



Cymoedd i'r Arfordir
Valleys to Coast

Customer and Community Engagement Strategy

2021-2024



Customer and Community Engagement Strategy

Introduction

This strategy sets out Valleys to Coast's approach to engagement with customers and communities.

Customer engagement is key to ensuring we deliver a service that not only meets but exceeds customer expectations. We put customers at the heart of our business and we want the communities that we serve to thrive.

We want to engage with customers and communities to help us understand customer wants, needs and desires, local priorities and issues. To help us tailor and focus our services and resources to deliver quality and value, and ensure that our customers, their communities and their homes are safe and happy.

Our customer and community engagement is about customers becoming involved in decisions about services that affect them, in a way that is flexible and offers choice.



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Our vision and aims

Vision

We will engage customers at the right time and make it easy for customers and communities to communicate with us.

We will be transparent, open and honest in our engagement and communication. We will do this by:

- providing information in a way that enables meaningful engagement and develops a culture of sharing information, learning and ideas, and a system and environment that makes it easy for customers' to engage with us
- clearly explaining the role of customers in the engagement process; and
- demonstrating how customer input has informed our work, and feedback on what action has or will be taken.

Aim of this strategy:

- To set out our current offer around customer engagement
 - To set out our plan on developing engagement
 - To set out the ways in which we will encourage and enable customers to be involved
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The Bigger Picture

Engagement runs throughout all our services and will not operate in isolation. For the purposes of this strategy, customer is in relation to the following:

- Tenants
- Leaseholders
- Occupants
- Residents

Customer engagement is defined as follows:

It is the relationship a customer wants with us, and us listening to customers who want to work with us in the design, delivery and review of our services, to meet needs that enable individuals and communities to flourish.

This strategy has been developed in line with our Corporate strategy and our commitment to:

- delivering brilliant services that are easy to use, accessible, responsive and reliable; with an offer of digital solutions so good that customers choose to use them;
- developing the voice of the customer to help shape, improve and evaluate our services; and
- understanding our customer needs, providing choice.

The strategy takes into consideration recommendations from The Regulatory Board for Wales' document 'The Right Stuff – Hearing the tenants voice'¹ which emphasises the need to focus on outcomes rather than adopting a specific methodology.

¹ The Right Stuff – Hearing the Tenants' Voice – Regulatory Board for Wales. Review of Tenant involvement in Wales (July 2019).

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How do we engage with customers?

We recognise that not all of our customers are the same and will want to engage with us in different ways and at different times. We understand that some customers will not want to engage at all. Our current offer allows for customers to engage with us via:



We have a variety of tools to enable engagement and we have had some real success with engagement both pre and post pandemic.

Current gaps in the service can be found in the cross organisational ownership of engagement, the need for planning, and building in lead time for engagement activities, and post pandemic a need to strengthen our digital offering.

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What do our customers say?

In February 2020 we reached out to customers we had existing relationships with, and met with them where they told us communication should be a priority; they felt we need to work harder at developing good, honest, transparent communication; and communicating what is happening and why. They want to hear more about our future priorities for their communities and to work with us to achieve the best outcome. Providing meaningful feedback on the impact their engagement has made is also an area for improvement. Customers told us they are keen to build relationships.

In a short digital survey, 'How can we work better together?', March 2020, customers told us that they want to hear from us using digital approaches; email, text, website and social media with areas of interest being repairs, improving our homes and the local community/area.

56% of respondents felt very satisfied or satisfied that Valleys to Coast listened and acted on feedback

In our most recent STAR survey undertaken in March 2021 56% of customers told us they were very satisfied or satisfied that Valleys to Coast listened to tenants and residents' views and acted upon them.

51% of customers were satisfied or very satisfied that Valleys to Coast gives them opportunities to participate in their decision-making process and 49% of customers stated they were satisfied or very

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satisfied that we gave them a say in how things are managed. This is a good base to start from and we feel that we can make improvements in these areas.

The same survey identified that a third of respondents did not have access to the internet, which returns us to the earlier point of us ensuring we have a variety of methods of engagement.

Looking to the future

Welsh Government is highlighting the importance of tenant engagement in the successful running of a modern housing association and the need to evidence effective tenant engagement. Evidencing we are listening to our customers and that their voices are impacting how we deliver our services is an increasingly important element of regulation.²

Our offer to customers needs to grow to offer more choice and flexibility, we have work to do around customer engagement and hearing the customers voice.

² [The Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations Registered in Wales](#), Welsh Government. (January 2022).

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Our approach

Our overall approach is to ensure we are speaking to customers who have had direct experience or insight into a service or element of service. This will give us the most effective and authentic views to influence the development of our service. This will move us away from the traditional single group of customers who are consulted on all services to a more **bespoke** engagement approach dependent on the individual service requirements.

Engagement sits across all colleagues and departments at Valleys to Coast. To support the cross organisational need for customer engagement we will identify **influencers** to enable us to embed the customer voice throughout the business and ensure customers' influencing services is business as usual.

The diagram on the following page sets out our themes across the phases, and is to be read in conjunction with our engagement tracker which sets out the how, when, where, who and details on how we will monitor success.

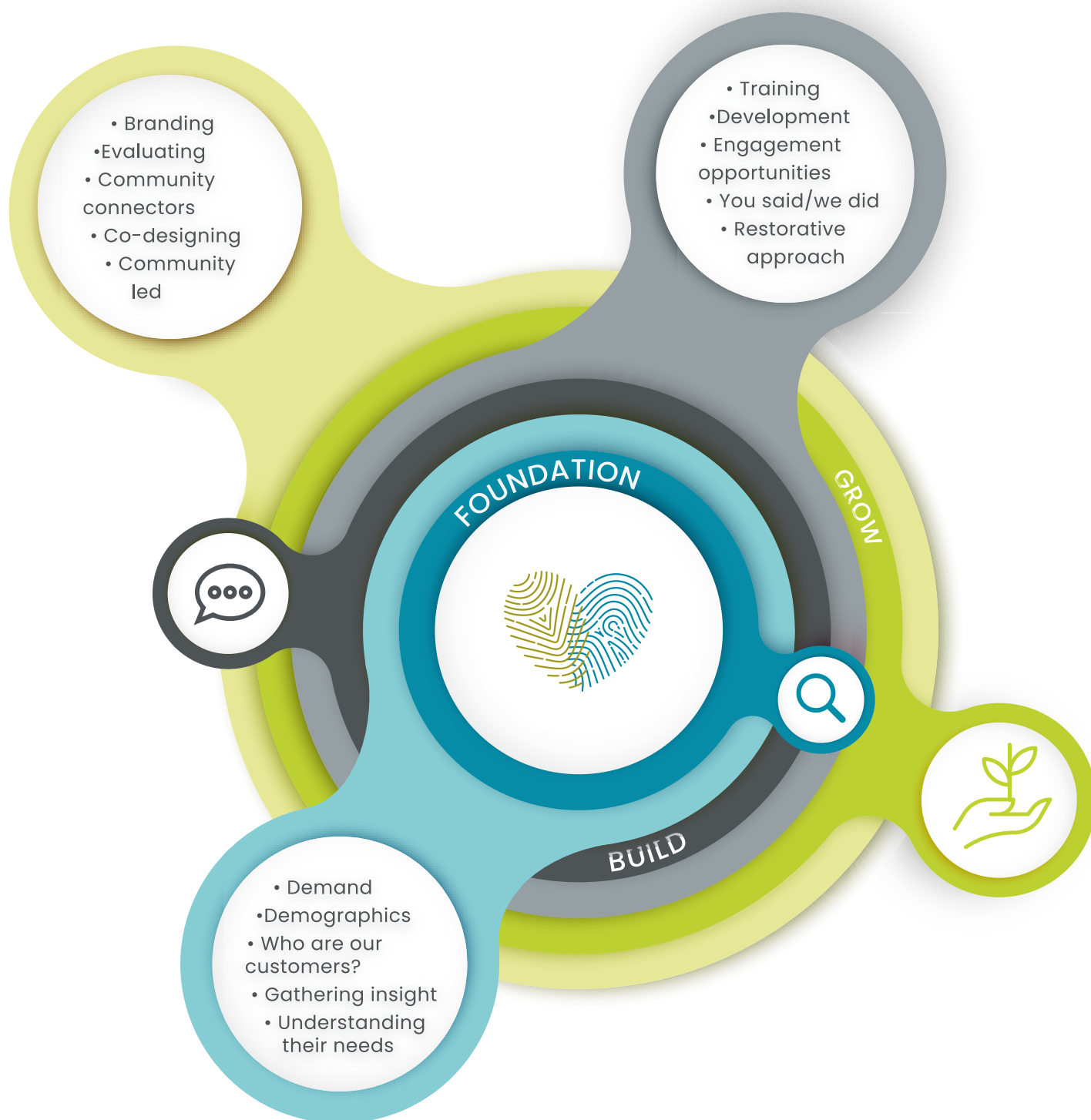
The engagement tracker is intended to provide more detailed narrative around the theme approaches and to be flexible in line with internal and external environmental changes.

There will be different phases of engagement at different points in time, and they might often intertwine. Each approach to engagement will be determined by the purpose of a project.

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Foundation

Our foundation phase is about us understanding who our customers are, their wants, needs and desires, and what they think of us as an organisation and their experience of the services we provide.

We will understand and respect how customers wish to engage with us, and use this to get underneath feedback. This information will be shared across the organisation up to board level to develop a greater understanding of what our customers are telling us.

We will work to build our digital approach so we have a broad range of engagement methods, using knowledge and data, together with further engagement in communities to really understand how and why customers want to interact with us.

Interventions such as the pilot project will allow us to introduce a more in depth approach to our customer insight by including thematic interviews and focus groups to gain insight beyond the immediate customer experience, to understand the impact on their lives. Working closely with customers on our decarb journey will allow us to understand their needs and desires and develop the programme together.

We want to see a strengthening of our feedback process so customers know that we are listening and what we are doing, whilst developing our approach to ensure the customer voice is heard consistently at a strategic level.

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Build

Our build phase will see us working with customers to deliver brilliant core services and working towards building resilient communities.

We will identify and try new ways of engaging customers and communities in our services and decision making, through areas such as digital activities and participatory budgeting. We will ensure the customer voice influences business decisions and helps us achieve corporate objectives.

Customers and communities will be supported with training and development opportunities so they are able to grow with us. Ensuring customers and communities are aware of the impact of their engagement will be a key element in our engagement, adopting a 'You said, we did approach'.

As we build engagement we will use data and engagement approaches to support communities to come together and develop a network where decisions and projects are developed at a community level.

Grow

Our grow phase is about ongoing relationships with customers where we move beyond brilliant core service to a centre of excellence, where we walk alongside customers to co-create and design our services.

We will work with communities to understand the role we can play to inspire and encourage them to achieve their priorities. Customers and communities will trust and see us as a partner of choice to work

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together on challenges and improving their local community.

Using insight and the customer voice we will create and tailor our services to meet the needs of customers, and continually evaluate to ensure customers are instigating business decisions throughout the whole organisation.

Governance

This strategy will be owned and adopted by our Board. The Board will hold the Leadership Team to account for putting the strategy into action, providing oversight and receiving periodic updates on how we are delivering, over time, the improvements in engagement for our customers and communities.

The Board will also directly consider how it can more directly and impactfully hear the voices of our customers.

Review

This is a three year strategy and will be reviewed quarterly by the Customer Services Manager and Customer Engagement Partner through review of the measures of success.

The engagement tracker will form part of senior leadership meetings to ensure progress and the customers voice will be heard bi-annually through presentation to the board.
