

## 2021 Questions & Answers

- Q1. Why are residents now customers? A title resisted by previous boards.
- A1. The language that we use as an association is important to us and should reflect our ambition, values and culture. Our residents are our customers and we recognise that they have a reasonable expectation of great service that is easy to access and delivers value for money. For colleagues the move to considering our residents as customers is helping us deliver a culture which is more customer centric and focuses on the customer experience.
- Q2. Why does NCH restrict the amount of contact that a resident/tenant has with them? I have been on restricted contact with NCH for eight years due to what NCH claims to be an excessive amount of contact with them, yet all my contact has been for very valid reasons? I bet that this question does not get an answer!
- A2. We plan to review our approach to restricted contact and appreciate you raising this with us. As a principle we should be undertaking an annual review with those customers who are on restricted contact. We currently use restricted contact arrangements to balance the needs of individual customers and ensure we minimise call waiting times for our wider customer group. The restricted contact also aims to give a single point of contact to customers who have more frequent contact.
- Q3. I would like to hear about what is going on in NCH and help in any way. It is great to know how NCH is still going forward, it's been a long time what with the lock down.
- A3. The Covid-19 pandemic has unfortunately restricted our ability to engage face-to-face with our customers within their homes and communities. We have continued to provide regular service updates through our website and social media platforms, and issued our Bridge Brief customer newsletter to every home. In December 2020 we launched a new on-line engagement forum, NCH Connected, which has helped us to address the need for ongoing customer engagement during the pandemic. Please get in touch if you'd like to receive more information on this, or other ways you can get involved with NCH.
- Q4. Why do we need to employ accountants from Swansea? The ethos of NCH was to keep Newport money in Newport?
- A4. In line with the association's procurement policy, a competitive procurement process was undertaken for external audit services. The tender notice was issued on 6 May 2021 and written submissions were assessed by the selection panel comprising of the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) chair, an ARC member and members of the finance and procurement team. Submissions were received from three organisations, where Bevan Buckland was assessed by the selection panel as the best tenderer based upon a combination of price and quality.
- Q5. What is the future of involved residents? Due to the effects of the pandemic and a change of policy and direction for involved residents, there is no going back, and I eventually foresee less involvement, eg grassroots decisions by residents.
- A5. The pandemic has certainly limited the face to face customer engagement we have but it has seen us grow the number of involved residents we have on digital platforms. Customer involvement is an absolute commitment from us, and we need to ensure that

we grow the opportunity for customers to be involved and to have real influence in decision making. Customer feedback already shapes our service offer, we have increased our customer surveys and routinely use customer comments to identify service improvements. Customer feedback through complaints and compliments are reviewed quarterly by Deputy Directors and Heads of Service to identify any learning and changes required to ensure we improve services for customers. We are very grateful for our customers on Scrutiny Partnership and our wider involved customers for the time they give us, as your feedback has real impact.

- Q6. You say that we are customers of NCH, which I would take to mean we have a real choice as we would in other businesses as to the type of accommodation we can live in and where with no restrictions. Are we getting this?
- A6. Offering real choice to our customers in terms of type of home and location is a challenge. There is significant demand for social housing, and this means homes are let on the basis of need, as well as choice. We and all of the other local housing associations let our homes through the Newport City Council run Home Options service. All applicants are assessed in terms of need and priority is given to those with the highest need. For those customers who need assistance with registering and bidding for Home Options, our customer advisor team can assist.
- Q7. You say you are making our homes warm, safe and energy efficient. Affordable during any improvement works which seem to crop up like roadworks. What allowances are being made to prevent the risk of foreign object damage, to someone with a prosthetic eye where dust and airborne contaminants are very harmful and a serious risk to health and safety?
- A7. When we plan to deliver improvements in our customer's homes or when we do day to day repairs, we ensure our trades are aware if our customer/s has a disability where we need to adapt our way of working. Unfortunately, we do not always hold up-to-date information on this, but we will always contact you before any works begin which gives an opportunity for you to let us know any concerns you may have. In terms of roadworks, generally these works are not done by Newport City Homes, they are completed by Newport City Council, which is a separate organisation.
- Q8. Regarding anti-social behaviour, why do contractors put up scaffolding and decide to leave it for weeks before doing any work? Drug users are climbing the scaffolding and getting in the premises bringing in bottles and canisters and leaving them on the stairwell and anti-social behaviour in full view of young children who use the balcony.
- A8. We will always aim to minimise disruption to our customers caused by essential investment work; however, we do recognise that this is sometimes unavoidable. As access is essential for the safety of the workers delivering our investment programme, we often have to install scaffolding in advance of works to enable construction surveys and detailed planning. However, we always minimise the opportunity for abuse from members of the public by installing equipment that stops general access. If you have any concerns relating to current or on-going works to homes, please contact us.
- Q9. Are there any plans to return the "55 and over" rule for the older population in flats, etc. With the older housing stock, insulation is not as it is nowadays.

- A9. In 2012 we removed the eligible age criteria for our general needs' flats in response to the introduction of the UK Government's welfare reforms, which restricts the ability of families with children to under-occupy larger family homes. We have no current plans to revert the eligible age criteria for general needs' flats back to 55+. We are reviewing our older persons' housing offer next year, and will develop a Later Living housing strategy, seeking to ensure that our homes and services meet the needs of all of our customers.
- Q10.
  1. Why are many staff rude to "clients"?
  2. I have had birds nesting in my attic for years and customer services "poor people skills" sends pest control who do not even go in my attic though then say there are No Birds?
  3. NCH need to learn to handle people with mental health.
  4. Service charge was meant to be "variable" but goes up with less done.
  5. Homes still not to WHQS?
- A10.
  1. I am sorry to hear that you feel colleagues have been rude to our customers. If you have a specific incident that you would like us to look into, please get in touch.
  2. If you have concerns about individual colleagues please get in touch so we can investigate your concerns.
  3. Mental illness covers a wide range of mental health conditions and disorders and many people have mental health concerns from time to time. This is a very complex area and we work closely with health and social care partners to ensure that we meet the needs of our customers experiencing mental ill health.
  4. We are currently undertaking a review of our service charge policy and process and are consulting with our customers on the levels of service received. If you would like further information or would like to discuss a particular area of concern, please contact us.
  5. We invest over £10M per annum through our long term stock investment programme. Customers have had the ability to refuse investments works, eg rewiring, kitchens, bathrooms and windows and as such these are removed from the "count" of completed properties and are classed as acceptable fails when categorising WHQS data. We will be happy to talk to you about your particular circumstances, if you would like to discuss please get in touch.