



# TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2025 - 2030

cairn

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# FOREWORD

Tenant engagement really matters to me, because it's about fairness, trust, and making sure your voice genuinely shapes the way we work at Cairn.

Over the last year, we've listened closely — in person, over the phone, online, and through surveys. You told us that what matters most is feeling heard, included, and seeing change happen as a result.

This strategy reflects those priorities. It offers more ways to get involved that suit your life, with a renewed focus on face-to-face conversations and a stronger commitment to showing how your voice makes a difference.

We won't get everything right first time. But we're committed to learning together and building a more open, responsive housing service, shaped by you.

Audrey Simpson, Chief Executive

# INTRODUCTION

Cairn is committed to working in partnership with tenants, not just delivering services to you but involving you in shaping how those services work. This strategy sets out how we'll strengthen tenant involvement across the organisation over the next five years.

We've developed this strategy in direct response to what tenants told us during a major consultation across Scotland from January to June 2025. Through surveys, in-person sessions, and conversations in local communities, you shared thoughtful and practical ideas about how Cairn could make involvement easier, more inclusive and more meaningful.

Many of you welcomed the ambition behind our consultation document and told us clearly that you want to see that ambition lead to lasting change and visible results.

That's why this strategy focuses on making it easier for you to get involved and influence what matters, from shaping services and setting standards to decisions about rent, charges and communication.

We will seek to engage with Cairn's other customer groups (such as property owners) positively and productively and will develop separate ways of engaging effectively with those groups.

## BACKGROUND

Cairn has for over 30 years served a wide variety of communities throughout Scotland offering a range of affordable housing and related services.

With around 5,000 homes under management and offices in Edinburgh, Inverness, Bellshill, Irvine and Thurso, we address housing needs of people in both urban and rural areas, including dedicated housing for older people, mid-market, and market rent as well as larger properties used as hostel and supported accommodation.

Our aim, in partnership with the Scottish Government, Local Authorities and others, is to create strong communities by improving access to and choice in affordable housing and services.

We are a non-profit distributing organisation, controlled by a voluntary Board. We are a recognised Scottish charity and registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator as a Registered Social Landlord (RSL).



# YOUR VOICE AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO

We'll continue to meet our legal and regulatory duties, including those under the Housing (Scotland) Acts, the Equality Act, and GDPR. Each year, before we make any decisions about rent or service charges, we will:

- Share clear, easy-to-understand information
- Ask for your views through surveys, focus groups or direct contact
- Show how your feedback influenced the final decision
- Check affordability to make sure you continue to get value for money

But this strategy goes further. It's about creating more opportunities to influence, supporting people to take part in ways that suit them, and making sure everyone can see the difference their voice makes.

It includes a practical action plan, with timescales, responsibilities and ways to track progress, and is grounded in tenant feedback, staff insight and sector best practice. While it meets our formal obligations, its heart is your voice.

## MAKING YOUR VOICE COUNT

The priorities tenants shared during the consultation directly shaped this strategy. Here's what you told us, and how we've responded:

During the consultation you said:

- Involve us from the start
- Make it easier to take part
- Don't rely on digital tools alone
- Show what's changed because of our feedback
- Be visible and approachable in our communities

We did this by:

- Building in early involvement to help shape decisions
- Creating flexible, low-pressure ways to take part
- Keeping digital optional, with support where needed
- Introducing regular 'You Said, We Did' updates
- Prioritising face-to-face contact, local events and walkabouts

# LINKS TO THE BUSINESS PLAN

This document provides a framework to deliver against the strategic objectives identified in the Business Plan, covering the period 2024-2027. These are aligned with the following strategic outcomes.

## Great Homes

### Outcome 1

#### We have high quality homes.

We will continue to prioritise investment in our properties to ensure we provide warm, safe and secure homes for our tenants. We will use the data from our Asset Performance Review to understand the needs of our stock and to target the investment program and consider disposal or demolition and regeneration where appropriate. We will continue to work with our local authority partners to develop new build properties where appropriate to meet housing need across Scotland. We will continue to work towards our green homes and net zero targets and access grant funding where appropriate.

### Outcome 2

#### We have thriving neighbourhoods.

It is not only important that we focus on bricks and mortar, but the neighbourhoods our tenants live in too. We will consider consolidation of where we have stock located to allow us to deliver services to customers in an effective manner. We will support tenants to stay in their homes, by providing access to welfare advice and other support services for those struggling financially. We will continue to reduce the time properties are empty and that we allocate to those in housing need. Working with partners, particularly local authorities, we will improve the estates and communities our tenants live in.



# Great Services

## Outcome 3

### We have customer focused services.

Our customers are at the heart of the services we provide, and we will continue to involve them in our decision-making processes. We will update and modernise the services delivered within our independent living properties to ensure they meet our customer's needs. We will continue to use modern technology to allow customers to contact us in a way that is suitable to them and to deliver services in a timely manner. We will also use modern technology to ensure our customers' homes are safe.



## Outcome 4

### We are efficient and value for money.

Achieving value for money for our tenants is one of our highest priorities. We will review our charging framework for the services tenants receive to ensure that these are the best value. The service level agreements and our working arrangements with our partners will be updated to ensure we are getting value for money. We will continue to focus on how we procure goods and manage services to ensure we are getting the best value out of tenant's rent.

# Great People

## Outcome 5

### We have skilled and engaged people.

Having the right people equipped with the right skills to deliver our services is important to us, as is our organisational culture expressed through our values. We will continue to invest in our team, whether that be staff or board members. We will continue to ensure that we recruit high quality individuals to work with us.

## Outcome 6

### We have sound governance.

Sound governance underpins every high performing organisation. We will build on our strong reputation, good relationship with the Regulator and continue to ensure that Cairn is run as effectively as possible. Compliance with regulatory standards and wider legislation, particularly that relating to Tenant and Resident Health and Safety will continue to be our priority. We will ensure we meet national standards and requirements for the safety of our customers.



# OUR VISION

A housing service shaped by tenants, where your views are listened to, valued and acted on.

# OUR MISSION

To make tenant involvement easy and meaningful, so your ideas drive the improvements that matter most to you.

# WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

We'll focus on three key goals:

- **Transparency** — Be clear about what we're doing and why
- **Influence** — Give you real ways to shape services and decisions
- **Accountability** — Show what's changed because of your feedback





# OUR ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

## 1. YOUR VOICE IN EVERY CHOICE

Tenant involvement will shape key decisions from the start, through co-production, not just consultation.

- Make decisions together, early in the process
- Have open, honest conversations
- Show clearly how feedback leads to change

There are lots of ways you can help shape how Cairn works. For example, you could:

- Co-design new services or policies with staff, sharing what works and what doesn't
- Work with us to review and improve policies and service standards
- Assess how Cairn is performing through a review of our Key Performance Indicators
- Take part in selecting contractors and giving feedback on how they perform

## 2. SMARTER SOLUTIONS, STRONGER CONNECTIONS

We'll use digital tools to make it easier to take part — but only where they genuinely help. You told us digital engagement should be optional, accessible, and well-supported. And we agree.

We'll:

- Improve access through a new, more user-friendly Cairn web app and enhancements to the MyCairn portal
- Offer online surveys, polls, drop-ins and quick feedback tools, always with paper, phone or in-person alternatives
- Use texts, emails and social media to share updates
- Display news and local information on screens or noticeboards in Courts
- Explore tools like chatbots to help answer simple queries and free up staff for in-depth support

To ensure no one is excluded, we'll:

- Run digital confidence sessions and offer help at drop-ins
- Provide loaned devices or assistance with connectivity
- Make sure our content works across all devices and is easy to use
- Launch a Digital Champions programme to support tenants in their communities

The aim is to offer choice, so you can get involved in a way that works for you, whether that's online, offline or a mix of both.



### **3. EVERY CONTACT COUNTS**

Every interaction is a chance to listen, build trust and improve, whether it's a repair request or a doorstep chat. We believe good engagement starts with understanding, not just asking for feedback. That's why we'll spend more time in communities, listen to what matters day to day, and shape our approach around the different needs and experiences of tenants. We'll:

- Offer regular check-ins in every community
- Tailor our approach for rural areas, older tenants and supported housing
- Host "Let's Get Connected Fortnight" – a yearly programme of staff visits and local outreach
- Expand the use of tenant ambassadors and pop-up events to connect with more people

### **4. YOUR VOICE, YOUR IMPACT**

You'll see clearly how your input leads to change. We'll:

- Share regular 'You Said, We Did' updates
- Report at local level and across Cairn
- Include tenant insights in reports for senior leaders
- Learn from complaints, setting up a Tenant Service Review Group and showing what's changed

### **5. BUILDING SKILLS, STRENGTHENING VOICES**

We'll support tenants and staff to feel confident and capable in their involvement.

We'll create a Tenant Housing Academy offering:

- Practical workshops on housing rights, policies and decision-making
- Support for Tenant Voice and service review roles
- Leadership and communication support for tenant representatives
- Signposting to external guidance, colleges or online learning
- Develop mentoring and buddying schemes for those new to involvement

Staff will also be trained to support tenant involvement in everyday interactions.

### **6. SUPPORTING YOUR INVOLVEMENT**

We'll remove barriers so everyone can take part.

To make involvement inclusive and accessible, we'll offer:

- Help with travel, childcare, translation and accessibility
- Flexible roles, both online and in person
- One-to-one support and clear role descriptions
- Vouchers, certificates and other thank-you gestures
- Support for local tenant groups with admin and meeting space

We'll also offer ways to grow your involvement, from a one-off session to joining a formal group.

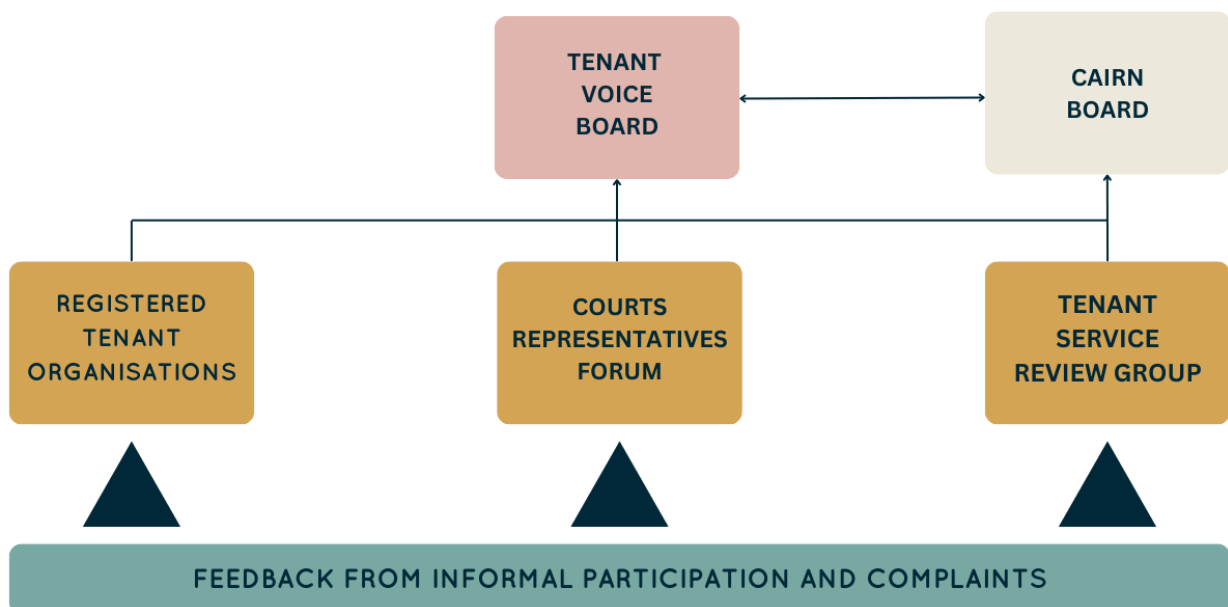
# WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

## INFORMAL OPTIONS - QUICK, EASY AND LOCAL

- Walkabouts with Cairn staff
- 'Cairn Coffee & Chat' sessions
- Conversations during visits or phone calls
- Local events and the Cairn Bus
- Surveys, suggestion boxes and community competitions

We'll also support:

- 'Let's Get Connected Fortnight' – an annual outreach drive
- A growing network of Tenant Ambassadors
- A Community Fund to help tenants run local projects and bring neighbours together



## FORMAL ROLES - STRUCTURED INVOLVEMENT WITH SUPPORT

These groups meet no more than once a month, online or in person, and come with the support you need.

### TENANT VOICE BOARD

**What it is:** A small group that meets with Cairn's senior leaders and Board a few times a year.

**What you do:** Share tenant priorities, give feedback on big decisions, and help shape direction.

**What to expect:** Friendly meetings (in-person or online), with support and updates between sessions.

### TENANT SERVICE REVIEW GROUP

**What it is:** A group that takes a closer look at how Cairn's services are working.

**What you do:** Review data, speak to other tenants and staff, and recommend improvements.

**What to expect:** Focus on one or two topics a year. You'll get help to understand the issues and support to speak up confidently.

### COURT REPRESENTATIVES FORUM

**What it is:** A space for tenants living in Courts or supported housing to raise issues and influence services.

**What you do:** Bring concerns from your scheme, work with staff to solve problems and shape decisions.

**What to expect:** Relaxed meetings, attend in-person or online, supported by staff.

### REGISTERED TENANT ORGANISATIONS (RTO)

**What it is:** Local tenant-led groups that work together to improve services in their area.

**What you do:** Raise issues, organise activities, influence decisions and access funding and support from Cairn.

**What to expect:** You decide how often to meet and what to focus on — Cairn will support you with admin, space and resources.

# cairn

**OUR HEAD OFFICE:**

Bellevue House  
22 Hopetoun Street  
Edinburgh  
EH7 4GH

**OUR WEBSITE:**

[www.cairnha.com](http://www.cairnha.com)

**OUR EMAIL:**

[enquiries@cairnha.com](mailto:enquiries@cairnha.com)

**OUR PHONE NUMBER:**

0800 990 3405