

Bristol Customer Consultation Session 16th June 2026: discussion notes

Attendees

- Four Bristol general needs customers (Maple House, Phillips House).
- Elim: Paul Smith - CEO, Rachel Pinchin - DCEO, Nick Jermyn - Head of Housing.
- Places for People (PfP): Rachel Crownshaw - Group Managing Director Communities, Julianne Britton - Strategy and Integration Director Communities, Sharon Buchanan - Group Head of Partnerships, Todd Brooks - Field Operations Manager.

Session outline

Introduction and briefing provided by PS on the Transfer of Engagements process, and the importance of the statutory consultation process.

Customer Q&A followed, addressed by Elim and Places for People. Discussion lasted circa 2 hours.

Questions in black, high-level responses in green, captured in the order they were raised by customers:

How much larger are Places for People than Elim?

With reference to the part of the Places for People Group which delivers social housing, PS described Places for People as almost 100 times larger than Elim in many regards. For example, Elim has just over 800 homes, Places for People has over 80,000.

Do Places for People provide housing for older people?

Yes, they provide a variety of different specialist services for different customer groups, including housing for older people.

Do Places for People have homes in Portishead or Clevedon for residents who are interested in moving out of Bristol to these areas?

No, there are no Places for People homes in these areas at the moment. However, there are other Housing Associations in North Somerset where residents in those areas may be interested in a mutual exchange process. It was agreed that an Elim Housing Officer would follow up with the relevant customer to provide more information on the mutual exchange process.

Can residents move from an Elim home into a new Places for People home?

This could happen through a mutual exchange process, but otherwise residents would need to register and bid for homes through the usual Local Authority processes or HomeSwapper. Places for People confirmed that they do not hold an internal transfer list for their own customers.

What payment methods will be available for Elim residents after they transfer into Places for People?

There will be a range of options including online payment and direct debit. Following the merger Elim customers will still be able to use their current Allpay card if they have one. The Elim Customer Reference Number will remain connected with your tenancy.

Your Elim Customer Reference number will eventually be replaced by a PfP Customer Payment Reference number. If customers have an Elim Allpay card, this will continue to work, but replacement cards will not be issued.

One customer reflected on some of the challenges they had experienced at their home which were associated with their personal circumstance and the need for extensive adaptations because of their disability. They spoke of their concern that their experience and current and future needs would be lost as part of the transfer into a much larger organisation and that they would fail to receive the support they needed. They reflected they had already experienced delays and challenges from Elim, and were not confident this would improve after the transfer into Places for People.

The Places for People Colleagues described their focus on providing a personalised, Community based service, and emphasised Customers should expect to receive personalised contact and a service that reflected their individual needs. Although Places for People may have 80,000 homes nationally, each Customer will have a Community Housing Manager, a Service Manager or a Community Coordinator as a point of contact. Their contact will be in touch with each Elim Customer after the Transfer of Engagement has taken place to make an introduction and to understand their personal circumstances.

Elim reflected on the practical approach they would take to make sure the Customer's circumstances were appropriately recorded and shared in a format that would enable Places for People to fully understand the Customer's current position, action underway (and outstanding) and any future needs are relevant to the housing service they require.

What is the difference between a Places for People Community Housing Manager and an Elim Housing Officer?

The main responsibilities of the two roles are very similar. However, Places for People have more specialist teams and services for example new lettings, managing Customer Accounts, So the Community Housing Managers have access to more support and a wider team than an Elim Housing Officer. In this way, Community Housing Managers can spend more time focused on Customer relationships including Keeping in Touch visits.

Is there greater risk or more opportunity for contacts or queries to get lost in a larger organisation?

This is not necessarily the case. The scale and number of Colleagues working for Places for People mean there is more opportunity for local cover during sickness or holiday absence. There is also a 24/7 in-house Places for People Customer Contact Centre for emergency repairs or incidents, and there is continuous work underway to try and improve systems so that contacts are correctly recorded, flagged and actioned. Records are in systems rather than on paper which can be lost.

There will be one single customer service contact number that all Elim Customers will be able to use.

Are Places for People using AI to improve efficiency?

Yes, they are exploring the use of AI, but with a lot of care and attention to the potential risks around new technology. Customer safety and data security are always the most important priorities.

It was noted that Places for People have a 'C1' Regulatory Grading. What is Elim's grading?

It was explained that Elim does not receive a grading because of its size. We are all required to meet the same standards, but only Housing Associations with more than 1000 homes are formally graded.

What is Places for People's formal name?

It was clarified that the Places for People Group is the name of the whole organisation (including all of the different subsidiaries). The Customer consultation letter references 'Places for People Living+ Limited'. This is the part of the Places for People Group that will become the landlord for Elim's social rent homes.

How do Places for People make sure they are accessible? How many of their homes or leisure centres are genuinely accessible for Customers with disabilities?

The team were unable to provide the specific answer to this question during the consultation meeting, although it was confirmed that 100% of the leisure centres were accessible to Customers with disabilities. Places Leisure App was also discussed. This

is a free app available to all PfP Customers where they can access exercise activity to do in their own home.

Places for People have several working groups and champions who focus on ensuring services are accessible for Colleagues and Customers. This includes Equality Diversity and Inclusion groups and groups focused on inclusion and belonging for Customers and Colleagues with a range of different needs. We noted the request to share more information on the EDI and Accessibility Group with Elim Customers.

What opportunities will there be for customer involvement?

There will be many more engagement opportunities for Elim customers as part of the Places for People Group. This will include local events, and opportunities for formal Customer scrutiny and engagement. There is a National Customer Group and seven Regional Customer Groups. These groups feed directly into the processes and committees where Customer services are shaped and improved. The Places for People Chair is also very interested in and connected to the work of the National Customer Group.

Feedback was received on the length and volume of the Customer consultation pack which was very long and difficult to reference back to (due to the lack of page numbers and information across multiple sections).

This feedback was noted by Elim and Places for People. We will ensure that future communications will include page numbers.

Is the Transfer of Engagements a 'done deal'? The consultation letter refers to the 'potential Transfer of Engagement' but it feels as though this is misleading.

It is extremely likely that the Transfer of Engagements will take place, but it is still subject to statutory processes including the Customer consultation and other approvals or consents. We expect this to progress smoothly, but there are still important stages such as this Customer Consultation and legal matters that need to be taken into consideration before the arrangement is complete.

What will happen to Elim's current contractors?

This will vary on a case-by-case basis dependent on current contractual arrangements (some contractual commitments may extend over the proposed October transfer date), where Places for People may use in-house contractors to deliver services more efficiently or how well existing contractors perform. We will also share feedback Customers have provided (through surveys or complaints) so that Customer opinion of contractor performance is also available to Places for People.

What does the Places for People Complaints process look like?

Complaints handling is required to follow a consistent two-stage procedure which is set by the Housing Ombudsman. This means that Places for People's complaints process is very similar to Elim's. The main difference is that Places for People have a specialist complaint handling team who are trained to handle and resolve complaints as effectively as possible.

How will Elim make sure that all current projects and plans are handed over to Places for People?

This is part of a much larger data transfer process – we are in the process of making sure that information and data from every part of the organisation is well organised and ready to transfer to Places for People. This includes Customer information such as rent and tenancy information, data on our properties, health and safety information and information on live and future projects.

Who will undertake the Customer Keeping in Touch visits?

These will be carried out by the Community Housing Manager who has been allocated to your home.

Will Elim keep the Briarlands Head Office?

No, the lease for Head Office will end in March 2027. Places for People are in the process of looking for a new office in Bristol or the immediate area that will be used for former Elim Colleagues and other Places for People teams that are based nearby.

How might service charges change under Places for People?

The process of calculating and allocating service charges is governed by the same statutory obligations that Elim also apply to the service charge process. There will be no change to current service charges for customers until April 2027. In response to a query as to how Places for People ensure transparency and fairness through the service charge process, it was noted that there is a designated service charge team and that they liaise directly with the Community Housing Managers to check that services provide value for money, and that they are being delivered in line with the required process.