**Communication Strategy**

If you have difficulty with sight or hearing, or if you require a translated copy of this document, we would be pleased to provide this information in a form that suits your needs.

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| GLEN-OAKS-FINAL | **Policy number:** |  |
| **Policy approved:** | March 2022 |
| **Due for review:** | March 2025 |

**Our Vision, Mission Statement and Values**

Glen Oaks’ vision statement ‘**Where Communities Thrive**’ and our mission statement ‘**Our aim is to provide good quality affordable housing and an excellent service. We will encourage resident participation and work with other agencies to regenerate our community**’ provide the foundation for Glen Oaks Housing Association’s commitment to its residents and the communities they live in.

This commitment is also demonstrated in the Association’s values which were agreed following discussions with the Board and staff. Glen Oaks’ values are fundamental to how we carry out our day-to-day activities.

Our values are:

**respectful**

*we trust and respect our customers and each other*

**dedicated**

*we will give 100% commitment to our work*

**transparent**

*we will be open and honest about what we do*

**aspirational**

*we will strive to achieve the best we can for our communities*

**Equality & Diversity Statement**

The Association is intent on ensuring people or communities do not face discrimination or social exclusion due to any of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; sex; marriage & civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; pregnancy & maternity.

This document complies with the Association’s equality, diversity and inclusion policy and Human Rights policy.

The Association will regularly review this document for equal opportunities implications and take the necessary action to address any inequalities that result from the implementation of the policy.

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* 1. **Introduction**
     1. The aim of this Communications Strategy is to outline the approach we will take to ensure our tenants and other customers, staff, stakeholders and the general public understand our vision, values and objectives and what we are doing to achieve them. This will make certain that we continue to build on our excellent reputation and brand.

1.2 The strategy aims to ensure that we have different ways to share information, as well as providing the means for them to share their views and other information with us, as communicating works both ways.

1.3 Well timed, clear and tailored communications contribute to the delivery of all areas of the Strategic Business Plan and our success as a Housing Association. Making sure we provide all of our customers with the right information, at the right time and in the right way, to meet their needs and preferences.

1.4 Everything that we do has the community at its heart, so it is incredibly important for us to ensure we connect with all the different groups of people whose lives we affect in ways that suit them.

1.5 Excellent communication is everyone’s responsibility and is central to everything we do. All our communications should help to create the kind of image and culture we want to achieve because every contact builds up the picture of Glen Oaks as a landlord, employer, developer, partner and business.

1.6 The Communications Strategy will be updated to reflect changing customer needs & perceptions, legislation, social, economic and political influences.

1. **Links to other strategies**

2.1 Good communication underpins all GOHA work and therefore our Communications Strategy links with all other strategies across the organisation, led primarily by the Strategic Business Plan.

2.2 It is also closely connected with:

* Customer Service Strategy
* Tenant Participation Strategy
* Digital & Social Media Strategy.
* Disaster Recovery Strategy
* Social Media Policy

2.3 It will also mirror our Customer Service Standards.

**3.0 Links to Regulatory Requirements**

1. CH2 - Publicise the approach to scrutiny to tenants
2. CH3 - Report performance in achieving/progressing towards Charter outcomes and standards to tenants and other service users by October each year.
3. CH4 - Report annually on performance to tenants and other service users
4. CH5 - Make SHR’s Landlord Report easily accessible to tenants, including online.
5. EH2 - Collect data relating to each of the protected characteristics for existing and new tenants; people on waiting lists; GBMs and staff.
6. TS1 - Collect data relating to each of the protected characteristics for existing and new tenants; people on waiting lists; GBMs and staff.
7. TS2 - Provide tenants and other service users with information needed to complain and seek redress.
8. OC1 - Make publicly available, including online, up-to-date details of: Board members, board minutes.

**4.0 Links to Regulatory Standards**

1. 1.3 The governing body ensures the RSL complies with its constitution and its legal obligations. Its constitution adheres to these standards and the constitutional requirements.
2. 2.1 The RSL gives tenants, service users and other stakeholders information that meets their needs about the RSL, its performance and its future plans.
3. 2.2 The governing body recognises it is accountable to its tenants and has a wider public accountability to the taxpayer as a recipient of public funds, and actively manages its accountabilities.
4. 2.3 It is open about what it does, publishes information about its activities and wherever possible, agrees to requests for information about the work of the governing body and the RSL.
5. 2.4 The RSL seeks out the needs, priorities, views and aspirations of tenants, service users and stakeholders. The governing body takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions.

**5.0 Communication plans**

5.1 Communication plans will be developed in line with this strategy to support specific business areas and reflect their individual priorities.

5.2 These will highlight the differences across the communication channels and allow planning for when a specific campaign can be communicated across all channels.

5.3 Communication planning is vitally important, particularly when there is a message we wish to promote. Planning allows for campaigns to be developed and ensures that customers are communicated in a timely manner, provided notice and then reminders, (where appropriate).

5.4 Communication Plans will be created annually and populated with any key events in advance for the calendar year and then updated regularly to include in adhoc requirements.

5.5 Plans that will be required are:

**i. Annual Communication Plan** – This will include all communications such as the quarterly newsletter, annual report, annual events, policy reviews or consultation, sector related communications (changes to regulator requirements) etc.

**ii. Newsletter Communication Plan –** This will include all articles that need to be included in the quarterly newsletter, ensuring we meet regulatory requirements, promote events and consultations in advance and that follow up feedback is provided in following editions. Standing items will be created but updated regularly to include any adhoc information if required.

**iii. Social Media Plan** – This will include light hearted posts to increase engagement such as Valentines Day, World Book Day. Regular signposting to our support services including goConnect and WorkingRite activities. This will include partnership working with the G8 Group.

**iv. Crisis Communication Plan** – This will give clear guidance in the event of a crisis who is responsible for communicating with staff, our customers and the media. The Crisis Communication Plan is part of the Disaster Recovery Plan.

**6.0 Brand guidance**

6.1 All communication will follow our brand guidance, which outlines font, colours, style of articles and letters that should be used.

**7.0 Our communication aims**

7.1 To ensure the strategy is successful, and that we have a consistent approach, communications will aim to;

* Celebrate our success and share how we are achieving our vision, values and objectives so we build a culture and reputation of ambition and excellence.
* Develop efficient, effective and accessible communication channels that represent value for money and improve access to and understanding of our services.
* Be clear and open so our staff and customers understand our plans for the future, how we will achieve them, how it affects them and how to contact us.
* Provide and promote opportunities for our customers, staff and stakeholders to share their views, influence how we work and ensure high satisfaction with our services.
* Increase the involvement of our tenants and the community in the decisions making process, consult with them and listen to their needs and views to assist us in making better informed decisions.
* Continue to improve our digital channels and culture so our customers and staff are digital by choice.
* To ensure all employees are informed and have ownership of our activities and take responsibility for effective and appropriate communications, to achieve our corporate aims, objectives and values.
* Maintain the clear brand identity, both internally and externally.
* Promote the good reputation of Glen Oaks (and its partners) locally, regionally and nationally and encourage potential business opportunities and partnerships.
* Promote us as a company that offers opportunity and choice for all tenants, leaseholders and employees – regardless of any protected characteristics such as Race, Gender, Age or Disability.
* Help staff be better informed of our priorities and understand how their role, regardless of the grade or location, contributes to the vision.
* Recognise the value of the media as a means of providing information to the public and the promotion of Glen Oaks and our successes. To be open and proactive in our dealings with them.
* Ensure all Health and Safety requirements are communicated effectively to all relevant customers.
* Be complaint with all regulatory standards and requirements, such as sharing our annual report.

**8.0 Our Principles for all communications**

8.1 Our communications will be guided by the following principles, which are in line with the Values set out in our Strategic Business Plan and Customer Service Standards.

8.2 All communications will be:

* Focused on achieving our key objectives and be driven by our customer needs.
* Honest, open and transparent and represent our values.
* Consistent and relevant - themes, messages, tone and style.
* Tailored to suit the target audience.
* Shared across all relevant communication channels where appropriate
* In clear, everyday language and be personable.
* Clear in its purpose – what do we want people to understand or do.
* Branded and look professional.
* Timely and current, helpful, courteous and in a professional manner
* Welcoming of feedback
* In our customers preferred method of communication and be available in alternative languages and formats when required.
* Utilise the potential available technology, most notably our CRM system
* Cost effective, representing value for money and be innovative.
* In line with confidentiality and Data Protection legislation.
* Meet Regulatory Requirements and Standards.

**8.3 We will:**

* + Treat all tenants, customers and stakeholders with dignity and respect
  + Take individual responsibility for good communication
  + Build partnerships based on openness and trust
  + Continue to develop our brand identity
  + Consider new approaches and opportunities to communication
  + Consider the impact across other services and policies
  + Treat complaints as an opportunity to resolve service failures and improve methods of working
  + Engage with our Service Improvement Group and other user groups to ensure communications meet their needs.

**9.0 Key audiences**

9.1 One of the most important aspects of communicating well is knowing who you are communicating with.

9.2 There are seven main audience groups we want to communicate well with and our aim is to understand them better.

* **Existing customers** (including tenants, sharing owners and factored owners.
* **Potential customers** (including applicants, staff, partners)
* **Community Groups** (IG Scrutiny Group/Tenant Association/Board members
* **Staff**
* **Partners/Contractors/stakeholders**
* **General public** (including local authorities & elected representatives)
* **Media**

9.3 We need to communicate with a wide range of audiences and to do that successfully the main objectives for each audience group must be considered.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Audience** | **Main objectives** |
| **Existing customers**  (including tenants, sharing owners and factored owners) | * Build our reputation as a leading housing provider for the Southside of Glasgow. |
| * Signpost to key services, both internal and external |
| * Deliver campaigns on themes including rent, welfare reform and tenancy maintenance |
| * Increase usage of digital services |
| * Enhance our status as a trusted provider of affordable homes. |
|  | |
| **Potential customers**  (including applicants, staff and partners) | * Interest, influence and attract new customers |
| * Build awareness through targeted messaging, focusing on key selling points (quality, excellence, dependability, cost efficiency etc.) |
|  |  |
| **Community groups**  SIG (scrutiny group), Tenant Association, Board Members | * Profile opportunities and benefits of involvement |
| * Profile reasons to join Governance structure |
| * Promote as an organisation that listens, learns and responds |
|  |  |
| **Staff** | * Enhance reputation as employer of choice * Promote internal campaigns and raise staff awareness of activities * Increase staff buy-in to key messages |
|  |  |
| **Partners/contractors** | * Promote benefits of partnership * Target and influence potential new partners |
|  |  |
| **General public**  (Local Authorities,  Elected Representatives) | * Build our reputation as a high performing, community based, 01Association. * Maintain and enhance relationships with councillors, MSPs etc and key local authority personnel. |
|  |  |
| **Media** | * Effective media response management to lessen reputational risk and promote successes to enhance profile |

**10.0 Key messages**

10.1 The key messages we wish to relay to our target audiences are that we:

* Are a tenant-led organisation that puts customers at the heart of everything we do.
* Are a landlord of choice, keeping its promises and adding value to our communities.
* Value all internal and external customers.
* Provide a good service that is well managed, well governed, viable and efficient.
* Are proactive in meeting the needs of our diverse communities.
* Respond to service failures positively and seek to rectify and learn from problems in a timely manner in line with SPSO complaint Handling Guidelines.
* Are a positive provider and partner within our communities.
* Listen and actively welcome ideas and feedback and support a scrutiny approach with our Service Improvement Group.
* Have a focus on modernisation and innovation, with an emphasis on digital services and digital communication.
* Have a ‘right first time’ approach.

* Combine excellence with value for money
* Are a great place to work and invest in our staff through regular training and continuous professional development. Currently hold Investors in People Bronze Award 2020.
* Provide good customer service, quality homes for our tenants to live and an efficient repairs and maintenance service.
* Support our customers with additional services such as goConnect, Starting Out, Welfare Right support and WorkingRite.

**11.0 Communication development**

11.1 To be able to communicate effectively is it important to have a range of different methods to reach our customers. The aim is to reach people through their preferred method of contact and to provide simple, convenient ways for people to contact us.

11.2 The main areas of communication we want to develop are:

1. **Digital communication via cx-feedback and engagement plus**

We will continue to build on our digital communication methods working to increase our already high engagement levels across our different tenant groups. Over 90% of tenants chose to currently communicate with us digitally via SMS or email. For the 10% that don’t we will continue to encourage the benefits of this communication channel and promote our Digital Inclusion support service. Cx-feedback and Engagement plus allows tenants to choose their preferred method of contact and update their email or mobile number directly with us. Engagement levels and the percentage of links opened (read) can be reported on. We will ensure tenants only receive communications relevant to them. Surveys can be attached to communications allowing for instant feedback for consultations etc. We want to continue to carry out consultations and surveys digitally, increasing return rates and reducing staff time in distributing them.

1. **Website and Tenant Portal**

Our developing website is the place where we would like our customers, particularly tenants, to come to when they want news, have an enquiry or need to contact regarding a service request. Continuing to develop new online services is crucial to meeting customer expectations and needs, as well as achieving better value for money and developing greener ways of working. As part of the work in renewing our Housing Management System and website, there will be more focus will be put on encouraging sign up of a Tenant Portal. This will be a digital gateway for our tenants to gain information on their own personal account quickly.

1. **Social media**

Social media is an excellent way to reach our customers digitally and build our reputation as a high performing Housing Association. Continuing to grow our social media community is an important part of how we will better target our communications, providing information to people we know are interested or involved with us. This provides additional choice for our customers in how they engage with us. Social media content is most effective when it shows the human side or personality of an organisation. We will continue to develop meaningful and engaging content that includes infographics where possible to engage with our customers more.

1. **Printed materials and Newsletter**

For customers who are not digital or prefer to be communicated with by printed documents, our quarterly newsletter is the most reliable and regular way to reach them. It is the cornerstone of Glen Oaks communications and we will continue to develop it as an important way of reaching our tenants. It is complimented by other printed materials including Tenant Handbook, leaflets and standard letters. All of which will comply with our brand guidance, such as font type, font size and corporate colours etc.

1. **Internal communications**

It is important to equip staff with the knowledge, skills and information needed to provide excellent customer services. Internal communications are an important part of this and we will develop a plan to improve how we connect with staff and encourage a culture of success. Microsoft Viva Engage will be used to share information, best practice examples and gain feedback on policy changes with staff. Hybrid Healthy is also used to manage our hybrid working arrangements.

1. **Media management**

How we respond to questions from the media and work with reporters is an important part of managing our reputation and building the Glen Oaks brand. We will develop a media approach for outgoing publicity and continue to ensure we are clear about how media enquiries are handled and by who.

1. **Marketing**

Coming up with ways to promote our services to different groups of people is important. We will review how we promote our services including those that are set up to benefit our tenants and assist them in sustaining their tenancy with us, such as goConnect, Workingrite and Housing Perks.

1. **Networking and memberships**

Forming effective, valuable partnerships continues to be an important strand of our communications work as an organisation. Planning and organising how Glen Oaks connects with our peers, community groups and charities across the city, regionally and nationally is vital to building our reputation and success.

1. **Campaigns**

When there is a specific need, with a specific objective in mind, we may need to create a campaign to ensure effective delivery of the messages needed. Campaigns should be used sparingly, for big issues, and a limit of three campaigns in any one calendar year, should be enforced. This will be part of an annual communication plan, with set timescales, actions, responsibilities etc. i.e. board recruitment, gas safety/smoke alarms/electrical tests, rent consultation (work with SIG on campaign ideas / topics).

1. **Crisis communications**

Being prepared should something bad/unexpected happen is an important part of managing the risks to the organisation and its reputation. Glen Oaks has a strong crisis communication strategy within our Disaster Recovery Strategy.

This must be maintained and tested regularly to continue to ensure it is effective.

Staff training, particular for those who have a responsibility in a crisis, will be carried out regularly. Things change daily, weekly, monthly, yearly and the staff need to be updated.

Communicating that staff receive adequate training will provide further confidence to our customers, that in the event of a crisis the Association has systems in place.

**12.0 Risks**

12.1 Communications will need to tackle existing and emerging challenges, including:

**Digital exclusion** – a small percentage (10%) of our customers choose to interact with traditional methods of communication. It is important that we work to ensure digital support is provided to these groups and that we continue to communicate with them by their preferred method of contact. The representation levels of surveys will be monitored to prevent digital exclusion and to ensure that all customer groups are engaging with surveys/consultations. Our engagement levels for difficult to reach age groups, 18-24 and over 65 are high (average 70% engage digitally) which is above sector trends. This will continue to be monitored.

**Increasing diversity –** our communities are already diverse which presents challenges when trying to have consistency with our communications. Striking a balance between providing information in an alternative language and having consistency. It is important we continue to understand our community’s diversity and how they wish to be communicated with through tenant profiling. We will ensure our communications are easily translated, in plain English, free of jargon and have a readability score in line with the UK’s average reading age of 9 years old.

**Wide range of communication mechanisms** – with the benefit of having many different options on how we can communicate with our tenants, there also is the risk of potential resource challenges. One key piece of information is now expected to be shared in multiple ways, all of which require their own design for example website noticeboard, facebook, text message, newsletter article, reception screen etc. There is also the risk if the information is not being designed to suit the appropriate channel it will not represent value for money and be ineffective.

**Communication fatigue** – With the ability to now communicate with our different tenant groups more easily and quickly it is important that communications are planned where possible to prevent fatigue and result in tenants not engaging. Our communication plans will allow for consultations, surveys and digital communications to be evenly spaced out across the year. Corporate Services will oversee adhoc communications to ensure they are targeted, relevant and aim to minimise the frequency of communications where possible.

**Value for money** – with the need to communicate through various channels it is important that we understand what channels represent the best value for money. This will be monitored and a communication budget set.

12.2 **Risk Management implications**

Protecting the reputation of the company is an important part of the work of the

Corporate Services team and the implementation of this strategy will continue to

reinforce this work.

12.3 The Communications Strategy also plays a key role in helping to mitigate the

risks identified in Glen Oaks Strategic and Operational Risk Registers. This ensures we provide effective, appropriate and high-quality communication of our key messages to all relevant customers.

**13.0 Communication compliance**

13.1 There are areas where it is unwise, and may even be unlawful, not to comply with certain standards and codes of practice in relation to communications.

13.2 The Corporate Services team will ensure that all of Glen Oaks communications will be:

• Meet Regulatory requirements and Standards.

• Compliant with current Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation and GDPR.

• Branded appropriately and follow corporate design guidelines

**14.0 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

14.1 The strategy promotes Glen Oaks an Association that offers opportunity and choice for all tenants and employees – regardless of any/all protected characteristics such as Race, Gender, Age, Disability etc.

14.2 Communicating with all customers that we are compliant with the Human Rights Act and that they understand their rights and how it affects our existing policies, procedures and consultations is of the greatest importance. The communication plan will ensure that this is embedded into all communications.

**15.0 Value for Money implications**

15.1 The Corporate Services team aims to carry out work in line with the Value for Money

(VFM) strategy and statement. This means balancing the need to have a varied approach to all communications, providing communication using the customers preferred method of contact, but also gain value for money in ways of return rates and levels of engagement.

15.2 The increasing use of social media and online access to services by our customers will continue to reinforce this VFM approach.

**16.0 Measuring success**

16.1 This strategy has been approved by our Board, it will be reviewed annually, alongside the creation of an annual communications plan. The plan will be monitored by our Corporate Services Team. Where appropriate, we will look to evaluate impact using a variety of methods to demonstrate our impact and reach including:

* Website and social media analytics.
* Engagement level reports with digital communications
* Survey/consultation returns compared per channel of communication
* Staff feedback
* Awards and accreditations
* Value for Money

**17.0 Strategy Review**

17.1 The Communications Strategy will be comprehensively reviewed every three

years, with consideration of any significant changes on an annual basis in

conjunction with the annual Communications Plan.

17.2 Reviews will incorporate assessments of key internal auditors, to ensure best practice and legal/statutory requirements are met.

17.3 The next review will be completed in March 2028