



Lochaber Housing Association Communications Strategy 2025-2028

Policy Name	LHA Communications Strategy
Policy Category	Corporate & Governance
Policy Number	CG018a
Officer Responsible	Director of Customer Services
Associated documentation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Communications Action Plan2. Communications Planner and Tracker3. Tenant Participation Strategy4. LHA Branding Guidelines5. Customer Care Charter
Equality Impact Assessment Complete	No
Scottish Housing Regulator Standards	1, 2, 4 and 5
Date to Board	13 th November 2025
Next Review Date	November 2028

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1. Executive Summary

This document outlines the Communications Strategy for Lochaber Housing Association 2025-26. Its aim is to deliver a comprehensive and effective strategy that builds relationships with stakeholders, including tenants and customers, staff and Board/Sub-Committee Members and external stakeholders. This will be achieved by taking account of their needs and priorities when delivering communications.

This strategy outlines the following key communication aims:

- Deliver effective and meaningful internal communications to ensure all staff feel valued, fully informed and listened to, so that they are empowered to shape strategic plans and service delivery.
- Ensure tenants and customers are kept fully informed via timely, meaningful and engaging communications so they are informed about services and outcomes.
- Raise the profile and protect the reputation of LHA among key stakeholders.

LHA has a wide variety of key stakeholders including:

- Existing tenants and customers
- Prospective applicants and customers
- Staff, Board and Sub-Committee members
- Subsidiary - Lochaber Housing Association Property Services (LHAPS)
- Subsidiary - Lochaber Care & Repair (LCR)
- Our communities

- The Highland Council
- The Scottish Government
- Scottish Housing Regulator
- Lenders
- Partner agencies

2. Introduction

The main purpose of this Communications Strategy is to support our Strategic Objectives by underpinning our Mission, reflecting our Company and Core Values, and provide a framework for directing effective communication, both internally and externally.

Our Mission:

“Our mission is to facilitate the provision and maintenance of good quality, truly affordable housing opportunities and services for local people in their preferred communities and helping to sustain and develop thriving communities throughout Lochaber.”

Our Company Values

- Teamwork
- Respect
- Commitment
- Communication

Our Core Values:



Our Strategic Objectives:

LHA's mission is underpinned by the following strategic objectives:

1. We will facilitate the provision of high-quality affordable housing solutions throughout Lochaber.
2. We will develop and manage a high quality range of affordable services that meet the needs and preferences of customers.
3. We will ensure that we manage and govern our affairs efficiently and prudently and in doing so will operate accountably and openly in all that we do.
4. We will ensure that our financial management and planning will deliver medium and long term financial viability.
5. We will support, train and develop our staff team in the furtherance of our objectives.
6. We will support and guide our subsidiary companies as social enterprises to grow and diversify their services in order to deliver social impact.

Effective communication also underpins each element of achieving our Business Plan and it is therefore essential that a comprehensive and robust Communications Strategy is delivered to support LHA's goals. The Business Plan provides more detail on how we will achieve and evidence our Strategic Objectives.

3. Governance and Legal Framework

We have ensured that this strategy meets the relevant Governance and Financial standards set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator and Scottish Government.

Relevant Regulatory Standards

1. The governing body leads and directs the organisation to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.
2. The organisation is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.
4. The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.
5. The organisation conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.

Relevant Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes

1. **Equalities** -Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that they support the right to adequate housing, every tenant and other

customer has their individual needs and rights recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

2. **Communication** - Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.
3. **Participation** - Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy for them to participate in, and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with. This outcome is further underpinned in our Participation Strategy.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We will actively encourage and promote measures to ensure that all tenants have equal access to participation. We will consult and involve tenants from all our communities regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We will use a range of ways to consult and enable participation, which reflects and respects the diversity of our tenants.

We will ensure all our activities are accessible, we will provide support for you to attend if you need it and our information is available in other formats and languages on request.

The Communications Strategy has been drafted to ensure compliance not only with Equality legislation but also with Human Rights legislation.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone within LHA has a responsibility for effective communication and for implementing this Communications Strategy.

All Employees

All employees are responsible for communicating in a clear, respectful, effective and timely manner ensuring that all communication results in a positive experience for tenants and other stakeholders; even when relaying difficult messages. Our **Customer Care Charter** provides more detail.

Board of Management

Board members are key representatives of the Association, promoting our activities and creating growth opportunities. The Chairperson leads the Board of

Management, and his/her primary role is to ensure that the Committee is effective in its task of setting and implementing LHA's direction and strategy, and communicating that strategy to internal and external customers. The Board of Management is visible and approachable to staff and tenants.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is responsible for proposing and implementing this Strategy. and will lead on external communications, acting as the main spokesperson. The Chief Executive will approve press releases and public statements on behalf of LHA.

Senior Management Team

The Senior Management Team will lead on communication for their departments and support the Chief Executive to fully implement this Strategy. They will ensure important information is effectively disseminated to their staff through one-to-one meetings and regular team meetings, and that feedback received is fed back upwards.

Customer Services

The Customer Services Team are largely responsible for the official day-to-day communications of LHA including producing print and digital publications, social media and the website, press releases and events. Customer Services will also co-ordinate all Freedom of Information (FOI) and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) requests and report to the Scottish Information Commissioner (SIC) as required.

Activity on communications is reported regularly to the Board of Management.

5. Our Audience

Internal

Effective internal communication is key in encouraging a positive culture, where staff feel informed, valued and are proud to be ambassadors of LHA.

Through engaging, inclusive and transparent communication employees are enabled to work together effectively, creating a positive employee experience.

Tenants and other customers

LHA's customer base comprises of tenants, sharing owners, factored owners and other customers and applicants who wish to be housed.

Excellent communication assists LHA to be clear on its roles and responsibilities and facilitates greater dialogue, to target services that matter the most to tenants and customers.

By implementing its Strategic Objectives, LHA aims to ensure tenancies are sustained whilst delivering great customer service. This is further supported by our **Customer Care Charter**.

External Stakeholders

We communicate with many external stakeholders to not only fulfil our regulatory objectives, but also to promote LHA with positive messages about our activities and services.

Examples of these stakeholder audiences are lenders, regulatory bodies, Elected Representatives and MSPs, and other Housing Associations.

6. Key Messages

The key messages LHA wishes to convey and will be kept in mind in all communications, are:

- LHA provide good quality housing and wider role service that is well managed
- LHA values customers
- LHA considers the needs of its tenants, customers and the community as a whole in the delivery of all its services
- An organisation that delivers excellent outcomes for the local community
- Services meet the diverse needs of the community
- LHA will respond to service failures positively and seek to rectify in a timely manner
- LHA is a good employer and a great place to work
- Staff are valued
- Staff will be supported to develop
- Attractive to a diverse workforce
- Progressive and exciting organisation to be involved with
- Expertise and contribution of Board of Management members is valued
- A good partner that will ensure mutual benefits and value its partners
- Able to collectively achieve greater impact
- Our experience across the board brings added value
- Able to support local strategy to develop and supply new homes; and a
- Good quality housing supplier.

Positive Community Messages

LHA believe that it is also extremely important to support our customers with promoting and sharing the range of services available to them within the wider community, on such topics as rising costs, community assistance groups, benefits and activities. These positive community messages help to maintain sustainable communities and make a difference to people's lives.

7. Accessibility

Our **Corporate Brand Guidelines** supports us in both promoting and maintaining a brand that is inclusive, accessible, and reflective of the diversity of our customers and stakeholders.

Our newly developed website now has enhanced features such as Google Translate and 'ReadIt', to further aid accessibility. This enables pages to be read aloud and the audio saved, text to be highlighted and font updated for Dyslexia. Downloadable PDF documents are laid out to be easily read by the users' inbuilt web browser tools such as 'Copilot'.

To provide the best experience when visiting the website, great care has been taken to ensure that the viewing experience across all devices is the same; pages render appropriately to differing sized screens and the same offering of pages is available on any device.

Kiswebs, our web designers, believe that 'the website meets or exceeds the requirements of the level A criteria of the World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative (WCAG WAI) 2.0 guidelines, and they also endeavour to meet with WCAG 2.0 AA standards.' (Statement taken from the LHA website.)

Digital First

As we strive to become a highly effective and forward-thinking organisation, we are committed to ensuring that all information is presented clearly, concisely, and in a format appropriate to the audience. We have therefore adopted a 'digital first' approach. However, digital first does not mean digital-only, as we will continue to offer traditional communication and access channels for tenants who are unable or unwilling to engage digitally.

Why Digital First?

The shift to digital-first is driven by two key factors:

- The rising cost of traditional communication methods, such as postage and printing
- Increasing tenant expectations for faster, more responsive, and convenient services.

Digital channels allow us to communicate in real time, streamline internal processes, and deliver better value for money.

What This Means in Practice

A digital-first housing association means prioritising digital tools and platforms in the way we work and deliver services. This includes:

- Improved tenant experience: Through My Home online tenant portal, mobile access and digital communication channels, tenants can easily access information, make payments, report repairs and contact us at a time that suits them.
- Operational efficiency: Digital systems support better workflows, data-driven decisions, and faster service delivery, freeing up staff time for more complex, high-need cases.
- Cost-effective communication: By reducing reliance on printed materials and postal delivery, we can redirect resources into improving core services.

Our Commitment to Digital Inclusion

We recognise that not everyone is digitally confident or connected. That's why, while we will continue to design our services to work best online, we will always offer non-digital alternatives. Our commitment is to ensure no one is excluded - regardless of their circumstances or preferences.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Whilst we are open to exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence in the future, we are currently awaiting guidance from The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and Scottish Housing Regulator, together with Data Protection legal updates, to ensure AI is utilised in a considerate and data protection conscious way.

Once this has been approved by the Senior Management Team, a program of staff training will be undertaken prior to adoption of AI in our day-to-day operations. This has been added to the **Communications Action Plan**.

8. Communication Channels and Timescales

When conveying a message, it is important to choose communication channels which audiences will best connect with.

Considerations when using different channels:

- Does the cost represent value for money?
- Will it return actual quantifiable benefits to LHA and our stakeholders?

- How can we target key stakeholders?
- Will the message reach a large number of the right stakeholders?
- Will the messages be received positively?
- Can the messages be personalised?
- What will successful communication look like and how will you know?

There are many different communication channels which LHA will consider utilising:

Communications Channels


<p>Written Correspondence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails • Letters • Text Messages • Management Committee minutes and reports • Surveys • Press responses 	<p>Media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • My Home Tenant Portal • Facebook • You Tube • Newspapers • Local publications and magazines • Adverts
<p>Published Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Briefs • Tenant’s Handbook • Tenant Talk - Annual Report • Business Plan • Performance Reports • Housing application pack • Waiting list review form • Consultations • Information Sheets, leaflets and flyers • Promotional adverts • Job advertisements • Job application packs • Posters • Postcards and calling cards • Stationery • Banner stands • Policies and strategies • Annual accounts • FOI request responses • Email signatures • ID badges • Press releases • Annual returns to the Regulator • Notifiable events 	<p>In Person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractor/consultant appointments • Tenants’ groups meetings • Reception • Interviews • Home visits • Tenancy sign-up • Staff inductions • Events • Drop-ins • Focus and scrutiny groups • Annual General Meeting • Social events • Banner stands • Internal and external training events • 1-2-1 staff meetings • Team meetings • Networking forums • Presentations • Tenant Satisfaction Survey • Estate walkabouts • Word of mouth
<p>Audio Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone calls 	<p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our branding

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference calls • Video conferencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office signage • Promotional items • Photographs • Envelope frank imprint
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Communication Timescales

Following consultation with tenants, LHA have actively published communication response timescales, on email signatures, the website and our social media. By doing this, it is hoped that expectations are managed effectively, and customers know what to expect from our staff.

Communication Timescales



Following receipt, we will:

- Respond to non-urgent emails within 3 working days.
- Respond to urgent emails within 24 hours.
- Respond to non-urgent letters within 5 working days.
- Respond to urgent letters within 1-2 working days.

- We will respond to non-urgent calls within 3 working days.
- We will respond to urgent calls the same day.

Our commitment is to ensure that in responding to the timescales below we adhere to the **Customer Care Charter**.

- Following receipt, we will respond to non urgent emails within 3 working days.
- Following receipt, we will respond to urgent emails within 24 hours.
- Following receipt, we will respond to non urgent letters within 5 working days.
- Following receipt, we will respond to urgent letters within 1-2 working days.
- We will respond to non urgent calls within 3 working days.
- We will respond to urgent calls same day.

It is acknowledged however, that this commitment has proven rather challenging to monitor and provide demonstrable results, so has been added to the **Communications Action Plan** for closer monitoring and review.

9. Staff Training

Key to effective communication is to use plain English and reduce jargon. We will be providing guidance for staff on how to use and promote plain English, and investigate the benefit of Crystal Mark accreditation from the Plain English Campaign. This action point is included in the **Communications Action Plan**.

10. Evaluating Success

Further development of data insights will highlight patterns, trends and relationships, to provide a deeper understanding of whether we are successful at communicating. This will be achieved by enabling analytics on the website and social media channels.

This data, including tenant and other customer feedback, people metrics such as retention figures and engagement levels will enable more informed decision-making.

LHA will introduce more advanced monitoring to ensure communication activities meet customer demands. Success will then be assessed through satisfaction surveys and consultations.

LHA will continue to seek employee feedback and encourage involvement.

11. Monitoring and Review

We will review this Communication Strategy regularly alongside the **Tenant Participation Strategy** (currently under review), to ensure that it continues to reflect our Strategic Objectives and the commitments laid out in our **Business Plan**.

Analytical measures are important as they will help define the transparency, accountability and performance of our communication methods. These results are reported to the Board and include the website, social media and My Home. As new communication technologies are introduced, we will ensure that analytical reporting is available.

Evaluation, through more effective use of short surveys and other tenant participation activities will be incorporated into our 'business as usual' approach. These benchmarking results will also be reported to the Board and follow up actions fed into our **Communications Action Plan** and the annual **Communications Planner and Tracker**, which provides a calendar of communication activities, both internally and externally.

Once an action point in the **Communications Action Plan** has been completed and signed off, the **Communications Strategy** will be updated to reflect this where necessary.

12. Supporting Documentation

The following documents should be read alongside this Communications Strategy:

1. Communications Action Plan
2. Communications Planner and Tracker
3. Tenant Participation Strategy (under review)
4. LHA Branding Guidelines
5. Customer Care Charter
6. LHAPS Communication Strategy provides details about how our subsidiary will communicate
7. LCR Communications Strategy provides details about how our subsidiary will communicate.