

A row of white wooden figures, similar to those used in board games, stands on a light-colored surface. Above the figures, several colorful icons float in the air: a red heart inside a white circle, a green speech bubble, a purple smiley face, a yellow speech bubble, a blue speech bubble, and a green smiley face. The background is a solid yellow color.

CUSTOMER INFLUENCE POLICY

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING



Customer Influence Policy			
Last Reviewed	August 2025	Next Review	August 2027
Responsible Officer	Director of Operations		

Policy Statement: We believe that our customers are at the heart of everything we do. They should have agency over their homes, communities and services. This Customer Influence Policy is designed to ensure that we are accountable to our customers and that they have meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise our strategies, policies, and services.

We recognise that involving our customers in decision-making processes leads to better outcomes, as it allows us to understand their diverse needs, preferences, and experiences. By actively listening to and engaging with our customers, we can deliver services that are more responsive, effective, and aligned with their expectations.

By implementing this policy, we are committed to creating a culture of openness, collaboration, and continuous improvement, where our customers' voices are heard and valued.

Policy Detail:

Scope

This policy applies to all current tenants, shared owners, and leaseholders of properties owned or managed by Freebridge.

Objectives

Through delivery of this policy, we aim to:

- Empower Customer Engagement: Provide opportunities for customers to influence and scrutinize our work.
- Enhance Transparency and Accountability: Communicate actions, decisions, and their rationale to customers.
- Continuous Improvement: Ensure a system for collecting, analysing, and acting on customer feedback.
- Promote Inclusivity and Diversity: Ensure engagement activities are inclusive and reflect diverse customer needs.
- Support Customer Well-being: Ensure customer voices are heard, and concerns are addressed.

Principles

This Policy underpins the principles of our Customer Influence Plan:

- Partnership
We want to work with our customers in shaping and improving services to ensure they meet the needs of our communities
- Appreciation
We value all contributions and show our thanks for all feedback
- Inclusivity
We want to provide a range of opportunities so that every customer can influence Freebridge and the services we provide, without facing barriers or difficulties
- Intrinsic
Listening to what our customers are telling us about what is important to them, their families and their communities is the heart of all that we do
- Influence
We want our engagement activity to empower our customers to truly influence services and our strategic decision making, to make a difference

Right to Be Consulted

We are committed to ensuring that customers have meaningful opportunities to influence our services, policies and strategies.

To achieve this, we commit to mandating consultation with customers in a range of situations.

For all Customers:

- All Policies effecting services delivered to customers
- Potential changes to customers' landlord
- Significant changes to the way in which we operate services and/or manage customers' homes and communities

For the Customer(s) directly impacted:

- Decisions about the area immediately surrounding a customer's home (i.e. decisions to build or remove structures (e.g., trees, driveways, paths, sheds, outbuildings, garages) directly next to or near a tenant's home).

When we consult with our customers, we will:

- Talk to customers early about possible change that may affect them, their homes, neighbourhoods and communities and be clear on the reasons for change.
- Be sure that the consultation is fair and accessible to all.
- Be open and transparent about any possible advantages and disadvantages of the proposed change.
- Provide customers with adequate time, information and opportunities to consider and give feedback.
- Truly listen to the views of our customers and test what we believe we have heard for accuracy.
- Give careful consideration for customers views, and communicate transparently how their views have been taken into account.

Right to Be Engaged

We believe that by listening to our customers views, priorities and preferences for the focus of the organisation, we are better able to ensure that our services are relevant and responsive to the needs of our customers. Co-creation of key strategic documents ensures that we are delivering services that our customers want and need.

When setting the direction of the organisation we will engage customers on the creation of:

- Our Corporate Strategy
- Asset and Customer Plans
- Customer Charter
- Setting of performance targets and service standards

Right to Scrutinise

We fundamentally believe that the principles of co-regulation extend to our customers. As the primary user of our services they are ultimately best placed to evaluate our performance, to challenge and hold us to account for the services we provide, and to shape improvements

We will:

- Share regular accessible, transparent performance information which benchmarks our performance against other landlords for comparison
- Provide different opportunities for customers to feedback, ask questions and challenge performance

- Provide engaged customers with scrutiny training, to enable them to better hold us to account for our performance
- Be accountable for our performance, communicating directly with our customers on areas that need to improve, and what we intend to do about this

Accessibility

We recognise the value of diverse views, and we want to make it as easy as possible for all customers, regardless of tenure or protected characteristics (age, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, beliefs, disabilities) to access opportunities to independently scrutinise our work. We will also provide options for anonymous feedback. To enable equity of influence we will:

- We keep our customers informed and promote customer influence opportunities regularly
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that we communicate in a range of formats
- Provide both digital and in person opportunities for involvement
- Ensure that customers who have been considered under our 'Dealing with Unreasonably Persistent Complainants and Abusive Individuals' Policy will still be able to give feedback; these customers will not be restricted from taking part in any surveying or mystery shopping opportunities.
- Enable customers through our myFreebridge framework to engage with us by:
 - Helping with the cost of transport, ICT and other essential expenses
 - Provide external training and access to online learning opportunities
 - ensuring we have colleagues dedicated to supporting involved customer groups
 - Valuing all contributions and show thanks for the commitment and support given by involved tenants through our myFreebridge reward scheme

myFreebridge

Our Influence model, 'myFreebridge', seeks to offer a diverse range of ways in which customers can influence strategies, policies and services, with a level of engagement that suits them and their circumstances.

Our Customer Influence Plan which supports the myFreebridge framework is reviewed annually, to ensure that we continue to consider ways to improve and tailor our approach to both delivering landlord services and customer engagement.

MyFreebridge is a Two-Tier framework

Tier One: Community Voices which is open to all customers and community partners, offering flexible engagement options from quick polls to mystery shopping, transactional surveys, estate inspections, Out & About visits and topic specific working groups.

Our Community Voices come together on a quarterly basis in our **Community Feedback Forum** to share their views directly with the Board and the Executive Team.

Tier Two: Customer Insight Panel (CIP), a representative group which analyses feedback, scrutinises, identifies trends, conducts spotlight reviews and performance assessments and makes recommendations to the Operations Committee, Board and Executive Team.

Resident Associations

We support the formation of residents' associations where they are autonomous and led by customers, for customers. Our role is not to steer or facilitate these groups, but we will help customers to establish residents' associations and are happy to participate at our customers' request.

Our Communications and Engagement Team will be equipped to support customers wishing to establish a resident association.

Formal Governance

We believe that the voice of our customers being heard clearly by our Board is central to good governance. To do this we will:

- Provide quarterly 'Customer Voice' reports to Members which collates all recent feedback and input from our customers.
- Facilitate Members engaging directly with our customers through our programme of 'Out & About' events.
- Ensure that where applicable, decision making at our Board is influenced by the customer voice, which is referenced in all board papers and proposals.
- We strive to recruit people with lived experience of social housing to our Board. Vacancies are open to our customers, subject to a fair, transparent and accessible recruitment process. We advertise widely, including to our customers.

Feedback Loop

We recognise how important it is to show our customers the impact their voices have had. We will ensure that customers are aware of the changes and improvements we make because of their feedback through the following methods:

- 'You Said, We Did' pages on our website, myFreebridge platform and through our customer magazine, 'Streets Ahead'
- Publish the results of all policy consultations on the myFreebridge platform and in Streets Ahead.
- Where customers participate in spotlight reviews or working group sessions, write to them personally with the outcomes of their involvement.
- We will produce an Annual Customer Impact Report which details the ways in which customers voices have influenced services, policies and strategies.

Review: This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if required by changes in legislation or regulatory requirements.