

# **STOCKPORT HOMES' CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY 2019 – 2022**

**01 November 2019**

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Stockport Homes has a strong record of providing excellent frontline services, as evidenced by high rates of customer satisfaction across numerous service areas, eleven years of continuous accreditation with the Customer Service Excellence award and an award for customer service at the national Chamber of Commerce awards in 2018.
- 1.2 Customer Access is a key element of these frontline services, ensuring Stockport Homes delivers its mission to be “*One Team, Transforming Lives*”, delivering a seamless service to customers which allows them to contact the organisation in the way which suits them best.
- 1.3 This Strategy sets out how Stockport Homes will continue to improve its approach to customer access. Customers were involved in developing the Strategy through a Customer Hub meeting, meetings with a group of customers who were interested in customer access and specific customer meetings, for example on the approach to reporting repairs online. There are customer satisfaction surveys for the One Number team and reception which have provided insight to inform the strategy. Customer’s recommendations have been incorporated in terms of limiting the interactive voice routing (IVR) menu on the One Number phone system, incorporating booked appointments for some of the reception drop in sessions and screen changes to the Myonline system. Discussion at SHG’s Operation’s Committee and Leadership Forum has helped to shape the strategy and its ambitions. A key challenge is to make a considerable improvement to Stockport Homes’ online offer, introducing end-to-end digital transactions which become the preferred route of contact for many customers.

## 2 CONTEXT

Customer care is at the heart of how SHG operates and delivers its services. This is supported through the focus on customer care in Values Conversation with team members, and a focus on identifying people with excellent customer care skills in recruitment. All of the Reception and One Number team members have attended accredited Welcome to Excellence training, with a commitment to expand the training to other SHG teams.

Stockport Council deliver the reception service at three neighbourhood library locations (Brinnington, Bridgehall and Reddish) on behalf of Stockport Homes. Since the move to Cornerstone these offices, as expected, have had fewer housing visitors because customers have gone online, visited Cornerstone or used the telephone. The Council are reviewing their library services and it is likely SHG will develop a new agreement with the Council regarding these reception services as a result.

Demand for online services is increasing, with a recent survey finding 51% of shoppers now say that they prefer to shop online<sup>1</sup> and 90% of adults had used the internet in the past 12 months<sup>2</sup>. Myonline is Stockport Homes’ online offer to

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<sup>1</sup> Ecommerce news survey 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics 2018.

customers and this currently has approximately 3,000 members. A recent review of the three main customer services (repairs, rehousing and neighbourhood issues) concluded that approximately 44%<sup>3</sup> of current interactions are completed online. This compares to some other housing organisations that state they are getting close to 90% of interactions on line<sup>4</sup>.

It is recognised that some customers either cannot, or do not want to engage online. In a recent survey, 20% of adults with a disability had not used the internet in the past 12 months and only 44% of those aged over 75 had used the internet in the past 12 months.<sup>5</sup> A separate Digital Access Strategy sets the context for supporting customers to get online and includes a specific focus on groups such as this. This Customer Access Strategy must cater for the increasing desire for online services but also provide high quality experiences for other customers who may still want to telephone, visit or have face to face contact. The Strategy will therefore have a 'digital by choice' approach which will emphasise an excellent digital offer to encourage customers but will also offer other high quality, accessible alternative methods of customer contact for customers with that preference.

### **3 ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE**

Good progress has been made towards delivering the 2015 – 2018 Customer Access Strategy, as detailed below.

#### **3.1 Develop a One Number approach**

- The One Number team has been brought together under a single manager (the Customer Access Manager), bringing together four separate teams who are now answering approximately 16,000 calls per month, undertaking outbound surveys and managing three email accounts.
- In the first quarter of 2019/20, the team met its target of answering 95% of calls. New telephony was implemented in October 2019 to drive improvements in customer satisfaction and improve performance further.
- All staff have attended 'Welcome to Excellence' training to improve the standard of customer interactions and this has been reflected in excellent customer satisfaction feedback.

#### **3.2 Develop online services**

- Over 3,000 customers are now registered for the Myonline service (there were less than 2,000 in 2017) to check their rent balance and personal details on line.
- Customers can now report repairs and make repairs appointments using Myonline.

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<sup>3</sup> This is an internal measure. It has been calculated by comparing the number of digital transactions (this includes online activity such as completing a rehousing application online and emails with specific service requests) to the number of telephone calls received. At present this measure only includes the customer facing services of repairs, rehousing and homechoice.

<sup>4</sup> Housing Online Conference, summer 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics 2018.

- Almost 100% of rehousing application forms and bidding for properties is on line.
- An average 250 emails per week are received reporting repairs (indicating an appetite from customers).
- There are now over 60 e-forms on the Stockport Homes website for customers to report a wide range of issues.

### **3.3 Deliver excellent face to face services at the new head office and at the area reception points**

- All staff within the reception team have the Welcome to Excellence training/accreditation to raise the standard of service that staff provide and this has been reflected in positive feedback from customers.
- 97% of customers surveyed in July 2018 felt Cornerstone offered a better environment and service experience than they had received at St Peters office.
- The Customer Scrutiny Panel reviewed the reception service and found it to be 'excellent'.
- The recent Customer Service Excellence accreditation inspection identified the reception environment and service as an exemplar.

### **3.4 To deliver an enhanced culture of customer care**

- Over 95% of customers state that the reception staff had been 'helpful and polite' in monthly surveys undertaken this year.
- In 2018/19, 97% of customers were satisfied when reporting repairs.

### **3.5 Introduce a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System**

- The CRM system went live in July 2018, with staff using new tablets to complete 4,000 tenancy visits.
- Estate inspections through CRM and undertaking Winter Welfare visits went live in September 2019.
- In a recent survey of Housing Officers, 97% stated the CRM system had improved their ways of working.

## **4 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2019-2022**

- 4.1 The overall aim of the Strategy remains consistent, *"to provide excellent access for all Stockport Homes' customers, balancing the needs of individuals, providing choice, responding to changing demands and providing value for money."*

This approach recognises that whilst Stockport Homes needs to meet demand from the increasing number of customers who expect online services, a range of high quality access routes should be provided to meet the needs of those customers whose preferred option is not online services.

- 4.2 Stockport Homes Customer Access Strategy 2019 - 2022 will focus on four key themes.

#### **4.2.1 Developing a Customer Service Centre**

The One Number team (which is currently telephone focussed) will develop into a multi-channel Customer Service Centre which incorporates a wider range of contact types including online queries, webchat, a webbot and social media channels. Furthermore, a review of calls coming into other teams across Stockport Homes will identify additional services which could be incorporated into the Customer Service Centre increasing its remit across the organisation.

The CRM offer will be refocused onto the Customer Service Centre to encourage more comprehensive use across all customer facing teams. The Customer Service Centre will raise CRM cases by recording contacts and will then send these cases to a range of teams to action and update. CRM will be the key source of data on customer activities which will assist the Customer Service Centre to be well informed to respond to customer enquiries. This approach will position the Customer Service Centre at the forefront of customer interactions. A key target for the Customer Service Centre, using CRM, going forward will be the number of queries that are resolved at the point of contact with the customer whether through telephone or digital contact.

The Carecall and Concierge service take incoming calls from a range of customers including calls from customers who may have fallen or need support, out of hours repairs and door entry into blocks. A review will be undertaken to consider the potential opportunities to develop closer working between the One Number and Carecall / Concierge teams including creating a single point of contact. This review will include how to improve the 24/7 offer within the context of an ever increasingly digital service offering.

#### **4.2.2 Deliver a step change in online services**

Stockport Homes' 2019 Digital Transformation Strategy aim is that *"we will optimise digital technologies to empower staff to improve efficiency and outcomes for customers."*

A key focus for this Strategy is that the MyOnline offer will provide more end-to-end digital services, with the aim of increasing users from 3,000 to 7,000 over the next three years. It is intended to encourage customers to use online services so that 200 customers per week are reporting repairs.

In addition, a new housing management system will be developed which will revolutionise online services, as well as ensuring the website has the functionality to meet customer needs. Stockport Homes has an excellent record for customer care and there is a challenge to make sure that this continues with the increase in online services. Regular analysis and customer journey mapping of the quality of customer interactions will be undertaken to ensure the digital approach continues to offer excellence.

#### **4.2.3 Developing the face to face offer**

The Cornerstone reception service will be positioned to expand to new services such as the SHG employment and support offers and potentially to hosting new organisations.

Reports show that the computers in reception were used for a total of 432 hours in January 2019. With the expansion of Universal Credit and the Myonline offer, it is anticipated demand could grow to between 750 and 1000 hours per month, necessitating a redesign to accommodate the expansion of the IT offer.

#### **4.2.4 Developing an enhanced customer service offer**

Additional skills training and development will be undertaken to ensure customer service is tailored to the needs of each individual customer. This will involve unconscious bias training and developing knowledge and responses to a wide variety of mental and physical challenges for customers. The customer service offer will be extended to other customer-facing teams such as the Carecall and Concierge teams, to embed a unified approach across the organisation.

### **4.3 Targets for the service**

A number of criteria for customer access have been developed in consultation with customers and staff. These are that services should;

- provide a choice to customers
- be easily accessible
- be simple to use
- be reliable
- be cost effective

These will be regularly tested with customers.

There will be four key targets to assess this Strategy.

- Achieve 95% customer satisfaction across both telephony and reception services.
- 95% of calls to the Customer Service Centre are answered from 2019 onwards
- There are 7,000 customers signed up to Myonline by 2022
- 70% of customer interactions are online by 2022

## **5 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

### **5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed on this Strategy.**

The approach taken in this Strategy is to offer a range of access routes rather than to force customers to use a preferred route. This has meant that it provides options for customers to choose from and therefore caters for a wider range of customers. The Strategy gives customers who do not want to use digital processes other high quality options.

The EIA also highlighted that some specific groups such as those whose first language is not English or who may have mental health issues could find it more difficult to engage and communicate with services. There is support for such groups, for example a Farsi drop-in and a deaf users' drop-in, use of interpreters and supported phone services for deaf customers. There is a training programme to support staff to engage with customers who may be hard of hearing, have autism or other mental health issues.

## **6 LINKS TO POLICIES**

6.1 This Strategy is related to and will have an impact on a number of strategies and policies across Stockport Homes, including:

- Digital Inclusion Strategy
- IT Strategy
- Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Digital access Strategy

## **7 ACTION PLAN**

An action plan is attached at Appendix One. The Action Plan shows the key activities to undertake to make sure that this Strategy is implemented. The Action Plan identifies the person who will lead each action and the timeframe in which it should be completed.

## **8 OWNERSHIP, MONITORING AND REVIEW.**

This Strategy is owned by the Head of Access & Support and will be reviewed annually.