



Communications Strategy 2021-2024

About Us

Maryhill Housing is a community-controlled housing association which was established in 1977. We own approximately 3,000 properties and factor approximately 700 properties in Maryhill and Ruchill in north west Glasgow.

As a registered social landlord, we are regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator and need to meet a range of different standards and outcomes to help ensure the best possible services for our customers.

Our Vision & Values

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Our vision is to provide 'great homes in strong and thriving communities'.

To be able to achieve our vision, we have identified the following three key objectives:

- ★ Improve customer experience and increase customer satisfaction
- ★ Address poverty and enable customers to make their lives better
- ★ Provide better homes and develop neighbourhoods to feel proud of

We also have four core values to guide everything that we do.

These values are:

- ★ Think customer first
- ★ Celebrate diversity
- ★ Deliver on our promises
- ★ Keep improving

Introduction

The main purposes of this Communications Strategy are to:

- promote our vision and values
- support us to meet our core organisational objectives
- establish general principles, which all of our communications will adhere to, to help us communicate effectively



Our objectives

Our objectives are to:

- ensure people understand what we do
- enhance our reputation as a provider of great housing and other support services within the communities we serve
- project a positive and recognisable brand identity
- make information accessible and helpful
- support the objectives within our Corporate Plan
- increase the satisfaction levels of existing customers
- support the development of our digital services
- ensure all staff and Board members are aware of and share full responsibility for achieving our vision, objectives and values
- raise our profile within the housing sector throughout Scotland and attract prospective new partners/funding

Principles

All of our communications should be:

Accessible: make information available in alternative formats and languages (where appropriate and reasonable to do so)

Appropriate and proactive: provide the right information to the right audiences using the right methods at the right time

Clear: use concise, plain language that is jargon-free

Consistent: establish trust by delivering strong, agreed messages

Effective: intended messages should be successfully delivered, received and understood

Good quality: ensure all communications are of the best possible quality

Honest: build and maintain trust through consistency and transparency

Informative: facilitate a two-way flow of information and ideas

Receptive: listen to and take on board feedback from customers, stakeholders and staff



Responsibilities for communication

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Corporate Officer (Communications & Events)

The Corporate Officer will draft and/or review all external published communications and high-volume customer correspondence to ensure they are informative, written in plain English and adhere to the general principles for communications.

All staff

All staff members are responsible for communicating in a clear, respectful and timely manner. All staff members must try to ensure that all communications result in a positive experience for our stakeholders; even when relaying difficult messages.

Senior Management Team

SMT will lead on communications for their departments and will share important information with their teams.

Chief Executive/Directors

The Chief Executive and Directors have the final say on all external communications and will act as the main spokesperson/people for the organisation.

Board

Board members are positive ambassadors for the organisation and should seek to promote our activities and growth opportunities.

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Channels of communication

Some of the different channels we can use to communicate with customers, stakeholders and staff are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list.

WRITTEN/ PRINTED

Letters
Emails
Texts
Newsletters
Posters
Leaflets
Newspapers

IN PERSON

Meetings
Home visits
Presentations
Consultations
Interviews
AGM's

AUDIO/VISUAL

Telephone/video calls

ONLINE

Website
Social media
My Home
Intranet
Media
Specialist
publications (i.e.
SHN)

Refer to Appendix 1 for more information regarding this

We require to communicate key messages to different audiences in different ways

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TARGET AUDIENCE	KEY MESSAGE	COMMS CHANNEL/S	DESIRED OUTCOME
Tenants	Sign up to the My Home customer portal	Website, social media, newsletter, targeted mailing	Tenants can access a variety of services at a time that suits them in a quicker, easier way
Staff	Training and development opportunities	Staff Intranet	Supporting, empowering and training staff to be the best that they can be
Housing sector, media and others	Commencement of ASHP project	Press releases, website, social media	Raise our profile and attract prospective new partners/funding

Refer to Appendix 1 for more information regarding this

Communications Plan

Our Communications Plan defines who should be given specific information, what our key messages are and what communication channels and tools should be used. These tools can be used in isolation but it is often better to use a variety of them in order to maximise the impact.

Before releasing any communication we should consider the following:

- Can it target a reasonable number of the right stakeholders?
- Can we adjust the key message/s to reach specific stakeholders?
- Will it be received positively?
- Will it return quantifiable benefits to the organisation and our stakeholders?

Refer to Appendix 2 for more information regarding this



Critical Success Factors

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TARGET

Visitors to website

400 per month

New social media followers

10 per month

Positive news story from teams

Monthly

Communication from Board

Quarterly

External PR promoting services and celebrating results

Bi-monthly

Internal Communications

Effective internal communications play a critical role in successful staff engagement. We recognise that different methods are needed for different teams. With a move to more remote working, it is also important for us to replace some in-person communication with virtual alternatives.

Channels will therefore include:

- All Staff emails and All Staff video calls
- Corporate updates
- In-person briefings
- Pulse surveys to consult with staff
- Toolbox talks for those not office-based
- Regular team meetings and 1:1's
- Staff Intranet and other online options

Actions

Every year our Delivery Plan will include a range of actions aimed at improving communication with our customers.

Refer to Appendix 3 for the 2021/22 actions.



**For more information,
contact Claire Hay,
Corporate Officer
(Communications &
Events)**



Communications Strategy 2021 – 2024 (Appendix 1)

Targeting Communications

It is clear that there are a number of audiences for any communications from Maryhill Housing. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Our customers (tenants and factored owners)
- Local communities
- Our staff
- Our Board
- Our members
- Our Service Improvement Panel and other similar groups
- Local community groups
- Registered Tenant Organisations (RTO's)
- Community Councils
- Local businesses
- Glasgow City Council
- The Scottish Government
- Health & Social Care Partnership
- Other housing/charity/voluntary organisations
- Regulatory bodies – i.e. Scottish Housing Regulator
- Others – i.e. Social Security Scotland, Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), Police Scotland
- Media

Most of our communities are disadvantaged and the needs of the people who live there go beyond a requirement for decent housing. The issues facing many of our customers include, but are not limited to, the following:

- poverty
- ill health
- disabilities
- unemployment
- poor levels of literacy/numeracy
- do not speak English as a first language
- limited access to services

We must always bear these issues in mind when communicating with our customers and consider whether we require to adjust the content and/or format in any way for specific customers. For example, customers with visual impairments may require written communications such as letters to be produced in a larger text size whilst customers who do not speak English as a first language may require an interpreter for audio communications such as telephone calls. With regards to the latter scenario, staff are advised to refer to the Maryhill Housing toolkit for helping customers to overcome communications barriers.

Communication Channels

Some of the different channels we can use to communicate with our customers, stakeholders and staff are listed below. These are not exhaustive lists.

Written/Printed Communications

- Letters
- Emails
- Texts
- Newsletters
- Posters
- Leaflets
- Signage
- Branding

In-Person Communications

- Meetings
- Briefings
- Home visits
- Presentations
- Consultations
- Interviews
- AGM/SGM's
- Events

Audio/Visual Communications

- Telephone and video calls

Online Communications

- Website
- Social media

- My Home Customer Portal
- Intranet
- Media (local/national)
- Specialist publications (i.e. Scottish Housing News)
- Google reviews
- Pulse surveys

When conveying a message, it is important to choose communication channels which our audiences will best connect with. For example, social media and video content is more popular with younger generations however older generations prefer face-to-face meetings and printed materials. It is worthwhile considering using multiple outlets for each audience as people tend to remember information better if they receive it in various forms.

Negative Press

Even when we behave responsibly, there is always the risk of negative press. How we respond to this can tell our stakeholders, as well as the wider public, a lot about us. Negative press is ultimately feedback and we should use this to learn and perform better in the future. In order to minimise the damage to our reputation in the event of any negative press, it is important to consider the following:-

- Take the time to determine if responding is really worth it. It is better to ignore the issue, or stay silent until it is time to issue a public statement, rather than respond negatively.
- Even if we choose to stay silent to the press, stakeholders should be fully aware of what is going on. Get rid of any misconceptions, promote positivity and make sure that everyone is on the same page when it comes to the current situation and what the press is saying.
- Know the facts and speak with all of the relevant people before making any public response. Own up to any errors (if warranted) and explain how you plan to correct them. Respond with humility, transparency and sincerity but do not provide more information than is necessary. If the media attention is particularly negative, it may be worth posting a public comment on the website to make the public is fully aware of our stance.
- Try to find positive angles and spin stories to be more positive wherever possible. The more we do this, the more we will counteract the negative press and the less damaging it will be.

The Maryhill Housing Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation states that the Board must be notified in the event of any negative press. The CEO and/or the



Directors must approve any response or statement to negative press coverage. In the event of any serious negative press, contact Alex Hamilton at BIG Partnership for assistance with crisis communications.

Communications Strategy 2021 – 2024 (Appendix 2)

Communications Plan for 2021

Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Objective/s
Spring newsletter	Corporate Officer (Comms & Events) All staff	March 2021	Make information accessible and helpful Project a positive and recognisable brand identity
Promotion of ASHP project	Corporate Officer (Comms & Events) Head of Property Project Manager	April 2021	Enhance our reputation as a provider of great housing and other support services within the communities we serve Raise our profile within the housing sector throughout Scotland and attract prospective new partners/funding
My Home/Repairs function promotion	Corporate Officer (Comms & Events) Head of Property Business Transformation & ICT Manager Customer Services Manager	May 2021	Increase the satisfaction levels of existing customers Support the development of our digital services

Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Objective/s
Summer newsletter	Corporate Officer (Comms & Events) All staff	July 2021	Make information accessible and helpful Project a positive and recognisable brand identity
AGM	Performance & Governance Manager Corporate Officer (Comms & Events) All staff	September 2021	Ensure people understand what we do Enhance our reputation as a provider of great housing and other support services within the communities we serve
Annual Review	Performance & Governance Manager Corporate Officer (Comms & Events)	October 2021	Ensure people understand what we do Enhance our reputation as a provider of great housing and other support services within the communities we serve Project a positive and recognisable brand identity
Rent consultation	Head of Housing Corporate Officer (Comms & Events) Business Transformation & ICT Manager Housing Managers	October 2021	Enhance our reputation as a provider of great housing and other support services within the communities we serve Make information accessible and helpful

Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Objective/s
Winter newsletter	Corporate Officer (Comms & Events) All staff	December 2021	Make information accessible and helpful Project a positive and recognisable brand identity

Communications Strategy 2021 – 2024 (Appendix 3)



Delivery Plan 2021/22

1. Improving customer experience and increasing customer satisfaction

No	Action	Who	When	Comments	Status
Owning issues, being clear about what customers can expect and following through on commitments					
a	Publish a leaflet about our Anti-Social Behaviour Service to be clearer on what customers can expect.	Head of Housing	June 2021		
b	Develop an annual landscaping service plan setting out duties to be undertaken for Summer and Winter Programmes.	Neighbourhood Team Leaders	June 2021		
c	Publish a leaflet about our two-yearly visits that outlines the reason for the visit and the potential benefits.	Head of Housing	September 2021		
Giving customers easier and better ways to contact us, e.g. via text / online					
a	Develop a Digital Strategy.	Business Transformation & ICT Manager	September 2021	To include a paperless option for customers supported by Digital Inclusion services.	
C	Promote the My Home customer portal including providing support to help tenants use online services.	Business Transformation & ICT Manager	March 2022	Support for sign up to be provided by CCT and Community Regeneration. Factoring invoices to be moved onto My Home by March 2022 (finance). Paperless option to be available by the end of the year.	
d	Deliver the first year of our Communications Strategy, including increased use of social media.	Performance & Governance Manager	March 2022	Current social media accounts to be used more and Instagram account to be launched. Instagram will be reliant on getting past covid restrictions to be able to compile a supply of suitable photos.	
Ensuring service relaunch after the covid pandemic delivers on the Customer Charter					
a	Fully implement our Customer Charter.	Chief Executive	June 2021		

No	Action	Who	When	Comments	Status
Using data and customer feedback to actively shape our services					
c	Renew our satisfaction figures through a full customer survey to assess the impact that recent improvements have had on our customers' views of the organisation.	Performance & Governance Manager	August 2021	This will incorporate questions on communication methods and satisfaction with being kept informed.	
e	Provide a guide for improving the data on SDM, to include recording of email addresses, equalities information and communication preferences, and a focus on ensuring existing data is correct.	Performance & Governance Manager	March 2022		

2. Reducing poverty and enabling customers to make their lives better

No	Action	Who	When	Comments	Status
Supporting our customers to navigate welfare reform, sustain tenancies, move into employment and reduce rent arrears					
b	Host targeted anti-poverty campaigns.	Community Regeneration Manager	October 2021		
Supporting more of our customers to get online					
c	Develop a Digital Inclusion Strategy.	Community Regeneration Manager	October 2021		

3. Providing better homes and developing neighbourhoods to feel proud of

No	Action	Who	When	Comments	Status
Improving the efficient planning and delivery of our investment programme					
a	Develop additional information for customers relating to works carried out in their home and what can be expected.	Property Manager / Investment Manager	March 2022	To incorporate leaflets and videos.	

4. Building a sustainable business

No	Action	Who	When	Comments	Status
Developing leadership skills and an empowered, professional staff team					
a	Revise the induction process to include new checklists and introduction videos.	HR Manager	April 2021		
Ensuring compliance with all regulatory and legislative requirements					
a	Establish regular meetings and / or joint briefings for local elected members and canal councillors.	Performance & Governance Manager	April 2021		

5. Governance Effectiveness

No	Action	Lead	Complete By	Comments	Status
We are open and accountable, taking account of customer needs and priorities					
a.	Develop the use of social media to provide more accessible updates on Board decisions and activities to customers.	Chair / Perf & Gov Manager	Q2		