



# **Lochaber Housing Association**

## **Tenant Engagement and Communication Strategy 2023 – 2026**

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## 1. Welcome to the Strategy

The Association has a history of involving our tenants in the decisions we take. Our vision is one of 'partnership with tenants' and this engagement strategy continues to support this. In listening to our tenants, our Tenant Engagement and Communication Strategy will:

- ✓ Support our tenants to participate at different levels;
- ✓ Offer meaningful engagement;
- ✓ Provide the opportunity for all tenants to be involved; and
- ✓ Help tenants make decisions about their home, services and community.

You play a vital role in helping us to improve our services and shape how we work. We welcome your feedback and suggestions ensuring we continue to deliver high quality services which reflect the needs and priorities of all our tenants.

Margaret Moynihan  
Chief Executive  
Lochaber Housing Association

## 2. Summary

Lochaber Housing Association is committed to ensuring tenants take part in decisions that affect them. We are aware however, that there are challenges in securing this involvement, such as having our housing stock dispersed over a wide geographic area.

This revised strategy has been developed following recent consultation along with a review of our Your Voice activities with members carried out post pandemic. This strategy also retains much of the previous strategy, which was created pre pandemic restrictions, following an engagement event supported by TPAS Scotland, a national social enterprise organisation. This engagement review included staff and tenants to identify what was important to them, which is retained in the revised strategy along with a revised action plan for moving forward.

The revised strategy also brings in communication, based on the outcomes of consultation from our tenant survey and highlights areas that were suggested for improvement. The Tenant Engagement and Communication Strategy will define how the Association communicates and engages with our tenants moving forward.

The strategy refers to engagement as opposed to participation and in doing so it is pledging more meaningful involvement of our tenants and working with our tenants, to create a stronger and more robust culture of engagement and involvement in the things that matter to them. For tenants to be both supportive and critical, fostering growth and improvement through candid and valuable input.

### **3. Policy Context**

#### **Strategy Background and Legal Framework**

##### **Our Commitment**

LHA's strategic objective is to develop and manage a high-quality range of services that meet the needs and preferences of service users. Working with TPAS, tenants and staff have developed and are now implementing a new tenant engagement and communication strategy, which aspires to:

- ✓ continue to develop the Your Voice tenant partnership with engagement opportunities at different levels that suits all;
- ✓ looking to develop regular local Your Voice focus groups for engagement along with developing a small group of Collaborative Voices from these groups to create a scrutiny panel;
- ✓ provide detail on how we will consult, the opportunities for tenants to be involved, timescales and the benefits;
- ✓ widen opportunities for engagement; and
- ✓ help and encourage tenants to become candidates for Board membership.

Our tenants are our most important stakeholders; under our Standing Orders, it is the role of Your Voice members to scrutinise the performance of the Association across a range of key indicators and, in particular, against the outcomes required under the Scottish Social Housing Charter. To lead in the production of the annual report to tenants required under the Scottish Social Housing Charter, and to consider any new/revised policy, or decision of the Board, that affects the management or maintenance of tenants' homes, prior to its implementation. To organise and conduct consultations and surveys with the wider tenant population to inform the decision and policy making of the Board, and scrutinise the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the Association's services, whilst recommending appropriate changes and improvements.

Whilst we have made worthwhile progress in effectively engaging with our tenants through these structures and processes, the partnership needs further development to increase membership and participation levels. We will therefore support the Your Voice members to devise and implement this Tenant Engagement and Communication Strategy.

##### **Legislation and Regulation**

1. Housing Scotland Act 2001 as amended, gave tenants and tenant's groups the right to be involved and to take part in decisions which affect them, later legislation has strengthened tenants' rights. The Act also places duties on landlords to ensure there are ways for tenants to get involved in decisions and to support and resource tenant participation.
2. Scottish Housing Charter – the Charter was developed by tenants and for tenants in 2012 and most recently updated in 2022. It sets out the outcomes and standards

that LHA and all landlords in Scotland are expected to meet and the levels of services tenants should expect from LHA. The Charter covers 16 key areas including participation and communication.

3. Social landlords should manage their businesses so that 'tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with'.
4. The Scottish Housing Regulator expects that tenants are at the heart of their organisation. LHA produces an Annual Assurance Statement for tenants to reassure them of compliance in meeting our statutory responsibilities to them.
5. How the Association performs will be monitored every year by the Scottish Housing Regulator and then reported on their website:  
<https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/landlords>
6. The Scottish Housing Charter and the Scottish Housing Regulator requires that the Association has arrangements in place to make sure tenants scrutinise and help improve performance and influence decisions about policies and services .
7. The Association should involve tenants in setting and monitoring its performance in all aspects of service.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We will actively encourage and promote measures to ensure that all tenants have equal access to participation. We will consult and involve tenants from all our communities regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We will use a range of ways to consult and enable participation, which reflects and respects the diversity of our tenants.

We will ensure all our activities are accessible, we will provide support for you to attend if you need it and our information is available in other formats and languages on request.

## Benefits of Good Engagement

We recognise that, when working well, tenant engagement brings benefits to tenants, staff and the Association.

***Why should I get involved?*** To improve service delivery and ensure better value for money, chance to develop new knowledge and skills.

***What difference will I make?*** Tenants are regarded as experts in their community and living environment, all we ask is that you share that expertise with us.

***How will tenant scrutiny improve services?*** Tenants actively feeding back on our services, better communication between staff and tenants. Tenants who are better informed will have the confidence to understand and influence decisions in their consultation responses.

***What does the Association get out of it?*** Building mutual trust, understanding and respect between the Association and its tenants. Increased tenant satisfaction with their homes and communities and increased job satisfaction for staff.

## **Benefits of Good Communication**

We recognise that good communication is at the heart of exceptional Customer Service and listening to tenants in our post satisfaction survey focus groups, we realise we have not always got everything right and it is from those experiences that we identified the following improvements.

### ***So what was considered to improve communication?***

- ✓ Ensuring tenants are being kept up to date with repairs or service changes.
- ✓ Ensuring tenant expectations on responses are managed through timescales for response.
- ✓ Ensuring tenants feel listened to when things aren't going so well.
- ✓ Better communication between trades operatives, contractors and Asset Management Team when dealing with complex repairs issues, or where follow up work may be needed, and crucially, tenants kept informed throughout.

### ***What changes will be made?***

- ✓ Improving feedback and keeping tenants informed across the LHA Group on what we do that impacts them individually or collectively through Housing Briefings or individual emails or letters.
- ✓ Ensuring that we do what we say we will do and communicate with tenants to ensure they understand.
- ✓ Ensuring tenant expectations are met through response timescales defined in this strategy.
- ✓ Improving consultation and engagement with tenants (Your Voice Activity) when planning works that includes listening to their experiences, expectations and reassuring them how the works will improve the property and their living environment.
- ✓ LHA taking the lead to maintain a relationship and communicate throughout any planned maintenance works with the tenant and seek feedback when completed.
- ✓ We will ensure that you are communicated in the event of any changes to planned maintenance for your home.

***How will we know you have listened?*** We will ensure that any consultation is published in a housing briefing, website and social media, showing clearly what tenants have said, and what we have done. We will also communicate with you to ensure when you contact us individually with a query that we have understood what you are saying and confirm our response accordingly.

***Will communication be inclusive?*** Lochaber Housing Association is committed to ensure all our communication is inclusive and will consider translation into a language suitable for the tenant to understand along with braille or make amendments to fonts and paper colour where it's identified by a tenant. Our **My Home** tenant portal will read aloud any information along with our revised website. Whilst email is our preferred method of communication, we will ensure that tenants that require them, are able to obtain printed letters, and printed versions of our housing briefings.

***How can I communicate directly with you?*** We will ensure that tenants know their Housing Officer, with contact details available, our officers will be present within our communities, and we will provide a central customer service point that you can also email or call. We will also provide additional communication through social media and briefings to tenants.

## Communication Timescales and Standards

Following consultation with tenants we will respond to tenant communication within the following timescales. These timescales will ensure that all tenants who contact the Association know what to expect from our staff. When we contact you, our staff will be professional, courteous, and offer clear explanations in plain English. We will ensure that in responding to the timescales below we adhere to the LHA Group Customer Charter.

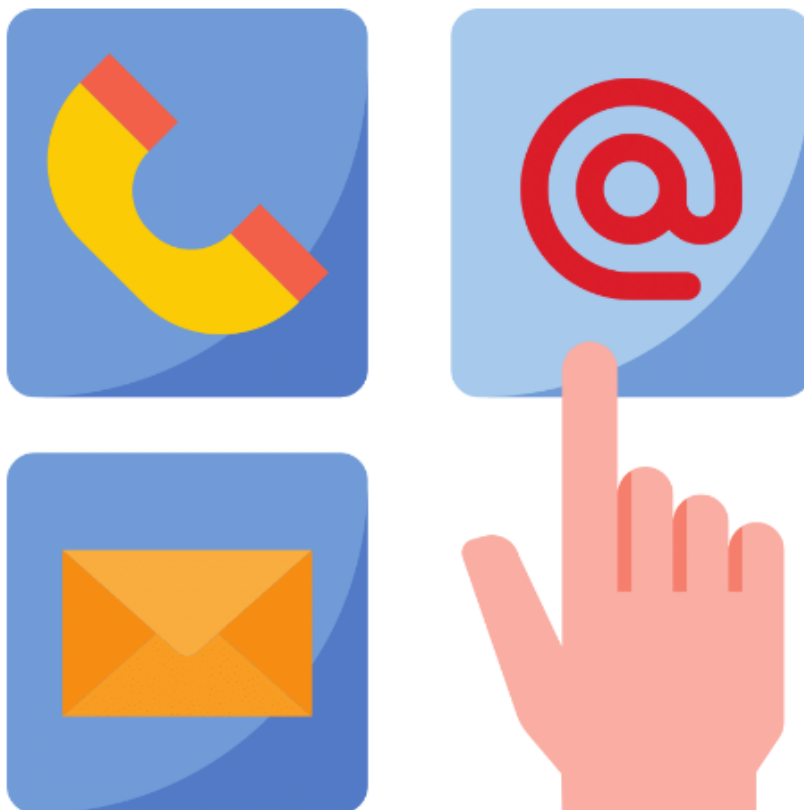
### Communication Timescales

- ✓ Following receipt, we will respond to non urgent emails within 3 working days.
- ✓ Following receipt, we will respond to urgent emails within 24 hours.
- ✓ Following receipt, we will respond to non urgent letters within 5 working days.
- ✓ Following receipt, we will respond to urgent letters within 1-2 working days.
- ✓ We will respond to non urgent calls within 3 working days.
- ✓ We will respond to urgent calls same day.

### Customer Charter

- ✓ Our customers are the most important part of our business. The organisation is committed to providing a responsive, effective, and cost-efficient customer service to all our customers. This Charter sets out the standards of customer care that we are committed to, and which every customer can expect.
- ✓ We will be courteous and fair to customers and do our best to help. In return, we expect customers to be courteous towards us.
- ✓ We will not discriminate against anyone regardless of age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, marital status, nationality, or religion.

- ✓ We will invite you to take part in regular reviews of our services, and your views will be key in any decisions taken to change or maintain current arrangements.
- ✓ Customer feedback on the service we provide will be regularly requested and always be welcome.
- ✓ We will train, develop, and equip our staff with the skills to undertake our commitment to you.
- ✓ If you require to visit our offices we will make an appointment for you, and will be welcoming and accessible.
- ✓ We will ensure that we provide our services to tenants in their own home.
- ✓ We always treat all customers fairly and respect confidentiality, giving clear reasons for any decision we make.
- ✓ We will publish and display information about our service standards and achievements.
- ✓ We offer a clear and accessible complaints procedure, and we will use this feedback to improve our service.



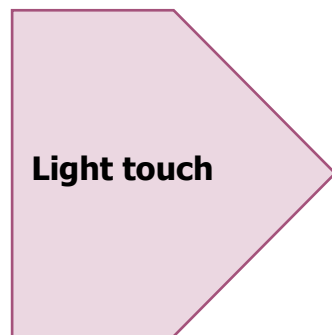


## 4. Key Methods of Engagement

Lochaber Housing Association is not looking to be overly complicated in how we conduct engagement activity: with a more flexible approach we are willing to think out of the box if it means getting the views and involvement of tenants and the communities we work with.

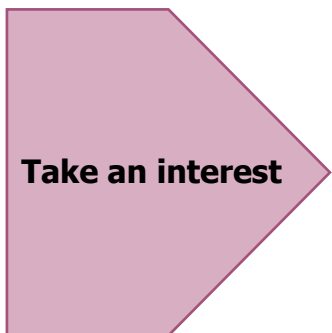
We do however want to increase engagement activities, and ensure we have a robust system in place.

Our key routes to engagement will offer three levels of involvement:



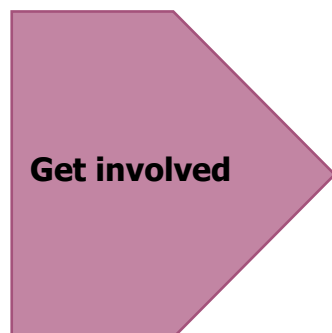
### Take a moment or time to feedback

- ← Responding to our surveys
- ← Responding to our rent consultation
- ← Responding to any consultation on **My Home**



### Going a little further than light touch and attending

- ← Attend one of two Your Voice meetings and any consultation groups
- ← Attending our AGM
- ← Taking part in your local estate walkabouts or scheme surveys
- ← Feedback on consultation documents, Tenant Talk, and methods for the consultation on the annual rent increase



### An active tenant voice

- ← Actively participate and help to organise events
- ← Attending our collective voice meeting
- ← Coming along to other tenant events
- ← Attending a focus group in your area
- ← Help with the design and content of our Tenant Talk annual report
- ← Participate in or help organise a Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) or participate in existing groups

Engagement is about lending us your voice, sharing your thoughts and us valuing your opinions and expertise as a tenant on areas such as;

- ✓ Rent increases
- ✓ New builds
- ✓ Community issues
- ✓ Maintenance
- ✓ Policy changes
- ✓ Triannual survey
- ✓ Service standards



Tenants interested in being involved can contact the Association via:

- ✉ [housingmgmt@lochaberhousing.org.uk](mailto:housingmgmt@lochaberhousing.org.uk)
- ☎ Speak to a Housing Officer or Housing Assistant on 01397 702530
- 💻 Or alternatively register their interest via their **My Home** dashboard.

## 5. The Conditions of Engagement

These conditions were decided by tenants as key to our activities and remain as our priority.



### Consult

#### Meaningful consultation

- ← Consultation throughout the LHA Groups' services and departments
- ← Tenants given time to respond – within a standard period of at least 28 days where possible but no less than 21 days
- ← Tenants given the background, context, guidance, and options



### Communication

#### Clear, concise, and active communication

- ← Clear methods of communication
- ← Making use of technology but ensuring we offer traditional methods for those who can't use it
- ← Actively listen to our tenants
- ← Keep tenants updated through our briefings, website, social media channels and **My Home** portal
- ← Feedback for tenant focus groups to and from neighbours
- ← Develop a specific Your Voice page on the **My Home** portal for all tenants
- ← Continued use of social media to encourage younger tenants to get involved



### Collaboration

#### Promoting tenant engagement by LHA

- ← Engagement throughout the organisation
- ← Tenant engagement in their community
- ← Tenants joining us as we make decisions

**Collaboration** refers to tenant engagement, with both staff and tenants, we understand that sometimes people are busy, and want to concentrate on a multitude of other things in their lives, but who also want to be heard. We will offer that opportunity through our light touch involvement and where tenants want to take an interest. We also seek to foster a stronger relationship with the few who wish to get actively involved from their community.

Not just in meetings but to actively represent their area and neighbours, working with us to raise the profile of engagement, help carry out the local discussions and be the driver of

discussions for what matters for them and their neighbours. Our action plan will define how we will achieve effective engagement and communication with our tenants. An action plan agreed in consultation with tenants to benefit tenants.

## 6. Conclusion

This strategy lays the foundation for the next three years in how we prioritise a flexible approach to consultation, make best use of technology such as social media (encourage tenant use of Facebook page) online questionnaires, specialist software, our website, and My Home for inclusive light touch consultation. Whilst also encouraging and supporting those tenants willing to help a little more, ensuring they can engage with us through localised focus groups, and come together to collaborate with staff at our offices a couple of times a year. We also want to ensure we take consultation into our communities, to listen to the things locally that impact on tenants or where we can make service improvements or identify services that are needed.

We look forward to improving our communication with tenants, providing clear timescales, and ensuring that we always confirm what we say we will do, and confirm when we have done it, this can be anywhere from a personal repair to the outcome of a consultation. Good communication and engagement opportunities are at the heart of what Lochaber Housing Group set out to achieve in developing and managing a high-quality range of services that meet the needs and preferences of tenants and service users.



## 7. The Action Plan

### Consult

#### 1. Review, update and monitor the Tenant Engagement strategy and action plan

*Who will carry out this task?* Staff and tenants

*Timescale?* Ongoing review of adherence and main document reviewed three yearly

*Resources?* Staff and tenant time

*Who needs to know?* Board of Management, staff and tenants

*Monitored by?* Via Your Voice

#### 2. Make use of technology and staff working in their areas to engage with more tenants

*Who will carry out this task?* Staff

*Timescale?* Year one

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* Board of Management, staff and tenants

*Monitored by?* Via Your Voice local Focus Groups

#### 3. Involve more tenants and adapt new ways to consult and work with other community and resident groups

*Who will carry out this task?* Staff and tenants

*Timescale?* Consider year one

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* Staff

*Monitored by?* Via Your Voice

#### 4. More consultation with tenants throughout LHA Group

*Who will carry out this task?* Senior Management

*Timescale?* Throughout the life of the strategy

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* Board of Management

*Monitored by?* Via Your Voice review of the strategy

## Communicate

### 1. Review the success of the communication improvements with tenants

*Who will carry out this task?* Staff

*Timescale?* Consider year two via the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2024-2027

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* LHA Board of Management, staff and tenants

*Monitored by?* Via Your Voice

### 2. Review social media, My Home and website by tenants for tenants, incorporate more information on tenant engagement, but also community news and events

*Who will carry out this task?* Staff and tenants

*Timescale?* Consider year one

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* Staff and tenants

*Monitored by?* Via tenant briefings, Your Voice annual briefing and light touch consultation

### 3. Inclusive communication that includes our rural areas

*Who will carry out this task?* Staff

*Timescale?* Consider year one

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* Tenants

*Monitored by?* Your Voice tenants attending local focus groups and light touch consultation

### 4. Listen, feedback, discuss and agree

*Who will carry out this task?* Staff and tenants

*Timescale?* Ongoing

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* LHA Board of Management, staff and tenants

*Monitored by?* Via Your Voice

## Collaboration

1. **Your Voice collaborative group from our local focus groups to encourage tenant engagement and develop those getting involved**

*Who will carry out this task?* Tenants

*Timescale?* Year two and three

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* LHA Board of Management, staff and tenants

*Monitored by?* Via Your Voice and LHA Board of Management

2. **Create focus groups in letting zones to get local representatives from tenants attending, providing training and support where required and developing more Registered Tenant Groups**

*Who will carry out this task?* Staff and tenants

*Timescale?* Throughout the strategy

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* LHA Board of Management, staff and tenants

*Monitored by?* Via Your Voice and LHA Board of Management

3. **Involve tenants in local estate walkabouts and identifying local needs for improving wellbeing, tackling poverty and fuel poverty key scrutiny group for policies and services**

*Who will carry out this task?* Staff and tenants

*Timescale?* Throughout the strategy

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* Staff and tenants

*Monitored by?* Via Your Voice and LHA Board of Management

4. **Develop involvement of LHA tenants in national and Highland wide tenant engagement activities**

*Who will carry out this task?* Staff and tenants

*Timescale?* Ongoing

*Resources?* Annual budget allocated

*Who needs to know?* LHA Board of Management, staff and tenants

*Monitored by?* Via Your Voice and LHA Board of Management

## 8. Moving forward

### Implementing the Action Plan Short Term

#### Short Term

- ✓ Agree the Tenant Engagement and Communication Strategy with Your Voice and the Board of Management
- ✓ Continue to make use of the preferred light touch approach which is popular whilst encouraging more tenants to get involved

#### Medium Term

- ✓ Develop more tenants to be more active in their community through local focus groups
- ✓ More consultation and engagement from your street to your estate on things that matter to you
- ✓ Mid term report to Your Voice and the Board of Management on progress

#### Long Term

- ✓ Collaborative group in place
- ✓ Tenant Engagement throughout the LHA Group

### Monitoring and Reviewing the Action Plan

The Tenant Engagement and Communication Strategy is a working document, and its implementation will be monitored on an on-going basis by Your Voice members through consultation and focus groups. The strategy will be reviewed with tenants every three years. The strategy will also evidence compliance to our regulatory standards and these actions will be added to our tracking document.

We will also monitor and review the ways we communicate with you and the methods of participation to make sure they are the most effective. These will be reported to our Board of Management as key performance indicators.

### Resources and support

We recognise the importance of ensuring that sufficient support and resources are available for tenant participation to work effectively. We will set a tenant participation budget to cover costs such as:

- ✓ Meeting/venue costs, refreshment costs
- ✓ Travel and subsistence expenses
- ✓ Stationery, pre-paid envelopes when consulting by post, photocopying, etc
- ✓ Staff and tenant training and conferences costs



- ✓ Care costs
- ✓ Publications/publicity including leaflets, newsletters and flyers
- ✓ Support for tenant groups including any group wishing to become an RTO
- ✓ Training for staff and tenants
- ✓ TPAS Membership and attendance at events
- ✓ Staff time made available to support and facilitate participation.

This strategy created by tenants and staff working together, will enable Lochaber Housing Association to provide current and future tenants with high quality services that are truly reflective of their needs and help us to ensure that we continue to improve our services and shape how we work.