

Accent

Customer
Engagement
Strategy

2024 • 2027

Our new corporate strategy places a focus on the importance of, and our commitment to, customer engagement, especially within the pillar ‘excellence through customer-influenced services’. Speaking of that commitment, our engaged customer, Emma Raven, reflects on what this means to her.

I cannot over emphasise what welcome news this strategy is. As a customer for many years, I am feeling *excited, positive* and *optimistic* about the future. Hearing that there is an intention for Accent to reach out to, *involve* and *collaborate* with customers cannot have come at a better time.

It cannot be ignored that for many families the struggle is real, battling with daily challenges, managing day to day and overcoming hurdles is something many of us have had to get to grips with. Knowing that moving forward, Accent will be hearing voices, taking the time to truly understand issues and personalising their responses can and will alleviate some of that strain. Now I know, there will be listening ears looking at customers with understanding eyes offering proactive, positive and helpful solutions.

Exciting times ahead - Promoting an ethos of new relationships coupled with a strategy to build confidence, inclusion and collaboration whilst cementing communities, at a time when it is truly needed can only be a positive step towards achieving a brighter future for all.

▶ **Emma Raven,**
*Camberley
customer*

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The Government's *Social Housing White Paper* clearly sets out the requirements for social landlords to ensure that their residents "have their voice heard".

Government research concluded that although there are some good examples of meaningful customer engagement, many social housing residents complained of being patronised, ignored and treated with disrespect.

We're committed to ensuring this is not the case for our customers.

The new Consumer Standards cover a range of service areas, key to this strategy are the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard and The Neighbourhood and Community standard. Both highlight the importance of customer input, co-design and accountability.

Accent consider engagement to be essential for ensuring that the needs and preferences of our customers are heard and met, and we believe it contributes to the overall success and sustainability of the relationship between Accent and Accent customers.

In Accent's first Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSM), 32% of customers highlighted their dissatisfaction with not being listened to by Accent. 51% said they do feel listened to with 17% not having an opinion either way.

Clearly ensuring we meet our regulatory requirements around engagement is important, but more important are the opportunities we will have to improve our service delivery if we meaningfully engage and listen to our customers.

This strategy places emphasis on authentic engagement—listening, understanding, and acting proactively to the needs, aspirations and challenges of our customers. It goes beyond tokenistic gestures and embraces a culture where our customers actively participate in the design and evolution of the services that directly impact their lives.

We understand that true customer engagement is not a transaction; it is an ongoing relationship built on trust, transparency, and a shared commitment to customer and community well-being.

It involves empowering our customers with the tools to shape their housing experiences, ensuring that their voices resonate in every decision-making process.

We have already laid the foundations to make it easier for our customers to connect with us. We have re-designed our operating model to ensure our Housing Partners look after smaller areas, of no more than 350 homes, to ensure they are able to provide a much more holistic service to customers and the communities in which they live.

We have invested in a community development team, and their purpose is to support the housing teams to embed engagement in our communities and enhance the good work that is already happening.



Purpose of our Customer Engagement Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to set out our approach to providing meaningful opportunities for our customers to engage with us.

We want to empower our customers to enable them to:

- Work with us to help shape and improve service delivery.
- Effectively challenge our performance and hold us to account when we are not delivering on our promises.
- Influence decision making at a local and national level.

Our Objectives



Improving *Service Delivery*

We will seek feedback on our services to understand customer needs, enhance service quality and resolve issues promptly to better meet the needs of our customers and communities.



Building *Trust and* *Transparency*

We will encourage regular and meaningful engagement to build trust with our customers and we will ensure there is transparency in decision-making processes and open communication with customers to alleviate concerns, address issues and dissatisfaction, and build positive relationships.



Compliance *and* *Regulation*

We will show our commitment to the strengthening of regulation around 'Customer Voice' and ensure that we evidence our compliance around hearing the 'Customer Voice' and acting on feedback, particularly in relation to the Consumer Standards. We will make it easy for customers to get involved and seek to understand the views of those customers who rarely contact us or access our services.



Enhancing *Community* *Cohesion*

We will effectively engage with our customers and local community partners to help foster a sense of community and belonging among residents. We will encourage customers to participate in community activities and decision-making processes, thereby strengthening social networks and community bonds. We will promote sustainability and provide opportunities for communities to come together and work together on initiatives such as community action days.



Supporting *Vulnerable* *Residents*

We will use insight to support our most vulnerable customers. Accent provides services to a diverse population, including vulnerable groups such as the elderly, low-income families, and individuals with disabilities. We know that engagement is crucial for understanding and addressing the unique needs of these groups, providing appropriate support, and ensuring their voices are heard.



Innovation *and Development*

We will target and tailor our consultation activities to ensure we capture valuable insights and innovative ideas for the development and improvement of our customer-facing policies and procedures.



Digital *Transformation and Communication*

We will refresh our digital engagement platforms to enable customers to interact and engage with us at a time and in a place that is most convenient for them. In the future, we will extend our digital platforms for our customers to interact with us, access services and participate in the Accent Community. We will structure our communications to ensure we provide information that helps to increase understanding and knowledge thus empowering customers with the information they need to hold us to account.



Equality, *Diversity and Inclusion*

We are committed to promoting the benefits of equality, diversity and social inclusion. We want to ensure that we hear all customer voices and that we enable all customers and future customers easy access to our services.

Our customer data is incomplete and needs to be improved. We don't hold comprehensive data on personal characteristics or vulnerabilities on either lead customers or their households. This is preventing us from being able to tailor our approach to service delivery and communication which is a major requirement of the new Consumer Standards as well as Awaab's Law.

During 2024/25, we will gather and record data on our customers and household members to ensure that we are able to tailor our services, provide appropriate support and effectively tailor our involvement opportunities to secure meaningful feedback in order to implement positive service improvements.

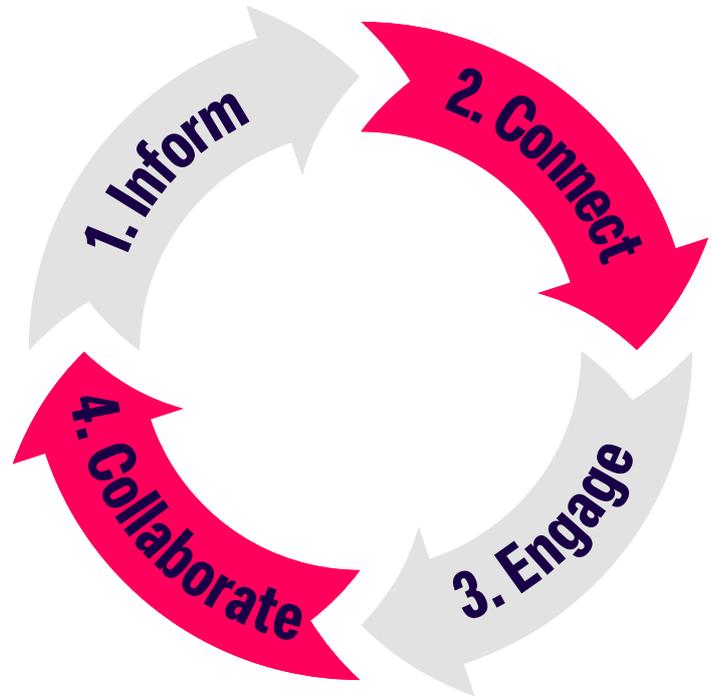


Growing *the Accent Community*

We are lucky to have involved customers on our Board and Committees. We want to grow our network of involved customers to include a wide-range of people that we can call upon to help us deliver on our promises.

We know that everyone is busy and that time is precious. We will make it as easy as possible for customers to engage with us and we will use the valuable information gathered from our interactions to drive service improvements and increase customer satisfaction in every service area.

Building our Customer Engagement Framework



1. Inform

We will work transparently with customers to ensure they possess all the information they need, in an accessible, clear and considered way, to hold us to account and show how we're performing.

2. Connect

We will use the data we hold to ensure we connect with customers in a way they prefer and remove any barriers which could prevent a relationship to be formed. Our messages will be tailored to what customers need and want to hear.

3. Engage

We will be visible in our communities, grow our channels and opportunities to have meaningful two-way conversations, ensuring that the relationships formed are trusting, open and mutually beneficial.

4. Collaborate

We will grow opportunities to collaborate on things that matter most to customers. We will innovate and problem-solve to build better customer outcomes. We will expand our scrutiny arrangements and opportunities to collaborate, and we will feed our customer voice across Accent to inform all aspects of service improvement and design.

You can't have a relationship without a two-way conversation.



Our commitment to you

Developing a *Customer Charter*

We will work with customers to develop a charter that sets out our commitments to our customers.

The charter will cover all service areas for all customers and we will work with customers to set out the promises we will make as a trusted landlord, and the commitments our customers will make as responsible tenants, shared-owners and leaseholders.

Who are Accent's Customers?

Accent provide housing options to a range of customers including tenants, leaseholders, shared-owners and freeholders. We would also consider applicants who are applying to become residents of Accent to be customers as well.

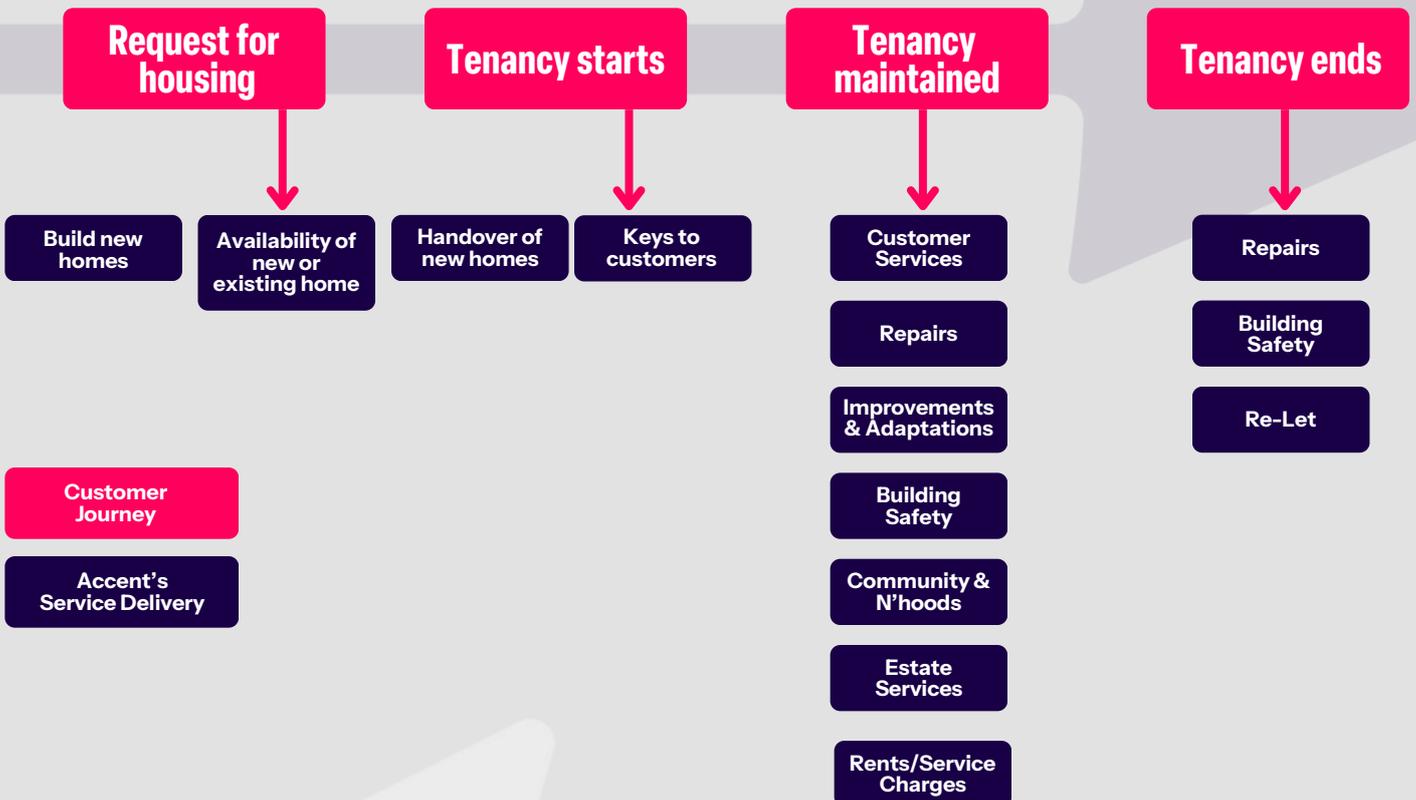
We acknowledge that we work with many external partners to help deliver services to our customers, but this strategy focuses on tenants, leaseholders, freeholders, shared-owners and applicants for housing.

The Accent *Customer Journey*



The diagram below depicts the Accent customer journey and the various touchpoints that present opportunities for positive engagement.

We believe that *customer engagement belongs to everyone at Accent* and we will promote opportunities for all colleagues to engage with our customers.



Engagement *Options*

From talking to customers during our *'Big Conversation'* and by gathering feedback through surveys, we have identified some opportunities for our customers to get involved.

There are various channels through which customer voice can be gathered, including customer reviews, surveys, social media comments, and direct interactions with customer facing teams.

Some of the options we want to explore with our customers going forward include:

Local Resident Groups – groups created to tackle local problems and issues – supported by the local housing teams but managed by residents.

National Resident Groups – initiated by Accent to look at national issues impacting a certain demographic, for example, our Specialist Housing Group.

Scrutiny activity – tailored to ensure that the customers involved have had experience of the service in recent times to ensure meaningful assessments.

TSMs – annual census survey for shared owners and those customers who rent their home from us.

Mystery Shoppers – a range of customers who routinely score us on service delivery.

Transactional surveys – short questionnaires that are routinely sent after service delivery.

Ad-hoc surveys – surveys put together to look at specific issues – tailored using data held to identify customers with a specific interest in the subject matter.

Resident Inspectors – an opportunity for customers to work alongside us to manage our repairs and maintenance contractors.

Recruitment – enabling customers to support on the selection and recruitment of key positions within Accent.



Engagement *on the Ground*

Community Development – community engagement, partnerships, local delivery.

Housing and Homeownership Partners – estate improvements, estate inspections, local issues.

Asset Management colleagues – consultations about choices on refurbishment projects, zero-carbon etc.



Building Strong Governance

It is important for our Board to receive regular and routine updates to gain assurance that customers are effectively influencing decision-making, that they are able to challenge and scrutinise service delivery and critically, that changes are made as a result of their involvement.

Much of our customer service activity is supported and monitored by the Customer Experience Committee (CEC) with major investment activity the focus of the Capital Investment Committee (CIC).

Both committees receive regular service updates around performance as well as discussing and debating policy decisions that impact customers. A key purpose of both CEC and CIC is to ensure that customer impact is always considered.

We are fortunate to have customers on both committees, with three members sitting on CEC and one sitting on CIC. To make it easier for customer committee members to represent customers in decision-making, we need to ensure that they have better access to the customer voice.



Customer Champions

In May 2024, we launched our Customer Champion initiative.

This involves each of our CEC customers representing and championing a service area. Their role will be to assess delivery and performance, review existing customer feedback and case studies, seek new feedback as necessary, scrutinise performance, and most importantly, present opportunities for improvement and change, based on customer feedback.

Taking direction from the results of the TSMs, over the next twelve months, the areas of focus for the Customer Champions will be complaints, anti-social Behaviour (ASB) and estate services.

We have developed a communications campaign to launch this new initiative as well as designing a workplan for the champions to focus on. The champions will report progress through CEC as well as providing quarterly reports to the Board.

All three of our Customer Champions are currently undertaking the CIH Level 2 Housing course which will help to make them even more effective members of our governance structure.

Succession Planning

We need to ensure we are developing our next customer committee members and need to provide appropriate opportunities for customers to get involved.

Part of this strategy is to create an active forum where we can develop individuals to become competent committee members in the future. The remit of this group will be to oversee and drive the actions identified by the customer champions to ensure we deliver on improvements.



Closing the Loop

We recognise that everyone is busy and we appreciate the time that our customers dedicate to working with us and helping us to improve our service delivery.

We are committed to 'closing the loop' and ensuring that we communicate to customers what has changed due to their engagement, feedback and challenge. We will use various communications methods to do this including our newly designed website, our local 'In the Loop' newsletter, on the ground engagement events and social media.

Monitoring and Reporting

Progress with this strategy will be reported to our Customer Experience Committee (CEC) through regular reporting at every meeting. In addition, the Customer Champions will report progress to the CEC at every meeting and to the Group Board annually.



Customer Engagement Strategy

Measures of Success

- ▶ Through our 'ways of working' project we will map our 'customer journey' and review our customer communications with our customers and align our plans for new communication channels to be delivered.
 - ▶ Complete our customer segmentation project and develop and implement our model to deliver services to all of our customers in the way that they want and need these to be delivered.
 - ▶ A year-on-year increase in the proportion of all customers who feel they are treated fairly and with respect (23/24 target 75%) - as per the TSM perception survey.
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- ▶ A year-on-year increase in the proportion of all customers who feel Accent listens to tenant views and acts upon them (24/25 target 57%) - as per the TSM perception survey.
 - ▶ A year-on-year increase in overall customer satisfaction.
 - ▶ Establish a new Service Improvement Forum to ensure we are better able to capture learning from complaints and other customer feedback, to make sustainable improvements to our services.
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- ▶ Complete the Customer data project with comprehensive personal customer data held for 70% of households to enable a more tailored service and communication approach.
 - ▶ Active residents' groups present in each region and nationally for Specialist Housing Services.
 - ▶ Implement a new on-line forum to seek customer views and provide an effective feedback loop for customers.
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- ▶ Implement a new Community Development and Inclusion strategy to enhance our grass roots engagement activities.
 - ▶ Work with customers to develop a customer charter setting out our partnership approach to delivering services to our customers and agreeing a set of promises that allow us to hold each other to account.
 - ▶ Develop a succession strategy and plan that allows customers to access training opportunities to enable them to join Accent committees and the Board ensuring the customer voice is heard in decision-making processes and contributes to more inclusive and representative governance



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