



A Member of The Chevin Housing Group

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY

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Introduction

This policy sets out our commitment to involving residents in all that we do. The policy explains how we will engage with residents and ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute effectively and equally in a way that suits them.

We define a resident as being any customer of ours, regardless of tenure.

The policy has been written in consultation with our residents, with input from tenant committee members and our tenants' and residents' panels, using suggestions from tenants across our region via a focus group, in consultation with our armchair panel and following publicity in our Chevin Views newsletter.

In developing this policy, we have taken the following into account:

1. The Housing Corporation regulatory code. The code states that: "Housing associations must seek and be responsive to residents' views and priorities:
 - reflecting these interests in their business strategy
 - giving residents and stakeholders opportunities to comment on their performance
 - enabling residents to play their part in decision-making
 - providing opportunities for residents to explore, and play their part, in how services are managed and provided" (1)
2. The Housing Corporation requires associations to produce an annual involvement statement that sets out how tenants and residents can expect to be involved in the work of their housing associations and the benefits that this is expected to bring (2)
3. The views of our residents
4. Findings from our STATUS satisfaction survey (3) (last carried out in 2005) and on-going customer opinion surveys

1. Housing Corporation Regulatory Code - August 2005
2. Housing Corporation's involvement policy
3. 2005 STATUS survey: Headline results - 58% satisfaction with opportunities for getting involved and 69% satisfaction with taking tenants' views into account

5. The Government's Respect agenda (4) with particular reference to the commitments required by landlords to empower, reassure and tailor services for residents.

There are a number of expectations placed upon housing associations when involving residents namely;

1. The Audit Commission's strategic plan 2004 – 2007. This sets out the Audit Commission's commitment to improving public services, something that they see as their ultimate aim.
2. The Commission for Race Equality's code of practice, which sets out a duty for public bodies to provide a fair and accessible service. In this context, we must ensure that we try to eliminate any discrimination or barriers to getting involved and to participating.
3. Current good practice – we are required to continually seek out and remain abreast of good practice and innovation, and to learn from this to improve our services where appropriate

This policy is supported by our annual involvement statement which is drawn up and reviewed each year with resident involvement in consultation with residents.

Our definition of resident involvement

We define resident involvement as:

'The participation of residents, prior to, during and after any activity that affects them, their household or the community in which they live, and by working together for mutual benefit to improve the services that all our customers receive'.

We believe that resident involvement covers a wide range of activities. We offer a choice of involvement methods and a scale of involvement, from:

- Information : We define this as passing on information about our services, activities, strategies or general information to keep residents up-to-date with the latest developments within the organisation. We will do this through letters, leaflets and our newsletters.

4. Respect Standard for Housing Management, Department for Communities and Local Government - August 2006

- Feedback :
 - i. We will seek feedback on our services, on how they affect our customers and what our customers think of them. We will do this through satisfaction surveys and customer opinion surveys as well as resident inspectors and mystery shoppers.
 - ii. We will provide feedback to our residents to demonstrate how their input has affected the way we do things and when services have been improved as a result.

- Consultation: By this, we mean that we will ask residents for an opinion of a proposal or new idea that we would like to introduce. We will do this through tenant and resident panels, focus groups, tenants' conferences and our armchair panel

- Involvement: when residents become actively involved in our work, they have an opportunity to take part in our decision-making and will be involved in developing ideas and proposals to improve services. This can also mean helping us to monitor and review services. Some examples of the ways that residents can get involved are: by becoming tenant Board and committee members, by joining a residents' panel, by becoming involved in the selection of contractors and our maintenance products

We offer a menu of involvement methods so that residents can choose a level of engagement that they feel comfortable with. We are continually broadening the choices available to residents in response to customer surveys and we are committed to exploring more innovative and engaging ways for residents to get involved to ensure fair access to these opportunities. These are itemised in appendix one.

Hard to reach groups

We are committed to providing appropriate opportunities to encourage resident involvement from our currently under represented residents. Whilst we recognise that not all residents want to get involved with our work, we have set out our commitment to involving Black and Minority Ethnic residents in our race equality strategy. Our equalities strategy explains our commitment to reaching out to other disadvantaged groups who traditionally do not get involved. We are continually developing our consultation methods to encourage participation from other groups of residents who don't access our traditional consultation events, such as working tenants or the younger age groups.

Our aims

In consultation with residents, we have decided upon the following aims for resident involvement.

1. To put residents at the heart of our work and involving them in this process before, during and after decision-making on issues that affect them
2. To develop a greater customer focus in all of our work to help us deliver better quality services, and ones that customers want and need
3. To seek out as many comments as possible to get a representative view from residents and to break down barriers to involvement through a better understanding of customers' needs
4. To provide a choice in the ways that residents can get involved, suitable to their commitment and their individual circumstances

Our approach to achieving these aims

When we are considering making any policy changes or changes to the way that we work, we will involve our tenant Board and committee members and our tenants' and residents' panels. This is so that we retain a customer perspective when developing policies and procedures and to increase satisfaction with any changes or new initiatives that are introduced. This will be done before we consult more widely on these proposals.

We will abide by the agreements within our tenants' and residents' panels membership document and code of conduct.

We will consult all affected parties before implementing any changes to our practices, policies or strategies where the outcome is likely to affect residents, their households or the community in which they live.

We will provide a choice of involvement methods to allow residents to get involved or to comment on our work in a way that suits them and within a reasonable timescale so that we can take account of residents' views.

We will seek out residents' comments and views of our services to help us continually improve our services. We will learn from feedback we receive from opinion surveys, from satisfaction questionnaires and from complaints or compliments that we receive.

We will inform residents on how their comments have influenced or changed the way we operate or the way that services are delivered, or service improvements that have been implemented. We will agree with residents their preferred method for this information.

We will work in partnership with tenants' and residents' groups to improve their local area and the communities in which we work.

We will take account of individual representations that are made to us when taking account of residents' views when we are making proposals or considering changes to the way we work.

We will support residents with training and development, to ensure that they gain the skills and confidence to be able to put forward their views and to take advantage of the opportunities we offer.

Resources

In order to fulfill these commitments, we have a budget to support resident involvement. We will pay for residents' reasonable traveling expenses and parking, to allow them to attend events, and meetings. We will pay for childcare when it is required. We will ensure that our venues for events are accessible and suit the requirements of attendees. We will give good notice of when events are to be held and will be flexible with the timings of events to maximise attendance. Where residents cannot make a meeting or event, we will make alternative arrangements for information to be disseminated.

We will carry out periodic value for money exercises asking residents to rate the value of the work we do to help us to assess the benefit of it.

We will ensure that our budget for resident involvement is monitored monthly and reviewed on an annual basis.

Monitoring and review

In order to determine our success with this policy we will:

- monitor the take up of our resident involvement opportunities
- carry out periodic satisfaction surveys of participants
- monitor, record and publicise the impact of our annual involvement statement
- involve residents in an annual review of this policy and our aims and commitments

- keep a record of the impact that residents have had on our services, policies and procedures
- ask front-line staff for their views of how resident involvement has brought about positive changes to estates or the way that we operate

We will report the impact of our residents' panels' activity every quarter to our operations committee. The annual involvement statement and its impact on services will be reported annually to our operations committee.

Appendix one

These are the ways that residents can get involved in shaping and improving our services.

Method	Opportunity
INFORMATION	Correspondence
	Newsletters
	Website
FEEDBACK	
(i) From us	Newsletters
	Website
	Presentations
	Tenants' conferences
	Tenants' and residents' panel meetings
(ii) From you	Complaints and compliments
	Tenants' talk back video
	Satisfaction surveys
CONSULTATION	Armchair panel
	Focus groups
	Tenants' and residents' panels
	Tenants' conferences
	Leaseholders' panel
	Component clinics
	Surveys and questionnaires
	Gala days/community events
	Community organisations
INVOLVEMENT	Resident Board & committee members
	Tenant and resident panels
	Estate walkabouts
	Leaseholders' panel
	Contractor selection
	Mystery shopping
	Website design
	Membership of steering groups e.g. equalities steering group
	Contributing newsletter articles

