

January 2024

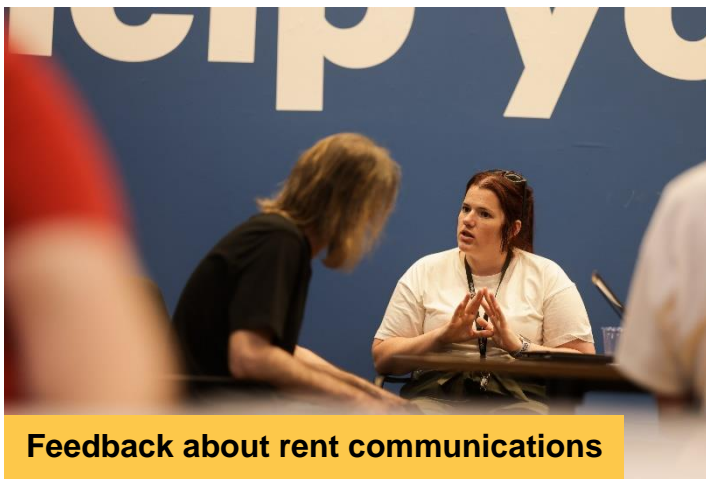
Customer engagement

update



Grab a cuppa and have a read of our latest customer engagement update, where you'll find information about the work involved customers have been doing recently and what's been achieved.

If you'd like more details about our customer involvement projects and how you can have your say, please get in touch with the customer engagement team.



Feedback about rent communications

Involved customers looked at the latest rent letters to make sure they are easy to read and understand.

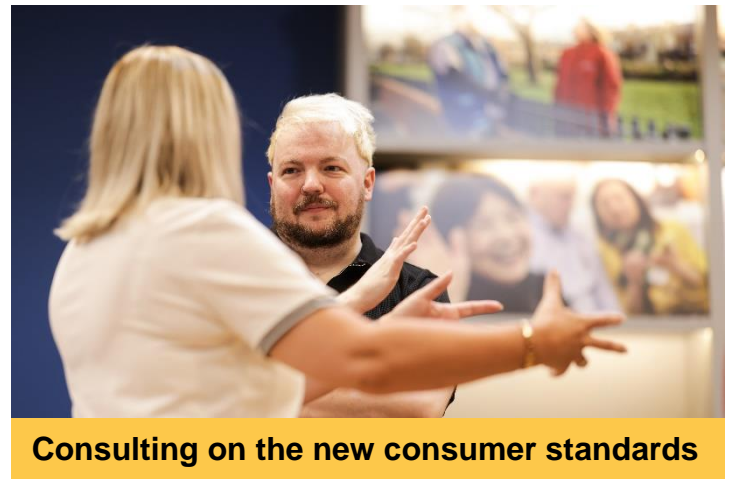
Feedback helped to identify changes to some of the colours used in the letter, to make it more accessible for people with a visual impairment.

During the consultation, customers also talked about the importance of the rent information being accessible for people who use braille, and for people who speak another language.

As part of the planning process, steps have been taken to make sure that customers receive the information in a format that meets their needs.

Sharing views on the Code of Conduct

The Involvement Code of Conduct was reviewed to make sure it is easy to read and understand, and that it includes the points mentioned by the National Housing Federation.



Consulting on the new consumer standards

Following proposed changes to consumer standards from the government, customers were invited to a consultation to share their views with Thirteen.

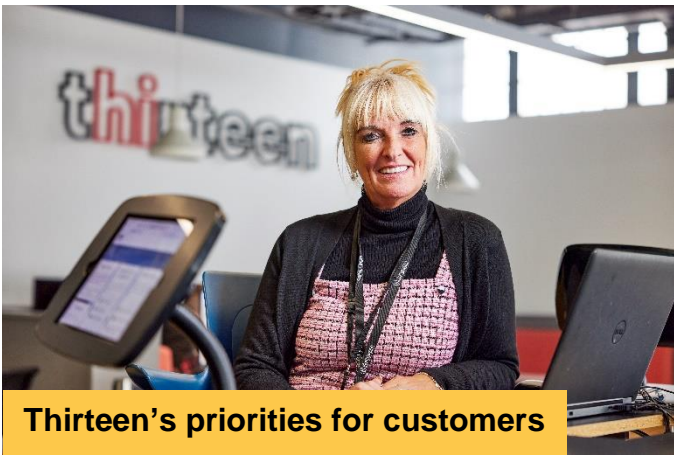
Consumer standards are a set of regulations that housing associations need to meet so that tenants live in safe, quality homes, have choice and protection, and can hold landlords to account.

Meetings were held in person and online to ask customers what they think about the new standards.

The responses will be considered by the government when they set out their decision on the final form of the consumer standards and Code of Practice.

Reviewing our involvement framework

Customers were asked for their views about our customer involvement framework, to make sure it is still fit for purpose and supports the work customers do to help shape services at Thirteen.



Thirteen's priorities for customers

Feedback from involved customers helped to develop the latest version of Thirteen's strategic plan, which sets out key projects and priorities over the next five years.

Customers were asked whether they felt the priorities were relevant to them and what they'd like to see from Thirteen.

[You can find a copy of Thirteen's strategic plan on the website.](#)



Building safety in high-rise blocks

A group of involved customers helped to create bespoke building safety strategies for each of Thirteen's high-rise blocks.

The strategies outline Thirteen's approach to building safety, with important information for customers about the building they live in and key contacts.

Customers can also find out about the hundreds of safety checks that Thirteen carries out in their block.



Funding for community projects

Lots of great causes apply for Thirteen's community fund and every few weeks, involved customers have a meeting to look at applications and choose which groups to fund.

Over the last year, Thirteen has provided a total of £39,324 to 78 projects in its communities.

One of the projects is Autism Matters, a charity based in Thornaby which recently opened a state-of-the-art sensory booth following funding from Thirteen.

The sensory booth is a dedicated space for sound isolation, which is designed to create a calming environment away from outside noise and lights.

A group of involved customers were invited to visit the project and said that it was fantastic to see the positive difference the funding has made, and the work that the charity is doing to improve facilities for adults with autism.



Testing consumer standards

Involved customers have been gathering evidence to make sure Thirteen is compliant with the home standard and the neighbourhood and community standard.

For the home standard, customers planned and took part in a four-month assessment. They found that although satisfaction with Thirteen's repairs service has increased, there are still some areas of improvement, including communication and managing customer expectations.

For the neighbourhood and community standard, involved customers met with the community resilience and anti-social behaviour teams to ask questions about their service. They also carried out job shadowing with the environmental and building safety teams, as well as mystery shopping to test the level of service that customers receive.

Through these tests, customers found that Thirteen is compliant with the standards.

Performance monitoring

Thirteen's figures were reviewed by involved customers during the latest performance meeting.

Customers looked at repairs satisfaction and the new debt management system, to see how this is helping to reduce tenant debt.

Monitoring complaints

In the latest complaints monitoring meeting, customers shared their views about the changes that had been made to the complaints, compliments and feedback policy, to make sure it was easy to read and understand.

Customers then reviewed the letter templates that are used for responding to customer complaints.

They have also been through Thirteen's self-assessment of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code and are happy that Thirteen is compliant.

Helping with next steps for a new store

Alongside staff members from Thirteen, involved customers visited the potential locations for a new customer store in Hartlepool.

During the visit, customers were asked to share their feedback about the different options to make sure the new space is accessible for everyone in the area.

The store will make it easier for customers in Hartlepool to chat to Thirteen face to face and ask any queries they have about housing and support services.

More information about the store is coming soon.

Training opportunities for customers

As part of their experience of being involved with Thirteen, customers were asked for their feedback about any training that they would find useful to help develop their skills.

The feedback will be used to develop a yearly training plan for involved customers.

Recommendations tracker

When customers get involved in projects, recommendations are often made to help improve services delivered by Thirteen.

There have been 11 recommendations added to the tracker since June 2023. All of these have been agreed and 9 already put in place.

Policy consultation

Three of Thirteen's policies have recently been shared with involved customers for feedback, including the anti-social behaviour policy, tenancy policy and compensation and claims policy.

Customers gave their feedback about whether the policies are easy to read and understand.

On the compensation and claims policy, customers said they would like to see examples to help people understand what they would be entitled to, and this has been added in.

Recruiting new staff members

When Thirteen is recruiting new staff members, involved customers are often asked to join the interview panel and give their feedback.

This gives customers the opportunity to play an active role in finding the right people to deliver services, and it helps Thirteen to understand what customers want to see from new colleagues in the team.

Customers were recently asked to get involved in interviews for the chief information officer, as well as roles in housing services, customer recovery, customer involvement and customer success.

Val Scollen re-elected as chair

Val Scollen has been re-elected as chair of Thirteen's customer involvement framework, and will continue the role for three years.

Val said: "I am looking forward to being a voice for other Thirteen customers, and working with others to help make Thirteen the landlord of choice."

Get in touch

For more information about getting involved, email the customer engagement team at customer.engagement@thirteengroup.co.uk, or chair of the involvement framework, Val Scollen at val.scollen@thirteengroup.co.uk.