

# CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT *Handbook*



**Shape services**

**Give your views**

**Make a difference**

**Influence homes and communities**





# Hello!

## Welcome to our Customer Engagement Handbook

If you would like this document in another language, call 01724 279900

Jeśli chcesz tę ulotkę w języku polskim, zadzwoń na 01724 279900

Jeļi norētumēte šio lapelio, savo kalbā, susisiekite su mums 01724 279900

Ja vēlaties šo instrukciju savā valodā, lūdzu, zvaniet mums uz 01724 279900

Se você gostaria deste folheto na sua língua, por favor ligue para 01724 279900

আপনি আপনার ভাষায় এই লিফলেট চান, অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে 01724 279900 উপর কল

如果您想本小册子在你的语言，请致电 01724 279900

## Section one

- 3** Introduction
- 4** About Ongo - what they do?
- 5** Accreditations & awards
- 6** The Customer Engagement Framework
- 7** Service Standards
- 8** Meet the Customer Engagement Team
- 9** Why get involved, what's in it for you?

## Section two

- 10** What opportunities are available for you to get involved, Community Voice
- 11** Tenant Inspectors
- 12** Complaints Monitoring Panel, Equality Diversity & Inclusion Group
- 13** Property Services Panel, Publications Panel, Leaseholder Forum
- 14** Resident Building Safety Group, Procurement
- 15** Focus/Consultation Groups, Surveys, Social media communication
- 16** Training, Resident Associations and Community groups, Funding for local community groups
- 17** Opportunities to engage the wider customer voice
- 18** Contact information

# Thank you for taking the time to read this handbook

**We hope this provides you with information that will encourage you to become involved in our customer engagement activities in the future.**

We want to give all our customers the chance to tell us what they think about the services they receive and to influence decisions that affect their homes and neighbourhoods. We will keep developing our existing methods of engagement to make sure this continues to happen.

If you are interested in any of the engagement opportunities available, then you can complete the **#InvolvedWithOngo** postcard in just a few clicks using the My Home app or on our website. You can also talk to us using our Live Chat feature on our website.

Or contact the Customer Engagement team direct by emailing or calling us.

If you have any specific needs such as large print, Braille, translation, audio or if you require any other form of support then please let us know.

 [ongo.co.uk](https://www.ongo.co.uk)



[customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk](mailto:customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk)



**01724 279900**



# About Ongo

## WHAT THEY DO?

Ongo is a Social Housing landlord who provides housing and community services to over 11,000 homes based in North Lincolnshire, West Lindsey, Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw.

Ongo is regulated by the Government's Regulator for Social Housing (RSH), who check to ensure Ongo is meeting the requirements of its RSH economic and consumer standards.

Ongo is made up of housing, commercial and community-based companies, and each of these areas has its own board who is responsible for governing the business. The Boards meet throughout the year and some Board members may sit on more than one board or committee.

The Ongo Homes Board is provided with 6 monthly Customer Voice reports that provides regular updates on the different feedback mechanisms in use, actual customer feedback, and how feedback is being used to influence service improvements.

In addition to the Board, we have a Customer Focus Committee who are responsible for monitoring performance against service delivery. Ensuring Customers are involved in reviewing, consultation and the delivery of customer related strategies and policies.

Also monitoring compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards that relate to customer experience and Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) performance, to ensure lessons are learned and actions implemented.

Tenants can apply to become an Ongo Homes Board Member or Customer Focus Committee Member when there is a vacancy. This gives tenants the opportunity to be part of an Ongo strategic decision-making group who make important decisions affecting their homes and communities. Tenants being on the board or committee also gives real lived experience into the strategic decision-making process.

# Accreditations & Awards

Ongo successfully achieved the TPAS Exemplar accreditation in May 2023. The Tpas Exemplar is for organisations that have previously been awarded the national Tpas accreditation three times and have consistently demonstrated their approach to engagement. It is a comprehensive process involving external consultants to ensure that Ongo continue to provide an excellent service in terms of customer engagement.

The Leaders in Diversity accreditation was awarded to Ongo in August 2022. The National Centre for Diversity offers several accreditations which Ongo have been successful in achieving previously and have now progressed to the higher level of Leaders in Diversity. In May 2022 based on previous accreditation results, The National Centre for Diversity announced Ongo as position 44 in their list of 'Top 100 Most Inclusive Workplaces' out of 300 plus multi-sector organisations.



**Investors  
in Diversity  
Gold UK**  
*Leaders in Diversity*





# Customer Engagement FRAMEWORK

We want our customers to not only shape and monitor our services but to be involved in making the decisions too. By doing this we can ensure continual service improvements are made that:

- Benefit our customers, enhancing their quality of life
- Increase customer satisfaction with the services that we provide
- Ensure value for money of rent payers money

Ongo's Commitment to Customer Engagement and our principles are clearly set out in this framework. Copies are available from Customer Engagement, on our website or you can use the QR code here.



## We believe...

Our customers are the best people to tell us what's working well or not so well, and that's why it's so important that they have their say on issues that affect their homes, their local communities and all of the services that we deliver to them.

## We will...

- Tell residents what the purpose of their involvement is
- Be clear about any limits to involvement or decision making and will communicate these limits clearly, e.g. involvement can't change everything
- Involve residents before decisions are made
- Provide relevant, accurate, up to date, timely and accessible information in a variety of communication methods and formats so that informed decisions can be taken
- Use language that is clear, free from jargon and accessible
- Provide support to enable involvement at all levels. This can include the provision of transport, childcare, carer support, interpreters, refreshments, reimbursement of expenses etc
- Provide formal and informal training for tenants, residents, and staff to ensure meaningful and equal participation
- Provide a wide range of opportunities to be involved, at a pace and level that suits the individual
- Be clear about the time commitment involved
- Involve residents in monitoring the quality of services provided
- Encourage customers to be involved in the scrutiny of customer facing services and issues
- Use the outcomes of resident involvement to shape service delivery and planning
- Give accurate feedback following involvement activity and deliver this within agreed time frames
- Provide the resources required in the shape of people, time, facilities and funding, to achieve good communications, effective consultation, participation, scrutiny & partnership working.

# Service STANDARDS

There is a regulatory requirement to publish service standards and to ensure that these comply with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards.

Ongo's Service Standards need to be clear so that customers will know what they can expect from Ongo. For this reason, the service standards were agreed with customers following full consultation with them. These feed through to Ongo's Corporate Plan objectives (Being a great landlord, Being customer focused, and Growth and Sustainability).

The Service Standards can help Ongo to monitor and to assess performance in each of the following service areas:

- Customer Experience
- Customer Engagement
- Property Services
- Neighbourhood & Community

Copies of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards and Service Standards are available from Customer Engagement, on our website or you can use the QR codes.



**Service Standards**



**Consumer Standards**



# Meet the Customer Engagement Team

We know it's important that customers are given the opportunity to do things they enjoy; being involved works best if they know their contribution has been recognised and has made a difference. We also recognise that sometimes there are things that might make it a little more difficult for them to take part, so we offer support to all our volunteers.

Members of the team will support individuals and help build confidence for those taking part in meetings to encourage them to participate and share their views.

Staff will help provide one-to-one training to enable new volunteers to learn and develop in whatever method of engagement they decide to be involved in.

Examples of this include:

- The use of social media and different methods of communication
- Administrative support for producing paperwork for meetings
- Providing useful contacts for external agencies that can help an individual or group
- Training and support opportunities from external companies to help develop skills
- Encourage attendance at conferences or seminars
- Help with transport or childcare costs to allow volunteers to attend meetings

The majority of meetings with Ongo's customer engagement groups are in a blended format which means customers can attend face to face or join online using Microsoft Teams, allowing them to use a method that they're comfortable with and that fits around their commitments.



# Why Get Involved?

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Getting involved and participating is an important way for you to get your views heard and to influence decisions which affect your home and your local community. Being involved brings lots of rewards:

- The opportunity to learn new skills and increase knowledge, at a pace and level of your own choosing
- The chance to meet other volunteers who have similar interests and to make new friends
- The chance to really make a difference to the homes and communities that you and other tenants live in

All customers should have an equal opportunity to become involved, regardless of their situation. It's important to us that you're not out of pocket financially as a result of attending Ongo meetings or other activities (such as attending conferences or training events). Therefore, we will cover expenses for travel and other reasonable costs to encourage you to get involved.



# What Opportunities ARE AVAILABLE FOR YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN?

## Community Voice

Community Voice is the main Ongo recognised tenant body. This group works in partnership with Ongo and is consulted on customer facing policies, providing their recommendations for approval by the Customer Focus Committee. This group influences improvements to homes, local communities, and improves the quality of life for all tenants.

Community Voice meetings usually take place bi-monthly in a formal meeting setting (using a blended format of meeting face to face in person, or online via Microsoft Teams).



Members are provided with agendas and paperwork for each meeting and take part in monitoring the performance of Ongo's service areas. An example of what the group has influenced previously includes providing feedback on the future letting of garages. There was an ever-increasing number of empty garages and there was little publicity about them, therefore the group suggested that garages could perhaps be offered for storage and that a marketing campaign be put in place to promote the vacant units. This feedback was taken on board with the outcome being that the number of empty garages reduced significantly after implementing the changes.

Membership for the group is open to any Ongo tenant or leaseholder.

In addition to this if you become a member of Community Voice you can also apply to become a Tenant Shareholder. This is an important role as it allows you to attend and vote at Ongo Homes Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and General Meetings (GMs). This means you would be able to vote on major decisions.

**Time commitment** - meeting dates and times are planned in advance and take place for three hours each bi-monthly month. All paperwork is provided in advance of each meeting to allow time for reading the information and getting prepared with questions.

# Tenant Inspectors

Tenant Inspectors are volunteers who carry out reality checks on Ongo's services. Examples of the inspections they can be involved in include:

- Acting as Mystery Shoppers to check out how a service is actually working in reality
- Estate inspections to check the condition of estates managed by Ongo and to raise any concerns, e.g. Health & Safety related issues
- Visits to empty homes to check properties that are considered as 'ready to let' against Ongo's Lettable Standard. Checks can be carried out by doing a physical visit to a property or by a virtual method online
- Inspections of internal communal areas in Retirement Living Schemes and High-Rise flats to check spaces are clean and tidy and that the required information is displayed on information boards or within communal rooms
- Green Space inspections to check that grounds maintenance work is being carried out effectively in areas managed by Ongo

Being a Tenant Inspector means you can get involved in various inspections and visit estates across the stock owned and managed by Ongo.

An example is that Tenant Inspectors carried out a Mystery Shopping exercise on the customer services team testing out several contact methods to check whether a quality of service and advice was delivered. The overall service was rated good but some areas for improvement were highlighted, e.g., the carrying out of sensitive and confidential conversations with customers. This resulted in refresher training being rolled out across a number of teams.

**Time commitment** - meetings take place every two months and normally last one and a half hours. Inspection schedules are produced in advance and each month names are taken at the meetings of who will cover the different inspections and areas in that particular period.



## Complaints Monitoring Panel

The panel is made up of volunteers who focus on how Ongo deals with complaints. The purpose of the panel is to drive change across the business and raise standards for tenants and customers who use the complaint service. The panel achieve this by quality checking all aspects of complaint handling and performance, analysing, and understanding themes of complaints and spotlighting areas for further scrutiny. Using example case studies, the panel identifies themes and trends to assess whether procedures have been followed or require changing.

The panel also provides comments on the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code and monitors the self-assessment to ensure Ongo is compliant when dealing with complaints.

**Time commitment** - meetings take place for two/three hours every three months. Papers are sent out prior to each meeting to allow members to read them in advance to prepare for attending a meeting.

## Equality Diversity & Inclusion Group

This is a group of staff and volunteers who are responsible for making sure all Ongo staff and customers are treated fairly and appropriately, making sure that everyone has equal access to services and opportunities. The membership of the group is predominantly made up of staff with a small number of tenants taking part. Vacancies to the panel are promoted when they become available.

**Time commitment** - meetings take place for two hours every three months.



## Property Services Panel

Volunteers are involved to ensure that Ongo's property services meet the needs of customers. Where required, the panel can invite tenants at large to the meetings to share their customer experience on work recently carried out to their home. Panel members are also given the same opportunity. The panel helps to influence improvements to the repairs service by monitoring the performance and delivery of the service. They also monitor the out-of-hours service and repair priorities, suggesting any improvements that may be required.

The panel has influenced changes to the categories and timescales for repairs and in performance reporting.

**Time commitment** - meetings take place for two hours every three months.

## Publications Panel

Ongo provides information to customers through its tenants' newsletter Key News, and in a variety of other ways such as letters, leaflets, and newsletters. The panel's purpose is to ensure articles are user and reader friendly, using plain English and are free from jargon. They provide comments either at face-to-face meetings or digitally online. Sometimes a quick turnaround for responses is required and so the use of email is essential.



The panel has influenced changes to the wording used in letters sent out to customers in relation to rents, smoke alarms, gas safety checks etc. They also agree and have input to the Key News magazine, e.g. influencing content and articles prior to them being published.

**Time commitment** - meeting frequency will vary depending on the timescales set out for each of the publications and the method used will be agreed at the time.

## Leaseholder Forum

This is made up of a group of leaseholder representatives who come together to discuss common issues such as service charges and planned major works. Meetings take place using a blended format of face to face in person, or online via Microsoft Teams.

**Time commitment** - meetings are held twice a year, with additional meetings taking place as and when required.

## Resident Building Safety Group

This group is made up of representatives from different property types who help to influence & challenge building health and safety policies and practices to ensure Ongo meets legal compliance in residents' safety. They act as resident health & safety champions that help to spread the word to residents at large on how to stay safe and they influence consultation processes to be put in place for building safety. Being involved with this group allows members to raise any concerns and questions at meetings on behalf of residents at large and in their own particular communities. The group have taken part in engagement days and consultation at the High Rise flats in Scunthorpe and influenced the development of the Building Safety Resident Engagement Framework. Working with Ongo's Compliance Team, the group have helped with the future development of training videos for wider tenants to use in relation to: Gas, Legionella, Fire, Asbestos, Electric & general health, and safety.

**Time commitment** - meetings take place for two hours every three months.

## Procurement

Volunteers are asked to take part in the procurement processes for taking on new contractors to work with Ongo. This involves checking tender documents and helping to select a preferred contractor that will work with Ongo over an agreed period of time.

Ongo involves volunteers in any procurement which would have a direct impact on them as a stakeholder. For example, where tenants will be coming into contact with the contractor, where the contractors will be making appointments with the tenant, or where the tenant will have some kind of involvement in the future operation of the contract. Examples include the tenders for kitchens, decent homes works, and grounds maintenance services. Exceptions are where the contract is very safety orientated and would mean more objectivity must be applied to the selection process, such as checking experience, certification, and qualifications etc. Examples of this include the Fire Safety contract and Asbestos services.

**Time commitment** - meetings are held as and when required and depend on the type of contract and number of tender submissions received. Additional time is required to read through documents before meetings to agree on the outcome.



## Focus/Consultation groups

Ongo regularly utilise focus groups to gather views and opinions on a specific area of Ongo services.

The group could be a one-off meeting to discuss a specific topic with the aim of providing solutions to help improve a particular service. This would normally include a small group of customers and one or two Ongo staff. Customers are encouraged to put forward their own personal views on the topic in question. For example, people who have recently been allocated an Ongo property are able to influence the future standard and condition of homes that are made available to let.

**Time commitment** - these meetings are usually held as and when required and would last for a period of two hours.

## Surveys

Ongo uses a variety of written, telephone and digital surveys to obtain views about a range of issues that affect customers' homes and communities. Comments received are used to improve and develop services and to plan the best use of resources. Surveys are a cost effective and convenient method for customers to give their views from the comfort of their home at a time of their choosing.

## Social Media Communication

The information in this booklet shows how we provide a variety of opportunities to consult with customers, but we also recognise that attending meetings may not be the right choice for everyone. Therefore, many other communication and engagement methods are available for customers to make their views known to us. Examples include Facebook and our My Home app etc.

Ongo has a digital group of customers who we can call on when we have something that we need to run past our customers. This group is willing to challenge the way we do things, to recommend improvements, and offer vital insights when recommending service improvements.

**Time commitment** - this will vary depending on the topic the group are involved with at the time. We can ask for a quick response over a few days or plan over a set period. Feedback sessions with the group are planned every 3 months.

# Training

Our volunteers can take part in training to help them learn more about the groups or on a specific topic. There is help available to learn about using social media such as Facebook. If you want to know more about this, please ask the Customer Engagement Team.

## Resident Associations & Community Groups

A residents' association is a group of people living in a local community who work to promote the interests of all residents in the area by bringing people together. This is a great way to meet neighbours, share concerns and create community spirit. Ongo has a responsibility to ensure that groups are truly representative of the community they live in and offer resources and support so they can operate effectively.

## Funding for Local Community groups

Ongo can help to support community groups to apply for grants or funding. We can help groups to prepare information and submit funding applications, or we can signpost to organisations that can do that for them.



# Opportunities to Engage

## THE WIDER CUSTOMER VOICE

In addition to the formal group structures of involvement, customer feedback is routinely gathered via a variety of methods, e.g. meetings, email and text surveys, Mail Chimp, social media, Key News, face to face, telephone conversations, complaints and compliments. Topic specific consultation is also facilitated via focus or task and finish groups which are useful to 'deep dive' into issues that require wider customer involvement to help inform changes or decisions.

To help Ongo continually improve its performance within the different service areas, monthly performance reports are shared on the Ongo website so that tenants can view performance and can provide comments or raise questions on it.



# GET INVOLVED

*make a difference*



**If you want more information, then please:**

Try our online Live Chat feature to speak to an advisor  
or complete our online customer contact form - **[ongo.co.uk](https://www.ongo.co.uk)**

 Email us at **[customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk](mailto:customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk)**

**You can talk to us on our social media channels too:**

 **[Facebook.com/OngoHomes](https://www.facebook.com/OngoHomes)**

You can also phone us on **01724 279900**, or write to us at:

**Customer Engagement, Ongo Homes Ltd, Ongo House, High Street,  
Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire, DN15 6AT**

**Shape services**

**Give your views**

**Make a difference**

**Influence homes and communities**

