

Making the Connection - Blackwood's Customer Engagement Plan 2018-2021

PREFACE

Making the Connection - Blackwood's Customer Engagement Plan has been co-produced by a working group consisting of employees and customer representatives from each of our three regions. As active participants in the project group our customer representatives ensured we gather a comprehensive range of views. This plan will be delivered over a three-year timeframe from April 2018 to March 2021.

We have named the plan **Making the Connection** for two key reasons:

- **Making** gives the plan its proactive and dynamic nature of our approach, demonstrating the input that both Blackwood and customers will make. As a member of this project team commented, it makes it sound 'alive'.
- **Connection** not only promotes the use of digital channels, but also suggests a high level of engagement between Blackwood and our customers, as well as between customers themselves.

Our approach to developing the plan has been built on our core values as an organisation, and on the key principle that we will identify and agree core content of the plan in partnership with our customers to ensure that we truly reflect their views.

Reflecting on their role within the group a customer stated:

"As a customer for over 20 years, I have often wished to influence and engage with Blackwood in a number of ways. By being part of the Making the Connection team, I am pleased that we have put together a plan allowing myself and others to do so."
– Customer Representative.

The work by this group has been built on through a series of events to gather the views of tenants, care home residents and care at home customers across Blackwood, as well as taking into account learnings from our 2017 AGM.

"Seeing our new Customer Engagement Plan come together has been a rewarding experience for all. I am looking forward to seeing the Plan delivered in the coming years, and I'm excited at the opportunity of achieving a notable and quantifiable increase in engagement and customer satisfaction"
- Angela Currie, Housing & Care Director

We would like to thank all who have taken the time to assist in producing the Plan, including members of Team Blackwood and employees. In particular we would like to thank our customers who have taken part in the consultation activity to inform the production of this Plan.

Making the Connection Working Group, March 2018.

INTRODUCTION

As a customer-focused housing and care provider we are committed to engaging with our customers to ensure that we deliver both quality and value within our services that we continue to focus on developing and designing our services to reflect a level of understanding of our customer's needs and aspirations.

Having an innovative customer engagement plan is instrumental in ensuring that we continue to provide an excellent standard of service for both our **current** and **future customers**. It will provide a wide range of opportunities to engage with our customers in a meaningful way that helps us improve services, design and deliver new services and help customers **live their life to the full**.



CONTEXT

Blackwood is required to produce a tenant involvement strategy for housing, but as a housing and care provider we see the value in having a customer engagement strategy that combines our approach to all our customers.

We believe it is important to find out what's important to you, what your hopes and aims are, and to plan and review your service so we know we are delivering a product that is tailored to you. The agencies that regulate social care services also view engagement as extremely important and expect us to encourage and support everyone who uses our services to have their say.

Our engagement strategy meets important legal and regulatory requirements. These are:

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Scottish Social Housing Charter 2017
- The Scottish Government's national guidelines on tenant participation
- National Care Standards
- The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2002
- Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice for Social Care Employers and Social Care Workers

HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

Blackwood's Customer Engagement Plan was co-produced by a team consisting of members of our own regional Housing and Care teams, Central Support from our Marketing and Innovation Teams and members of Team Blackwood, our customer scrutiny teams.

We consulted with three groups of customers in late 2017; tenants, care home residents and care at home/housing support customers, asking two basic questions:

1. What would encourage you to get involved with Blackwood?
2. What methods would you prefer to use to get involved?

Customer Engagement days were held across our care services to gather the views of care home and care at home customers. An insert was also included in the annual Customer Report encouraging tenants to provide their views.

From this feedback, a draft Engagement Plan was created and shared with Blackwood's Housing and Care Teams, as well as Team Blackwood, for initial feedback. This feedback was, on the whole, positive, only with minor amendments made as a result. One suggestion was made that the document should be more accessible to be more inclusive to our customer group. Thanks to this feedback, both an easy read and compact leaflet version have been produced alongside this plan.

A draft was then taken to Blackwood's Services Committee in February 2018 for approval, before being made available for all Blackwood employees and customers to feedback on during a consultation period. Following this, further amends were made before being presented to, and approved by, Blackwood's full Board in March 2018.

HOW THIS PLAN FITS WITH OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

The Customer Engagement Plan will form part of the suite of plans that supports the delivery of our main Strategy and Business Plan 2015-2020. It will play an important role in linking the actions identified in our Housing Strategy and Care Strategy.

The Plan works alongside our Housing Strategy by helping to deliver the Blackwood Housing Offer. This includes putting the Housing Officer role at the heart of all we do. A channel shift to on-line access and service provision while maintaining a personal service to those without online access will create efficiency gains, allowing for a greater customer focus.

Our Care Strategy aim is to ensure we help people live their lives to the full, so a key focus of this plan is the ways in which we can support customers to be in control of their care, live independently and have access to digital inclusion services.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE FROM THE PLAN

We believe that organisations who understand their customers are more likely to deliver better services. By gaining this understanding, we will aim to deliver more individualised services to promote greater levels of meaningful engagement which will help us to continue to deliver value and quality to our customers.

We want to ensure that our customers are enabled to:

- a) Get involved as much as they choose to do so
- b) At a level they feel comfortable at
- c) At a time convenient to them, and
- d) Has a demonstrable impact

Engaging with customers helps to make the services we provide accountable, relevant and transparent. We will develop opportunities for participation, including for those who are perhaps traditionally less likely to take part.

WHAT WILL WE DO TO ACHIEVE THIS

As Blackwood progresses with the rollout of CleverCogs™, Making the Connection has a strong focus on using technology, building on our success as the winner of the UK Housing Award 2017 for our Outstanding Approach to Digital Inclusion.

The Plan is underpinned by seven key principles as detailed below. In these, we will

- take a different approach to some of our existing services:
- develop new methods of engagement to enable us to:
- continue to support established methods of engagement and scrutiny:

Digital Shift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refocus the role of our Housing Officers will be freed up, allowing them to do more face-to-face work in their neighbourhoods and support the plan - Housing and care services will be available online and accessible 24/7 through our housing app, and by CleverCogs™ for our care customers.
Dynamic, fun and modern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging customers to engage through new, more modern digital methods - Building on traditional methods of engagement where this is appropriate
Reflect our unique challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We will aim to engage with every customer to provide a personalised service, recognising their needs and preferences - This will include understanding the needs of our customer base to remove or reduce any potential barriers to engagement - Use technology to support improved methods of engagement in more rural locations
Connect with hard to reach groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase engagement with our care at home customers - Devise ways to connect with young people, gathering their views as part of this
Increase inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equip our Housing Officers with knowledge and understanding of our neighbourhoods - Promoting local events, activities and opportunities to engage, including CleverCogs™ video communications

Support independent living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roll out our digital services, to provide all customers with internet access and digital skills - Connect our customers with other agencies to enable them to live their life to the full
Scrutiny Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to support Team Blackwood, our regional scrutiny panels nationally so that we remain open and transparent in how we develop and deliver our services - Develop opportunities for care customers to scrutinise performance and processes - Support and develop our regional tenant's organisations

We will also support those who prefer to use through more traditional methods, whilst at the same time encouraging them to engage through modern methods through initiatives such as using our Housing App to access our service or joining in with virtual estate tours.

The value of face-to-face contact between Blackwood and our customers, and between customers themselves is also at the forefront of the strategy. This will build on the social aspect of events such as our 2017 AGM.

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

For our own understanding, we will structure our activities into four levels of engagement, which form the basis of the Action Plan. Planning and organising activities in this way will allow our customers to see the range of choice and levels of commitment required across various levels of engagement.

Policy and Strategy	
What will this mean?	How will we do this?
Involvement in major decisions and providing feedback on current and new policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A co-production approach between customers and Blackwood in decision making and service design and delivery will be taken where appropriate - By using unique and modern methods, for example instead of providing paper copies of documents for feedback, you may be asked to watch a short video and respond to questions

Helping to Inform Investment Decisions	
What will this mean?	How will we do this?
Consulting our customers on local decisions on how Blackwood invests in areas such as maintenance and decoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consult on the Blackwood Standard for planned and cyclical maintenance, and on our new homes design - Seek feedback on the style and type of adaptations in our existing developments - In our Care Homes, we will use innovative co-design tools such as Talking Mats to gather views

Feeding Back on Satisfaction and Influencing Improvement

What will this mean?	How will we do this?
Giving the opportunity for customers to take part in engagement exercises such as surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gauging opinions through regular, short satisfaction surveys using innovative, digital approaches and CleverCogs™ - Listening to suggestions for improvement and evidencing these using the 'you said, we did' framework - Continue to support Team Blackwood in their scrutiny activity

Supporting Better Health and Wellbeing and Independent Living

What will this mean?	How will we do this?
Activities which will aim to reduce isolation and be beneficial to the physical and mental health of our customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build on the social aspect of events such as our 2017 AGM - Reducing isolation through digital inclusion, by providing customers with the means to connect such as free WiFi and CleverCogs™, and supporting this through training in digital skills for our customers - Be proactive in our neighbourhoods to support and encourage customers to become active citizens

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Making the Connection is scheduled to be delivered over a three-year period. We would expect the following to be delivered at yearly intervals over the three-year duration of the plan.

Year One
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop an annual timetable for the coproduction of policies and service design between customers and Blackwood - Trial new approaches for feedback on policies, such as producing video and inviting feedback from these - Devise a programme of short surveys to be sent to customers using digital methods on subjects such as planned maintenance and adaptations - In our Care Homes, we will test more innovative co-design tools such as Talking Mats to gather views and engage our customers - Continue to support and develop our Team Blackwood scrutiny panels - Regularly evidencing suggestions for improvement using the 'you said, we did' framework - Develop a set of resources for our operations teams to encourage and support local events and activities - Ensure our data collection on our customers is appropriate and being done

Year Two

- Evaluate and agree on a new approach to providing feedback on policies
- Consult on the Blackwood Standard for our new homes design
- Seek feedback on the style and type of adaptations in our existing developments to inform our approach to the Blackwood standard
- Introduce a new approach to estate tours and annual visits, including 'virtual tours' and feedback
- Support Housing Officers & Customers to connect with local community groups and facilities to promote Independent Living
- Create a Community Ambassadors programme to assist Housing Officers as a local point of contact for knowledge of the local community
- Report on data collected to gather a greater understanding of our customer base

Year Three

- Introduce online services to allow customers to access a number of our services digitally, such as paying rent and reporting repairs
- Provide internet access to all Blackwood customers in our housing developments and provide access to CleverCogs for our care customers
- Evaluation the role out of Digital Skills training and support programme to customers Develop new opportunities for care customers to scrutinise performance and processes to increase the level of quality feedback for our Care at Home customers
- Streamline administrative to free up the time of our Housing Officers to spend more time to support the health & wellbeing goals of our customers

The Scottish Housing Regulator's Annual Return on the Charter requires Blackwood to measure and report on tenant's satisfaction with getting involved with their landlord. In addition, increases in other satisfaction measures, such as those related to overall service and repairs, will also demonstrate success. Our target for these is to meet and exceed 90% of customers being satisfied.

We will also analyse feedback received from the Care Inspectorate and from our own Quality Assurance surveys to assess the satisfaction of our care customers in being involved with the service and the care which they received.

Clear evidence of the impact of engagement on decision-making will be demonstrable in policies and procedures rolled out. Feedback on the delivery of the plan will also be provided to Blackwood's board and executive management team.

There will be a notable increase in the number of ways customers can engage with Blackwood, with many of these being delivered through CleverCogs™. These in turn will also give more opportunities for difficult to reach groups.

A notable increase in these satisfaction measures, plus an increase in positive comments from the Care Inspectorate will equate to the success of the strategy.

RESOURCES

To allow engagement to develop successfully it has to be adequately resourced and supported. To support this, customer engagement budgets will be held by each region, allowing them to invest in local priorities.

Customer engagement is an intrinsic part of everyone's role in Blackwood and front line employees are trained and supported to ensure that customer engagement is a key part of our values.

The rollout of CleverCogs™, WiFi and the Blackwood App will maximise the value of participating through digital means for our customers. This digital inclusion will be supported by digital skills programmes for customers and staff.

Resources will also be allocated to trial innovative, previously unused methods of engagement, which will be aimed at our harder to reach groups of care at home and younger customers, for example. Demonstrable success in these approaches will see them rolled out to other customer groups.

Through the duration of this Plan, we will also be well underway with a new programme of recruiting and managing volunteers across our services. It is anticipated that volunteers will play an integral role in customer engagement, especially in the areas of supporting better health and wellbeing and social inclusion.

MONITORING OF THE PLAN

A monitoring group consisting of Blackwood employees and customers from all areas of our business will be set up. This group will meet on a regular basis and shall coproduce a six-monthly report to our board commenting on the success of the plan and work progressed to date and the upcoming priorities for the following year. An invite to each meeting of the group will be extended to Board members.

The success of the strategy will be evaluated in the final 6 months of the three-year period and reported and evaluated annually through the performance management and governance frameworks that already exist within Blackwood. Reported progress will also inform the production of the next three-year strategy.

The plan may also be refined during its three-year period by the annual tenant consultation exercise or other external factors as required. Any such refinement will be at the discretion of the monitoring group.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Action Plan	The supporting document to this Plan, detailing all actions to be taken, by when, and how we will measure the success of these
Blackwood App	A small programme which can be downloaded to a tablet or smartphone
CleverCogs™	Blackwood's digitally enhanced care system, find out more at http://www.blackwoodgroup.org.uk/clevercogs
Co-produce	Any document or plan which is produced in conjunction, and on equal terms, by Blackwood employees and our customers

Customer	Collective term for all tenants, care home residents, and those who receive care at home and housing support from Blackwood
Digital Inclusion	Having the right access, skills, motivation and trust to confidently access online services
Engagement	Any action taken by Blackwood, or our employees, to involve customers in decision making, social events or the provision of information
WiFi	Wireless internet access which can be used to connect smartphones, tablets and computers to the internet