Connect housing

Earning trust through our actions

Corporate Strategy
2024-2027

Introduction

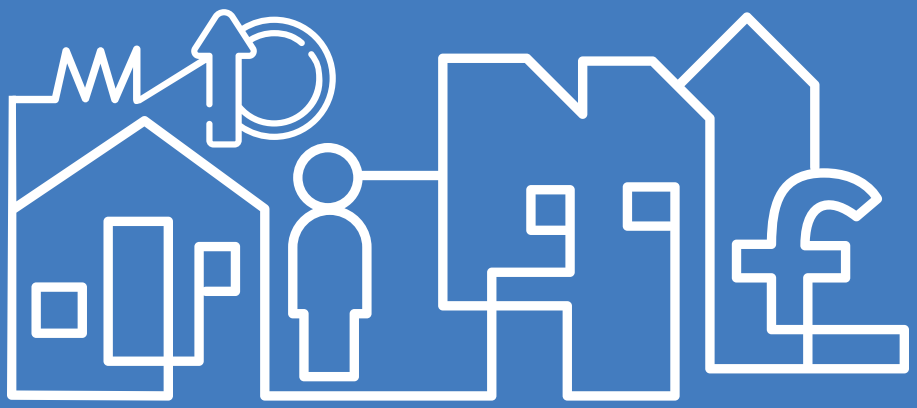
The title for our strategy for 2024-27 places focus on one of our values, 'we earn trust through our actions' because, having undergone a lot of internal and external change during the course of our last strategy, our future focus is on demonstrating to customers, through our actions, the benefits of that change.

We have aligned our plans to the new West Yorkshire Housing Strategy because working with the Mayoral Combined Authority, and West Yorkshire Housing Partnership, is a key strategic context. We have also addressed the requirements of new Consumer Standards and Housing Ombudsman insights in identifying our priorities.

Our ambitions for the next three years have been simplified and prioritised under the strategic objectives of Fairer, Greener, Smarter. These three words summarised the five strategic objectives of our 2021-24 strategy and have gained traction with colleagues as well as involved customers, so it makes sense to build on that familiarity.

Our Board and colleagues know that, with every decision we make, and action we take, we will ask ourselves, can we be **Fairer, Greener, Smarter?**

Helen Lennon Chief Executive
Diane French Chair of the Board



Our vision

To be a trusted, well-connected, landlord working to build a sustainable and just society where good homes, neighbourhoods and opportunities help people enjoy happy, healthy lives.

Our purpose

We exist to serve the people of West Yorkshire, investing in homes and relationships that build positive futures.

Our values

We put people first

It is important to us that everyone interacting with Connect (customers, colleagues, peers and partners) has a positive experience. We want people to feel valued, respected and included.

We love making a difference

We put our energy into finding solutions to the many challenges that society and our customers face. For example, the climate emergency can seem overwhelming but we are determined to work with others to take practical action to maximise our positive impact.

We actively listen and learn

In a fast-paced world it is important to us that we keep things human so we are using technology to free up time for us to really listen to people and learn what is important to them.. With new IT systems and more data than ever before, as professionals we know that every day is a learning day.

We collaborate creatively

Our public institutions are under immense pressure which adds to the challenges our customers, communities and we face. Now more than ever our commitment to build solutions with others, especially customers, is coming to the fore.

We earn trust through our actions

We know that this is easy to say and hard to do which is why we adopted the National Housing Federation Code of Conduct 2022 and spend time with colleagues discussing the expectations within it.

Fairer

A positive experience for all customers and colleagues

We believe that a key element of offering a positive customer experience is for colleagues to have a strong sense of belonging at Connect. We want to see high levels of satisfaction from customers and colleagues about their involvement with us. With that in mind, over the next three years, we are prioritising six key activities:

- Updating our approach to complaints and compliments, creating a complaint-positive culture overseen by a Board Champion.
- Enhancing Connect's position as a fair, values-driven, community-centric West Yorkshire employer where colleagues can grow professionally and develop careers.
- Making it easier for colleagues to keep customers informed, in ways tailored to their needs, including a new, convenient, customer self-service platform.
- Ensuring we are meeting new standards across all of our services and publishing what customers should expect.
- Updating our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Ensuring the way Connect is run is more actively influenced by customers and colleagues through 'co-production' and insight.

By 2027 we expect to achieve:

Tenant satisfaction

Connect treats me fairly and with respect.

>85%

Tenant satisfaction

Connect listens to your views and acts upon them.

>80%

Tenant satisfaction

Customer and Colleague NetPromoter Score.

+40

Safe, quality homes

This is the number one priority for customers so it is a priority for us. With that in mind, over the next 3 years, we are prioritising five key activities:

Adding new homes to our housing supply to play our part in combatting the housing crisis.

Building on the success of our inhouse maintenance service by adding a new Major Projects team to complete work such as kitchen replacements.

Finalising arrangements to oversee the service provided to some tenants by third party 'managing agents'.

Bringing data from various sources together to provide a 360 degree assessment of all homes to inform investment and management plans.

Supporting colleagues to manage complex repairs efficiently by implementing a case management system.

By 2027 we expect to achieve:

Tenant satisfaction	Building safety	Housing supply
Connect provides me with a home that is safe/ well maintained.	Compliance with key Health and Safety requirements.	New homes.
>80%	100%	150

Contributing to the building blocks for stable lives

We believe that a secure home is the foundation for life but a home on its own isn't enough. Homes exist within communities and those communities are increasingly diverse. As public services are under pressure, demands on our services are increasing. With that in mind, over the next 3 years, we are prioritising five key activities:

Developing a vulnerability policy, supported by a complex case management process, to allow for adjustments to be made to services based upon individual circumstances.

Working with local partnerships to support customers to maintain their tenancies and secure long-term housing, including making best use of our dementia and domestic abuse expertise.

Working with West Yorkshire partners on strategic approaches, and with tenants on neighbourhood approaches towards maintaining sustainable and neighbourly places.

Co-designing allocations, tenancy and anti-social behaviour policies with customers, including considering the role of annual tenancy/property visits.

Supporting customers through continuing cost of living issues by 'collecting with care' in terms of income collection, intervening early and offering targeted support.

By 2027 we expect to achieve:

Tenant satisfaction

Connect makes a positive contribution to my neighbourhood.

>70%

Sustainable tenancies

Rent arrears as a percentage of rental income.

<4%

Supporting customers

Access to financial support through Money Matters for tenants.

£2,250,000

Greener

Prioritising the environment in our thinking and actions

Having consulted customers and colleagues in 2023, especially younger members, there is a growing interest in us showing that we are prioritising the environment in our actions. That feedback informed our new Sustainability Strategy for 2024-27. With that in mind, over the next 3 years, we are prioritising five key activities:

Building on our Climate Emergency thought-leadership, to engage in partnership projects that will enable us to make an impact more cost-effectively and quickly, including accessing available funding for sustainability projects.

Delivering a growing number of collaborative colleague and customer biodiversity projects, led by our Estates and Community Housing teams.

Offering an active cyclical training programme to build green knowledge and skills for technical and non-technical colleagues.

Engaging colleagues in taking action on sustainability issues through a new Green Working Group and volunteering opportunities.

Transitioning our working practices and equipment to continue to reduce our carbon footprint, including active travel and electric vehicles.

By 2027 we expect to achieve:

Carbon footprint

Percentage of our vehicle fleet that's electric.

10%

Change our thinking

Colleagues have been engaged in green training and activity.

100%

Greening our homes

The most significant impact we can have in helping to slow the progress of the Climate Emergency is to make our homes net zero carbon. We have made a good start but it will take many years to complete unless grant funding becomes more readily available. With that in mind, over the next 3 years, we are prioritising five key activities:

Integrating our retrofit, building safety and major repairs programmes. This will enable us to offer packages of work to the contractor market and to take neighbourhood approaches with other landlords, including a partnership photovoltaic and battery storage project.

Agreeing a standard specification for renewable technology and property resilience in the face of the climate emergency, e.g. flooding and overheating.

Delivering programmes to bring the remaining adaptable homes below EPC C up to required ratings and ethically disposing of homes that cannot be cost-effectively improved.

Publicising the support we can offer to tenants in fuel poverty prior to any retrofit plans being implemented and how we can respond to demand for electric vehicle charging points.

Maintaining more of our green spaces in a way that enhances biodiversity with the agreement and involvement of tenants.

By 2027 we expect to achieve:

Renewable technology

Solar panels and battery storage systems installed.

>500 homes

Retrofit

Heat pumps or other low carbon heating systems installed.

>100 homes

Smarter

Smarter

A customer curious culture

It's best for everyone if we can get to the crux of what customers want the first time they contact us, so that we can resolve issues as quickly as possible or provide clear information about how far we can meet expectations. In order to do this more effectively, we are encouraging the growth of professional curiosity in the way colleagues work so that they keep questioning until they reach understanding. With that in mind, over the next three years, we are prioritising five key activities:

Developing a new People Strategy with a focus on culture in a hybrid-working context and an ambitious learning and development agenda, cutting across technical and softer skills that support professional curiosity.

Implementing a 'root cause' analysis routine to understand why a service may have failed and how to prevent repeat service failure.

Bringing customer experience closer to the Board so that Board can drive Connect's culture, including strengthening links with the Service Improvement Forum.

Using programmes to develop interested tenants and people from diverse communities to become ready to join the Board and be involved in our work.

Review of customer communications to offer greater transparency and promote mutual understanding.

By 2027 we expect to achieve:

Standards

To retain our G1 grading with the Regulator of Social Housing and working towards C1.

G1 - C2+

Tenant satisfaction

Satisfaction with Connects approach to complaint handling.

>50%

Governance

Board membership from people of minority ethnic backgrounds and lived experience of our services.

40%

Converting data to intelligence to change

During the course of the last strategy, we upgraded our technology systems and developed a co-ordinated change management process. Now we turn our focus onto building our data and unlocking insights to help us change and improve. With that in mind, over the next three years, we are prioritising five key activities:

Developing a data warehouse and new reporting tools to offer more real-time performance information, offer evidence-based assurance regarding data integrity, and make data triangulation easier.

Knowing 'who is behind the door', collating sufficient data to ensure that all tenants have fair access to, and equitable outcomes from, our services and exploring customer segmentation.

Using customer insight in a proactive and systematic way to understand customer satisfaction levels and to inform service design and delivery.

Publishing more information as part of our transparency commitment, including tailored information via the customer portal, and implementing the Access to Information Scheme. This will include using Tenant Satisfaction Measures results to support tenant scrutiny.

Using formal and informal benchmarking to compare our performance to that of our peers, enabling teams and individuals to manage their performance more effectively.

By 2027 we expect to achieve:

Financial performance

Operating margin.

20%

Business intelligence

Converting transactions to digital/self-serve.

>20%

Data integrity

Tenant data accuracy (data held, checked and updated).

90%

Being well equipped for the future

As a developing association, operating within a regulated rent regime, it is vital that we manage our resources as effectively as possible, and minimise disruption to the business, to allow us to invest in delivering this strategy. With that in mind, over the next three years, we are prioritising six key activities:

Developing a new ICT strategy with a focus on maintaining cyber-security, the role of Artificial Intelligence, addressing remaining system gaps, and maximising automation to free colleagues to offer positive customer experiences.

Using data and insight to support a Value for Money culture.

Streamlining and documenting processes that integrate new regulatory and ombudsman requirements, including training some colleagues in process mapping.

Prioritising and managing the pace of change through our Change Management Programme.

Updating our workplace strategy to support a productive workforce that can perform most effectively.

Negotiating amendments to loan covenants to provide more headroom for investment and refinancing to support our development programme.

By 2027 we expect to achieve:

Standards

A compliant viability rating from the Regulator of Social Housing that matches or exceeds our peers.

Minimum of V2

Value for money

Key VFM metrics benchmark position.

>Median

Connect housing

Thank you for reading. We welcome your ideas, comments and feedback on our future plans.

Please drop us a line at **hello@connecthousing.org.uk**

Also, get in touch if you would like to
request this document in an alternative format.

Connect Housing 21 Bond Street, Dewsbury, WF13 1AX
T 0300 5000 600 | **E** hello@connecthousing.org.uk | **connecthousing.org.uk**