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ADOPTED: 25.1.17

REVIEWED: 26.2.20

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Communication is a key function for Prospect Community Housing in terms of providing high quality customer service to the wide range of our stakeholders. How we communicate also has a big impact on the perception of the organisation. This policy and the associated procedures support staff to ensure our communications are appropriate, clear and consistent.

1.2 It should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Committee Members Code of Governance, section 6.2
- Committee Members Code of Conduct, section 4.13
- Staff Code of Conduct, sections 5.1 – 5.3
- IT System Security and Use and Communications policies.
- Openness and Confidentiality Policy.

2.0 THE SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER

2.1 The relevant outcome of the Scottish Social Housing Charter for the Communication Policy is:

Outcome 2: Communication

Social landlords manage their business so that:

- Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

3.0 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 Our stakeholders are people or organisations with a direct involvement or interest in our operation and performance, including staff, tenants, residents, contractors, consultants, committee members, local partners and elected representatives.

3.2 It is important that we communicate effectively with stakeholders. This may be:

- Verbally by face to face meetings, telephone, in groups or estate walkabouts
- In writing by letter or newsletter
- Electronically through email, text, electronic newsletter, My Prospect Account or our website
- By social media such as Facebook and Twitter

3.3 We use our housing management system to offer a range of communication preferences to our tenants and residents to ensure communications are received in a format which suits. We also tailor our methods of communication to accommodate any particular needs.

3.4 We raise awareness of our activities and news via articles in the local and national media as well as social media and our website.

3.5 Any formal enquiries from national or regional media will initially be handled by our Director, or in their absence, or a member of Management Team.

4.0 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

4.1 We recognise that efficient internal communication is key in ensuring great teamwork, high staff motivation and satisfaction. Success in these areas assists in the delivery of excellent customer service.

4.2 Prospect has a range of communication approaches internally including regular work review meetings, monthly staff briefings, staff or committee meetings or away days, annual appraisals, surveys, consultations, staff meals, open door policy, staff room etc.

5.0 CUSTOMER CHARTER

5.1 As a housing association based within a community, we recognise the importance of a personal relationship with our tenants and residents, rather than a more corporate approach. Thus, many of our communications must achieve a balance of being friendly, clear and in plain English yet also being professional and on occasion, communicating an unwelcome message.

5.2 We have developed a Customer Charter with staff and our tenants. This will help us to provide a consistent high-quality service which helps to clarify expectations of staff and customers. The Charter can be found at Appendix 1.

6.0 MONITORING

6.1 In order to ensure that the objectives of this policy are met, we will:

- Encourage and support each other to adhere to Prospect's Customer Charter.
- Use feedback from customers such as complaints, compliments and regular surveys to make improvements where appropriate.

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND POLICY REVIEW

7.1 Each Manager is responsible for ensuring this policy is applied in their department. However, each staff and committee member have a responsibility take personal responsibility for providing good service by communicating effectively.

7.2 The Housing Manager will ensure that the Management Committee reviews this policy at least every 3 years.

Approved by the Management Committee on 26 February 2020

Next review due by February 2023

Appendix 1

PROSPECT'S CUSTOMER CHARTER - OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU!

WE HAVE OUR CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY AT HEART

- We work with our customers to find better ways of doing things
- We work with other local organisations to improve the community

WE ASK, LISTEN, RESPOND AND LEARN

- We regularly consult with our customers and ask for feedback
- We listen to our customers' viewpoint, opinions, and feedback
- We let our customers know of the changes we make as a result of their feedback
- When we get things wrong, we learn from the experience

WE DO WHAT WE SAY WE WILL

- We provide clear timescales for work to be carried out
- We update our customers with appointment times
- If there are any changes, we keep our customers informed
- We use a variety of methods of communication to keep our customers informed in a way that they prefer

WE ARE OPEN, HONEST AND APPROACHABLE

- Our staff are friendly, approachable, knowledgeable and professional
- We hope our customers feel they can contact us for help
- We treat our customers as individuals

WE SUPPORT AND ARE SUPPORTIVE OF OUR CUSTOMERS

- By being approachable, listening to our customers and being actively involved in the local area we can support our customers when they most need help, either by providing that help ourselves or by helping our customers approach other specialist agencies.
- By having strong links in the community, we are able to support groups of tenants be more actively involved in the community

PROSPECT EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT RECORD



Title of policy/ practice/ strategy	Communication Policy	
Department	Housing Management	
Who is involved in the EQIA?	Catherine Louch	
Type of policy/ practice/ strategy	New <input type="checkbox"/>	Existing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Date completed	3 February 2020	

Stage 1: Screening Record

What is the main purpose of the policy?

Prospect’s Communication Policy outlines our approach to communications with internal and external stakeholders. It links to the Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcome 2: Communications.

Who will the policy benefit and how?

This policy impacts and should benefit tenants, service users, employees, committee, stakeholders, the wider community and touches on our relationship with the media. The policy and Customer Charter will assist to ensure clarity and a consistent approach. This should have a positive impact on service delivery for our tenants giving clarity of the service they can expect from Prospect. The policy also clarifies our approach to communications with external of stakeholders.

For each equality group, does or could the policy have a negative impact?

Protected characteristic	Negative	Positive/no impact	Don't know
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy & maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief (including no belief)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Are there any potential barriers to implementing the policy?

None identified.

	Yes	No
Is a full EQIA required?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered no to the above question explain why a full EQIA is not required:

No impact on equalities identified:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	

Stage 2: Data and evidence gathering, involvement and consultation

Include here the results of your evidence gathering, including qualitative and quantitative data and the source of that information, whether national statistics, surveys or consultations with relevant equality groups.

Source	Qualitative evidence provided	Quantitative evidence provided	Which protected characteristics are covered?	Gaps identified/ action taken
Management information data		Annual staff and committee equalities data	Age, disability, gender, ethnicity. In some cases other protected characteristics	Membership data not collected.
Tenant satisfaction survey		Survey carried out in 2019	All protected characteristics.	Data becoming out of date.
Committee, Equalities Working Group and Tenants Forum minutes	Equality related issues identified and discussed		Various	
Review of complaints received	Tenant/service user experience	Statistical data on types of complaint	All protected characteristics	Implementation of Cx will assist with data collection and analysis of protected characteristics
Observations/conversations (anecdotal)	Staff/committee/tenant/service user levels of understanding, inclusive practice		All protected characteristics	
Edinburgh Census 2011		Statistical data	Age disability, gender, ethnicity, marital status, religion or belief.	Data becoming out of date.
EdIndex data		Statistical data provided for individuals on the housing waiting list	Age, disability, gender, ethnicity. In some cases other protected characteristics.	Data becoming out of date.
SHR Annual Return on Charter data		Statistical data on staff, committee and tenant profile for RSLs	Disability, ethnicity.	

Stage 3: Assessing the impacts

How might the policy impact on people who share protected characteristics? Include both positive and negative impacts.

Protected Characteristic	Description of Impact
Age	Offering information in a range of formats to suit individuals reflects that different people like to receive communications in different formats. Our 2019 Tenant survey found that our tenants aged 55 and over are least likely to use our website and prefer that we communicate with them in writing or via the newsletter. However, our younger tenants were keener for us to reduce paper communications and promote the use of My Prospect account.
Disability	Striving to communicate in different formats such as large print, via websites or our tenant portal will have a positive impact on our customers with poor sight or mobility. Our 2019 survey shows that 42% of respondents said either they or someone in their household had some form of health problem or disability. Those with a disability were significantly less likely to have access to the internet (45% vs 11%).
Gender reassignment	No impact identified.
Marriage & civil partnership	Our 2019 Survey shows that single people and those living with partners are more likely to use the internet on their phone to transact with us.
Pregnancy & maternity	No impact identified.
Race	Using plain English and keeping communications clear and to the point will have a positive impact on our customers where English isn't their first language. We will also continue to offer translated communications on request. Our 2019 survey shows that 77% of our tenants are white Scottish while 10% are white Polish, 4% are black African. Our Polish tenants are more interested in using email, letters and the website than the newsletter whilst our African tenants prefer use of text.
Religion or belief (including no belief)	No impact identified.
Sex	No impact identified.
Sexual orientation	No impact identified.

How does the policy promote equality of opportunity?

This Communication Policy aims to outline the way in which our communications are presented to internal and external stakeholders. However it recognises that our customers have a wide range of preferences or requirements and, where possible, we will aim to honour these in the communication approaches we use.

How does the policy promote good relations?

By offering a range of communication methods in a consistent and clear style and format, we aim to improve service delivery to all.

Stage 4: Decision making and monitoring

Identifying and establishing any required mitigating action

If, following the impact analysis, you think you have identified any unlawful discrimination – direct or indirect - you must consider and set out what action will be undertaken to mitigate the negative impact.

Does the assessment show a potential for differential impact on any group(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is there potential for unlawful direct or indirect discrimination?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

What arrangements could be implemented to reduce or mitigate any potential adverse or negative impacts identified?

Describing how Equality Impact analysis has shaped the policy making process

As part of the implementation of this policy, we will develop a range of standard communications in different formats. To ensure that we meet the outcomes of this assessment, our tenants and residents will be able to specify their communications preferences. There may be resource impacts here dependent on the demand for large print documents or translation.

Monitoring and Review

We have recently undertaken a large scale Tenant Satisfaction Survey. As part of the analysis of the results of this survey, the Equalities working group will assess whether further work is required as part of the measures introduced in this policy and this impact assessment. Any tasks identified will be incorporated into the Tenant Satisfaction Survey Action Plan. This will be reviewed by committee and our Tenants’ Forum.

The policy and this assessment will be reviewed in 3 years’ time.

Stage 5 - Authorisation of EQIA

Please confirm that:

- ◆ This Equality Impact Assessment has informed the development of this policy:

Yes No

- ◆ Opportunities to promote equality in respect of age, disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race and religion or belief have been considered, i.e.:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation;
- Removing or minimising any barriers and/or disadvantages;
- Taking steps which assist with promoting equality and meeting people's different needs;
- Encouraging participation (e.g. in public life)
- Fostering good relations, tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Yes No

Declaration

I am satisfied with the equality impact assessment that has been undertaken for Prospect Community Housing's Communication Policy.

Name: Catherine Louch

Position: Housing Manager

Authorisation date: 03 February 2020