements, customers will be able to track the progress of all repairs through their online account, as well as receiving updates by email and text message.



Attractive neighbourhoods

Shared spaces are one of the most important ingredients in how people feel about where they live.

Through high-quality estate services, we can make a huge difference to people's quality of life, creating attractive and safe neighbourhoods that residents are proud to call home.

Inspiring communities

We want everyone in our communities to enjoy a shared sense of pride in their neighbourhood. We'll play our part through proactive estate services that deliver great-looking communal areas and green spaces that are clean, safe and well-managed. Our team will care as much about the feel of our neighbourhoods as the people who live in them do.

We'll ensure that our grounds maintenance and cleaning services are delivered to a high standard, monitoring customer satisfaction and responding to feedback. Through local initiatives, and by working with Neighbourhood Champions, we'll actively encourage residents to love their neighbourhood and help us maintain attractive public spaces for everyone. We'll also work to boost biodiversity, helping nature to thrive and creating healthier environments within our communities.

As well as improving public spaces, we will ensure that communal areas in and around our homes – including entrances, corridors and staircases – are modern and well-maintained, so that residents can take pride in where they live. These improvements won't be just cosmetic, as we'll prioritise the security of blocks that have communal entrances and shared areas so that residents feel safe in their homes.



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Attractive neighbourhoods

A common goal

Through our strong network of local partners, we'll bring communities together so that we can make our investment stretch further, working in partnership with local people and other organisations.

On top of our work to improve our neighbourhoods, we'll act swiftly to deal with any issues, such as fly-tipping. We'll be proactive, working with partners to put in place measures that prevent people from dumping rubbish, monitoring any problem areas and carrying out enforcement action against fly-tippers to tackle the problem and give residents confidence that we listen to their concerns.



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Safe and friendly communities

Creating safe and welcoming neighbourhoods takes teamwork.

We will build on our reputation as a trusted local partner to help tackle anti-social behaviour and crime in our communities, working with other agencies including the police.

We know this is a key concern for our customers, so we'll work directly with them, giving people confidence that we take their concerns seriously and we are prepared to act on them.





Good neighbourhood management

For people to feel happy and proud in their communities, they need to feel safe and secure. We can play a key role in this, by maintaining a reassuring, visible presence and quickly addressing residents' concerns – giving people a neighbourhood that they take pride in and want to protect.

Our housing officers will be active and visible within their local areas, providing face-to-face support for residents and taking the lead on delivering good neighbourhood management services. Our repairs and estates teams will also continue to be a familiar sight across our communities, as they work to keep homes and shared spaces in good condition.

'For people to feel happy and proud in their communities, they need to feel safe and secure. We can play a key role in this.'

Taking anti-social behaviour seriously

We want everyone to be able to enjoy living in their community, without fear of anti-social behaviour and crime. Working closely with residents, we'll tackle anti-social behaviour by taking decisive action wherever possible.

Our teams will be trained to deal with difficult issues and we'll make sure that it's easy for residents to find out how to ask for support with neighbourhood problems. We'll be available within our communities to listen to residents' concerns, holding local surgeries where we will take on board ideas for

improvements and take a constructive approach to problem-solving.

By sharing clear information on the types of behaviour that is classed as anti-social, we'll be open and honest about the support we can provide. Because some anti-social behaviour cases can be sensitive and complex, it's not always possible to share regular updates, but we'll do all we can to reassure people that their concerns are being taken seriously. To support residents who feel that we haven't been able to provide the level of assistance they need, we'll offer advice on whether the situation meets the threshold to request a multi-agency case review.



Strength in partnerships

To tackle the biggest challenges our communities face, we will work hand in hand with a range of local partners to address more serious anti-social behaviour and crime. We will be an active participant in initiatives such as community safety partnerships in all the areas we serve, working closely with the police and fire services, local authorities and other agencies.

Through these partnerships, we'll ensure that effective action is taken to make our communities safer, especially where criminal offences take place. We'll forge joint action plans targeting priorities including serious youth violence and violence against women and girls.

Tackling tenancy fraud

Affordable homes are precious. As an organisation committed to providing homes for people on lower incomes, we believe it is right to take action against anyone who abuses the system for personal gain. We take a zero-tolerance approach to tenancy fraud, helping build stronger communities by ensuring homes are for people who really need them.

We will take legal action to recoup any monetary gains made by fraudulent means, so that this money can be invested in our homes, to benefit our customers. To make sure we are equipped to tackle this issue, we train our teams to recognise tenancy fraud and take a proactive approach to dealing with it. We'll also work in partnership with the county council's Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS).

To give local residents confidence in the work we do around tenancy fraud, we'll share success stories where we've reclaimed homes for people who need them and we'll make sure it's easy to report suspected fraud to us.



'We'll share success stories where we've reclaimed homes for people who need them.'

Listening and learning

We are driven by our desire to deliver for our customers.

We know we won't always get it right – but we are committed to learning the lessons whenever we fall short.

Our ethos will be built around continuous improvement, so that we listen to feedback from our customers and empower them to guide us so that we can keep getting better.



Making lasting improvements

Nobody wants to receive complaints but, when we do, we will use them to spur us on to do better next time. If something has gone wrong, we will embrace the opportunity to make lasting improvements and we promise to tell our customers how we are learning from our mistakes.

We will take an intelligent approach to learning, analysing the sources of negative feedback so that we can address any recurring problems quickly, and we'll share our findings effectively across our teams. We will also learn from other organisations and professional bodies across the sector, as we aspire to be amongst the best.

Where we fall short of our service standards, we'll make sure that customers can raise any issues quickly, easily and efficiently. Nobody should have to raise a concern more than once, so we'll respond promptly, giving an honest answer about how we might be able to resolve the problem. We will give clear timelines and we will make sure we meet them.



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Decisions influenced by feedback

As well as receiving feedback directly, we invite customers to share their experiences through surveys, and we will continue to listen carefully to all feedback – both good and bad – and take it seriously. We will also use this information to ensure that we are performing well in comparison to other housing providers.

We will pay attention to what our customers tell us about their key services, especially when we are looking to make changes or appoint new contractors for services such as cleaning, grounds maintenance and repairs. We'll give people the chance to tell us what's working and what's not, and to influence who we appoint. By involving residents with these procurement decisions, we'll give our customers choice over what happens in their communities and ensure that we achieve value for money for customers of all tenure types.

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