



The Langstane Group

Communication Strategy 2020 - 2023

1. Introduction

This document sets out the Langstane Group's¹ strategy for effective communication both internally and externally, underpinning its commitment to achieving the Group's key ambitions as set out in its Business Plan, and the communication outcomes and standards contained within the Scottish Social Housing Charter².

The Communication Strategy, supported by the Group's Public Relations and Marketing Plan, assists the Group to become a highly effective organisation by ensuring information is presented in a manner that is appropriate, targeted, clear and concise.

2. Objectives

The key objectives of the Communication Strategy are:

- To positively raise the profile of the Langstane Group, its activities, ethos and culture;
- To ensure high quality communication is produced that meets the needs of, and engages effectively with tenants and other target audiences;
- To ensure the views of those involved with the Langstane Group are encouraged and taken into account to affect decision making; and
- To increase efficiency and value for money by ensuring the most effective and appropriate communication method is used and the information provided is clear, concise and relevant.

3. Key principles

The key principles underpinning the Strategy are:

- Communication is in plain language and jargon free; accessible; easy to read, understand; open, honest and factual; and reflects the values of the Group;
- Important information is not 'hidden' by using pictures as a background or 'lost' in the midst of complex or detailed graphs / reports / information;
- A range of tailored communication methods are available to meet the needs of the individual / audience; and
- Alternative communication requirements are accommodated where practical to do so.

This Strategy compliments other strategic and policy documents and supports the Langstane Group's Business Plan.

¹ The Langstane Group comprises of Langstane Housing Association Limited, and its subsidiary companies.

² Scottish Social Housing Charter – section 31 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 requires that Scottish Ministers set the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets these down.

4. Target audiences

The Langstane Group has a wide range of audiences and communication levels vary throughout the year. However, the key audiences are:

4.1. Internal audiences:

- Staff;
- Board / Committee Members; and
- Partner organisations 'hosted' within the office.

4.2. External audiences:

- Existing customers / tenants;
- Future customers / applicants;
- Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs);
- Professional bodies:
 - Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR);
 - Scottish Government (SG);
 - Financial Conduct Authority (FCA);
 - Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR);
 - Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO);
 - Health and Safety Executive (HSE);
 - Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA);
 - Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH);
 - Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS); and
 - Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE).
- Local Authorities:
 - Aberdeen City Council;
 - Aberdeenshire Council; and
 - Moray Council;
- Local communities / general public across the north east of Scotland;
- Local / national peers;
- Funders (including grant providers) / lenders;
- Elected Representatives:
 - MPs;
 - MSPs;
 - MEPs; and
 - Locally elected councillors.
- Private sector organisations;
- Media;
- Advice agencies; and
- Contractors, consultants and other providers of services.

5. Communication methods

The Group uses a variety of communication methods to ensure a style and format that promotes accessibility for all. Advice via NESS (North East Sensory Services) training sessions and Plain English guides are used to promote best practice.

The most appropriate channels of communication for individual audiences are identified and agreed in advance depending on the communication type.

Clear guidance, in the form of a Corporate Style Guidance Note and training is provided to those preparing and distributing communication on behalf of the Group. This ensures the most appropriate methods are used and all communication is easily understood and achieves its objective.

A range of ways in which the Group can be contacted, and makes contact with its audiences, is offered and promoted. Periodic surveys will be undertaken to ensure the methods of communication remain relevant and promote two-way dialogue.

The Group takes into account any preferred communication methods identified by individuals and accommodates these where practical and appropriate to do so.

Communication methods used by the Langstane Group include:

- Home visits;
- Direct written communication;
- Phone calls;
- Notifications displayed in flatted developments;
- Emails – group and individual;
- Text messaging – group and individual;
- Website;
- Social media;
- Leaflets / publications;
- Newsletters / Annual Reports;
- Surveys;
- Meetings;
- Conferences / Seminars / training events;
- Focus groups;
- Trade magazines; and
- Media locally and nationally.

During emergency situations communication methods may change at short notice. The Group will ensure, as far as reasonably practical, any changes are with the agreement of its target audience and promote inclusion.

6. Corporate branding

To ensure all communication is instantly recognisable and corporately branded, the Group will ensure that all forms of communication details the appropriate logo(s), colour(s), contact details, registration number(s) and web / social media details.

Terminology and formatting will be uniform throughout corporate documentation and appropriate to the target audience.

7. Digital inclusion

The Group will take advantage of new technologies and maximise digital opportunities via its ICT Strategy to:

- Provide its customers with greater accessibility to information and self service products via its website;
- Provide an intranet which ensures staff can access key corporate documents secure in the knowledge they are the most up to date versions available; and
- Increase the Group's electronic communication to reduce costs and reduce the negative impact on the environment.

8. Freedom of Information Act

From 11 November 2019, Langstane Housing Association and certain activities of its subsidiary companies became formally subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2002.

To reduce the resource required to facilitate this, the Group maximises the information publically available and in particular, provided via its website.

9. Data Protection

The Group adheres to current Data Protection legislation and any future changes to it.

10. Equality and diversity

The Group is strongly committed to achieving equality of opportunity for an increasingly diverse customer population and to provide excellent services that meet the needs and preferences of its customers.

11. Measuring and evaluating the strategy

To ensure the Strategy meets its objectives it is important the Group measures and evaluates the impact that different communication methods have on target audiences.

11.1. Impact of the strategy

The Strategy will:

for tenants and other customers:

- ensure tenants and other customers are given every opportunity to become actively involved in creating the Langstane Group's future;
- ensure two way conversations that demonstrate mutual respect and an understanding of the priorities of tenants and other customers;
- ensure improved and focussed customer services;
- ensure key information is more accessible; and
- increase confidence in the Langstane brand.

for staff:

- create a 'can do' culture and build a committed and high performing workforce focussed on achieving the Group's aims, objectives and key priorities;
- ensure staff are actively involved in creating the Langstane Group's future;
- ensure key information is available to assist staff to carry out their roles;
- assist the Group to understand customer needs and preferences; and
- deliver excellent customer services that match the needs and preferences of customers.

for the Group:

- increase confidence in, and respect for, the Langstane brand.

11.2. Evaluating the strategy

The success of the strategy will be measured through an increase in:

for customers:

- tenant satisfaction with communication;
- tenants who say the Association keeps them informed;
- tenant participation;
- consultation returns; and
- website and social media users.

for staff:

- staff satisfaction with communication;
- performance in key priority areas;
- knowledge of customer needs and preferences; and
- the delivery of excellent customer service.

for the group:

- positive recognition of corporate brand;
- staff promoting the services of the Group at conferences and sharing best practice;
- positive media coverage; and
- opportunities to increase good quality stock.

An annual review of the Strategy will be provided to Langstane Housing Association's Board of Management.

12. Review of the Strategy

The Strategy covers the three year period form 2020-2023 and will be reviewed in 2023 unless there are significant changes required prior to 2023.