

Customer Voice Policy

1.0 Policy statement

- 1.1 This policy sets out how Stonewater Group (referred to as Stonewater) will engage and communicate with customers to ensure they take a central role in shaping, influencing and scrutinising our decision-making in order to enhance the services that they receive.
- 1.2 Building relationships based on fairness and respect is central to delivering our social purpose. In providing opportunities for customers to engage with us, we will ensure that we meet our regulatory requirements and deliver commitments set out within our adoption of the National Housing Federation's 'Together with Tenants' charter.
- 1.3 Stonewater approaches customer voice through understanding, analysing and acting on customer feedback, customer engagement, Customer complaints and customer communication. This underpins the delivery of our Customer Strategy.
- 1.4 Critical to our approach is acting on the findings of our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) survey. The TSMs allow us to identify priority areas for improvement as well as existing good practice and to drive service improvement linked to our customers' priorities.

2.0 Policy scope and objectives

- 2.1 This policy relates to all Stonewater customers, such as our tenants, homeowners, service users and anyone who receives services from Stonewater. We also welcome the involvement of customers' representatives, where Stonewater has formally recognised their role.
- 2.2 The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all Stonewater colleagues.
- 2.3 The objectives of this policy are to:
 - ensure customer voice shapes and informs Stonewater's decision-making about customer-facing services
 - provide accessible and relevant information so customers can use our services, understand what to expect and can hold us to account
 - ensure that engagement opportunities are accessible, and customers are given support and opportunities to influence and shape the services that they receive
 - sustain and increase the ways we listen and understand customer voice through good practice, innovation and commitment
 - use customer voice as a driver for continuous improvement, value for money and the ongoing development of services.

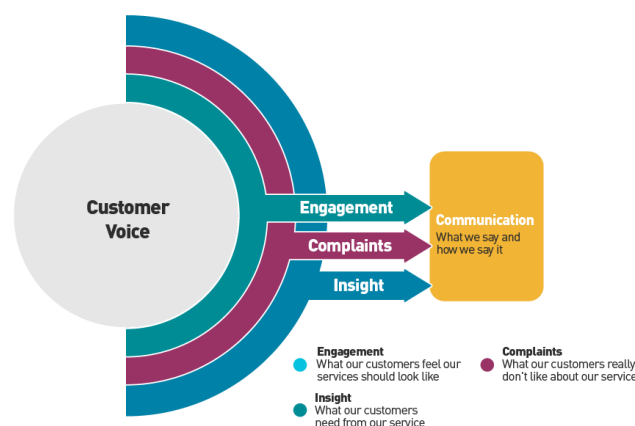
3.0 Regulatory and legal considerations

3.1 We've developed this policy in line with all relevant legal and statutory duties, customer feedback including:

- Landlord and Tenant Act (1985)
- Housing Act (1996)
- Schedule 2 Data Protection Act (2018) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Localism Act (2011)
- Building Safety Act (2022)
- The Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023
- Housing Ombudsman Scheme and 2024 Complaint Handling Code
- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act (2023)
- Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards, including the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard 2024

4.0 Policy details

4.1 Our Customer Strategy outlines our commitments to 'Listening and learning', emphasising our ambition to develop as an intelligent organisation that encourages and values customer voice.



4.2 We listen to customer voice through three primary channels:

- **Customer engagement** – we offer a range of innovative, accessible and meaningful options for customers to be involved in influencing and scrutinising our strategies, policies and services. This includes formal groups and panels, alongside listening tools such as workshops. This

ensures customers can hold us to account and helps us to improve services and customer experience

- **Customer complaints** – we recognise that we don't always get it right. We make it easy for our customers to complain about the services they receive. We analyse this data to identify service improvements and to prevent similar issues from happening again.
- **Customer insight** – we use insight gathered from our listening tools including TSMs, customer satisfaction surveys, individual customer feedback, group petitions as well as customer contacts, service requests and wider data sources to understand customers' needs and preferences. By analysing this information, we're able to target support, improve services and drive higher customer satisfaction.

4.3 We recognise the importance of excellent communication to supporting customers to shape our services through customer voice. As such, our approach is underpinned by:

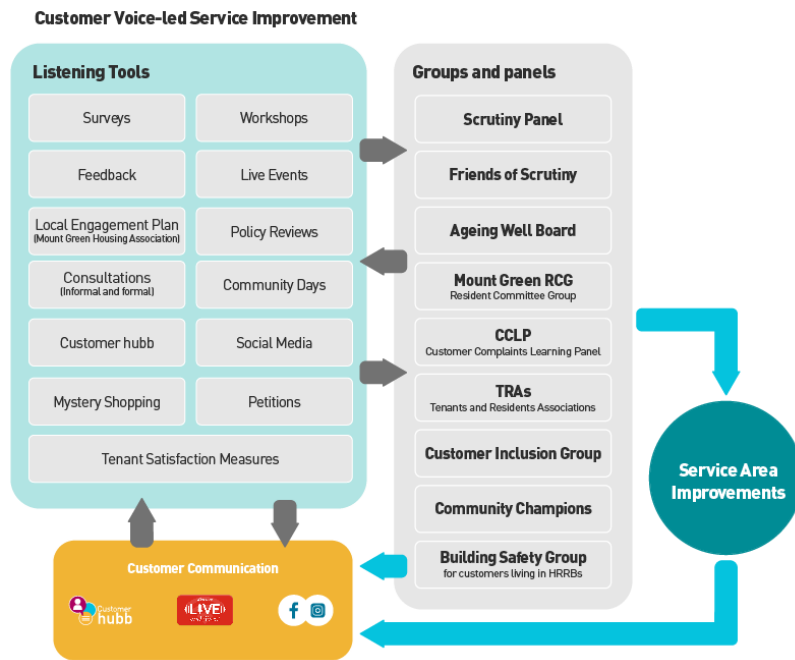
- **Customer communications** - we provide accessible information about our services, service standards, customers' legal rights and performance information so customers can use our services, understand what to expect from Stonewater, and hold us to account through effective scrutiny. We communicate how customer voice has improved our services to our customers

4.4 Stonewater will devote resources to supporting, listening and acting on customer voice. This includes:

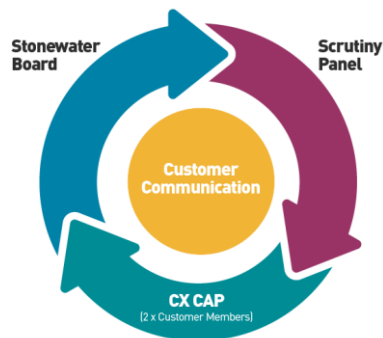
- dedicated Customer Voice and Customer Insight functions, with specialist colleagues to lead our activities and local leads within our subsidiaries
- producing an annual Customer Communication and Engagement Plan, which we use to drive delivery of customer voice activities and to monitor our performance
- providing training and other support to enable customers to take part in shaping customer voice and holding Stonewater to account
- ensuring our customer voice activities are simple, easy and accessible, including through providing digital training programmes
- delivering an extensive customer engagement offer, which we will promote actively and support to be impactful.

4.5 Stonewater's customer engagement offer is shaped by customer priorities, providing multiple opportunities to get involved in ways that work for our customers' differing needs. We will constantly seek to improve it, listening to customers' feedback.

4.6 Based on feedback from our customer survey in 2023, our 2023-2026 Customer Voice led service improvement model includes:



- 4.7 We will use the appropriate engagement mechanisms depending on the issue under review and constantly look to innovate our approach. We promote opportunities to get involved in our Stonewater Customer Engagement Guide, Group websites and our customer communication channels.
- 4.8 We provide dedicated support to our Customer Scrutiny Panel, which undertakes formal reviews of our services and makes recommendations on improvements to our Customer Experience Challenge and Assurance Panel (CXCAP) and Board. We monitor the completion of accepted Scrutiny Panel recommendations, reporting progress annually to our CXCAP, Scrutiny Panel and customers.



- 4.9 In order to ensure Stonewater's customer voice offer is relevant and accessible, we will consult customers at least once every three years to understand their engagement preferences. We will use this information to refresh our engagement offer.
- 4.10 Stonewater uses the information gathered through our customer voice channels in many ways. This includes:

- supporting our Customer Scrutiny Panel to identify and undertake impactful reviews of our services, with a view to making recommendations to improve services
- using the TSMs to understand customers' priorities and areas for service improvement
- identifying themes and trends, which allow us to target support to customers as/when they need it
- anticipating and predicting customer demand to enhance our services and improve customer experience
- undertaking root cause analysis of complaints to identify learning and implement arising service improvements
- consulting customers if we're considering a change in landlord for one or more customers, or significant change in management arrangements
- responding to individual customer issues in a timely manner.

4.11 We will provide customers with feedback about how we've used customer voice through our customer communication channels. This includes:

- sharing case studies and examples about service improvements, highlighting how we've listened to customer voice to make positive changes
- providing regular updates on our performance including against the TSMs, our Customer Commitments and performance measures outlined in this policy.

4.12 Producing and promoting our annual complaints performance and service report, which we will publish for our customers alongside our board's response in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaints Handling Code.

5.0 Service standards

5.1 In order to ensure our customer voice activity is impactful, we will use a suite of measures to determine success.

5.2 We report annually to customers and our Board on overall progress and performance against our Customer Communications and Engagement Plan. Our performance measures include:

- number of involved customers
- number of service improvements due to customer voice, including learning from complaints
- Scrutiny Panel recommendations implemented.

5.3 Our customer voice work contributes towards Stonewater's TSM scores including:

- The landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them (TP06).
- The landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them (TP07).

5.4 We report on our TSM performance to our Board, our Scrutiny Panel and to our customers.

6.0 Equality, diversity and inclusion

6.1 Stonewater believes that equality, diversity and inclusion matters. We believe that customers, colleagues and partners should be treated as individuals and with fairness and respect. We will ensure that these principles are applied fairly and consistently to all. Our approach is outlined in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

6.2 We comply with the Equality Act (2010) and the Human Rights Act (1998). We will not directly or indirectly unlawfully discriminate against any person or group of people because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation or on any other grounds set out in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

6.3 When customers have known or suspected vulnerabilities, we will follow our Vulnerable Persons Policy. We will also consider making reasonable adjustments (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) where appropriate and ensure we provide accessible support to enable customers to provide their views as part of our customer voice framework.

6.4 Stonewater is committed to ensuring every customer can share their views and influence our services through our customer voice activities. We will support initiatives to promote inclusion, champion accessibility and work to encourage participation across every customer group.

6.5 We will also use data and insight to identify under-represented groups and proactively encourage these customers to participate in customer voice activities. In order to drive our work, we will undertake an annual assessment of engaged customers by protected characteristics and use the findings to support our work to make our customer voice offer accessible and inclusive.

Last issued: 16.10.2024

Next review date: 16.10.2027