

Entrant company name: **Sanctuary**

Category: **In-House PR Team of the Year – Not-for-Profit/Public/Charity Sector**

### **1. Business objectives and performance against budget**

Sanctuary believes everyone deserves a safe home.

As one of the UK's largest not-for-profit housing and care providers, we manage more than 125,000 homes and support 14,000 employees.

To deliver this social purpose, colleagues need clear communication, customer understanding must be high and trust in the organisation must be strong.

The Communications team helps colleagues understand their purpose, supports customers with clear, accessible information and protects Sanctuary's reputation at a time when scrutiny of housing providers is high.

Over the last two years the team worked within a constrained financial environment shaped by national rent caps, inflation and rising service costs. Despite this, we increased impact while reducing spend. A prioritisation framework ensured that all activity supported business need, customer experience or colleague engagement.

#### Performance against budget

- Real-terms budget reduction of 10%, yet increased delivery across engagement, digital adoption, media management, accessibility and customer experience.
- Improved web journeys, redesigned letters, reduced avoidable contact and freed customer service capacity.
- Shift to inhouse production lowered reliance on external agencies and increased quality and speed.

#### Business objectives supported

- Improving customer experience
- Building an inclusive, high-performing culture
- Protecting Sanctuary's reputation
- Delivering accessible, user-centred communication

- Ensuring efficiency and value across services

Communications contributed to higher survey scores, stronger digital engagement, improved customer sentiment and reduced reputational risk.

## **2. Business and team strategy overview**

Our strategy is built around five pillars aligned to Sanctuary's Corporate Strategy:

- Reputation and trust. Proactive media handling, visible executive communication and positive storytelling.
- Employee engagement and culture. Strengthening leadership-colleague connections to support a customer-first, high-performing culture.
- Customer experience and insight. Using data, research and customer feedback to design communication that works in real life.
- Inclusive and accessible communication. Ensuring information is clear for all, regardless of language, disability or digital confidence.
- Digital innovation. Improving user journeys, increasing adoption of channels and building capability across the organisation.

These pillars position Communications as a driver of cultural, reputational and customer-centric improvement.

## **3. Commitment to CPD and professionalism**

Sanctuary invests in professional development for every team member.

Our approach includes:

- Fully funded CIPR, PRCA or IoIC membership.
- Monthly Learning Lab sessions with external experts including a Paralympian specialising in accessible communication.
- Annual collaboration day with Sanctuary's marketing teams, designed and delivered by the Communications team, focused on innovation with industry leaders including Grace Miller from Flight Studio.
- Apprenticeship development, including an apprentice progressing through three promotions and recruitment of a new marketing channels apprentice in 2025.
- A culture that encourages experimentation, curiosity and continuous improvement.

This investment strengthened accessibility performance, built confidence in digital, video and design skills and created a more resilient and agile team.

#### 4. Recent outstanding achievements

We delivered one of our strongest years, with clear, measurable impact across the organisation. Top achievements

- Customer experience improved through redesigned letters, multilingual videos and clearer online information.
- Internal comms and engagement drove record 2025 staff survey scores: 62% response rate, up 12%; engagement score up 3% to 80; Employee net promoter score up 9 points to +17.
- Reputational risk reduced, with 29% of potential negative media enquiries successfully spiked.
- Accessibility standards strengthened following independent review, with WCAG AA compliance increasing by 17 points to 86%.
- Website engagement increased by 22% and page views by 38% following improvements to Information Architecture and webforms.
- We deliver campaigns and events for four colleague inclusion networks supporting Disability, Parents, Race Equality and LGBTQIA+. These engaged more than 4,000 colleagues, an increase of 38%.
- Intranet use increased by 10% to an average of 8,450 monthly visitors.
- Unique Viva Engage posters increased by 46%.
- Forty CEO updates received 67,300 views. New, regional townhalls achieved colleague rating of 9 out of 10.

These results demonstrate a high-performing, insight-driven team delivering measurable organisational value.

#### 5. Hero campaign: Customer Experience Improvement Programme (Accessible Communications Initiative)

Brief

Improve customer understanding of service charges, reduce avoidable contact and support Sanctuary's commitment to clear, inclusive and accessible communication.

Objectives

- Redesign complex letters to Plain English standards.
- Improve digital content and encourage self-serve.
- Reduce friction in customer journeys.
- Increase understanding and trust.
- Increase website engagement.

## Strategy

We used customer feedback, user testing and frontline insight to identify pain points. Clarity, accessibility and simplicity shaped all decisions. Multilingual content, BSL videos and clear explanations supported a wide range of customer needs.

## Tactics

- Full redesign of service charge and rent letters.
- New videos in six languages including BSL.
- Customer webinars with senior leaders.
- Creation of a Customer Community of Interest.
- Improved Information Architecture and simplified web forms.

## Outputs and outcomes

- Positive customer feedback praising clearer tone and layout.
- Service charge webpage received 4,602 views with an 82.74% engagement rate.
- Tenant e-newsletter maintained a 54% open rate reaching 42,000 customers.
- Customer videos achieved 137,511 YouTube views.
- Website engagement increased by 22% and page views by 38%.
- Avoidable contact decreased and customer understanding improved.
- Insights informed service design and policy decisions.

## Budget

Delivered primarily in house with minimal spend on accessibility tools, offering excellent value.

## 6. Why we should win

Sanctuary's Communications Team shows how professionalism, creativity and purpose transform outcomes for a large social purpose organisation, working with minimal budget and focusing on value for money.

Despite financial pressures, we delivered record engagement, strengthened accessibility, improved customer experience and helped build a more inclusive culture.

Our work delivers clearer information, stronger colleague support and improved trust in an essential UK housing and care provider.

Colleagues anonymously summed up our culture in the annual staff engagement survey:

“My team are brilliant and supportive. I am encouraged to use creative freedom to solve problems.”

“I'm appreciative to be able to work for an organisation where I believe I can make difference.”

This entry demonstrates excellence in strategy, impact, value, professionalism and social purpose.