

# Communications Strategy

Delivering on our Ambition



**Our Viability**

Warrington Housing Association

## WHA Communications Strategy

### The Warrington Housing Association story

Warrington Housing Association (WHA) has a great story to tell. We are a high performing locally based community housing association that has been in operation for nearly 50 years. During that time, we have grown, developed and changed to meet the needs and expectations of our customers and the communities in which we work. Our services stretch well beyond core housing provision, and include;

- Our award-winning Lifetime project, which provides a wide range of clubs to help Warrington residents aged 50 and over to stay active, connected, happy and learning.
- Warrington Gateway – A Community Hub, acting as a bridge between the local community, public sector and voluntary organisation providing assistance, advice and guidance to cater for community needs.
- Warrington Home Improvement Agency – We also deliver adaptation and home improvement services across the public and private sector through our own Home Improvement agency.

This Communications Strategy details how we will communicate our story to our diverse audience. In simple terms, it explains the overall purpose of communications for WHA, outlining:

- What we want to say – Our objectives
- Who we want to say it to – Our target audiences
- How we are going to say it – the range of tools we will use to get our message across.

This strategy also outlines key considerations in terms of risks and regulatory requirements as well as a clear mechanism for how we will measure the success of what we do.

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## OUR OBJECTIVES

In line with our organisational vision, this strategy identifies the use of communications to demonstrate how we will ***work with our customers to help make Warrington a great place to live, in which the potential of individuals and communities can be realised.*** We will focus on the following objectives;

1. Increasing WHAs profile as a voice of authority on the experiences and value of smaller community housing associations.
2. To demonstrate how we are open and accountable, where necessary challenging negative perceptions of our sector but also ensuring that when things go wrong, we demonstrate how we will put them right and learn for the future.
3. To engage with our customers in the most effective ways to achieve understanding and encourage interaction.
4. To build on existing collaborative relationships with the partners with whom we work in order to help improve lives across our communities.
5. To encourage our colleagues to share in the ownership of positive communications across their spheres of influence.
6. To ensure that all our requirements under law, Health and Safety etc, are communicated effectively to all relevant stakeholders.

## OUR AUDIENCE

As well as knowing what we want to say, it's important that we are clear in respect of who our potential audiences are. It's also important that we target our communications specific to the audience in question. We will do this through the use of primary and secondary messages, tailored according to the requirements of the recipient. Typically this will include, although not limited to:

- Residents (tenants, potential tenants, leaseholders and customers).
- Colleagues including staff and Board members
- Partner Organisations, such as other Housing Associations
- Local community members, influencers and decision makers
- Local, regional and national (Trade) media
- The Government such as MP's, ministers and shadow ministers
- Local Government, including councillors and officials
- Other public sector bodies, such as health services, police employment services.
- Trade bodies, such as the National Housing Federation, PlaceShapers Homes England and other regulatory bodies.

## OUR COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

### Our Brand

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Our brand is very important to us, be that; WHA, the Gateway, Lifetime, WHiA, or Lifetime Homes. We have spent time modernising our identity making it fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, without moving away from what has been a very effective local identifier. Our brand reflects our organisational personality. It's all the different elements of our organisation that together help create WHAs image and reputation. It's about our logos, about the images we use, the way we present ourselves, the media we post and the way we respond to others. Effective use of our brand will help demonstrate the continued success of WHA and delivery of our corporate priorities.

Through our corporate identity we will set clear rules and protocols for the use of our brand in everything we do from producing letterheads and flyers, right through to organising major launch events and obtaining national media coverage.

### Our Colleagues

We believe in open communication and our colleagues across WHA are encouraged to share with each other and the wider public the work that they do and outcomes they achieve. We recognise that the people we work with can be our greatest advocates and we will ensure that we support the right culture to allow effective communications to thrive. As a small organisation we don't have the luxury of in-house communications specialists, but our cross departmental communications group will oversee the delivery of this strategy and its related actions. We have already identified champions amongst our Board for key areas of responsibility and our social media policy provides colleagues with the right level of support and guidance to encourage open communications of all that we achieve.

Following our liP review in 2022 and to meet the suggested recommendation, we have developed an Internal Communications Policy.

### Our Thematic Pillars

We recently reaffirmed our commitment to our current vision and strategic objectives alongside reviewing our strategic architecture. We now have Five Thematic Pillars around which our business will prosper. These Pillars will be used throughout our organisation to help us articulate who we are and what we want to achieve. They will help us shape our strategies and policies based on the priorities set by our Board. Going forward, they will be able to demonstrate the links between the *things* that we do, the *priorities* that we set and the *outcomes* we want to achieve.

### Other Tools

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Ultimately, our aim is that we connect with the widest possible audience through their preferred way of communicating. We will do this by providing the right balance of push, pull and interactive communications incorporating the following:

- Website, including self-service options
- Internal Communications M365 Teams and the Intranet
- Social Media
- Printed Material
- Local, regional and national housing, community and wellbeing campaigns
- Partnership working and events (e.g. Warrington community, health and social care sector, CHANW)
- Departmental communication plans, which focus on key messages for customers and colleagues
- HomeMaster customer portal
- Media Engagement for both trade and local coverage
- Sector Networking and memberships
- Crisis Communication

## RISK AND REGULATION

Relevant regulations:

- GDPR

The Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations

Risks identified:

- Confusing the WHA brand with other HA's: this is causing misguided trolling on social media by dissatisfied Torus customers
- Confusing the WHA brand with Warrington Council
- See also crisis communications policy risk assessment.

## MEASURING SUCCESS

This strategy has been approved by our Board, it will be reviewed annually, alongside the creation of an annual plan. The plan will be monitored by our cross departmental comms group. Where appropriate, we will look to evaluate impact using a variety of methods to demonstrate our impact and reach including:

- Website and social media analytics.
- Press placements and EAV – equivalent ad value
- Successful participation in annual sector and local campaigns
- Colleague and customer engagement.
- Effectiveness analysis

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- Awards and accreditations
- Value for Money
- Organisational reach in developing stakeholder relationships

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