



CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

First Choice Homes Customer and Communities Strategy 2025-28

Customer & Communities Strategy 2025-28

Our Vision: Providing quality homes, fostering pride, and enhancing lives in Oldham

Our Mission: Homes we are proud of and improving lives

We're committed to providing quality homes, fostering pride and enhancing lives in Oldham. Our Big Plan 2.0 (2024 – 2026) sets out our offer of Great Services, Great Homes, Great Neighbourhoods and Great Company.

The Customer and Communities Strategy is critical to supporting the achievement of our Big Plan objectives, to embed our commitment to improving neighbourhoods and to enhance how customers experience our services. Engagement has taken place with colleagues and customers to ensure that this strategy addresses and prioritises the things that matter most.

This strategy will be underpinned by a robust Delivery Plan and is supported by the development and delivery of our: Digital Strategy, Data Strategy, People Strategy, Homes Strategy

We have 11,500 homes, serving 24,500 customers

At FCHO we value our customers and recognise that we have a diverse and varied customer base. Understanding their unique needs and preferences is crucial for tailoring our services effectively. We are committed to employing data-driven insights and customer feedback to better serve our customers and this will be a key component throughout the delivery of the Customer and Communities Strategy.

It is our priority to offer safe and secure homes to around 24,500 people in Oldham and the surrounding area. We take our role as a major landlord and employer very seriously and will continue to do our best despite economic uncertainty.

To support this, we are making FCHO an anchor organisation for Oldham, proactively working in partnership with local organisations. Our role is to help further develop the important bonds we need to strengthen our communities - some of them the most deprived in Greater Manchester. Changes to public services and how they are funded mean we are often the frontline service in our districts, and we stand ready to help when we can and when it is appropriate to do so.

We must also make sure we are listening to our customers and understand their needs and expectations. Our new Customer and Communities Committee will help us greatly in this area and we recognise Oldham is constantly changing and FCHO must respond effectively.

New legislation to improve the quality of homes nationally are now in place and offers a substantial opportunity and challenge for the sector. We are proud our building safety compliance, repairs and tenant satisfaction measures have allowed us to retain the highest grading from the Regulator of Social Housing. One of our priorities is to continue to improve on these and other measures by using new technology to reach our customers more effectively. This means meeting their needs for example in ensuring repairs are carried out quickly, rent can be paid more easily or reporting anti-social behaviour is effective.

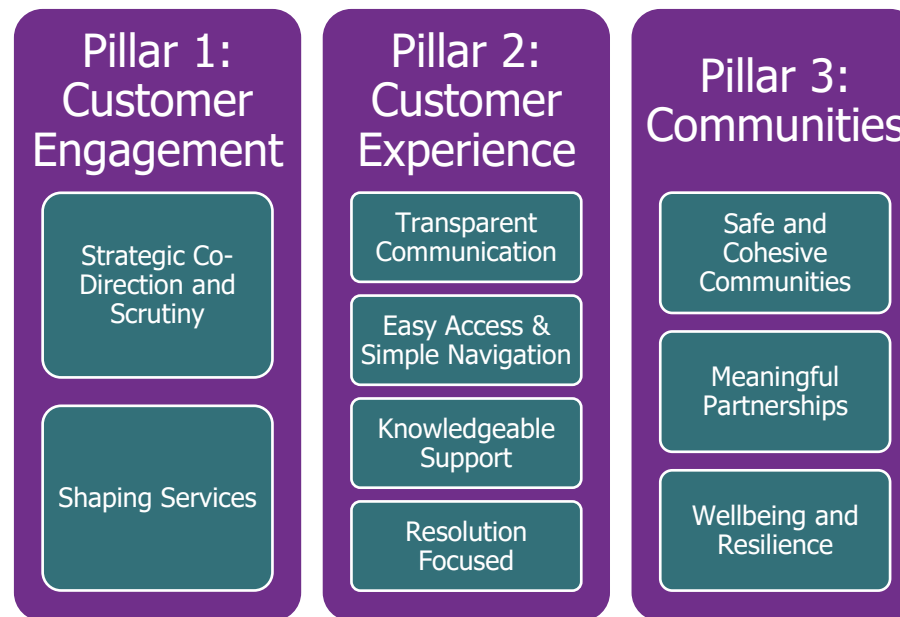
Purpose of the Customer and Communities Strategy:

We want to ensure we provide an excellent customer experience; we hear our customers' voice throughout the organisation so that they can influence the services that they receive, and we make a positive contribution to the communities in which we operate. This strategy outlines the steps we will take to enhance how customers' experience not only the services that we provide, but the communities that they live in.

Through our extensive consultation on this strategy, we picked out some key and emerging themes that are reflected in our pillars. These included staying true to our purpose, being a good landlord, working in partnership, tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and driving digital transformation to enable colleagues to focus on those customers who need us most.

This strategy establishes the methodology by which FCHO will work to develop our existing and future approach to customer experience, keeping pace with the changing expectations of our customers, changing demographics in our communities, and our own ambition to provide quality homes, foster pride and enhance lives in Oldham. It is focused on priorities that support operational colleagues to tackle current issues, maximise opportunities to enhance our services and communities, and take ownership of excellent service delivery ensuring the best outcomes for our customers. This is a strategy that reaches across the organisation and will impact how everyone at FCHO interacts with, engages, and serves our customers.

The strategy has three pillars: Customer Engagement, Customer Experience and Communities with multiple workstreams under each pillar as shown below:



Pillar 1: Customer Engagement

Strategic Co-direction and Scrutiny

What do we mean?

Our customers have a strong voice within strategic decision making at FCHO and play a significant role within our organisational governance and scrutiny.

How will we do it?

We will establish our Customer and Communities Committee, embedding this as part of our broader governance structures.

We will ensure the Customer and Communities Committee retains strong links with our Customer Performance and Scrutiny Panel and Customer Engagement Network, so all FCHO customer engagement structures work seamlessly together to amplify the customer voice.

We will encourage customer scrutiny in key areas of the business and implement appropriate interventions, changes and guidance as a result of customer recommendations.

When will we do it?

By April 2026 we will have established and embedded clear links between our Customer and Communities Committee and Board, so that the customer voice is clearly heard at Board level and influences how we do things at FCHO.

By April 2026, we will also have established and embedded clear interaction points between our Customer and Communities Committee and our broader Customer Engagement Network.

What difference will it make?

By sharing the work of the Customer and Communities Committee, all FCHO customers will be able to see how the customer voice is genuinely influencing decision making.

Customers will be considered throughout strategy and policy design. As a result of this, strategy and policy will continuously become better aligned with customer needs and aspirations.

Customers will feel listened to and that their input is valued.

What does that mean?

- **“Customer and Communities Committee”** – A subcommittee of FCHO’s Board, including customer members who focus on scrutinising customer issues.
- **“Customer Performance and Scrutiny Panel/ Customer Engagement Network”** – FCHO customer groups, who get involved in feeding back on FCHO services, policies and strategies.

Shaping Services

What do we mean?

The customer voice is heard clearly throughout the organisation and influences how we deliver services.

Customers have a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise our policies and services. This includes in relation to their community.

How will we do it?

We will further develop the work of our Customer Performance and Scrutiny Panel and Customer Engagement Network to ensure we are hearing from a wide range of customers.

We will review our current Customer Engagement Framework and make changes to enhance the range of opportunities for customers to get involved, including reviewing how leadership and operational teams are hearing and using that feedback.

We will identify opportunities for colleagues and customers to co-design services, especially in relation to the delivery of the Customer and Communities strategy.

We will update our Customer Performance and Scrutiny Panel on our performance each quarter, and work with them to focus improvements on the things that matter most.

When will we do it?

Within 2025 we will review our Customer Engagement Framework and act on any recommendations that strengthen our approach.

In the development of the Customer and Communities Strategy Delivery Plan, we have identified opportunities for co-design and will deliver these from 2025 through to 2028.

What difference will it make?

Customers will have more opportunities to shape FCHO services, and in turn, this invaluable input will support our services to continually improve, ensuring customers are more satisfied with service delivery.

Colleagues will clearly hear the customer voice.

Customers will feel their views are listened to and acted upon by FCHO.

What does that mean?

- **“Customer Engagement Framework”** – The way FCHO will work with our customers to gather feedback on services, policies and strategies. It includes the menu of involvement activities FCHO offers to customers and the types of activities customer can get involved in.

Pillar 2: Customer Experience

Transparent Communication

What do we mean?

Customers know what to expect from us, and what is expected from them, and we have a clear service offer that takes into account the individual needs of our customers.

How will we do it?

With customers, we will develop and communicate a clear service offer that outlines things like how quickly we will answer the phone, respond to e-mails, and carry out repairs.

We will monitor our response times to make sure that customer contact is responded to within our service standards, which will have been agreed with customers.

We will make sure that all of our interactions with customers are logged by improving our record keeping, improving our systems for colleagues and developing our Contact Centre into a Customer Experience Hub.

We will make sure that in all interactions with customers, we have done what we can to help by developing a culture that focuses on customers, and training that supports and empowers colleagues in this.

When will we do it?

In 2025-2026 we will work with customers to develop a clear service offer that takes into account individual needs.

In 2026 we will launch a training and empowerment programme designed to support colleagues in understanding the value of every customer interaction, and logging those interactions to improve our ability to offer knowledgeable support.

What difference will it make?

When customer contact us, we'll be better informed if they've already contacted us before so they will receive a consistent, lower effort service.

Customer queries will be dealt with by colleagues who have been trained and empowered to offer as much support as possible.

Customers will know what to expect from FCHO and can hold us to account if we don't deliver.

What does that mean?

- **"Customer Experience Hub"** – A new type of Contact Centre, where FCHO colleagues deal with a wider range of customer requests, which would currently be passed to other teams.

Easy Access & Simple Navigation

What do we mean?

Customers can contact us in a way that suits their needs and receive a consistent service level.

Customers can have most of their queries and needs dealt with the first time they tell us about them.

How will we do it?

We will develop our digital offer so that customers can contact us, update us and interact with us online if they want to.

Customers will be able to contact us using their preferred contact channel, taking into account their individual needs.

We will improve our systems for colleagues so that they can see all interactions with a customer and can update them easily.

We will develop our current Contact Centre into a Customer Experience Hub, training colleagues in a variety of functions so they can answer most queries at first point of contact.

We will review all of the ways customers get in touch with us and agree how to get the best out of these interactions with customers.

When will we do it?

Within 2025 we will develop a roadmap for our systems and begin our Contact Centre transformation into a Customer Experience Hub.

Within 2026 we will embed our customer focussed culture, including enhanced record keeping, we will also finalise transformation of our Contact Centre into a Customer Experience Hub.

Within 2027 we will review how we can use artificial intelligence (AI) responsibly and safely in our processes to enable us to individually tailor our services.

By 2028 we will have reviewed and implemented a next steps Customer and Communities strategy to keep pace with the changing customer expectations and advancements in technology.

What difference will it make?

Customers will feel more satisfied with FCHO services.

Customers will be able to communicate with us via a method that they choose and have a seamless consistent experience.

Through better record keeping, colleagues will feel better informed and able to provide the best support to customers and being part of our Customer Experience Hub will be an exciting career opportunity.

Knowledgeable Support

What do we mean?

Colleagues are well trained and knowledgeable about our processes and policies, they are also supported by good systems and data that help them to know our customers, what they want from us, and their individual needs.

How will we do it?

We will learn more about our customers via good data collection and then use that data to tailor services to customer need.

We will develop a training programme for colleagues so that all colleagues are trained in delivering a good customer experience.

As part of the Customer Experience Hub development, we will upskill colleagues in our current Contact Centre to enable them to answer more queries.

As part of our review of how and where we interact with customers, we will understand what customers ask colleagues about most and ensure that they are equipped with the answers or know where to find them.

When will we do it?

In 2025/2026 we will design and implement a customer census which gives us excellent data we can use to better understand our customers. We will also develop a clear plan on how we will use this data.

In 2026 we will design and deliver customer experience training to all colleagues, develop our customer experience ethos, and roll out to all colleagues.

In 2025/2026 we will develop a solid understanding of our technology roadmap and how this can support the Customer and Communities strategy ambitions.

In 2026-28 we will scope, pilot and begin to introduce a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which is how we will view, record and update all of our customer information and interactions.

What difference will it make?

FCHO colleagues will be able to speak to a customer and know what they've contacted us about, updating them, without the customer having to repeat their information.

Customers will feel they are being treated fairly, respectfully and are receiving a customer-focused service.

Customers will feel that their individual needs are being met.

What does that mean?

- **"Customer census"** – A data collection exercise with all current FCHO customers, to update their personal details and information about people who are living in the home.
- **"Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system"** – A specialist IT system, which records every contact with a customer in a central system.

Resolution Focused

What do we mean?

Issues are resolved and needs are met in a timely manner, with quality responses, colleagues taking accountability for their interactions with customers and ensuring they're kept up to date.

All contacts and service requests are properly logged, and we endeavour to get it right first time, every time.

How will we do it?

We will train and empower our colleagues to make customer focussed decisions. We will work with colleagues on taking accountability for customer queries.

We will gather meaningful feedback from customers so that we can learn from them and use that learning to improve our services. This will include reviewing when and how we survey customers so that we're getting the best feedback, without burdening them with too many surveys.

We know that repairs are really important to our customers so both our Customer and Communities Strategy and our Homes Strategy focus on training colleagues to diagnose repairs more effectively, making it easier for customers to report repairs correctly, and focus on ensuring repairs can be resolved right first time as often as possible.

When will we do it?

In 2025 we will review all surveys conducted across the organisation and develop a streamlined approach to gathering customer feedback. In 2025 we will also work with colleagues to make sure they are empowered to make quick decisions and take accountability for their interactions with customers.

In 2026 we will develop our customer facing teams to ensure we have the right skills and knowledge to turn learning into improvements.

In 2027 we will review how we can use technology to enable quicker decision making, including considering how we can make safe and effective use of new technologies such as AI and machine learning.

What difference will it make?

Customers will have their needs met and be satisfied with the service they receive.

Colleagues will be able to make quick, informed decisions that help customers because they will be knowledgeable and feel empowered.

Customers will feel listened to.

Community

Safe and cohesive communities

What do we mean?

Customers feel safe and secure in their community and feel like they can contribute to their local area. FCHO understand the diversity of our communities and ensure this is considered in service design, delivery of activities and local initiatives.

How will we do it?

We will review and strengthen our approach to tackling and reducing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), better aligning service delivery to the needs of our customers and communities

In our Homes Strategy, we have committed to enhancing green spaces and open spaces which FCHO own or maintain. We will carry out a review of our communal spaces and develop an action plan to improve these where needed.

We will review the use of our Community Centres and, working with the community, develop Community Hubs that offer services in-line with the needs of that community. Where possible we will encourage this activity to be community led.

We will improve our customer data and use that data to promote inclusive events within our communities, working in partnership with other community organisations.

We will develop a robust approach to preventing and tackling issues of Domestic Abuse, ensuring we have well trained colleagues and raise awareness of this within our communities.

When will we do it?

In 2025 we will review our approach to preventing and tackling ASB and develop an improvement plan. We will also launch a review into the work we do over and above our housing services, that provide additional benefit to our communities. This will include reviewing how we spend our budget to ensure it supports the right activities, in the right areas.

In 2026/2027 we will shape and agree a plan with customers to maximise our community impact. We will also carry out a review of our communal spaces including Community Centres.

In 2026/2028 we will use the data and insight gathered from the various reviews to make changes to or introduce new services that will have a meaningful impact for customers and communities.

What does that mean?

- “Communal spaces” – These are spaces in FCHO Owned buildings which are used by multiple homes or customers, such as stairwells, entrances, community rooms, shared

What difference will it make?

Our customers will report feeling safer in their home and in their community.

Customers will know they can report ASB to us, and it will be handled appropriately.

Customers will know what they can get involved in within their community.

We will have a clear understanding of how the money we are spending is providing benefit to our communities.

Meaningful Partnerships

What do we mean?

FCHO have strong partnerships with local authorities, health services, schools, police, other neighbouring housing providers and charities that provide value to our customers and to us in delivering our services. By value, we mean that we will either be able to deliver something better, more effectively, or more efficiently by doing it in partnership with someone else.

How will we do it?

We will identify partners who are involved in our work and our communities, understanding and setting up the best ways to work with them effectively, for the benefit of our customers.

We will develop a clear set of objectives for our partnership working, which we will use to sense check against any current and future arrangements, ensuring that we are getting value from those partnerships. Where we aren't getting value, or there is a more effective way of delivering existing services, we will review and bring an end to those partnerships.

We will develop appropriate frameworks with those organisations where we determine there is value, clearly outlining what success looks like.

We will work closely with the police service to tackle customer issues with crime and ASB.

We will work closely with Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council on issues that impact our customers.

When will we do it?

In 2025 we will work proactively to enhance our relationship with some key partners including Greater Manchester Police, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and councillors.

In 2025/2026 we will identify the partners we need and want to work with, and we will also agree the objectives related to our partnership working arrangements.

In 2025/2026 we will review all current partnerships, both formal and informal.

In 2026-28 we will build meaningful partnerships that align to our strategic goals, corporate plan, and provide benefit to our customers and communities.

What difference will it make?

Our customers will see us working with partners in their communities and will benefit from faster problem solving and joined up support.

Our partnerships will help us to achieve our Big Plan, and in turn we will support their strategic ambitions.

We will see improvements in customer satisfaction across specific areas related to individual partnerships. For example, an improvement in our approach to ASB due to more effective partnership working with the police and youth organisations.

What does that mean?

- **"Stakeholder mapping"** – This means identifying all the other organisations FCHO works with currently, how we work with them, and who the key people are in those organisations.

Wellbeing & Resilience

What do we mean?

We have a focus on supporting and empowering customers and communities to overcome challenges such as economic hardship, health inequalities and access to services.

How will we do it?

We will get to know our communities by having active and visible Neighbourhood Co-Ordinators. We will understand the individual challenges each community faces and develop bespoke Neighbourhood Plans.

We will have up to date knowledge of the services available in our communities so that we can sign-post where a service isn't delivered by us.

We will support community organisations to deliver their objectives through effective partnership arrangements, or Community funding, where this adds value to FCHO and our customers.

We will determine the best ways to support customers in employability, digital inclusion, energy efficiency, access to healthy food and health and wellbeing services.

We will provide tenancy sustainment services related to financial wellbeing.

When will we do it?

In 2025/26 we will review how we deliver neighbourhood services to ensure we have an effective, knowledgeable and visible approach to Neighbourhood Management.

In 2026 we will develop, with communities, tailored Neighbourhood Plans which the Neighbourhood Co-Ordinators will take responsibility for delivering.

In 2026-28 we will deliver against those Neighbourhood Plans.

What difference will it make?

Customers will feel that FCHO are making a positive contribution to their neighbourhood and community.

Customers will feel listened to.

Customers will be able to access the support they need.

What does this mean for our customers?

- You will know that FCHO are working to help you feel safe in your home and community.
- You will be able to contact us in a way that best suits you, be that human interaction or digital.
- You will have a wide range of opportunities open to you, to shape FCHO's services and strategic direction.
- You will feel listened to, engaged if you want to be, and valued as a customer.
- It doesn't mean we can say yes to everything, but it does mean that we will always be thinking about how we can help.
- You will feel that FCHO are making a positive contribution to your neighbourhood.

-

What does this mean for our colleagues?

- We will invest in your training and development.
- You will feel better able to answer queries from customers.
- We will empower you to ask 'how can I help?' and put the customer first.
- You will know what is expected of you and have the tools to deliver it.

What does this mean for Oldham?

- FCHO owned green spaces, open spaces and communal areas will be progressive improved.
- FCHO Community Centres will become Community Hubs, offering facilities better tailored to needs of local people.
- By reviewing our partnerships and the needs of local communities, FCHO will make use of our resources to ensure we are fill gaps in local area service provision rather than duplicating services already offered by others.
- We will ensure that money is being used effectively to support community wellbeing and resilience.

What are our priorities for 2025?

- Getting good customer data to inform our services
- Getting a roadmap in place for our systems
- Beginning the transformation of our Contact Centre to a Customer Experience Hub
- Involving our customers in influencing our service offer - and then clearly communicating this
- Reviewing how we spend FCHO money for the benefit of our communities.