

Customer Focus Strategy

2010-13

OUR MISSION

To deliver excellent, customer focused
and cost effective housing services
to all our residents



Please feel free to get in touch with us if:

- You feel this document is not as clear and easy to read as you would expect; or
- You believe that we aren't doing the things that this document says we will do; or
- You just want to talk to someone about this document

Whatever the reason, if you want to talk to us about this document you should contact:

Head of Quality & Performance on Freephone 0800 195 5552

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Introduction

- 1.1** SHP delivers a range of housing services directly to the tenants and leaseholders of the London Borough of Sutton (“the Council”) and a number of services that support delivery of these direct services.
- 1.2** Our approach to the delivery of all services is underpinned by a number of drivers, one of which is ensuring a focus on customers. We endeavour to embed these drivers in all that we do and the customer focus strategy identifies our medium term objectives for ensuring that our services (a) are readily accessible to all our customers, (b) are provided with a high level of customer care, and (c) are delivered and developed through meaningful involvement with our customers. This strategy is an overarching strategy that will directly influence how both our direct service and support strategies are delivered.
- 1.3** This strategy has been developed in consultation with customers. The customer care and access review, the resident involvement compact review and the complaints process review all involved customers. The outcomes from each of these reviews have informed the strategy, as have the satisfaction surveys carried out with complainants and with visitors to reception. In addition we have used events such as the St. Helier Festival and established groups such as the Service Improvement Group and the Sheltered Housing Forum to inform the strategy.
- 1.4** There are complementary driver strategies for Equality & Diversity, Environmental

Sustainability, Risk Management and Value For Money. Together with the strategies for direct and support services our strategies provide the focus for achieving our Priorities.

Where Are We Now?

- 2.1** The current position in relation to the embedding of customer focus is reflected in the following:
 - By consulting customers we have identified that excellent housing services to them means;
 - ◇ Doing things right first time
 - ◇ Treating everyone as an individual
 - ◇ Thinking about the customers’ perspective
 - ◇ Enabling customers to help review the way things are done
 - ◇ Doing “what it says on the tin”
 - ◇ Providing high quality with value for money
 - ◇ Learning from mistakes;
 - We have collected profiling data for over 80% of our customer households which has given us the following knowledge of our customer base;
 - ◇ 10.8% of our customers are from black and minority ethnic groups
 - ◇ Nearly 40% of our customers are aged 60 or over
 - ◇ 64% of our tenant households are headed by women

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- ◇ 23% of our customers have identified themselves as having a disability or long term illness;
 - We hold communication preferences information for tenants enabling us to ensure that communications better meet customers needs (e.g. Homefront is available in a variety of formats);
 - Residents are involved in mystery shopping exercises to assess and review services from a customer's perspective. Their involvement has resulted in clear improvements e.g. signage for estates, the introduction of a menu of messages as part of the Freephone service;
 - The service review toolkit includes specific requirements for customers to be involved in the scoping and process of service reviews;
 - We have introduced a 3rd stage in the complaints process that involves complaints being assessed by residents' representatives;
 - Customers have easy access to services with a range of methods including introduction of late night telephony service and improved communication via the new website;
 - Customers are involved in the production of information and publications as part of the reading panel which provides for a resident approval tick on public documents;
 - Staff throughout the organisation have been trained in customer care and we were awarded the Customer Service Excellence standard in September 2009;
 - We have a growing and informed 'Sounding Board' database of involved residents (1053) which clearly details their preferred method of involvement and area of interest;
 - Staff work together to evaluate customer involvement activities. This is helping to ensure that staff are improving the ways we engage with customers to ensure we are listening and acting on customers needs;
 - A Customer Care Team which is extremely capable of taking and responding to high volumes of calls from residents and liaising with residents face to face (dedicated receptionist);
 - Staff who are keen to advise residents on all aspects of housing including anti-social behaviour, rent arrears, repairs, welfare and housing benefits (Champion roles in Customer Care Team);
 - Staff who offer to carrying out home visits to see residents, if requested or appropriate (Complaints Team and Income Managers);
 - Programme of training for residents, developed with residents; has helped improve work prospects, built skill sets and encouraged personal development, i.e. how to write a CV and positive thinking;
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- Improved information sign up packs, with a DVD version, as well as new tenants welcome pack;
 - Leasehold Services Champion in the Customer Care team, improving leasehold services to customers in writing, on the telephone, able to calculate service charges;
 - Staff across the organisation have attended evening consultation meetings e.g. SFTRA, SLA, RA's;
 - Staff have personal targets for contacting tenants to compile a questionnaire on their individual needs of tenants and leaseholders, leading to robust profile data of our residents, tailoring services and limiting barriers to access. i.e. large print home front, some publications available on CD;
 - Staff trained to ensure 'Right First Time' approach with repairs diagnostic training, and training sessions with the in-house Repairs and Maintenance staff;
 - Staff experienced in liaising with contractors regarding logging and outstanding repairs to ensure service standards are adhered to (staff attended monthly meeting to ensure complaints are dealt with and standards adhered to);
 - Resident Repair Inspectors responsible for monitoring the quality and performance of communal repairs, which have seen some resident led improvements in this area. i.e. cleaning of light fittings during repairs. Recently recruited a further 15 inspectors from across the borough;
 - Residents have been consulted on budget priorities by questionnaires and focus group meetings, helping to identify service improvements and allocation of future resources;
 - The Customer Care Charter developed in partnership with residents, which clearly sets out the promises and levels of customer care our residents should experience;
 - Regular on-line polling of customer views, including views about additional late night opening;
 - Landline telephone number included in promotional information to residents to help mobile phones users cut costs when contacting SHP;
 - Overall customer satisfaction with SHP has risen by 4.7 percentage points since 2006 to 72.5%;
 - Services provided from our main office are easy to access (Mon-Fri 9.00-5.00) and there is freephone access and an out-of-hours emergency helpline;
 - Customers are consulted on access and their views are responded to (e.g. planned increased access to customer services from April 2008);
 - There have been improvements since 2006 in the number of tenants who find staff helpful and able to deal with problems and in the numbers satisfied with the outcome of their contact;
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- The Board has 3 Customer Focus Champions (Chair & 2 tenant members) who champion customer focus issues at board meetings. They also led on a customer focus workshop with Board members and SHP managers in 2008;
 - We carry out customer focused service reviews across the organisation including a review of customer care and access in Autumn 2008;
 - Learning from complaints has become more effective (e.g. post-termination garage inspections are now carried as following complaints from new garage renters) and residents are now involved in complaints resolution (stage 3 complaints panel);
 - We use surveys to analyse customer satisfaction with a range of services (e.g. major works, responsive repairs, reception services, new tenancies) and introduce service improvements as a result (e.g. new sign up process);
 - We involve and train residents in mystery shopping programmes to monitor a range of customer interfaces and measure the performance of customer services;
 - Current service standards for customer care and access are in place and are regularly monitored;
 - Customer care training has been provided to customer services and other front line staff;
 - There is an increasing range of meaningful involvement opportunities, with efforts to reach out to traditionally hard to reach communities (e.g. Durand Close Youth Group). However there has been a slight increase in the number of tenants dissatisfied with opportunities to participate in management and decision making;
 - The Resident Involvement Compact has been comprehensively reviewed by residents, staff and TPAS resulting in a more user friendly compact available in more accessible forms;
 - We have strong and productive relationships with resident representative groups (e.g. the chairs of SFTRA and SLA meet with the Chief Executive on a regular basis);
 - A number of resident-led groups operate to feedback on service delivery and shape service developments (e.g. Service Improvement Group, Repairs Investment Group);
 - SHP actively seeks the views and involves customers to help develop and design services, identifying areas for improvement in the plethora of groups set out within the resident compact. These include formal groups such as SFTRA, SLA and the SIG. There are a number of localised resident groups which focus on local issues, these groups have helped to identify areas for improvement within the Estate Action Plans;

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- Customers (both residents democracies and in general) are involved in identifying budget priorities and the budget setting process. As a result resources have been shifted to reflect customers' priorities (e.g. increases in the responsive repairs budget);
 - There is a resident-led Service Improvement Group which undertakes customer journey mapping of a number of our key processes to identify improved customer outcomes;
 - All staff have undertaken customer involvement training delivered by TPAS and job descriptions reflect a requirement for all staff to participate in customer involvement activities;
 - Customers have been trained and sit on interview panels for key customer-facing staff.

2.2 It was the view of the Audit Commission in their inspection of October 2009 that for access and customer care strengths outweighed weaknesses. They commented that "Customer care is now embedded across the organisation and services are accessible with clear service standards. Information is well produced and readily available including an informative website. Complaints are being responded to quickly and learnt from. Residents' feedback is being used to improve services. However, not all service standards are being met and not all types of complaints are being captured."

2.3 Further it was the Audit Commission's view that strengths and weaknesses are balanced in resident involvement. They commented: "A high quality involvement compact provides a clear framework and standards for involvement. Residents have a range of formal and informal mechanisms to get involved and their involvement is well resourced and having a positive impact on service improvement. However, there is limited success in engaging a larger and more diverse range of tenants, involvement in strategic decisions is limited and satisfaction with opportunities to participate is low."

Where Do We Want To Be?

3.1 Based on the reviews of customer access, care and involvement we want to ensure that customers are the focus of all aspects of our services. We will know and understand our customers and we will involve them in deciding how best to respond to their needs and aspirations. This will be demonstrated by there being:

- An understanding of what excellence means to customers and services consistently delivered to that standard;
- A range of readily available means to access all services for all customers;
- Clear and consistent delivery of customer care to a high standard;
- A well trained staff motivated to deal with customers in a professional, friendly and caring way and who recognise that customer care is the responsibility of all staff;

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- An excellent service experience for all our customers, measured by a range of tools, on a continuous basis so that we can recognise how and when we can do things better and right first time;
 - A co-ordinated approach to customer involvement that enables all residents to meaningfully participate in the development and monitoring of services through a range of mechanisms that are responsive to their preferences for involvement;
 - Service design and improvement that is customer focussed.

Our Strategic Objectives

4.1 In order to achieve our desired service level we have prioritised a number of strategic objectives and identified the scope of each objective across the service. These strategic objectives are:

- **To remove any barriers that prevent customers accessing our services [CF01]**
Covering contact methods, availability, barriers, information
- **To continuously improve the level of customer service to meet customer expectations [CF02]**
Covering care, standards, complaints,
- **To enable all customers to be meaningfully involved in the development and monitoring of our services [CF03]**
Covering opportunities, compact, customer training, representation

4.2 To measure our progress in meeting these objectives we will use quantitative and qualitative indicators including:

- Satisfaction with our services;
- Satisfaction with involvement opportunities and the extent to which participation makes a difference;
- How complaints are handled and resolved;
- The level of customer service being delivered across the organisation;
- Our performance against service standards;
- Our level of customer insight.

Embedding Our Drivers

5.1 In embedding a focus on customers we will seek to embed the organisation's other strategic drivers:

- We will know and respond to the **diversity** of the local community in ensuring that access is improved for all customers particularly those who currently find it difficult to access our services. We will give consideration to the diverse range of needs in providing high quality customer service to all. We will enable all customers to meaningfully participate in the development and monitoring of services and provide involvement opportunities that meet the preferences for involvement of diverse groups;

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- We will address the **risks** associated with embedding this driver by monitoring the implementation of this strategy and ensuring that sufficient and appropriate staff training takes place in order to provide the capacity and capability to embed customer focus;
 - We will take account of **sustainability** issues by considering residents' preferred methods of communication and encourage email wherever possible. Service improvements have been instrumental in promoting Free-cycle, Vine Project and other environmentally friendly recycling after a meeting discussed bulk waste management;
 - In pursuing opportunities for **value for money** we will assess the cost effective of all means of accessing our services. We will seek to identify the most cost effective methods for 'mystery shopping' our services and for involving customers in the design, delivery and development of our services.

Issues To Consider

- 6.1** The issues which may impact on service delivery that we are aware of are:
- Changes in government policy, particularly those affecting the way in which we are required to involve residents in service delivery;
 - We need to be able to identify the need for, and opportunities to access, training for residents to increase their capacity for meaningful involvement;

- The new Tenant Services Authority and the National Tenant Voice will seek to influence all aspects of customer focus with the TSA eventually having the regulatory powers to support it;
- Our success in delivering customer outcomes is dependent on our contractors having a customer focused culture. Thus, we need to ensure that customer focus is also fully embedded in the approach of our partners.

Expected Impact

7.1 We expect, through the successful implementation of this strategy, to have the following impact:

- **Customers** will benefit from a range of means to access our services that are appropriate to their needs. They will receive a consistently high level of good customer service from all staff. They will be able to contribute to the development and monitoring of our services in ways that meet their requirements;
- **SHP** will be more customer focused with staff naturally putting the customer at the heart of all that they do. Staff will be more visible and our services more transparent to the customer.

Resources Required





8.1 To successfully deliver this strategy we will require the appropriate level of resources, the implications of which are:

- The enhanced level of staffing for customer care will need to be maintained. Many of the actions arising from the strategy will be delivered within service areas and they will be required to use their existing staff resources for this purpose;
- The CRM system needs to be embedded so that there is effective recording and tracking of customer contact across the organisation. We will also need to consider ongoing enhancements to the system to ensure it remains fit for purpose.









Strategy Delivery

9.1 The actions required to implement this strategy in its first year are contained in the appended Customer Focus Action Plan 2010-11. It should be noted that in the process of embedding customer focus many of the actions relating to this driver will be contained in the Service Plans of the individual service areas.









Action Plan Key


Reference	Service Improvement Plan reference	Summary of action	Responsible Officer	Start date	End date	Evidence of action having been completed
		Expected impact on customer focus (access, care or involvement)				 Expected impact on risk
		Expected impact on equality & diversity				 Expected impact on value for money




























Improvement Actions

























CF.IA.01	SIP03	Ensure all informal and formal complaints about all services are captured and analysed	DE	Apr-10	Jun-10	Complaints database logs all complaints, quarterly analysis undertaken (through MPG)
		Tenants are more satisfied with the services they receive				 Reduces the risk of ongoing dissatisfaction with SHP services
		Increased satisfaction will be achieved across all diversity groups				 Satisfaction improved within existing service delivery costs
CF.IA.02	SIP06	Review the structure of customer involvement responsibilities across the organisation	JC	Apr-10	Jun-10	Involves consultation, recommendations and Board approval
		Customers satisfaction with opportunities to participate will increase				 Reduces the risk that staffing structures will prevent improved performance
		Customers satisfaction across all diversity groups will increase				 More effective structure will enable us to provide customer involvement opportunities more efficiently

Operational Actions

CF.OA.01	Produce and promote Customer Involvement Toolkit for Staff	AL	Apr-10	Jun-10	Toolkit produced, training provided and campaign to promote	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Reduces the risk that customer involvement activities are not identified and carried out effectively			
						
CF.OA.02	Continue with resident mystery shopping programme as part of the Service review programme	LG	Apr-10	Jun-10	Residents trained, mystery shopping taken place & service improvements initiated and included in service reviews	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Residents involved in continuous improvement and raising standards			
						

CF.OA.03	Hold a Customer Involvement week that attracts more diverse groups	AL	Apr-10	Jul-10	Programme of activity, records of attendance and no's of residents recruited to Sounding Board, outcomes and evaluation
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Wide range of targeted activities will enable diverse groups to participate			
					
CF.OA.04	Embed CRM to ensure right first time approach across the organisation	DI	Apr-10	Sep-10	Reports produced and service standards exceeded
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Customers more likely to have their issues resolved at first contact			
					
CF.OA.05	Address the TSA standards and set local standards with residents	DE	Apr-10	Oct-10	Standards set and monitoring in place
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Ensures customer involvement in target setting and ensures targets are appropriate to delivering excellent services			
					
CF.OA.06	Recruitment of resident member to each Complaints Panel to ensure independence	DI	Apr-10	Mar-11	Resident member recruited & trained
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Involves residents more directly in complaints resolution			
					
CF.OA.07	Review and monitor service charters	DE	Apr-10	Mar-11	Service Charters monitored and targets met or exceeded
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Reduces the risk that service standards are not appropriate to the delivery of services to the standards identified by customers			
					
CF.OA.08	Participate in NFA Customer Care benchmarking group (London & SE)	DI	Apr-10	Mar-11	Host meeting April 2010, feedback to customer care team
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): By identifying and learning from best practice we can deliver better quality services for the same cost			
					
CF.OA.09	All frontline staff to participate in the Institute of Customer Care standard	DE	Apr-10	Mar-11	Development takes place, accreditation takes place
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Customer facing staff are able to provide a higher quality service			
					

CF.OA.10	Implement programme for all staff to provide customer care with support	DI	Apr-10	Mar-11	Support has taken place & staff have recorded examples of customer care provided
	 ✓	Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Reduces the risk that customer care is not applied consistently across the whole organisation			
					
CF.OA.11	Carry out a training programme for residents	AL	Apr-10	Mar-11	Programme published, training delivered, participation analysed & evaluated
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Customers are able to build capacity and skills to make involvement more effective			
					
CF.OA.12	Participate in the London Residents Involvement Champions Group	AL	Apr-10	Mar-11	Attendance at meetings, feedback provided to staff via Managers Performance Group
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): By identifying and learning from best practice we can deliver better quality services for the same cost			
	 ✓				
CF.OA.13	Hold a programme of Youth Focus Groups on estates	AL	May-10	Aug-10	Produce a programme, focus groups held and outcomes evaluated
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Increases the level of involvement from a traditionally under-represented group			
 ✓					
CF.OA.14	Provide customer care refresher training to all staff and new starters	DI	Jun-10	Oct-10	Training undertaken
	 ✓	Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Reduces the risk that customer care is not applied consistently across the whole organisation			
					
CF.OA.15	Monitor the implementation of the service improvement plan	LG	Jun-10	Mar-11	Service plans updated and reported to the MPG and Board monthly
	 ✓	Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Reduces the risk that identified service improvements are not delivered			
					
CF.OA.16	Investigate feasibility of implementing a residents community chest scheme for estate improvements	AL	Jul-10	Sep-10	Results of research, report to board with recommendations
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Gives customers an increased say in how resources are spent ensuring more effective use of resources			
	 ✓				

CF.OA.17	Investigate and make recommendations for a system to track, monitor and analyse Sounding Board member involvement and activity	AL	Aug-10	Oct-10	Produce report for board with results of research, cost analysis and recommendations.
	 ✓	Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Reduces the risk that we are unable to make effective use of the Sounding Board			
CF.OA.18	Publish Sounding Board newsletter twice a year	AL	Aug-10	Mar-11	Sounding Board newsletter produced, with resident involvement and sent to all Sounding Board members
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Increases customer awareness of the difference that their involvement has made			
CF.OA.19	Establish a youth forum with representatives recruited from youth focus groups	AH	Sep-10	Dec-10	Forum set up and promoted, outcomes identified and evaluated
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
 ✓		Provides a formal mechanism for an under-represented group to express their views and to influence decision making			
CF.OA.20	Carry out an audit of telephony and written correspondence across the organisation	BN	Sep-10	Mar-11	Audit complete and report fed back to MPG
	 ✓	Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Reduces the risk that customer contact is not dealt with according to established service standards			
CF.OA.21	Consider offering mystery shopping services to other housing organisations in the Borough	DE	Oct-10	Mar-11	MS programme promoted and services commissioned
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
	 ✓	Generates inward investment from existing resources			
CF.OA.22	Participate in the CCA accreditation for Customer Care Team	DE	Jan-11	Mar-11	Accreditation achieved
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Provides customers with greater assurance that customer care is being delivered to recognised standards			





Putting Customers First
Making Services Accessible To All
Achieving Value For Money
Providing Quality Homes
Creating Safe, Welcoming Neighbourhoods
