

# Customer Engagement Plan: 2026-29



# Contents

<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Principles of engagement</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Our vision for customer engagement</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Engagement objectives 2026–2029</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1. Ensure customer feedback drives service improvements .....	4
2. Make better use of the data we have to deliver improved, more tailored services .....	4
3. Demonstrate how we act on customer feedback.....	4
4. Improve communication with a focus on clarity, timeliness and relevance .....	4
5. Improve transparency around performance, safety and service delivery .....	4
6. Expand engagement opportunities .....	5
<b>Our current engagement opportunities</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Monitoring and measuring success</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Sources</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Customer Engagement Action Plan 2026-29</b> .....	<b>7</b>
The 3 Cs .....	7
Objective 1: Ensure customer feedback drives service improvements .....	7
Objective 2: Make better use of the data we have to deliver improved, more tailored services.....	8
Objective 3: Better demonstrate how we act on customer feedback .....	8
Objective 4: Improve communication with a focus on clarity, timeliness and relevance.....	9
Objective 5: Improve transparency around performance, safety and service delivery .....	10
Objective 6: Expand engagement opportunities .....	11

# Introduction

This Customer Engagement Plan sets out how Cottsway will listen to, communicate with, and act on the views and experiences of our customers. We want to show we're listening and that your views are known, understood and responded to, making the experience of living in a Cottsway home better than ever.

Informed by the 2024/25 Customer Survey and aligned with the expectations of the new Transparency, Influence and Accountability Consumer Standard this plan is designed to ensure that every customer has a voice and can see how feedback shapes the services we provide. It also supports delivery of our Corporate Plan and People Strategy (2023-28) and, of course, our values which are:

- We are open and transparent about how we do business.
- We are here for the long term.
- We see Cottsway as a partnership between customers and staff and key stakeholders.
- We will do all we can to provide our customers with decent homes from which they can enhance their lives.
- We are part of, and value, the communities in which we work

## Principles of engagement

Our approach to customer engagement is shaped by the following core principles:

- **Inclusive:** Engagement opportunities are open and accessible, regardless of background or circumstance.
- **Flexible:** Customers have the freedom to choose how and when they engage, in ways that suit their circumstances.
- **Transparent:** We clearly demonstrate how customer feedback influences decisions and shapes services.
- **Accountable:** We track, measure and report on the impact of engagement to ensure it drives meaningful change.

## Our vision for customer engagement

We want all Cottsway customers to feel heard, respected and empowered to influence our decisions and services. By building inclusive, transparent and proactive two-way communication, we aim to:

- Create a culture where the customer voice leads.
- Deliver services built on transparency and accountability, driven by customer feedback.
- Provide inclusive and impactful engagement opportunities and use data effectively to drive improvements.
- Ensure customer engagement makes a difference to services and in our neighbourhoods.

## Engagement objectives 2026–2029

Over the period of this Engagement Plan we will work on the following six objectives to deliver on our vision for customer engagement at Cottsway. Below is an explanation of why we have identified these objectives, for more detail of the actions themselves see the action plan on page 7.

## 1. Ensure customer feedback drives service improvements

Customer feedback comes in all sorts of forms, from statistical analysis of survey results and analysis of comments to compliments, complaints, phone calls, emails and social media posts. We already use feedback from surveys and consultations to drive service improvements but aim to do more and do better to create a truly customer driven culture.

### Key themes to be addressed:

Based on customer feedback, three common themes have been identified as areas we need to focus on and we will prioritise these for improvement, while delivering the objectives set out in this plan. These are:

1. Communications,
2. Communal areas
3. Contract Management.

## 2. Make better use of the data we have to deliver improved, more tailored services

We gather lots of data, both on our homes and on knowing who our customers are. Recent developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have led to new ways for us to analyse and use that data to identify where customer feedback indicates services need to be improved, for example we now have sentiment analysis functionality on our surveys with Acuity. Finding ways to better use the data we hold, and making sure that data is fit for purpose (we are collecting the right information) will help us meet customer need more effectively and ensure we are targeting resources efficiently.

## 3. Demonstrate how we act on customer feedback

We already review all comments received in our surveys to ensure that where a customer needs a response they get one, with the aim of improving their experience and demonstrating we are listening and responding. We also publish quarterly updates and annual complaints reports on our website that set out how we have improved services in response to the issues raised and publish reports on all key surveys. This year we've introduced a new report showing how feedback from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey impacted services in 2024/25. That said, we need to do more to show how customer feedback is improving services.

## 4. Improve communication with a focus on clarity, timeliness and relevance

The [Customer Survey 2024/25](#) showed that the majority of customers who responded (over 1,500) are satisfied with the information we provide about our services and performance, however it did show some customers (up to 20%) see room for improvement and comments were very informative.

Our People Strategy 2023/28 has a commitment to ensuring 80% of our normal day-to-day transactions will be digital by 2028. We know that not all our customers are online (78% in June 2025) so we want to make sure those not online are not excluded. We also want to look at increasing our range of Easy Read materials.

## 5. Improve transparency around performance, safety and service delivery

Again, the Customer Survey 2024/25 showed that while 83% of respondents were satisfied with the information provided about safety in the home 17% were dissatisfied or unsure. The survey also told us that 29% of respondents were not sure or disagreed that we are open and transparent about our performance. To improve in these areas, we will review the information we provide to identify any gaps and consider alternative ways to publish and promote performance information, including to customers who are not online.

## 6. Expand engagement opportunities

We focus on hearing the voice of the many in our engagement structure, through regular surveys, consultations and task & finish groups. We know not everybody wants to be formally involved and want to make it as easy as possible for everyone who wants to engage to give us their feedback. We also rely on the hard work and commitment of a few customers who look in-depth at our services and make recommendations for improvements through membership of our Scrutiny Group. We have a solid foundation for customer engagement but want to build on that through the lifetime of this Engagement Plan, creating more accessible opportunities for customers to have their voices heard. A specific focus will be creating new mechanisms for customers living in our low-cost home ownership properties, a number that grows year on year thanks to our development programme.

## Our current engagement opportunities

We offer a variety of engagement opportunities for customers, both online, by phone, post and in-person, ranging from regular and one-off surveys, consultations and task & finish groups through to more formal resident associations and the Scrutiny Group. Examples include:

### Individual feedback and one-off consultations

- Quarterly Tenant Satisfaction (TSM) survey
- Transactional surveys for repairs, lettings, complaints, new build and anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- Policy reviews and service-related consultations.

### Task & Finish Groups

- As required, most recently reviewed communications around service charges.
- Procurement Working Group meets as required to provide a customer perspective on new, customer-facing contracts.

### Neighbourhood engagement

- Tenant and Residents Associations, supported by grants and practical advice.
- Door knocking and individual contact to address local issues.
- Consultations on local environmental improvements.

### Online engagement

- Our closed Facebook Group is for Cottsway customers only. We use it to promote activities, opportunities, neighbourhood news and for customers to vote on the Community Fund.

### Scrutiny Group

- A group of up to six customers who meet regularly to review performance and scrutinise services, making recommendations for improvements.
- A formal recruitment process and structure with a Terms of Reference, role profile, Code of Conduct, Annual Report and minutes of meetings.

### Links to the governance structure

- Scrutiny Group members attend regular meetings of the Customer Insight Group (CIG), seeing all the same performance information as staff.
- The Chair of the Scrutiny Group attends the board's Customer Committee meetings twice a year.
- Board members also attend twice yearly Scrutiny Liaison Group meetings with the Chair of the Scrutiny Group.
- All customer feedback, including survey results, complaints and scrutiny recommendations are reported to board's Customer Committee twice a year.

# Monitoring and measuring success

We will measure progress with this Engagement Plan through:

- Regular monitoring of the Action Plan at Customer Insight Group meetings, also attended by Scrutiny Group members.
- Collecting, monitoring and reporting on the number of changes made to services as a result of customer feedback.
- Twice yearly reports of progress to Customer Committee.

## Conclusion

The Customer Engagement Plan 2026-2029 is a key part of Cottsway's commitment to becoming more transparent, inclusive and responsive. We know our customers care about the services they receive and want to have their voices heard. By embedding these principles in our work, and delivering on the action plan, we will strengthen trust, enhance service quality and deliver on what matters most to the people and communities we serve.

## Sources

The following sources were used to inform this Customer Engagement Strategy:

- Customer survey 2024-25
- TSM survey 2024-25 Annual Report (LCRA)
- TSM survey 2024-25 Report (LCHO)
- Transactional surveys Annual Report 2024-25
- Complaints and service improvement report 2024-25
- The People Strategy 2023-28
- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

# Customer Engagement Action Plan 2026-29

## The 3 Cs

Customer feedback has identified three common themes, and we will prioritise these during the life of this plan. Some of the actions below directly relate to bringing about improvements to these areas of service.

**C1. Communications** – this affects all customers, and we will focus on clarity, timeliness and relevance. The emphasis needs to be on keeping customers informed, particularly from start to finish when they are in the process of requesting or receiving a service from Cottsway and our contractors.

**C2. Communal areas** – this relates to customers who have communal areas and shared spaces, and receive shared services including grounds maintenance and cleaning, as well as repairs and things like communal bins and parking areas. During 2024/25, 24% of our communal customers were dissatisfied with how these areas are maintained.

**C3. Contract management** – this is linked to communal services, as we use contractors to deliver services like grounds maintenance and cleaning, and we also used external contractors for some repairs and maintenance services. We will do more to work with contractors to deliver services to the standards set out in contracts and do more to explain to customers when services will be provided, and what they can expect to receive from these.

The action plan below sets out how we will meet each objective and also shows which of the 3 C's the action will help us to deliver on.

## Objective 1: Ensure customer feedback drives service improvements

Ref	Action	C1 Communications	C2 Communal areas	C3 Contract management	Supports regulatory compliance
CEP1:01	Focus the Operational Customer Insight Group (OCIG) on using customer feedback to drive service improvements.	✓	✓	✓	✓
CEP1:02	Share complaints feedback and analysis with operational managers through OCIG and demonstrate how it is used to improve services.	✓			✓
CEP1:03	Encourage survey respondents to share contact details so we can follow up on issues raised if needed.	✓	✓	✓	

## Objective 2: Make better use of the data we have to deliver improved, more tailored services

Ref	Action	C1 Communications	C2 Communal areas	C3 Contract management	Supports regulatory compliance
CEP2:01	Review the customer information we collect – refer to the National Housing Federations' (NHF) Knowing our Homes report and develop a statement setting out what information we collect and why.	✓			✓
CEP2:02	Document our approach to identifying diverse needs as part of a request for service – including the key questions asked at point of service request or contact.	✓			✓
CEP2:03	Review how we capture and record when we have tailored services to meet a specific need and improve reporting.	✓			✓
CEP2:04	Ensure we can evidence how we use customer data to deliver services that meet a defined need, especially vulnerability.	✓			✓
CEP2:05	Make better use of the data we hold to inform and shape service delivery e.g. repairs contracts.		✓		

## Objective 3: Better demonstrate how we act on customer feedback

Ref	Action	C1 Communications	C2 Communal areas	C3 Contract management	Supports regulatory compliance
CEP3:01	Better evidence how individual customer feedback is responded to i.e. small case studies, numbers responded to per quarter, themes raised.	✓			✓
CEP3:02	Develop a library of case studies for different service areas showing how we have responded to feedback.	✓			✓

## Objective 4: Improve communication with a focus on clarity, timeliness and relevance

Ref	Action	C1 Communications	C2 Communal areas	C3 Contract management	Supports regulatory compliance
CEP4:01	Review Homepage with the aim of including graphics.	✓			
CEP4:02	Provide a printed copy of Homepage and other key information to customers for who we have no email.	✓			✓
CEP4:03	Provide key documents in Easy Read format.	✓			
CEP4:04	Explore if operatives can call customers when on the way.	✓			
CEP4:05	Investigate if repairs notification texts can be further improved to include the name of the operative.	✓			
CEP4:06	Provide more details on schedule of cyclical maintenance contracts i.e. replacement roofs, windows, gutters etc.	✓			
CEP4:07	Provide more information on services to communal areas (grounds maintenance and cleaning) including service standards and schedules.	✓	✓	✓	
CEP4:08	Continue to roll out the installation of noticeboards in blocks of flats and regularly provide updated information, to include QR codes to link to further information.	✓	✓	✓	
CEP4:09	Ensure we keep customers up to date when a service has been delayed and ensure contractors also communicate delays to the customer.	✓		✓	✓
CEP4:10	Provide more information on our energy efficiency investment programme.	✓			
CEP4:11	Establish a rolling programme of information campaigns on topics customers care about (eg communal services, energy efficiency, cyclical maintenance, service charges)	✓	✓		
CEP4:12	Run campaigns to better inform customers about the information we provide (performance data, policies, etc).	✓			
CEP4:13	Ensure all staff receive regular customer service training with a focus on care, empathy and respect.	✓			
CEP4:14	Set up robust call-back monitoring to ensure timely responses and include results in team performance indicators.	✓			

## Objective 5: Improve transparency around performance, safety and service delivery

Ref	Action	C1 Communications	C2 Communal areas	C3 Contract management	Supports regulatory compliance
CEP5:01	Further develop the customer portal to provide access to more services i.e. repairs appointments, key tenancy documentation, the onboarding process for new customers.	✓			
CEP5:02	Publish the Clean Space and Green Space survey results.	✓	✓	✓	
CEP5:03	Publish satisfaction with communal repairs.	✓	✓	✓	
CEP5:04	Identify what performance information customers want on communal areas and publish regularly, both online and on notice boards in communal areas.	✓	✓	✓	
CEP5:05	Investigate how we can provide useful feedback to customers on their home following completion of a stock condition survey.	✓			
CEP5:06	Develop a service standard for our approach to managing and maintaining communal areas and publish in the Customer Charter and on noticeboards.	✓	✓	✓	
CEP5:07	Develop and publish an investment programme for communal areas, with customers establishing the priorities.		✓		
CEP5:08	Publish short videos to explain our services, processes and what customers can expect.	✓			

## Objective 6: Expand engagement opportunities

Ref	Action	C1 Communications	C2 Communal areas	C3 Contract management	Supports regulatory compliance
CEP6:01	Engage customers in further developing the portal, identifying services/information to be included.	✓			
CEP6:02	Establish a mechanism to enable Low-Cost Homeowners (LCHO) to better engage with Cottsway with a focus on the issues raised in the LCHO Annual TSM survey.	✓			✓
CEP6:03	Use the engagement mailing list to invite customers to engage on a wider range of topics.	✓			
CEP6:04	Establish a mailing list for LCHO customers, identify the topics they want from Cottsway, and introduce a suitable communication method (e.g., targeted newsletter).	✓			
CEP6:05	Review and enhance engagement tracking, customer segmentation, and survey-fatigue management using TP Tracker.	✓		✓	
CEP6:06	Ensure customer-facing service tenders reflect input from customer feedback.			✓	
CEP6:07	Strengthen and develop our customer Procurement Group.			✓	
CEP6:08	Evaluate our engagement model against the standards set out in the Tpas National Tenant Engagement Standards.				
CEP6:09	Assess the feasibility of a Clean & Green Space Champions scheme.		✓	✓	
CEP6:10	Improve the visibility and accessibility of NHO's through site visits, estate inspections, community events and published information.	✓			
CEP6:11	Review and formalise the process of consultation for environmental improvements.	✓			
CEP6:12	Explore additional social media and messaging platforms for the Communities Team and their fit for customer forums.	✓			
CEP6:13	Online meet the team opportunities for customers with CLT, Exec and Board or videoclips explaining their roles.	✓			
CEP6:14	Establish satisfactions surveys for contractors, especially those used by property services teams.			✓	

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