



Introduction

The Association puts residents at the heart of the organisation providing a range of opportunities for involving residents both formally and informally. This enables the Association and residents to work in partnership to make key decisions about how housing and related services are developed and delivered.

Key Principles

The collective term 'Residents' refers to tenants of the Association or owner occupiers who have bought their property from the Association and are required to pay a service charge.

Resident involvement requires a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between all parties at all levels. We also ensure that internal structures and processes create and develop a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between and among residents, staff and Board.

Although we would like all residents to be involved in our work, we acknowledge that many do not wish to participate for a variety of reasons and we respect their right not to. This policy therefore aims to provide more formal participation methods for fair and representative consultation wherever possible, whilst at the same time promoting maximum inclusion through other less formal methods.

We consider that we are successful in our resident participation when groups we work with feel supported – either by us or another appropriate agency and when they are able to develop in a way that meets their needs and those of the community they represent.

In terms of wider resident participation we will consider we are successful if residents have been given opportunities to be consulted on or included in our decision making processes, where relevant, and have had a chance to have their say on important issues.

Why do we want our customers to get involved in the work we do?

We are committed to working in partnership with residents and other community groups to promote and support genuine participation, involvement and shared decision making, where appropriate. We believe that working in partnership leads to better decision making and continuous improvements in our services.

Who can get involved in our work?

Whilst tenants may form the majority of residents in the communities where we work, households with other tenures, i.e. owner occupiers have an important contribution to make and are affected by our work. We are therefore committed to inclusive resident participation.

How can I get involved?

We involve our residents in the work that we do in a variety of different ways, suiting the subject matter concerned. These methods relate to the structures already in place and recognise the way we have been told by our customers that they want to participate. We define participation therefore in three different ways to reflect the fact that we do not have a 'one size fits all' approach.

Feedback:

We provide many opportunities for customers to feedback their views to us through regular surveys, repair satisfaction etc.

Information

We provide regular information on the work we have done and the plans that we have for the future.

Consultation

We consult with tenants, residents, resident groups and local community about a wide variety of issues. We provide opportunities to make comments about significant changes to policy, practice or service before we finalise proposals. We do this in the most appropriate way. We consult the Residents Forum about our policy proposals and also seek views from the wider resident population through the newsletter, website or other suitable contact. We ensure that sensible timescales are in place for consultation exercises. This varies depending on the method of consultation.

How can the Association help me get involved?

We recognise the importance that groups can play, particularly as a contact point for residents and in building links with traditionally excluded groups. We will continue to work and support groups to develop.

Financial support will only be available to groups who can demonstrate clear objectives and whose activities satisfy our commitment to promoting resident involvement.

What mechanisms for participation does the Association offer at present?

The Residents' Forum

The Residents' Forum is made up of residents who have been elected to represent the Habinteg schemes in which they live, from right across Northern Ireland. The Association facilitates and encourages the Forum to meet as a group at regular intervals and meet with the Association's staff at least three times per year. The meetings provide an opportunity for genuine involvement and discussion in Habinteg's decision making process and in the delivery of its customer services.

Representation and Scrutiny on the Housing Management Committee and Board of Management

Two resident representatives, who are Chair and Vice Chair of the Residents' Forum, sit, as full members, one on both the Association's Housing Management Committee and Board of Management and one on the Housing Management Committee only. This Committee scrutinises the Association's performance in key Housing Management service delivery areas. This demonstrates Habinteg's commitment to involving residents to make decisions, influence and scrutinise service delivery at a very senior level in the organisation.

The Armchair Panel

In addition to the Residents' Forum, the Association offers the opportunity for residents to become Armchair Panel members. Membership of this Panel involves less commitment, than that of the Forum, in that you are not required to attend meetings. As an Armchair Panel Member, the Association may contact you seeking your feedback on certain service delivery areas. You will only be representing yourself and your household on areas you wish to feedback to the Association. You will not be representing the views of other residents in your housing scheme/estate, unless you can otherwise indicate this.

Scheme Surgeries

Housing Officers and Maintenance Officers attend each development at least once every eight weeks. They are available to discuss relevant issues with residents on a one-to-one basis. Housing Officers will encourage residents to form local residents' groups and to join the existing Residents' Forum or Armchair Panel.

Tenant Satisfaction Surveys & Service Review Groups

The Association continues to develop and promote other participation approaches through the various Tenant Satisfaction Surveys and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey. Feedback from surveys is vital to the Association in identifying areas for improvements in service delivery and experience can improve satisfaction levels.

The Association consults Residents by involving them in Service Review Groups on key service delivery areas on a five year rolling programme. Resident Representatives are invited from the Residents Forum to sit on Service Review Groups.

Direct Involvement of Residents

The Association involves its residents by advising on proposals in writing, inviting comments and offers the opportunity for discussion before a response, if this is helpful.

The Association carries out consultation to involve residents/ leaseholders by individual visits to their homes or premises or by telephone discussions.

Appendix One- Mechanisms for Involvement

- Questionnaires [part of sign up]
- Surveys; [voluntary]
- Information and communication technology e.g. email consultation, twitter and website
- Customer Comments Cards; [voluntary]
- Housing Officer and Maintenance eight-week surgeries; [voluntary]
- Residents' Groups; [voluntary]
- Residents' Forum; [voluntary]
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel [voluntary]
- Armchair Panel [voluntary]
- Service Review Groups [voluntary]
- Residents' Forum Chairman and Vice Chairman to Housing Management Committee; [voluntary]
- Residents' Forum Chairman and Vice Chairman to Board of Management [voluntary]
- Mystery Shopping
- Journey Mapping Exercises on our Services