



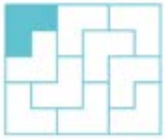
Our 2024 - 2029 plan for:



**Communal
services**

Date of issue: November 2024





Vision statement

“When I open my windows and look outside do I think “I’m glad I live here?”

“When my friends or family come and see me, am I proud to live here?”

The plan describes what we will change over the next three years to achieve our vision to deliver excellent communal areas which have high levels of customer satisfaction and are maintained and repaired to an assessed high standard. Our aim is to deliver a ‘Yes’ answer from customers on the above questions when they live on or visit our estates and our communal areas.

The BIG challenges

- **Contractors:** We want contractors to deliver high quality services at competitive costs, so we can ensure value for money for customer’s service charges, but procurement and contractor management does not always result in the value for money we are seeking.
- **Customer expectations:** Customers have high standards for their internal and external communal space, we do as well. But meeting those expectations while trying to keep costs down and challenges from Housing Benefit to a minimum can result in communal spaces not kept to all customers’ ideal standard.
- **Management:** Coordinating plans across different NCHA teams and contractors can be complicated, since so many are involved that it can result in a disjointed approach. Housing, Your Community, Assets and Property Services, Sustainability teams, and services and repairs contractors need to work together.

Where are we now?

- In the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) survey in May 2023, of those 327 customers who said they had internal or external communal space, 55% said they were satisfied with 'how the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained'. This is lower than the sector and peer group median of 67%.
- A separate annual survey completed by the Services Team and Comms and Engagement Team in July 2024 identified issues with customer satisfaction and perception provided by NCHA and our contractors. 51% of customers were satisfied overall with their grounds maintenance, and 56% of customers were satisfied with communal cleaning.
- In the 12 months from April 2023, there were 51 complaints about grounds maintenance, window cleaning and communal cleaning. This is a low number given the weekly and fortnightly services provided to 396 schemes and constitutes 2.58% of all complaints.
- Contract performance for 2023-24 was generally satisfactory across our grounds maintenance and cleaning contractors. We have issued an improvement notice to one contractor due to the gaps they have had in service whilst recruiting colleagues' to positions in Northamptonshire. We are also testing contractors' capacity to deliver enhanced specification across a wide geographical area as part of our pre-tendering work.
- The Homes and Neighbourhood Panel is assisting with scoring in our communal cleaning tender process and we are discussing how they support ongoing monitoring of grounds maintenance.
- In 2024 we restructured the caretaking service, creating the new position of multi-site services officers who visit a patch of communal spaces to manage health and safety, monitor cleaning contractors, carry out minor repairs and respond to issues raised by customers.
- Health and Safety compliance relating to communal spaces is good, with 100% compliance for fire risk assessments, LOLER for communal lifts, water safety, electrical safety and gas safety.

Key objectives

One year

Setting a new bi-annual customer satisfaction survey

- Complete a new annual Communal Services Survey in Spring 2024
- Analyse survey data and identify 'Hotspots' of low performance to schedule visits in quarter 2
- Use Smoke surveys from Customer Experience team feedback and Complaints received to determine ongoing satisfaction and additional inspection schedules for Quarters 2, 3 and 4
- Publicise responses back to customers and share our plans in quarter 3.

Use best practice to help improve our communal services

- Join HQN's Estate Services Benchmarking Club and attend quarterly meetings and the annual Estate Services Conference
- Apply HQN's Estate Services Inspection grading model at NCHA.

Two Years

Commence an Inspection Programme with customers

- Recruit and train Community Voice volunteers to join an Inspection Team who will review local estates quarterly using the HQN Estate Grading Model
- Publicise our inspection work with customers on through the website and customer magazine.

Review and improve our communal services specifications

- Using statistics from 2023-24 survey and feedback, Services Coordinators will review grounds maintenance specifications
- Arrange a programme of site specific consultation meetings with customers at individual schemes with negative feedback
- Draw up any additional work requested by customers – include these as enhanced estate work in a new draft specifications (if customers willing to pay for an enhanced service)

- Include any new changes to specification changes into our new grounds maintenance contracts
- Post revised specifications following consultation on our website
- Train our Customer Experience team on specifications to allow them to respond to customers as first contact resolutions, as required
- Identify a further nine sites for wildflower meadows and carry out works to establish them as a wildflower meadow. This includes advising customers, budgeting, signage and informing grounds maintenance contractors of revised scheme plans.

Procurement

- Map out procurement of our new contracts with the Procurement team. This will include evaluating and confirming the number of 'lots', coverage and duration of our next contracts
- Procure and deliver the new grounds maintenance contracts and window cleaning contracts, after agreeing our rewilding and biodiversity net gain position
- Deliver the new communal cleaning and care home cleaning contracts in June 2024. Ensure customer specifications for all new procurement are clear on the website
- Schedule contract meetings and agree KPIs with customers
- Incorporate GIS mapping to manage communal areas, especially tree surveying and ongoing management, land ownership and responsibility. Agree our contract positions on ad hoc tree work.

Performance

- Achieve median benchmarked satisfaction with the communal services tenant satisfaction measure.

Five years

- Achieve Q1 benchmarked satisfaction with the communal services tenant satisfaction measure.

Delivering the plan

The Head of Housing Services will be responsible for the delivery of the thematic plan and supported by a team of managers/team leaders to assist delivery. All the objectives are reflected in the relevant team plan.

A bi-monthly meeting will manage the plan overall attended by:

- Head of Housing Services
- Rents and Services Manager
- Services Team Leader
- Multi-site Services Team leader
- Sustainability Officer
- Head of Communications and Engagement
- Assets and Property Services Lead

Monitoring and reporting

The plan delivery will be overseen by the 'Our Customers' steering group. Progress will be reported to Customer Committee in 2025. The plan will be fully reviewed in 2026.



Our business delivery strategies

Being the best we can be for our customers and colleagues by always listening and striving to improve, in an environment that is supportive, inclusive and wellbeing focused.

Alongside the Group Corporate Plan sit five **'Business Delivery Strategies'**, which are relevant to all departments. These are:

- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- Social Impact Strategy
- Value for Money Strategy
- Our Customers Strategy
- Our Places Strategy.



Taken together, these strategies provide us with the opportunity to pause and reflect on what we've been doing, and then to refocus on the future.

Taking inspiration from these five business delivery strategies, this plan sets out our ambitions for customer experience for the next five years.