



# **Communications Strategy 2017-2020**

# Communications Strategy – 2017-2020

## 1. Executive Summary

This document outlines the Communications Strategy for West of Scotland Housing Association (WSHA) for 2017-2020. The overall aim of the Association is to deliver a comprehensive and effective communications strategy that builds relationships with stakeholders i.e. tenants and customers, staff and Board/Sub-Committee Members and external stakeholders. We also want to raise and protect our reputation by promoting the impact our services have on tenants, customers and the wider community.

The strategy outlines the following key communication objectives:

- Embed the new brand identity and vision for an independent WSHA.
- Ensure tenants and customers are kept fully informed via timely, meaningful and engaging communications so they feel informed about services and outcomes.
- Improve internal communication to ensure staff and members of our Board and support committees can be active and informed ambassadors for the Association.
- Promote the impact and work of the Willowacre Trust.
- Enhance and protect the reputation of WSHA among key stakeholders.

The strategy also outlines planned communication activity for 2017/2018.

## 2. Introduction

WSHA is underpinned by the mission to make a difference to people's lives and make society a better place to live. This ethos is the basis for the vision, values and strategic aims of the Association (outlined below).

### Our Vision:

We go further to provide housing you call home
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### Our Values:

To support our customers and communities by:

Being adaptable and flexible in meeting their needs
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Empowering and providing opportunities to help them grow
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Creating a sense of belonging
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Engaging and connecting with others who can help
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### Our Strategic Aims:

The Association's strategic aims set our overall direction and demonstrate how we will meet our Vision. Our strategic aims are to:

Deliver outstanding service to customers in all our communities
Actively manage our assets and develop new homes to meet local needs
Be the best we can be for our customers
Work with others to improve tenants' lives
Be well governed and financially strong

Communication underpins each element of the vision, values and strategic aims. Therefore, it is essential that a comprehensive and effective strategy is created and delivered that will help to achieve the vision of WSHA.

A key focus for the strategy will be to establish WSHA's new identity and build on it to raise the profile of the Association and secure its reputation as a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) that makes a tangible difference to the lives of tenants, customers and the wider community.

We have ensured that this strategy meets the relevant Governance and Financial standards set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator. The strategy outlines a number of ways we take account of the needs and priorities of our tenants, customers and stakeholders when delivering communications.

### **3. Stakeholder Feedback**

WSHA has a wide variety of key stakeholders including:

- Existing tenants and customers
- Potential applicants and customers
- Staff, Board and Sub-Committee members
- Local Authorities
- Funders
- Regulators
- Housing sector
- Elected Members
- Partner agencies
- Press

To ensure the creation of a successful strategy that is shaped by our stakeholders and meets their needs, we sought their views about communication.

The common themes of the feedback and points of interest were:

Stakeholder	Feedback
Tenants	<p>Tenant feedback on communication has been collated from the Customer Satisfaction Survey and the Community Survey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 98% of tenants felt WSHA was very or fairly good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions</li> <li>• Written communication is preferred by 87% of tenants</li> <li>• 66% of tenants had internet access with 78% using it to access social media and 43% for email.</li> <li>• 81% of tenants said they read the Westworld with 69% stating it would benefit from the inclusion of a section dedicated to their local authority area.</li> </ul>
Factored and Shared Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 65% state letter is preferred communication method</li> <li>• 77% would like to receive a newsletter if it was relevant to them</li> <li>• Quarterly updates</li> <li>• There has been a lack of communication targeted at this group and it is evident they would appreciate being kept informed of a variety of issues e.g. contractor changes and service charge increases.</li> <li>• Feeling WSHA is only interested in tenants and not owners</li> </ul>
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email is preferred communication method until intranet is revamped</li> <li>• Increased verbal updates via team meetings</li> <li>• Better flow of strategic information from CMT/SMT level to rest of organisation</li> <li>• Relevant and engaging intranet is needed</li> <li>• Majority of staff don't use website or follow our social media profiles.</li> </ul>
External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email is preferred method of communication</li> <li>• Quarterly updates</li> <li>• Would like to hear updates about development projects and general news that may affect the community.</li> </ul>

#### 4. Communication Objectives

Building on stakeholder feedback we have identified five communication objectives to ensure effective and meaningful communication is achieved:

##### 4.1 Embed the new brand identity and vision for an independent WSHA.

Following WSHA's separation from Gentoo it is essential that the Association re-launches itself as an independent organisation that is committed to making a

difference to tenants and owners in the communities we operate in. A main focus for 2017/18 will be establishing our new identity and vision among key stakeholders.

**We will achieve this by:**

- Creating and delivering a launch plan to ensure that internal and external stakeholders are informed about the Gentoo separation and WSHA's new identity.
- Raising awareness with staff so they feel confident in understanding WSHA's vision and values and applying the new brand guidelines in their daily work.
- Ensuring that all WSHA marketing and promotional materials are consistently branded and any previous branding is no longer used.
- Utilising online platforms to routinely share key messages that reinforce our vision and values.
- Creating a clear Tone of Voice for WSHA that complements the brand guidelines and outlines the language we use e.g. WSHA, us, we.

**4.2 Ensure tenants and customers are kept fully informed via timely, meaningful and engaging communications so they feel informed about services and outcomes.**

We want all of our tenants and customers to be proud of being part of WSHA and act as ambassadors for the Association. All communications with tenants and customers across all platforms must reflect WSHA's vision and values.

It is essential that we build a positive relationship with tenants and customers via meaningful and regular communication. WSHA continuously strives to seek ways to improve communications and uses feedback to help shape communication activity.

We recognise that there has been a lack of regular communication with our factored and shared owners which was reinforced in their communication survey feedback. We are committed to improving communication with these customers to increase satisfaction and create a meaningful dialogue with factored and shared owners.

**We will achieve this by:**

- Ensuring the views of tenants and customers shape communications content and method of delivery at all times. A feedback protocol will be developed by the Tenant Engagement Officer that will allow tenants and customers to regularly give their views on communication and also to provide content. Feedback from existing customer satisfaction and complaints processes will also be used.
- Reviewing Westworld and making necessary changes to deliver a Tenant Newsletter that readers find relevant, meaningful and engaging.
- Utilising our newly redesigned website to highlight our achievements and promote the range of services we offer to tenants.

- Increase our use of video as an information tool to answer commonly asked questions or explain routine processes e.g. application process, repairs issues.
- Maintaining the content on our website to reflect sector best practice and guidance i.e. Scottish Federation of Housing 'Open all Hours'.
- Ensuring tenants and customers can access the website to pay their rent, report a repair and access relevant information.
- Increasing use of social media engagement particularly with tenants by posting regular and interesting content.
- Providing opportunities for tenants and owners to share their content.
- Establishing regular communication with factored and shared owners e.g. send Westworld and Scottish Social Housing Charter with a tailored correspondence relevant to their needs.
- Creating a dedication section on the website with the range of information reflecting our legal requirements.
- Involving owners in consultation on the quality and range of services we deliver to them.
- Exploring the feasibility of creating a focus group of factored and shared owners to gain their views and improve 2-way communication.
- Ensure all communications are easy to understand and accessible for all and adhering to the Equalities Act.

#### **4.3 Improve internal communication to ensure staff, Board and sub-committee members can be active and informed ambassadors for the Association.**

Staff, Board and sub-committee members are the greatest ambassadors of WSHA therefore it is essential they have a positive view of the Association and have the skills and confidence to promote it. Staff, Board and sub-committee members will receive regular communications that contain internal news, examples of how their work makes a difference and give them the opportunity to share content for news stories. They should also feel confident in sharing information that will inform content for promotional purposes.

##### **We will achieve this by:**

- Creating a staff champions group that will represent their team/department and gather content for WSHA to use as content for online and offline communications.
- Launching a new intranet system to increase engagement and improve communication with staff and Board members.
- Utilising the Intranet and Members Brief to share information and good news stories.
- Developing a communications protocol for sharing internal news.
- Providing structured advice and support to help staff communicate key messages and promote the impact of their services.

- Building meaningful relationships with staff and Members to ensure the Communication & PR Advisor has an excellent understanding of the work of the Association and has knowledge of upcoming news content.
- Ensuring that our values are reinforced in all communications so that staff and Board/Sub-Committee members have a full understanding of our vision.

#### **4.4 Promote the impact and work of the Willowacre Trust.**

WSHA's charitable subsidiary, the Willowacre Trust, makes a difference to the lives of tenants, customers and the wider community by delivering a range of support services and events. It is crucial that the work of the Willowacre Trust is promoted to increase engagement and demonstrate its positive impact.

- **We will achieve this by:**
- Working with the Community and Support Services Manager/team to create and deliver a mini strategy for the Willowacre Trust.
- Ensuring the Willowacre Trust and its work is featured prominently on the website and is updated regularly.
- Using the intranet to ensure all staff are aware of services available to tenants and customers and any upcoming events.
- Proactively seeking opportunities to highlight the impact Willowacre Trust has on individuals and communities e.g. news coverage, WSHA e-news bulletin, award submissions.

#### **4.5 Enhance and protect the reputation of WSHA among key stakeholders.**

WSHA is proud of providing houses you call home and making a difference to individuals and communities. To enhance and protect this reputation it is essential to proactively promote the work of the Association and effectively manage any potentially damaging situations.

It is also important that we have effective communication with our potential tenants and customers i.e. waiting list applicants and must ensure we have a process in place for keeping them updated.

#### **We will achieve this by:**

- Proactively seeking content to be used in news releases
- Developing a regular e-news bulletin to be sent to external stakeholders.
- Creating a comprehensive Press Enquires and Crisis Media Plan
- Producing a protocol for internally communicating any potentially negative news stories.
- Ensuring all communications reinforce the vision and values of WSHA
- Seeking beneficial opportunities for WSHA to be represented on a wider scale at conferences and events and ensuring those that attend are confident in their ambassadorial role.

- Ensuring all staff are aware of the procedures for press enquiries.
- Establish communication process for waiting list applicants that builds a positive relationship with us.

## **5. Monitoring and Reporting**

The Communication & PR Advisor will lead on the implementation of this strategy. Progress on the key strategic objectives will be monitored by the Corporate Services Manager.

A report against progress on the strategy will be provided to the Board on an annual basis.

If you require any more information regarding this strategy please contact Sabrina Allan, Communication & PR Advisor, 0141 550 5630 or [sabrina.allan@westscot.co.uk](mailto:sabrina.allan@westscot.co.uk)