Scrutiny Team Review

Review of Customer Communications

Management Response

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1. Introduction

After receiving recommendations relating to customer communications in previous reviews, the scrutiny team chose to focus on how Selwood Housing communicate with customers, in particular the quality, volume and type of communications.

2. Management response

The marketing and communications team really welcomed this review and appreciated that this was a big undertaking by the scrutiny team, since customer communications spans so many different service areas. It was

great to work with scrutiny members and colleagues across many teams to provide an overview and insight into the range of customer communications.

In turn, the scrutiny team provided valuable and practical customer feedback to help improve clarity and consistency in our customer communications. The five agreed actions from the scrutiny team's review will make a positive impact on customer communications across the organisation.

3. Recommendations

	Recommendation	Management response	RAG rating
6.1.1	Improving customer letters The format of letters sent to customers should be improved with guidance to all staff aimed at establishing consistent standards across the business, and that training and quality assurance around this should sit with a single point of contact. Recommended guidance for customer letters: • Highlight key areas within long letters • Use bullet points • Colour code letters (yellow/orange) for warning for rent arrears letters and red for final notices • Do not bunch up too much information within one paragraph • Keep wording simple and to the point • Explain any abbreviations or acronyms used	Due to vast number of communications and resource constraints, this improvement will have to be targeted to prioritised forms of communications. We will take the following steps to improve consistency and clarity across customer communications: • Create templates for key customer letters (most frequently sent letters) • Create guidance and recommendations to accompany these templates to assist staff writing new letters. This will include use of plain English and bullet points. Recommendations we cannot fully incorporate: • Quality assurance must be a collective responsibility across our teams, we	Green From June 2023, we began prioritising 23 key customer letters and created new and improved templates. Business analysts will be responsible for uploading them to our internal database but delays with our portal project mean we do not have a completion date for this piece of work. A guidance sheet has been developed for staff with tips and advice on how to write great customer letters and effectively get the

	• Keep letters consistent • Keep letter information updated regularly • Refrain from using technical language • Carry out 6 monthly checks on letters	will put in place measures to support this. • Colour coding may not be feasible due to its inaccessibility in print and digital formats.	message across. This has been shared with staff, accompanied by a customer letter template.
6.1.2	Correspondence to customers Correspondence to customers should be simplified and recognise the diversity of our customers. Recommended guidance: • Simplify all correspondence • Avoid use of jargon or acronyms • Send correspondences in other languages • Correspondence in Braille • Audio and videoed sign language • More training in hidden disabilities	Producing correspondence in alternative formats and in other languages is in progress. Examples include large print and Easy Read. An external audit on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Selwood Housing was recently carried out. This recommendation has been shared with the No Limits working group who are leading on an action plan with the aim of agreeing a consistent approach to translations and alternative formats across the organisation. The customer portal will also enable customers' communication preferences to be clearly recorded.	Green This action was on hold awaiting improvements to systems and EDI data collection. An external audit on EDI has been carried out there is now an EDI corporate project in progress to improve collection of data and communicate with customers. A new reasonable adjustments policy has been created. Scrutiny was update on this in 2025 and will receive updates in due course.
6.1.3	Maintaining contact with customers New guidance should be put in place to ensure that staff maintain positive ongoing communications with customers.	We are in agreement with this, it is important the customers do not feel forgotten. This would be best communicated through changing policy and/or team charter, to ensure its constant, rather than just being promoted to staff as a one off,	Green As of October 2023, we are now moving into phase 2 of the project which involves appointing 'communication

	When a staff member is on leave or showing their "out of office" response, one or two designated staff members who that customer can contact rather than a general inbox or switchboard because it makes customers feel more valued.	which would then risk being forgotten or missed when new staff change. Most teams have a daily rota where a member of the team will be the designated person to pick up calls and deal with issues with those that are absent, they are also the advice and triage point for customer support. This is not always possible in very small teams so directing to customer support is the most effective way to get immediate assistance.	champions' across Selwood Housing. They will receive training from the marketing and communications team so they can advise their colleagues on clear and effective communications and boost this knowledge across the business.
6.1.4	Internal review of customer communications To use the outcomes of our review to undertake an internal review of customer communications.	With review #15 of regular, mass customer communications, the scrutiny team has started this review and provided many valuable insights. The actions outlined in this response will help to address some of the areas for improvement the review identified.	Green This recommendation refers to the project as a whole.
6.1.5	Quality assurance Establish monitoring procedures to ensure that all staff are consistently following the expectations* that have been clearly set out for them to ensure good customer communications. *If those expectations exist and if they don't, use the outcomes of our review and	The objectives of the action plan arising from this review, will be to: • Improve the clarity and consistency of customer communications across the organisation • As communication is a key part of every staff member's role, equip colleagues to build and maintain skills in this area, through toolkits, guidance and training	Green The whole project includes creating templates, guidelines and champions that will help to address the quality assurance.

	more customer involvement work to establish them.	All staff receive plain English training currently. The team are developing 'communications champion' roles within various teams in the organisation who will work closely with the marketing and communications team. The team will also look to improve the staff training and the information toolkit with the help of the learning and development team	