CASTLEHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Castlehill Housing Association is a registered charitable organisation, established in 1970. The Association has a long, successful, track record in the provision of housing and associated support services. Our current housing stock includes general needs properties, amenity, sheltered and very sheltered housing. We operate across three Local Authority areas; Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. Through our subsidiary, Grampian Community Care Charitable Trust (GCCCT), we provide specially designed housing for people with particular needs. The bulk of our stock is for affordable rent but we also have a number of shared ownership properties. As of 2018, we currently own and manage around 2000 properties and over 10,000 households are registered with us seeking housing. In 2011, we established a non-registered, non-charitable subsidiary, "Castlehill Solutions" (CSL), to enable us to carry out activities that are complementary to the core objectives of Castlehill but could not be done by the parent charitable Company. CSL leases properties from Castlehill HA to provide Mid Market Rent tenancies. There are 22 such properties at 2018.

In addition to our core activities as a registered social landlord, Castlehill also manages Aberdeen Care & Repair, undertaking a range of services for older and disabled people throughout the City.

A Personal Service

The Association believes that quality services can best be delivered by ensuring that, as far as possible, front line staff build up direct relationships with tenants or other service users.

Housing Officers and Maintenance Officers each provide a service to a distinct group of properties. In this way, they get to know their tenants, and deal with the full range of issues that may arise during a tenancy. Housing Support staff from the Key Project work with individuals who need additional support, and to be effective it is essential that trust is built up between the support worker and tenant.

In sheltered housing, individual housing support plans are shaped to meet a tenant's specific needs and reviewed regularly by our Scheme Managers, who provide the housing support service.

Care and Repair staff provide a service which is based on home visits, primarily to older and disabled owner-occupiers. They aim to provide a holistic service which can address 'quality of life' issues, as well as assisting with repairs and improvements to their home.

Customer Participation and Communication

The Scottish Government's "Social Housing Charter" outcome on participation states:

Social landlords manage their business so that:

- tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Integral to the 'personal service' approach is involving users of our services in shaping how these services are delivered. The Association recognises that customer feedback and

participation are vital in assessing our performance and identifying improvements in how we work. We will actively promote a culture that values the contribution users of our services can make to Castlehill.

The Charter also states that:

Social landlords manage their business so that:

- tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

Castlehill employs a wide range of communication methods including our website, newsletters, meetings, tenant's handbook, service information brochures, tenant's panel, sheltered scheme meetings, annual charter report and tenant satisfaction surveys, for example.

Our Staff

We are proud of our highly committed and skilled staff and the work that they do.

Currently, we have approximately 130 staff in our offices and schemes. Approximately 65 staff are employed at our offices in Aberdeen and ~ 65 staff are based at our schemes across Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray.

Many of our staff work for us part-time or job-share and we operate a variety of working patterns to allow staff to maintain the work life balance they choose. Our employment policies are typically top quartile for our sector and we monitor this through regular benchmarking activities. We are undertaking a review of our approach to staff consultation and involvement to ensure it remains fit for purpose and is valued by both staff and the Association.

We offer a wide range of training and development opportunities to all staff. Our staff review/appraisal process encourages staff to think about training needs, the direction their career might follow and how the Association might support their aspirations. We promote healthy and active lifestyles for staff , having previously held the Grampian NHS "Healthy Working Lives" highest level Gold Award and we are looking to develop a new "in house" programme of activities to support this.

Partnership Working

Partnership working has always been important to the Association, and enables us to bring together the complementary skills of organisations. We have many examples where we have provided accommodation, and our partner voluntary organisation provides the support and care. We work closely with local authority partners in areas such as strategy development and support service provision.

The Association views successful partnership working as key to delivering on issues such as the Government's National Outcomes agenda.

North East Scotland has a successful track record of partnership working between local RSLs and Local Authorities on a variety of projects such as the Devanha procurement programme that delivered over 1300 new homes. Castlehill will continue to pursue opportunities to work with partners to deliver on our objectives.

Independence

Over the last 4 decades, the Association has developed a distinctive identity and culture. We have developed services based on areas of expertise and experience, for example, our work with older people in sheltered housing led naturally to the development of Care and Repair services for older and disabled owner-occupiers. We have continued to promote an ethos of care and support in the work we do, taking business development opportunities based on our perceived strengths and areas of expertise. Examples of this include our Key Project, which has now been successfully providing a wide range of housing support for sixteen years and our successful bid to take on Grampian Community Care Charitable Trust within Castlehill. A crucial factor in the transfer of the Trust was our shared ethos and values.

Our Management Committee wishes to see Castlehill continue to build on past success and have a long future as a strong independent organisation.

- We are well respected by local partners and recognised for our commitment to housing support.
- Our tenants and other service users regularly report high levels of satisfaction with our services
- We have a strong financial management framework, and we have always been prudent when evaluating risks and managing our finances.
- We have favoured a policy of steady, measured growth and developed a stable organisation with committed and motivated staff.
- We have a simple governance structure, and a strong, supportive Management Committee who are committed to our objectives.
- We have established a group structure with parent and subsidiary companies allowing us to undertake a range of activities contributing to our overall aims and objectives.
- We are financially viable, but also aware that we must continually take steps to control our unit management and maintenance costs, and thus demonstrate efficiency.
- We have concentrated staffing resources on front line services, and we consider we operate a lean, efficient “back room” service.

For all the above reasons, we consider our work can best be delivered by an independent Castlehill, provided that we continue to focus on managing our costs as well as delivering a quality service. We see no conflict between retaining an independent organisation whilst working with partners to deliver on our objectives, as appropriate.

The sector in North East Scotland consists of a limited number of regional and national RSLs rather than a large number of smaller community based Associations and we view the retention of independent organisations as healthy situation enabling both customer choice and benchmarking to improve services.

Opportunities

The Association will continue to consider opportunities for providing new developments or services which are in accordance with our Core Values and Culture.

Equalities and Diversity

The Association is committed to the promotion of equalities and to combating discrimination, direct or indirect in all areas of our work. Our Equalities and Diversity Policy was reviewed in 2016.

The Association is committed to complying with current anti-discrimination legislation, regulations and good practice. All our staff receive training on equality issues.

We aim to ensure that in all our policies and decision making there is no unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender, marriage or civil partnership status, age, ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability or any other relevant ground.

We aim to make our services as accessible as possible and will endeavour to provide information in appropriate forms for those requiring it.

Our approach to Equalities aims to ensure we can achieve the outcome stated in the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

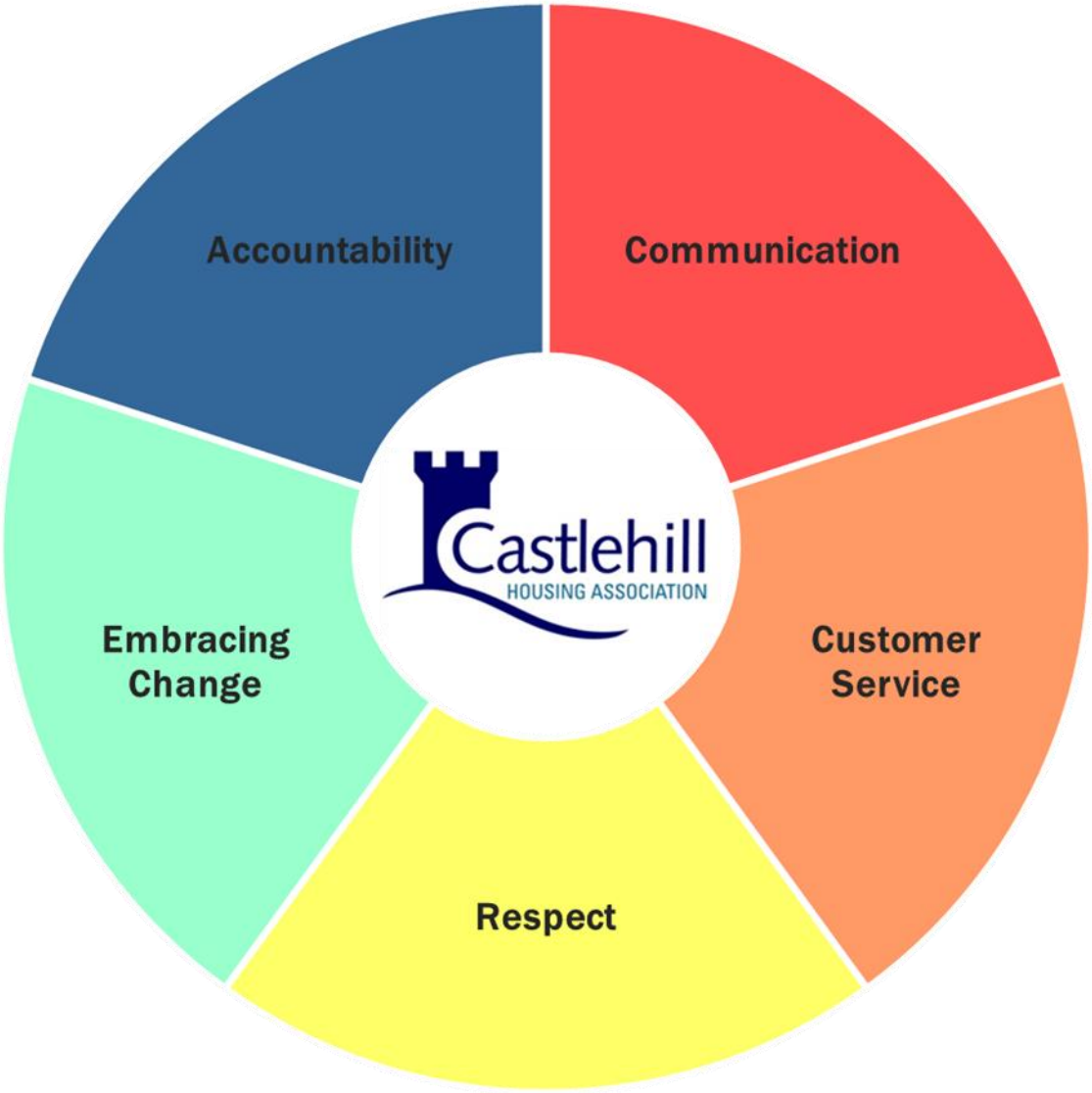
Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and other services.

Extract from the Strategic Plan 2017-19

Castlehill Housing Association

Our Values



What are Values?

Castlehill's Values focus on observable behaviours – underlying characteristics, traits, attributes or qualities that we all display when we approach our work. They explain **HOW** we go about doing our jobs, rather than **WHAT** we do. They do not define the technical skills and knowledge needed to do our jobs.

These values can be helpful in ensuring that staff are the right 'fit' for Castlehill – that is, their personality, ways of working and general behaviour is aligned with the culture of our organisation – so that we can all work together to meet Castlehill's overall aims and objectives and ensure that our customers receive consistently high quality services.

Using Castlehill's Values

Castlehill's Values apply to all employees. The values outline the expected standards of behaviour that employees are required to demonstrate when undertaking their duties. Each of the five values consists of a descriptor defining what the value means, and examples of the types of behaviour associated with effective performance for staff at different levels (all, manager, and director). Examples of behaviours that would be considered inappropriate and unsupportive of Castlehill's culture are also listed as development indicators.

Note that the behaviour levels are cumulative, meaning that the behaviours in the previous level(s) are pre-requisites for all subsequent levels i.e. if you are a director, you are also required to demonstrate the types of behaviour given in the 'all' and 'manager' sections.

Castlehill's Values may be incorporated into a range of HR practices, including: recruitment and selection, job descriptions, learning and development, and performance management, including the annual appraisal process.

Communication

The ability to communicate clearly and effectively with a diverse range of people, taking account of their views, and using well-reasoned arguments to convince and persuade where necessary.

Level	Effective Behaviours	Development Indicators
All	• Polite and courteous to others at all times. • Thinks before acting or talking. • Asks questions when required to check for understanding. • Listens to others, taking on board what is said. • Answers questions promptly. • Communicates effectively using a variety of methods e.g. verbal, written, email, telephone. • Shares relevant information. • Adapts communication style depending on the audience and situation. • Sensitive to the consequences of passing information to an inappropriate source.	• Does not listen to others. • Uncomfortable communicating. • Sees information as power. • Blocks information flow. • Not able to engage or persuade people. • Unable to put their point across clearly and effectively. • Appears bored or uninterested when others are talking. • Is unfocussed in written or oral communication. • Uses inappropriate methods of communication for the audience / situation. • Does not notice how people react or whether they have understood. • Is inconsistent in use of words and actions. • Does not show respect for confidentiality.
Manager	• Able to communicate confidently. • Holds people's attention when conveying information. • Able to persuade and influence others positively. • Can communicate effectively and consistently at a variety of levels, internally and externally. • Prepares and puts forward complex information simply and logically. • Produces well structured, clear and concise written information. • Respects the views and actions of others, challenging as required. • Is open and non-judgemental in discussing difficult issues with others.	
Director	• Acts as a proactive ambassador for Castlehill. • Promotes Castlehill at a local / regional / national level. • Develops and promotes effective two-way communication across the Association. • Leads meetings and / or discussions effectively to achieve clear results. • Secures positive outcomes through negotiation where appropriate. • Encourages others on the benefits of proposals and specific courses of action. • Presents compelling arguments by understanding and anticipating the agendas of others. • Articulate, persuasive and influential in presenting information, both formally and informally.	

Customer Service

Taking account of customer needs, striving to meet them, and providing a consistently high quality service to all customers including tenants, service users and colleagues.

Level	Effective Behaviours	Development Indicators
All	• Is approachable and genuinely helpful. • Treats customers fairly and consistently. • Responds to customer needs and enquiries efficiently and effectively. • Deals with customers in a positive manner. • Is prepared to be flexible to meet customer needs where possible. • Understands the value of, and actively seeks, customer feedback. • Develops good working relationships with customers and colleagues, recognising when these breakdown. • Makes unprompted efforts to satisfy customer needs. • Maintains the confidentiality of customers.	• Places customer needs low on the list of priorities. • Shows no interest in delivering a good service. • Does not see things from the customer's point of view. • Does not welcome customer feedback. • Does not keep customers informed of what is happening. • Is slow to respond to customer requests. • Is unwilling or unable to tackle conflict. • Is reactive rather than proactive in anticipating customer needs.
Manager	• Deals effectively with customer complaints and issues within the agreed procedures and timescales. • Listens to customer feedback and ensures all feedback is considered constructively and communicated to the appropriate stakeholders. • Evaluates customer satisfaction, changing processes and strategy where necessary. • Actively seeks to implement improvements to the service delivered. • Builds mutually beneficial relationships, both within and outside of Castlehill.	
Director	• Supports and promotes a customer focused culture by setting an example across the organisation. • Balances customer expectation with statutory requirements, Castlehill policy, and resource limitations. • Challenges the customer's way of thinking, influencing their behaviour positively. • Responds quickly to conflict or breakdown in customer relationships to reach positive solutions. • Anticipates future customer needs and prepares to meet them. • Tactfully involves and consults with customers to determine and refine service requirements.	

Respect

Demonstrating high standards of fairness and honesty, dealing with customers and colleagues in an open, equal and respectful way at all times.

Level	Effective Behaviours	Development Indicators
All	• Demonstrates respect for colleagues and customers in all day to day dealings. • Understands the need for equality and fairness to all in the workplace. • Treats others with genuine consideration and understanding. • Shows an understanding and appreciation of people's differences. • Is honest and realistic about what can be delivered. • Does what is right in spite of the personal consequences. • Is worthy of the personal trust of others.	• Is impolite and unhelpful. • Shows bias or discrimination towards others. • Fails to keep commitments or deliver agreed outcomes. • Is late or unprepared for meetings. • Ignores the contribution or opinions of others. • Fails to give reasonable warning of changes to plans or priorities. • Makes unreasonable demands on people's time or resources. • Fails to follow Castlehill's agreed policies and procedures. • Fails to challenge behaviours which do not show respect.
Manager	• Respects the time and effort of others by being on-time and prepared for meetings and tasks. • Sets a good example by demonstrating empathy, equality and fairness towards others. • Acknowledges and values the effort, good performance and personal commitment of others. • Is positive, honest and constructive in dealing with others. • Ensures fairness and equality through consistent application of Castlehill's agreed policies and procedures.	
Director	• Acts as a role model, visibly and openly demonstrating respect, empathy, equality and fairness in working relationships both internally and when representing Castlehill externally. • Challenges behaviours when a lack of respect is observed, empowering and supporting others to do the same. • Ensures that equality and fairness is at the heart of all strategic and operational policies, procedures, and improvements.	

Embracing Change

The ability to adapt to change, remain flexible in changing circumstances, and embrace different ways of doing things and opportunities for improvement with a positive and open attitude.

Level	Effective Behaviours	Development Indicators
All	• Ability to adapt and remain flexible in changing circumstances. • Willing to adjust ways of working by adopting new methods, approaches, technology policies and procedures. • Prepared to take on new or different tasks. • Able to switch easily between routine and complex tasks in response to fluctuating workload and / or changing business need. • Suggests ways to introduce and improve working practices where appropriate. • Takes responsibility for own learning. • Willing to listen to feedback and constructive criticism. • Learns from mistakes.	• Inflexible. • Resists new ideas. • Is set in own ways and reluctant to embrace new ways of working. • Creates barriers to change. • Is focused on the present term and does not consider long term. • Talks about change without taking action to make it happen. • Does not promote or explain the benefits of change to other members of staff. • Unwilling to listen to feedback or constructive criticism and use it to improve. • "Head in the Sand" mentality. • Waits to be taught.
Manager	• Adapts style and approach to meet team needs and / or changing demands. • Actively supports and promotes innovation. • Actively seeks opportunities to improve working practices, and takes action to implement improvements where appropriate. • Able to adapt and find solutions when faced with difficult situations. • Uses feedback and constructive criticism to make changes and improvements where appropriate.	
Director	• Constructively challenges policy, practice and traditional boundaries when necessary. • Leads the implementation of change, embracing new and different approaches. • Promotes a positive and flexible approach to change. • Creates a culture of continuous improvement amongst staff. • Receptive to fresh insights and perspectives from a diverse range of sources. • Focuses on what is required for the organisation, setting aside personal preferences. • Appreciates the impact of change on others and manages change openly, honestly and sensitively. • Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability during times of pressure, emergency or crisis.	

Accountability

Being openly accountable for our actions, opinions and decisions; taking responsibility and ownership for delivering agreed outcomes and seeing things through to completion.

Level	Effective Behaviours	Development Indicators
All	• Understands the importance of taking ownership of own workload and responsibilities. • Is reliable and keeps promises to deliver agreed outcomes. • Pre-empts problems with delivering agreed outcomes and takes appropriate action. • Willing to take responsibility for failure within remit of personal workload and responsibilities. • Keeps customers as informed as possible, and acknowledges when expectations have not been met. • Willing to stand up and give honest opinions and input where appropriate. • Willing to take on tasks beyond remit in order to ensure things get done.	• Fails to take ownership for personal responsibilities, tasks and / or goals. • Blames others for failure. • Defensive or in denial about failure and unwilling to accept responsibility. • Fails to overcome obstacles that are within control, or positively influence outcomes. • Delegates tasks to others without following up to ensure completion. • Afraid to speak up and voice opinions. • Unwilling to make decisions and stand by them. • "Slopey Shoulders" attitude.
Manager	• Provides clear and realistic goals and priorities to team members, whilst acknowledging the importance of maintaining overall responsibility and ownership for team output. • Confidently makes decisions and stands by them. • Meets objectives, or is willing to explain why objectives have not been met. • Overcomes obstacles to delivering agreed outcomes. • Supports team members to meet objectives and achieve goals, pre-empting problems and providing support where appropriate. • Willing to take responsibility for failures within the remit of relevant team(s).	
Director	• Inspires trust in others through openly demonstrating a willingness to take ownership and accountability for responsibilities across the organisation. • Acts as a role model and coach, empowering others to take ownership and responsibility and providing support in overcoming obstacles to delivering outcomes. • Stands by actions and decisions taken at a corporate level, presenting a positive attitude across the organisation. • Willing to take responsibility for failure at a corporate level and work with senior management and the management team to take appropriate action.	