



CUSTOMER EXCELLENCE STRATEGY

2017/18 - 2019/20

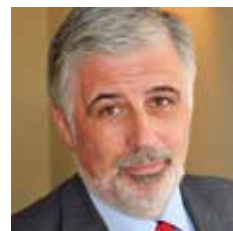
Housing
Executive

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We can let you have a copy of the plans in a language that meets your needs and in different formats.

Foreword



PUTTING OUR CUSTOMERS FIRST

As Northern Ireland's comprehensive Regional Housing Authority our customers contact us directly for assistance on a wide range of housing services.

- We are a landlord to over 86,000 households across both urban and rural areas of Northern Ireland and we help to support over 500 community groups.
- Through our Regional Services we administer the waiting list for social housing; manage the formulation and delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme and provide Supporting People and Homelessness Services to a broad range of potentially vulnerable customers. Our Grants Service provides information and grants for the Private and Private Rented Sectors and we carry out registrations and inspections for Houses in Multiple Occupation, although this function is to transfer to councils during 2018/19. In addition we are the Home Energy Conservation Authority for Northern Ireland.
- We administer a Housing Benefit Service for our tenants, for housing association tenants, for hostel claims and for private rented sector tenants.
- We also provide services in partnership with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies to build vibrant communities and neighbourhoods.

This document outlines the journey we have been on to improve our services through our Journey to Excellence Strategic Statements (J2E) 2014 -2017. This new Customer Strategy sets out how we will build on the knowledge that we have gained through J2E and outlines our commitment to provide customers with the best possible experience when they use our services.

Over time, we aim to provide choices for how customers will interact and do business with us. We aim to increase their control over their experience with us and to improve our digital services to enable those who wish to self-serve, through an on line account, to do so.

Our three year action plan can be found at the end of this document which sets out our commitment to you, the customer.



Professor Peter Roberts
Interim Chair



Clark Bailie
Chief Executive



CUSTOMER VISION

We aim to provide excellent services for all of our customers, placing customer needs at the centre of everything we do and sustaining high performance across key service areas.

Context

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2014, we embarked upon our Journey to Excellence programme (2014-2017) to improve all aspects of our business.

The vision for our Journey to Excellence is:

“to ensure that we deliver top class regeneration and housing solutions that meet the needs of our customers, communities, and partners now and in the future.”

The four key pillars of the Journey to Excellence Programme are:

- Business Excellence: To ensure the Housing Executive makes best use of available resources and continually drives sustainable positive change;
- Customer Excellence: To ensure the Housing Executive meets the needs of every customer, every time, however they contact us;
- People Excellence: To ensure that the Housing Executive recruits, develops supports and retains the very best people to achieve our vision and objectives;
- Underpinned by a Technology Platform: To ensure that the Housing Executive has a highly resilient, flexible, scalable and robust leading edge technological environment.

The Excellence Strategies focused on how to improve and extend the services we provide. The Customer Excellence Strategy demonstrates how we will fulfil our vision by placing customer needs at the centre of everything we do and sustaining high performance across key service areas in the long term.

It will support the Housing Executive’s Corporate Vision as set out in our Corporate Plan

“Everyone is able to live in an affordable and decent home, appropriate to their needs, in a safe and attractive place”

and drive the delivery of our core values of:

“Making a difference, through Fairness, Passion and Expertise.”

- Making a difference - We strive to make people’s lives better; we put our customers first and deliver right first time; We build strong partnerships and share great ideas.
- Fairness - We treat our customers, staff and partners fairly; We respect and promote diversity and equality for all; We work in an open and transparent way.
- Passion - We are professional in all that we do; We strive for excellence; We look for new, creative, better ways to do things.
- Expertise - We believe in our people; We are constantly learning and developing; We provide strong, confident leadership.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Strategy is to set out a clear direction for how we improve the way we deliver services to all of our customers during the period 2017/18 - 2019/20.

The Customer Excellence Strategy will support other organisational strategies including our Corporate and Business Plans and our work on Digital Inclusion, and complement the work being undertaken through our other customer facing strategies.

The strategy recognises and gives due regard to the fact that our customers are different and that diversity is respected and varying customer demand and support is accommodated within the strategy.

Also, taking account of the ongoing programmes of work across the organisation this strategy will:

- Create the service vision for our customers, staff and other stakeholders and communicate the Housing Executive's commitment to customer excellence;
- Set out the actions and delivery plans for the key objectives; and
- Serve as a reference point in order to prevent non-aligned and disjointed activities and drive everyone toward the same service goal.



STRATEGIC DRIVERS

Successive government initiatives require public sector organisations to put the customer at the centre of an organisation's activities, this is known as a customer or citizen-centric approach.

In addition, the drive towards efficiency places demands on the Housing Executive alongside all Northern Ireland public sector organisations to provide more and better services at less cost.

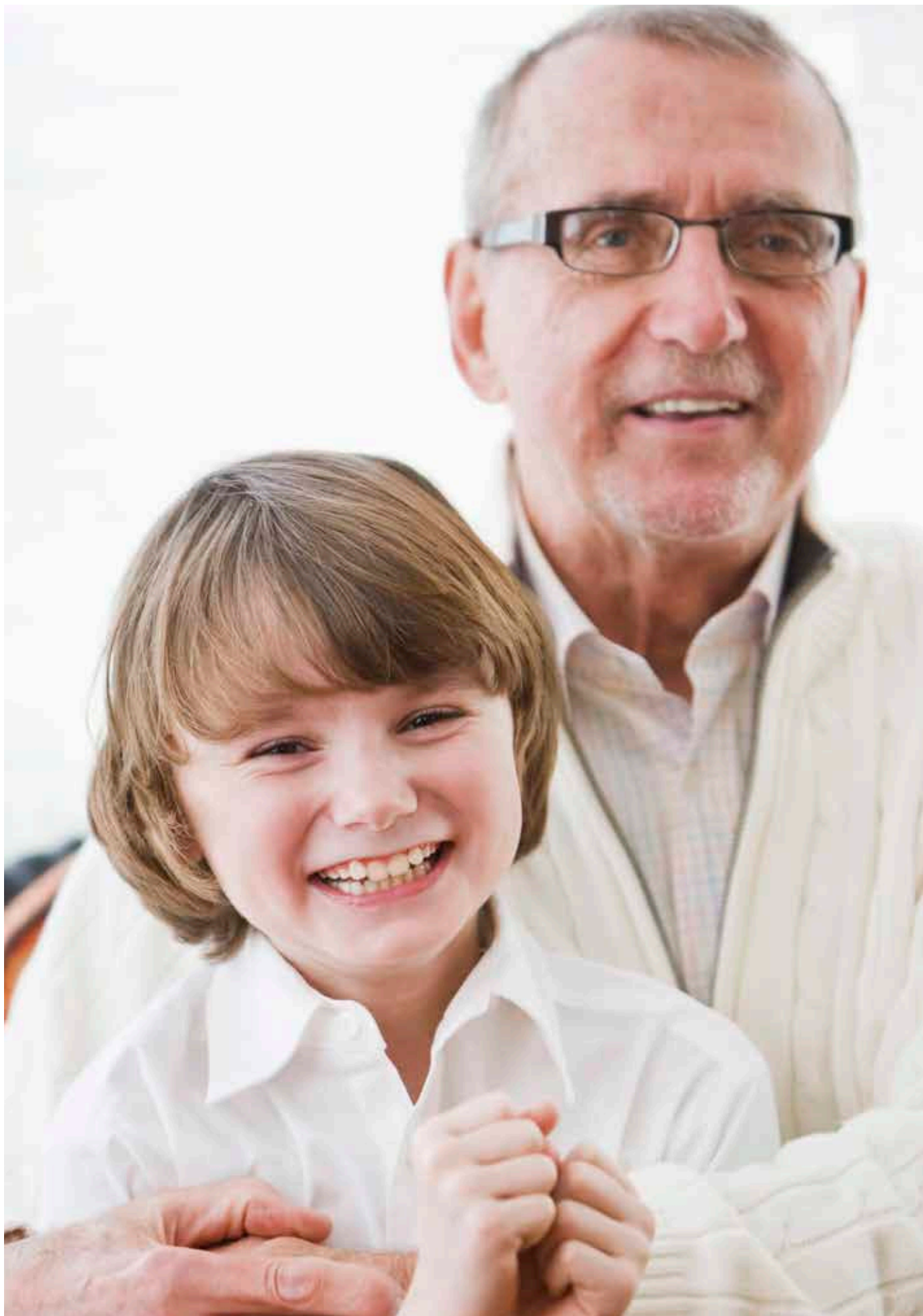
To address this, the public sector must explore new ways to deliver a service that improves the customer experience. Improved service delivery, better dialogue with customers and communities, and joined-up services across government departments and agencies are just some of the challenges currently facing the public sector in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2016-2021 sets the direction for the next five years. The PfG focuses on an outcome based approach and creates an opportunity for collaborative working across sectors and across organisational boundaries.

The key elements of this approach are:

- "A focus on outcomes - these are things with which people can identify such as living longer and healthier lives or getting good jobs - which are designed to stay in place for a generation rather than a single Assembly term, and define if we are progressing as a society."
- Indicators which show the change we want to bring about.
- Measures that will let us know if we are succeeding.

Integral to this will be the necessity to improve the responsiveness of services to meet the needs of citizens, including the appropriate use of technology. Public sector organisations and partners are tasked with building services around the needs of users, increasing the number of public services available online and supporting the delivery of services through the most appropriate channel.



Delivering Customer Excellence

THE CUSTOMER VISION

We aim to provide excellent services for all of our customers, placing customer needs at the centre of everything we do and sustaining high performance across key service areas.

Our customers will enjoy an excellent customer experience that is focused on their needs and getting it 'right first time'.

DELIVERING THE VISION

We want to make it easy to contact us or use our services in a way that suits our customers including face-to-face, telephone, email, letter and digital routes. Our aim is to simplify the number of ways a customer can access our services. We will provide the capability to connect customers directly with services without the need for manual intervention.

We will deliver our customer vision and improve our customers experience by:

- Aiming to we get it right for every customer every time regardless of how we are contacted. We will simplify the number of ways a customer can access all our services;
- Providing the customer with a quick response and where possible, a single point of contact;
- Using Customer Insight so we understand what customers want and need;
- Making it easy for customers to access the right advice and information in such a way that suits individual needs, be that online, on the phone or face to face and at a time that suits them;
- Providing a service where customers feel that they have been understood and their personal information is treated confidentially;
- Offering flexibility through the use of digital channels to enable customers to have 24/7 access to services at times and place that suit them;
- Supporting those who need it through our digital inclusion work;
- Making it easy for customers to give us feedback on our services which will help us continually improve on what we do;
- Embedding an organisation culture among our leaders, staff and key partners that enables 'customer first' thinking in every part of our business.

AIMS

To achieve our customer vision we will deliver this strategy under the following key related themes reflecting Customer Service Excellence (CSE) criterion.



THEME 1

Developing Customer Insight

- We will improve the way we collect, collate and use information to have an in depth understanding of all customer groups to better understand their needs and preferences.
- Improve the methods and approaches used for developing understanding including the use of technology (Customer Relationship Management) and other methods such as focus groups, surveys and customer journey mapping.
- Have systematic approaches to engaging and involving customers using a range of methods appropriate to their needs.
- Measure customer satisfaction for all key customer facing services and publicise satisfaction levels. Set challenging targets for sustained good performance and improvement.
- Review information about the full range of services we provide to customers including how and when people can contact us, how our services are run and who is responsible for them.



THEME 2

The Culture of the Organisation

- Demonstrate a corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery. Ensure that leaders at all levels actively support this and are advocates for customers.
- Demonstrate our commitment to customer focused services through a comprehensive range of recruitment, learning and development policies for staff.
- Empower and encourage all staff to interpret service issues and respond appropriately within organisational rules.
- Prioritise customer focus through our appraisal performance management system.
- Value the contribution our staff make to delivering customer focused services.



THEME 3

Information and Access

- We will review customer communication channels across all key channels. This will include all of the ways that our customers interact with us including face to face, telephone and through digital channels.
- Ensure all services are accessible to all customers through a range of channels; we will evaluate their relative effectiveness and use this data to identify service improvement and choice.

Enabling Digital Flexibility

- We will develop digital channels to enable customers to have 24/7 access to services how and when it suits them.
- We will develop web self-serve through an enhanced user friendly Housing Executive web site, to ensure we have single customer accounts and customers can manage and access services from one place.

Continuous improvement of what we do

- Provide customers with the accurate and complete information they need in ways that are tailored to meet their needs and preferences, using a range of appropriate channels. We will make it easy for customers to give us feedback and we will listen and act upon what our customers say.
- Customer feedback helps us know what customers think we are doing well, identifies customers who aren't happy with our services; stop reoccurring problems and helping us increase our overall customer satisfaction.

Supporting Digital Inclusion

- We will support our customers to enable them to access our digital services and monitor customer satisfaction.
- We will help our tenants become digitally included, overcoming barriers which prevent them from safely and effectively accessing the internet.
- We will support our tenants in enhancing their digital skills and capabilities.
- We will use Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS); Satisfaction surveys linked to digital transactions, Housing Community Networks and as we change the way we deliver services, we will ask customers to test them for us.

Front line office accommodation

- Ensure our front line office accommodation is accessible and fit for purpose.
- Review key services with partners and other providers to ensure demonstrable benefits for our customers.



THEME 4

Delivery

- Set challenging delivery standards for our main services. We will monitor and meet our standards and tell our customers about our performance.
- Consult and involve customers in setting, reviewing and raising standards and let them know what they can expect from the services we provide.
- Demonstrate that we deliver the service we promised and that outcomes are positive for our customers.
- Learn and improve services based on benchmarking, external good practices and by analysing trends in our own performance.
- Review our complaints procedure to ensure that complaints are dealt with fully within reasonable time limits, that staff are trained and empowered to put things right and that we learn from trends in comments and complaints to improve services.



THEME 5

Timeliness and Quality of Service

- Set appropriate and measurable standards for the timeliness and quality of response for all forms of customer contact. The standards will be based on what matters most to our customers.
- Advise our customers about our promises on timeliness and quality of customer service for each main service.
- Plan, design and deliver our services on a right first time basis. We will identify individual customer needs at the first point of contact and where possible ensure an appropriate person can meet the customer needs.
- Monitor and publicise our performance against standards for timeliness and quality of customer service. We will take action where problems are identified.

REVIEW

Each of the themes and objectives above will drive specific actions to deliver high level outcomes. To ensure successful delivery of our strategic outcomes over the three year period of this strategy 2017/18 -2019/20, annual delivery plans will be developed and monitored. An annual progress report will be published after the end of each financial year.

Customer Excellence Strategy 2017/18 - 2019/20

KEY THEME 1: DEVELOPING CUSTOMER INSIGHT

Outcome: Have an in-depth understanding of all of our customers including through our approach to gathering customer insight, consulting with customers and using that information to develop and improve services.

Objective/Goal	Actions		
	Year 1 - 2017/18	Year 2 - 2018/19	Year 3 - 2019/20
1.1 Develop an in-depth understanding of all customer groups to better understand their needs and preferences.	We will set out our approach to developing customer insight for all main customer groups to more fully understand preferences expectations and demand by service.	We will continue to develop our approach to gain customer insight for all main customer groups to more fully understand preferences, expectations and demand.	Evaluate the outcomes from this approach to inform future strategy.
Who	All customer facing departments	All customer facing departments	All customer facing departments
1.2 We will develop the methods and approaches used for developing understanding.	We will review and define the methods for gathering customer insight for each customer facing service.	We will continue to gather customer insight for each customer facing service.	We will publish our findings.
Who	All customer facing departments	All customer facing departments	All customer facing departments
1.3 We will have systematic approaches to engaging and involving customers using a range of methods appropriate to their needs.		We will review and define the approaches to engaging and involving customers for each customer facing service.	
Who		All customer facing departments	
1.4 We will measure customer satisfaction for all key customer facing services. We will publicise satisfaction levels and set challenging targets for sustained good performance and improvement.	We will review our approach to measuring and publicising customer perceptions satisfaction across all key services and at different touch points within services.		
Who	All customer facing departments		

KEY THEME 2: THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

Outcome: A customer focused culture across the organisation that supports improved service delivery. Ensuring leaders at all levels are role models for customer excellence and that our staff are trained and empowered to deliver excellent service, all supported with effective HR and organisational policies.

Objective/Goal	Actions		
	Year 1 - 2017/18	Year 2 - 2018/19	Year 3 - 2019/20
2.1 We will demonstrate our corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and that leaders at all levels are role models for customer excellence.	Launch a new Customer Excellence Strategy; Update our Customer Charter;	Monitor Action Plan and publish results annually. Publish Customer Charter.	Monitor Action Plan and publish results annually.
Who	Corporate Strategy & Planning; all Divisions;	Corporate Strategy & Planning;	Corporate Strategy & Planning;
2.2 We will ensure our recruitment, learning and development and other HR policies are aligned with customer excellence.	Review our Learning and Development Strategy in support of customer excellence.	Evidencing improvement through Investors in People re-accreditation and use lessons learned, to improve future services.	
Who	Human Resources.	Human Resources.	
2.3 We will empower and encourage all staff to interpret service issues and respond appropriately within organisational rules.	'Build Yes' - redesign of our front line housing services 'Innovate' - our internal staff suggestion scheme for service improvements; Embed a 'Customer First' approach.	Further deployment of 'Build Yes' Programme for front line Grants Services.	Further deployment of 'Build Yes' methodology.
Who	Business Review and Improvement Unit. All customer facing services;	Business Review and Improvement Unit.	Business Review and Improvement Unit.
2.4 We will prioritise customer focus through our performance management system	Review our (internal) performance management framework and reporting to ensure greater customer focus.	Evaluate our new Performance Management Development (appraisal) process to ensure that all staff know how their work fulfils the Housing Executive's Vision and Values.	Capturing customer feedback will help to inform how to continually improve on delivering services and to help us focus on the objectives and behaviours to drive success.
Who	Human Resources.	Human Resources.	
2.5 We value the contribution our staff make to delivering customer focused services and we will ensure leaders, staff (and partners) demonstrate these behaviours. We will ensure we understand and improve performance by measuring what matters to our customers.	In support of Build Yes redesign of services we will deliver Learning and Development programmes for new customer facing roles. We will capture customer feedback to help to improve services.	We will continue to review our HR policies and approaches to recruitment, training, leadership and personal development programmes, using customer insight, to ensure they enable customer excellence.	
Who	Human Resources; Landlord Housing Services; Business Review & Improvement Unit	Human Resources.	

KEY THEME 3: INFORMATION AND ACCESS

Outcome: Informed, consulted customers who are provided with accurate and detailed information according to their needs. This includes the range and quality of information, the access to services via a range of preferred channels and how well we join up services with other providers, partners and communities

Objective/Goal	Actions		
	Year 1 - 2017/18	Year 2 - 2018/19	Year 3 - 2019/20
3.1 We will continue to review the information about the full range of services we provide to customers including how and when people can contact us, how our services are run and who is responsible for them.	Review customer communication across all key channels.	Develop an enhanced user-friendly Housing Executive website. Greater access to services through the development of digital channels.	Our customers will have greater flexibility as to how they can access our services.
Who	Support Services.		Support Services.
3.2 We will provide customers with the accurate and complete information they need in ways that meet their needs and preferences, using a range of appropriate communication channels.	Based on customer insight we will review our approaches to customer communication across all key customer facing services.	This developmental work will be ongoing and we will communicate changes to our customers.	We will offer flexibility in the ways that customers can transact with us.
Who	Support Services.		
3.3 We will ensure all services are accessible to all customers through a range of channels; we will evaluate their relative effectiveness and use this data to identify service improvement and choice.	Develop a Channel Strategy based on customer insight and the effective use of resources. Support tenants to use different channels through our work in Digital Engagement.	This developmental work will be on-going and we will communicate changes to our customers. Evaluate the 'Proof of Concept Digital Engagement Hubs' for further roll-out.	We will develop a Customer Relationship Management System as a key enabler to improved customer service and to develop insight and understanding of customer demand.
Who	Support Services.	Support Services/Housing Services/ Business Review & Improvement Unit	IT along with customer facing departments.
3.4 We will ensure our front line office accommodation is accessible and fit for purpose and our services are delivered in ways suitable for the customer including future service delivery models.	Develop an Office Accommodation Strategy.	Implement our Office Accommodation strategy.	Review customer feedback on service delivery.
Who	Asset Management	All Divisions	Relevant Departments
3.5 We will review key services with partners and other providers to ensure demonstrable benefits for our customers	Where appropriate interventions will include joint review of services with key partners.		
Who	All customer facing departments		

KEY THEME 4: DELIVERY

Outcome: We will continue to monitor and review our performance against our main business aims, the outcomes for the customer and how we address and learn from any problems that may arise.

Objective/Goal	Actions	Year 2 - 2018/19	Year 3 - 2019/20
4.1 We will set challenging delivery standards for our main services. We will monitor and meet our standards and tell our customers about our performance.	Review our (internal) performance management framework and reporting to ensure greater customer focus.	Publish performance results in relation to our high level outcomes to demonstrate our commitment to our customers.	Incorporate insights into developing the business plan and publish performance in relation to our high level outcomes, demonstrating our commitment to our customers.
Who	Support Services	Support Services	Support Services
4.2 We consult and involve customers in setting, reviewing and raising standards and what they can expect from the services we provide.	We will involve our customers in setting reviewing and raising standards in each main customer facing service.	We will build on this work to ensure that we maintain or raise service standards. Link satisfaction surveys to digital channels.	We will build on this work to ensure that we maintain or raise service standards.
Who	Housing Services	All customer facing departments	All customer facing departments
4.3 We will demonstrate that we deliver the service we promised and that outcomes are positive for the majority of customers.	Publish results	Publish results	Publish results
Who	All departments	All departments	All departments
4.4 We will learn and improve services based on benchmarking, external good practices and from analysing dips in our own performance.	Publish our annual results including benchmarked results to inform future service delivery.	We will develop a more systematic approach to identifying opportunities for learning and continuous improvement including the use of benchmarking where appropriate.	
Who	All customer facing departments	All customer facing departments	
4.5 We will review our complaints procedure to ensure that complaints are dealt with fully within reasonable time limits, that staff are trained and empowered to put things right and that we learn from trends in comments and complaints to improve services.	Review of complaints procedure including learning from complaints to improve services.	This will be a continuous improvement work strand.	This will be a continuous improvement work strand.
Who	All departments	All departments	All departments

KEY THEME 5: TIMELINESS AND QUALITY OF SERVICE

Outcome: Based on customer insight we will develop standards for carrying out our main business, drawing heavily on what customers have identified as the most important factors of excellent customer service with a focus on both timeliness and quality

Objective/Goal	Actions		
	Year 1 - 2017/18	Year 2 - 2018/19	Year 3 - 2019/20
5.1 We will set appropriate and measurable standards for the timeliness and quality of response for all forms of customer contact. The standards will be based on what matters most to our customers.	Develop new customer based measures through the 'Build Yes' programme.	Publish our revised Customer Charter; Where appropriate, continue to develop new customer based measures through the 'Build Yes' programme.	Report on our commitments under the revised Charter.
Who	Business Review and Improvement/ all departments.	Support Services	Support Services
5.2 We will advise our customers about our promises on timeliness and quality of customer service for each main service.	Develop flexible channels for communicating with our customers.	This will be set out in our revised Customer Charter. Results will be published annually.	Results will be published annually.
Who	Support Services	Support Services/Communications and Secretariat.	Support Services/Communications and Secretariat.
5.3 We will plan and design our services in order to deliver services on a right first time basis. We will identify individual customer needs at the first point of contact and where possible ensure an appropriate person can meet the customer needs.	Our 'Build Yes' programme will redesign front line services based on right first time principles with services shaped around the needs of the customer.	Where required, continue to implement the 'Build Yes,' Systems Thinking methodology across the organisation.	
Who	Business Review and Improvement Unit	Business Review and Improvement Unit	
5.4 As a key organisational indicator, we will monitor and publicise our performance against standards for timeliness and quality of customer service. We will take action where problems are identified.	Review our performance management framework and reporting to ensure greater customer focus.	Incorporate insights into developing the business plan and publish performance results in relation to our high level outcomes to demonstrate our commitment to our customers.	Incorporate insights into developing the business plan and publish performance results in relation to our high level outcomes to demonstrate our commitment to our customers.
Who	Corporate Strategy & Planning - Business Planning & Performance	Corporate Strategy and Planning - Business Planning and Performance	Corporate Strategy and Planning - Business Planning and Performance

This document is available in alternative formats. Please contact:

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Housing
Executive

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