Customer Experience Strategy

April 2024 to March 2027

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our last customer experience strategy (2019 to 2022) set out our ambition to enable choice for our housing tenants in how they interact with us. It recognised our aim as an organisation to increase engagement and involvement, and on continuing to focus on our values-based delivery of our service.

During this period, we've faced a pandemic, cost of living crisis and other significant external factors that have changed the way we work and what our customers need from us. Additionally, we have grown to bring new and different customers that we need to engage with. We've achieved a significant amount within this last strategy period, particularly around our shift to include digital channels.

This strategy builds on our ability to continue to offer choice in our values-led way in how we interact with all our customers, ensures we link all we can around our tenant base, and additionally focuses on finding the customers to support to ensure all areas of the Group succeed, particularly in our more commercial areas.

It sets out our ambition to continue to increase satisfaction, to build that positive reputation and to ensure the impact of the services we deliver really achieves a difference in our customers' lives.

We have a detailed action plan to ensure we get there, and this is underpinned by data and insight at every stage to ensure we do what our customers need, are led by them, and make key steps to achieve our corporate vision.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The last strategy period has seen our customer base change. We've established a new education and skills business unit to work alongside housing, focused on a diverse portfolio of activities across education, skills, wellbeing, employability and student accommodation. It has brought with it a new customer base from different backgrounds, different ways to interact with them, and the need to focus on finding and getting new customers in volume to make these areas work.

The external factors faced by all our customers including cost of living and the effects of the pandemic, have resulted in changed needs and expectations. We have seen an increase in interactions with us, increased support needs, and the focus on digital shift for communications far exceed our expectations and sector standards as people have got to grips with a different way of communicating and engaging with us.

These external challenges have not ended. Insight has told us people expect to face new challenges in the future. And have limited knowledge of what we do or where to go outside for that help. Wider services have changed and continue to change through the pressures on funding and we need to recognise that this may change the expectations our customers have on what we do day to day. Additionally, those customers who historically have been 'self-sufficient' may face new challenges that need support.

More widely, we have seen the housing and education sectors under more scrutiny around customer standards. The introduction of Awaab's Law and the increased focus on tenant satisfaction and complaints handling within the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, the focus on wellbeing and safety by Ofsted following the death of Ruth Perry, and the introduction and the focus on reporting our environmental, social and governance (ESG) impact have all brought responsive change that has meant a stronger focus on the support and joined up service provision that needs to be offered to ensure customers are safe and are communicated with well.

All this change has meant a huge cultural shift and refocus on who we are as an organisation – which has resulted in our new corporate strategy direction.

Our new corporate strategy '**2030 – Getting there together'** was launched in 2023 and sets out our new group-wide priorities and what we want to achieve by 2030 to help **us be there to support people when they need us.**

We'll ensure we do this by putting people first and focusing on our priority areas:

- Home – creating spaces where people can thrive
- Support – help for people across a range of challenges
- Quality – embedding and exceeding service standards

Alongside new priority areas, our corporate strategy re-iterates the importance of our values and principles in guiding us in achieving our ambitions with clear targets to achieve around our customers. This includes a continued improvement on satisfaction, a focus on supporting our customers in different ways and ensuring that we make a difference in our customers lives.

OUR CURRENT POSITION

			HOUSING	EDUCATION AND SKILLS	
		TARGET	acis	clip / riverside	acis students
Choose it	Net promotor	35	28	72	-10*
	Overall satisfaction	90%	79%	97%	60%*
Deliver it	Investors in people – living the values	6.0	5.7 0.1 off sector average (2019 5.8 0.1 off sector average)		
Hear it	Listens and acts	74%	66%	100%	
	Involved in your voice	10%	12.8%		

*note these were from the term of transfer prior to model changes. No further data received.

The above table shares the position at the end of the strategy period against the original targets in the last customer experience strategy (end 2023 where available). It must be noted though that all measures set were around our housing operations, and many measures have evolved due to the changing landscape shared in the background information on page two.

Additionally, we have now established two clear operating business units with very different operating models:

	HOUSING	EDUCATION AND SKILLS
Purpose	To focus on all social housing operations including repairs and maintenance, investment, neighbourhood management, involvement, tenant support and community activities alongside commercial housing activity around property development.	To deliver non-housing related charitable purpose activities around our education, skills, employment and wellbeing, delivering various products and services under our CLIP, Riverside and Acis Students brands.
Size	c. 48% of our people directly delivering in this area	c. 25% of our people directly delivering in this area
Serves	Circa 6,700 homes	Circa 5,000 people supported pa with c. 70% of these brand new each year

We need to serve more customers than ever before in different ways. We need to continue to build long term relationships with our customers. We have more requirements for finding new customers to support through new homes for sale, learning or support, or student accommodation.

We want people to use our services time and time again and retain their commitment and trust for our 'brand'. We also want our customers to understand the wider range of services we can offer, either directly or through partners, when they need it. And as one in four of the people we support through CLIP and Riverside are within our household areas, we additionally have the opportunity to support our tenants and exceed expectations through the wider services of the Group.

We have people who want to interact with us in different ways. Our digital services are seeing increased demand with requirements going beyond that of our current infrastructure and system abilities, and our ability to communicate more effectively and timely in a value for money way continues to be a key requirement moving forward. Our repairs service model has been overhauled and is now delivering positive feedback that far exceeds that of the sector and of our previous years. This is an opportunity to turn this into a key USP that shapes our service offer in housing.

Our insight about our customers has grown. We have an established programme of satisfaction data that continues to evolve and grow as we learn more. And we have successfully enabled development of new models and services based on research and insight that has led us to want to do more in this area.

OUR STRATEGY AIMS

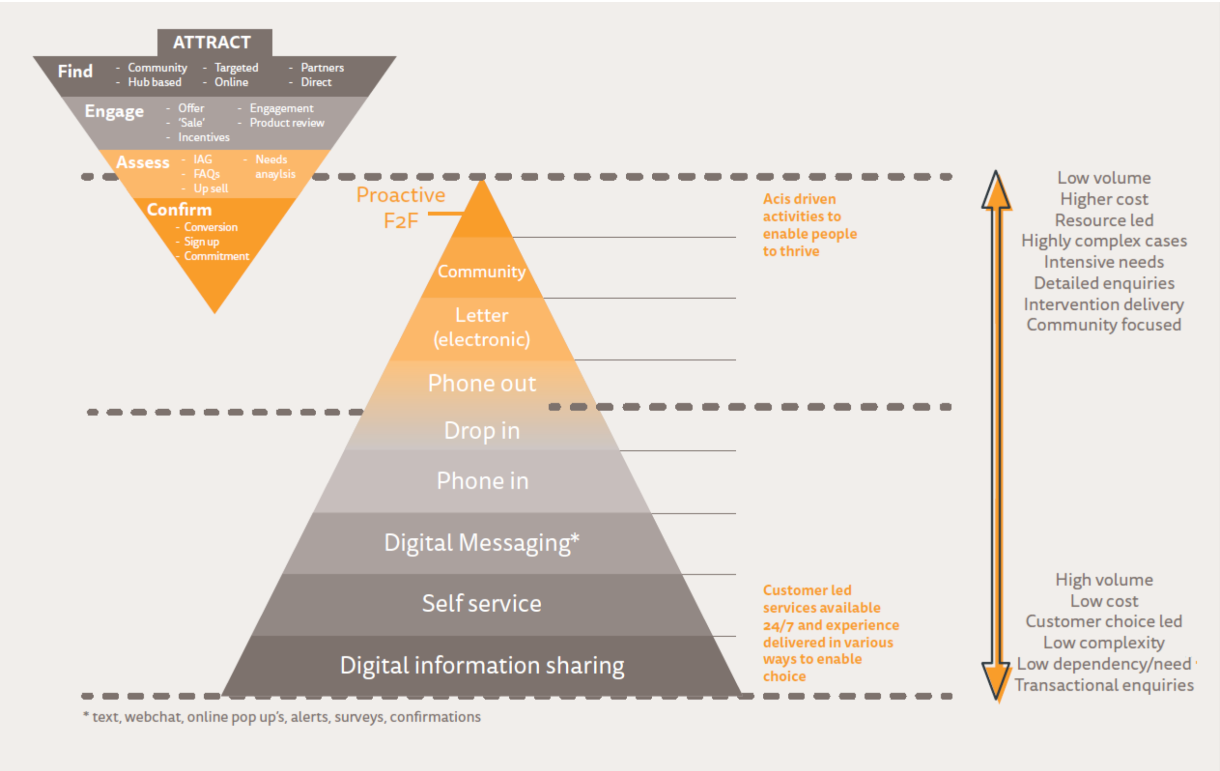
Our overall satisfaction score is the one measure that drives the whole organisation, and that everybody has the ability to influence and improve. This strategy will ensure we continue improving it and enable that shift change to focusing on our recommendation score (net promotor score) – a measure that is consistent regardless of sector.

This customer experience strategy will be key to ensuring we deliver on our corporate vision to support people when they need us. It will ensure we find the people we can help in the volumes needed to ensure successful services, and that the experience they get while we're doing it is one that delivers high satisfaction and fosters positive recommendations and repeat interaction.

We will ensure we draw together our services so all customers can access support through them when they need it. Additionally, this strategy will:

- continue to meet or manage customer expectations
- meet the new housing consumer standards and regulations
- develop insight and measures that drive decision making and activities
- develop our support hub delivery model set out in our corporate strategy
- bring support and safety to the forefront of all interactions with our customers
- enable customers to access what they need from us
- continue to offer choice in how people experience the service we offer
- ensure our technology solutions support this ever-increasing complex journey of support

It is important that underpinning this strategy is a clear consistent approach to how we will do it Group-wide. Our “choose it” model that was developed and implemented during the last strategy enabled us to be flexible in how we delivered our services and let customers choose how they wanted to engage with us. During this strategy period we will continue this choice model of delivering our services – giving us flexibility to engage the different customer groups we now work with. Additionally, we will ensure our approach to attracting new customers is built through a model of choice too in ‘attract it’. It will focus on ensuring people have choice in how they find us, and how we find them proactively, and that several steps are taken with them to ensure that we can meet their needs and can support them before signing up. The diagram below shows how we will do this through attracting people and then delivering our service through our continued choice-based approach:



OUR THEMES

We will have three areas of focus for this strategy. They outline the objectives we will aim to deliver through this strategy period and focus to ensure we drive the right priorities to deliver our corporate strategy and vision.

Within each theme we have identified a distinct data focus and core measures to ensure we are delivering activities that achieve what we need. These include:

- Demographics and development of our personas (VIPs)
- Satisfaction, perception and feedback
- Customer needs and insight research

ATTRACT - to find new people we can support

This theme will ensure we focus on our approach for acquiring new customers Group-wide. While we have always had to find customers for all our services, we now need to find people ongoing, in volume, and in competitive markets across all our areas of delivery. This is a new area for us and one that is essential to make our new business units successful and really drives our commercial thinking in our values-based way and fits with our charitable purpose. We also have a far greater service offer available to all customers – and one that our customers told us they want to know more about and how it can support them. A key focus within this is enabling data and insight to lead our activities. We will learn from our customers, about who our customers are, and about the areas we operate in. We will develop our model for attracting new customers focused on those where our offer meets their needs. We will ensure choice is embedded within it and that our values-based approach sets us out from the crowd.

Focus within this area will include:

- Understanding who our customers are and what our offer is in all areas
- Ensuring we know what we do, and clearly communicating our whole offer internally and externally
- Focusing on our education and skills business unit to build a new approach to how we find new customers, and test and learn different routes until we generate success

Measure of success
1 Aggregated net promoter score – increased by end of strategy period
2 The number of people engaged –increased by end of strategy period

DELIVER - to deliver a consistent group-wide customer experience

This theme will focus on the core service we deliver in all areas of the organisation and ensure we both interact and engage with all customers in a way that is right. It is key for us that customers continue to be given a choice in how they engage with us regardless of the brand or part of the group of they are interacting with, and that our service standards be consistent Group-wide. This includes ensuring a consistent welcome, a clear approach to the way we communicate in all we do, and the ability to own it in every interaction we do. We will ensure that the availability of our service is clearly communicated, easily accessible, resolved first time where possible, and reminders and updates are given to support day to day. Additionally, we will always seek feedback to ensure we continue to improve our service and respond to needs.

Within our housing operations we have consistently maintained a high tenancy sustainment. This both ensures income and ensures a secure and stable base from which customers can thrive. We will use this best practice and build a strong retention model for our more transient service areas, particularly within education and skills. We will build on this and develop a group wide approach to assessment at the start and end of a customer's journey with us. This will be a marker of our great customer experience, retaining their support, supporting them further, and enabling them to succeed.

Each business unit delivers different things so it's important our group standards can be applied within their own context. We will do this by a focus on:

- Defining our standards for customer service, developing our own minimum standards that our people understand and apply Group-wide, with an agile approach to the area in which they operate
- Focus on retention of our customer base, through an understanding of a customers' journey from start to finish to ensure we deliver excellence at all times
- Continue to develop our digital tools and capabilities to increase the number that interact with us and enable quicker, more frequent, and lower cost engagement
- Continue our involvement activities to strengthen the customer voice across the Group
- Embed measures of our service through satisfaction as aggregated scores group wide

Measure of success
3 Retained customer excellence accreditations
4 Aggregated customer satisfaction reaches 90% during this strategy period
5 Customer retention rate – baseline set and increased by end of strategy period
6 Interaction matrix – breakdown of engagement by channel to showcase choice

THRIVE - to ensure customers can access support they need

This theme will ensure we continue to develop our culture of understanding our customers' needs, supporting them rather than just transacting with them and ensure we use data and insight to drive this. We need to focus on joining up our offer of services to our customers and communities. We will enhance our customer experience through a clear focus on supportive activity and wellbeing in all areas, and where possible enable access to other services from across the group when customers need it. This will be further enhanced by support from the partners we work with. This will be based on need – and customer insight will be a key part of this strategy to enable us to drive decision making. Additionally, we will build a stronger holistic understanding of our communities. We do some amazing work Group-wide within the communities in which we work, and this impacts on a stronger customer experience. To do this, we will:

- Develop our support hub model to enable access to support when they need it
- Define a new approach to community level insight - focusing on the holistic picture of all customers and the communities in which they live to ensure we know the needs of our communities, the impact we have, and the opportunities we can support
- Developing key research pieces that enables a focus on customer insight
- Embed an approach of assessment understanding and destination for all customers we serve
- Strengthen the delivery of our support and wellbeing offer within housing, with a launch of specialist support offers
- Accessibility and sustainability of our services for customers

Measure of success
7 The number of people supported – 12,000
8 Launch of customer research and insight programme

MONITORING PROGRESS

Assurance that the strategy is being delivered in the right way will come from a number of sources including:

- Standard reporting, including performance dashboards and regulatory returns.
- Progress against the strategy will be reviewed by ELT and Board annually.
- Any areas of development or discussion will be shared with Group Board for input.

LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES

As outlined in our strategy framework approach detailed in the corporate strategy, this strategy is developed to ensure explicit links with the corporate strategy targets. It additionally has intentional links between all other enabling strategies, in particular the customer experience strategy which will ensure all forms of growth are driven by customer data and consultation and this is embedded in every action we deliver within this.

APPENDIX A – ACTION PLAN CX STRATEGY				
Specific action	**Measure of success**	**lead officer(s)**	**Resource implications**	**Timescales**
Attract				
Define group and business unit (BU) level propositions and USPs and develop clearly articulated offers for the teams to use that are competitive and meet needs.	Product offers live	BDM	Marketing;	December 2024
Develop an external positioning programme to enable our new offers to reach partners to support those who need us.	Programme live	HoBD	Marketing, EEM's	March 2025
Review our customer personas and develop our product offers for each need.	Personas live and product offer live	BDM	Marketing	December 2026
Develop analysis tools and methodology around customer insight and analysis, using this to gain a baseline on engagement and ensure we focus our efforts where it works and on future customer needs	Method live and used for one service change	BDM	Data team, CSC, EEM-RT CLIP	March 2025
Develop our "attract it" model, defining our approach to include partners, referrals, community activity, and commercial links to deliver for all business unit needs	Increased customers engaged	HoBD	IT; Operations;	March 2026
Test and learn new routes to market to find customers focused on the areas with higher volume needs.	New customers engaged	E&EM's	Marketing, BIM, BD, CEM, CEM	March 2027
DELIVER				
Co-design and launch our group service standards to ensure we deliver a high quality experience	Consistent standards live	HoBD/HoCO		December 2025
Develop and roll out a targeted accredited sales, experience and engagement training programme group wide.	E&E teams achieve qualification	BIM / DME	L&D; CLIP Delivery team;	March 2026
Embed our group service standards through our challenge it programme (mystery shopping).	Programme live	BIM/CEM		March 2027
Carry out journey mapping of the experience per BU, focusing on embedding a core start and destination process and assessment.	Assessment and process in place	BDM/BIM		March 2025

Develop and launch our alumni model to focus on strengthening our approach to retention and recommendation	Alumni live	HoBD		December 2026
Review the opportunity for digital tools within the customer journey in all BU's (including new tech), identifying opportunities to maximise engagement, efficiencies, VFM, and continued improvements.	Business plan for IT improvements	PMIT/BIM		July 2026
Develop our involvement and engagement digital channels focused on engagement through the launch of engage HQ in housing and then wider across the group.	Your voice digital live and active	DfCE		June 2024 – Housing July 2025 – E&S
THRIVE				
Co-design our support hub environment concepts and model and roll out in our live delivery sites maximising our asset base	Concept agreed Environments changed	HoBDES		September 2024 March 2027
Launch and develop our tenant wellbeing model – live well – across all our housing services to enable tenants to access support when needed	Live well live for tenants to access (as needed)	HoCS	BDM	Live - March 2025 Developed - March 2027
Develop and deliver an annual insight programme and deliver research pieces on key needs to drive opportunities for change.	3 key research pieces delivered	BDM		March 2027
Develop an approach to capturing community-based insight – focusing on the needs of our communities, the services, and the impact we have.	All areas operate within mapped	HoBD/HoCO		March 2026
Carry out a task and finish group around maximising accessibility and sustainability.	Actions in place	BIM		March 2025