



**Resident Involvement Strategy
2009-2012**

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Contents

1. Introduction	
1.1 Purpose of the strategy	3
2. Background Information	
2.1 Commitment	3
2.2 Approach	3
2.3 Formal Accountability Structures	4
2.4 Underlying Principles	4
3. Context	
3.1 The National context	5-7
3.2 The Local Context	7-8
4. H&F Homes current resident involvement activities	8
5. H&F Homes resident involvement objectives	9-14
6. H&F Homes approach to partnership working	14
7. Equality and Diversity	14
8. Impact of this strategy	
8.1 Monitoring progress	15
8.2 Ownership of the strategy	15
8.3 Future review	15

Related documents that supplement this Strategy are:

- The Resident Involvement Action Plan
- The Resident Involvement Statement

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the strategy

The purpose of involving residents is to meet the overall business objectives of H&F Homes which are:

- To put residents first
- To give Decent Homes
- To have pride in our estates
- To provide quality housing services
- To give value for money
- To promote diversity and financial inclusion
- To develop safe and sustainable communities.

H&F Homes recognises that the effective involvement of residents is central to achieving these overall business objectives. Therefore, residents are involved with the joint aims of:

- Continuously improving services,
- Developing and maintaining strong communities, to combat social exclusion, enhance social capital and build community cohesion
- Ensuring H&F Homes is formally accountable to its residents and that residents' groups are accountable to the wider resident population

This Strategy sets out H&F Homes' commitment to involve its residents during the period 2009-12 and the methods that will be used to do this effectively

2. Background Information

2.1 Commitment

H&F Homes is committed to working more closely with residents to ensure that they are at the heart of the business in terms of service provision, housing management, community involvement in regeneration, business planning and governance. We will ensure that this strategic commitment to resident involvement is translated into real actions to promote the involvement of residents in all activities of the organisation.

2.2 Approach

This is a leap forward from our previous position of involving residents in that it aims to embed involvement across the full range of activities within our organisation and places our residents at the heart of everything we do. The

approach of H&F Homes to involving residents, and reflected in this strategy, is to focus more overtly on the impact of involvement and the tangible outcomes for residents, rather than on the structures and activities. At the same time there will be a leap forward in terms of activities and processes to achieve these outcomes.

2.3 Formal accountability structures

The formal T&RA structure, through Hammersmith and Fulham Federation of Tenant and Resident Associations (HAFFTRA), is still central to the strategy for the coming three years. This ensures a formal level of accountability and representation.

H&F Homes have a well developed formal accountability structure with HAFFTRA in place and nine residents operating as elected board members. Some areas for improvement have been recognised in terms of the range of opportunities for involvement and particularly in engaging with harder to reach groups. There is also the need to make better use of feedback from residents, especially in terms of making decisions about how to improve our services.

This Strategy will address these gaps in the way residents are involved. The formal structure will now be supported and complemented by specific involvement activities designed to improve the level of customer feedback, focussed partnership working, internal service assessment/inspection mechanisms and self regulation. It will make our involvement structures more widely accessible to a wider range of people, with more options and opportunities for people to be involved in ways that suit them and which are directed towards achieving positive outcomes for residents.

2.4 Underlying Principles

In order to achieve this “leap forward” H&F Homes are committed to a number of underlying principles that are outlined below:

- All residents should have an equal opportunity to be involved
- We will use customer intelligence and profile information to help shape and improve services
- Residents will have real influence over decisions about service improvement and overall business direction
- Recognising that different residents have different needs and aspirations, we will develop a range of involvement methods to address these differences and ensure all residents can take part on a “level playing field”.
- We will involve all residents, tenants, leaseholders and freeholders who receive services from us
- Resources and training are essential and will be developed and maintained to support and facilitate involvement.

3. Context

3.1 The national context

This Strategy has been informed by a number of different and influential policy reviews and other external drivers, for example, policy papers and changes to regulatory arrangements.

3.1.1. A new relationship with residents

Recent thinking on the relationship an organisation has with its residents has moved away from the simple landlord /tenant relationship and beyond the producer/consumer relationship towards a relationship of mutuality, as a partnership of equals. In fact, there are a number of relationships occurring simultaneously.

Residents are customers or consumers when they take part in a service transaction of some kind (e.g. receive a repair) but may also take part in the way the housing service is improved and developed overall, working in partnership with the organisation. Residents are partners, customers, and citizens simultaneously. This more complex set of relationships is something, as an organisation, we need to understand if we are to provide the right services and have appropriate forms of involvement. Involvement, therefore has to be seen as having a number of facets, it is not a simple, one dimensional aspect of our work.

3.1.2. Advantages of improved and more effective involvement

For the most part social housing providers provide services to 'captive consumers' who cannot simply take their custom elsewhere if they do not like the service. Social Housing providers do not experience the direct impact of lost business that affects commercial operators. Effective resident involvement aims to fulfil the need for ensuring that they we are providing the right, high quality services. Government has been keen to emphasise greater resident involvement for social landlords and reform of the regulatory framework. In 2006 the Cave Review was set up to look at the way housing is regulated.

3.1.3. The Cave Review

Cave stated that the need for external regulation arises primarily because residents cannot simply take their business to another supplier. Cave proposed that the new approach to regulation should not be solely external, but co-regulatory in approach. Successful organisations will involve residents in the process and in return receive a 'lighter touch' regulation from the external regulator. The review envisaged that providers will annually furnish data to the external regulator including:

- level of tenant satisfaction,
- tenant involvement and choice
- the standard of housing and service provided

Cave recommended that all providers should establish formal arrangements to:

- enable tenants to make periodic assessments of the quality of services provided
- share benchmarking information about their performance and costs with other providers, and publish this information to tenants and more widely
- include an independent element in their performance assessment so that there is effective external challenge

3.1.4. Tenant Services Authority (TSA)

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) was set up as the new single housing domain regulator and replaced the Housing Corporation in December 2008. It becomes the regulator for Local Authorities and ALMOs in April 2010. The TSA expect that empowered tenants will play a key role in assessing performance and holding landlords to account for weaknesses in performance.

Initially the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) will operate under the legal powers of the Housing Corporation whilst it consults on the powers set out in the 2008 Housing and Regeneration Act. The TSA will initially measure landlords under the involvement policy developed by the Housing Corporation in 2007, ***People First – Delivering Change through Involvement*** for the Housing Association sector. This states that involvement needs to be directed towards achieving positive outcomes. Within the Policy, involvement is defined as:

- all of the activities and processes that a landlords undertakes that help it to know what its residents and communities want;
- all of the activities and resources that enable people to be involved, if they want to;
- all of the activities that enable residents and communities to have more influence over decisions when they want it; and

There is an expectation that all registered providers will take into account these external influences and consider how they can be used when developing structures and services. This is clearly stated in the Audit Commission's Key Line of Enquiry on resident involvement.

3.1.5. Audit Commission

The Audit Commission's inspections of housing services examines service quality from two view points: whether it is good value for money; and whether it meets the needs of users; In assessing the users perspective, the Commission want to know:

- What role residents have in service development, monitoring and review
- Whether or not residents are satisfied with service;
- How responsive providers are to residents' concerns.

3.1.6. The National Tenant Voice

The Cave Report also recommended that the Government should establish and fund a new 'national tenant voice' for social housing tenants to work alongside the TSA. This bodies remit is to ensure tenants can shape and influence policy and decision-making at local, regional and national Government level.

3.1.7 NHF Code of Service Delivery

In 2006 the National Housing Federation set up a Tenant Involvement Commission to find out what Housing Association tenants want from their landlords. Though not directly aimed at ALMO tenants, the principles are exactly the same. The report of the Commission, 'What Tenants Want', made a number of recommendations that can positively inform H&F Homes involvement strategy. The report made a number of recommendations including:

- Encouraging housing organisations to develop a service pledge and an accountability pledge
- That NHF produce a code of Service delivery and accountability

In response to the report the NHF set up a 'Customer First Panel' made up of housing professionals and residents to put into practice the recommendations of the report – which were adopted by the National Housing Federation. The main output is the Code of Service Delivery and Accountability to be published in 2009. H&F Homes' Strategy responds both to the needs of our residents and these external drivers.

3.2 The Local Context

3.2.1 Hammersmith and Fulham Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations (HAFFTRA)

There is a strong, formal accountability structure led through a Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations (TRAs). HAFFTRA receives funding through rental income but act as an independent body to support TRAs. It employs three workers (two full time and one part time). This independent status and formal structure is an example of excellent practice in empowering residents through formal structures. HAFFTRA cannot officially represent leaseholders as it is solely funded by tenants via a levy on their rents.

3.2.2 Tenant Involvement Compact

The 3 way Borough wide compact sets out how HAFFTRA, The Council and H&F Homes will work together. The Compact is reviewed annually.

3.2.3 Improving Involvement

A culture and approach is being developed which places resident involvement at the heart of a range of strategic and operational activities. This has been supported by a menu of options for involvement which allows residents to choose how they wish to be involved.

It is acknowledged that the approach needs to be updated to include a more extensive menu of involvement opportunities at H&F Homes to include leaseholders, who are valued stakeholders, and a diverse range of residents who may wish to be involved in other, less formal, ways. There is also the need to ensure that H&F Homes' approach to involvement evolves to meet expectations of government and the regulator.

3.2.4. Resident Involvement Steering Group

A review, led by a Steering Group of Residents, with the support of HAFFTRA, and H&F Home's staff, commissioned a report containing recommendations by HQN and TPAS to develop the Strategy. The Steering Group were able to draw upon the comments within the 2007 H&F Homes Audit Commission report as well as performance information collected for the regulatory and statistical return. The results of the 2008 STATUS survey, for the KPI on Satisfaction that your views are taken into account 61% were very or fairly satisfied, 17% were fairly or very dissatisfied. There is therefore a satisfaction differential of 44% (difference between % satisfied and dissatisfied). This Strategy and the resulting actions currently under way and taking place over the next three years is designed to move H&F Homes into the top quartile for the sector and to increase the satisfaction differential. This will be monitored annually with residents and action taken accordingly.

3.2.5 Resident Board Members

Nine out of the nineteen places on the board are reserved for residents. Resident Board members are elected by other residents. Seven are tenants and two are leaseholders broadly reflective of the population as a whole.

4 H&F Homes current resident involvement activity

H&F Homes already work with residents in a number of ways, for example:

- TRAs – recognised through registration process.
- Partnership working with HAFFTRA on RI activities:
- Resident Involvement Steering Group
- Resident Mystery Shopping project
- Decent Homes Consultation(Surveys, Meetings, Resident Liaison Officers)
- Regeneration project teams
- RI Strategy process including focus groups with involved and non-involved residents

- A survey programme to inform business planning and strategies
- Neighbourhood Respect Panel
- Local Area Forums
- Borough Forum
- Nine Resident Board Members
- Leaseholder Forums
- P2P
- Equalities Champions
- Residents involved in specific service review teams – e.g. caretaking pilot

5 H&F Homes resident involvement objectives

The Resident Involvement Strategy has three broad purposes at H&F Homes:

- **Service Improvement** – developing resident involvement and a research programme to increase the range of methods used to gather feedback on resident services. Further developing the menu of options for residents to become involved and a system that ensures resident services are regularly monitored, reviewed and evaluated by residents. Resident feedback is acted upon and used to improve services and service standards
- **Accountability** – Ensuring that a structure is in place to ensure that resident's views are heard and influence decisions made at the highest level within H&F Homes.
- **Strong Communities** – neighbourhood management is committed to putting this at the heart of H&F Homes business. This means working with residents to develop local involvement plans and strategies in the shape of Estate and Neighbourhood Plans.

To achieve each of these purposes are a set of objectives aimed at producing positive outcomes.

5.1 Widen the range of opportunities for residents to be involved in service improvement

To achieve continuous service improvement involvement must be focused specifically on the areas of service that require improvement. The methods of involvement can be categorised as having three main functions aimed at:

- Producing customer feedback about the service in general or specific services in random sample surveys or at the point of delivery (e.g. repairs surveys)
- Working in partnership with residents to improve services
- Empowering residents to monitor performance

The lists of methods below are not exhaustive and other methods will be developed, utilised and included in annual action plans as and when required.

5.1.1 We will improve customer feedback by using the following methods:

- **Surveys**

We will undertake surveys in all formats – including postal, telephone, and web surveys to gain feedback from residents about the services they receive. This includes surveys taken at the point of delivery (e.g. repairs survey immediately following the completion of a repair) and those undertaken as part of a programme of service review. A programme of surveys to be undertaken annually will be developed to fit into the continuous improvement/service review plan.

- **Focus Groups**

Alongside the survey programme will be the use of other research techniques designed to obtain more qualitative information – these will include Focus groups to complement the more quantitative information being gathered through surveys

- **Leaseholder Forums**

These will continue on a quarterly basis to ensure issues specific to leaseholders are given due consideration.

- **Diversity Forums**

Groups set up, sometimes in partnership with other agencies to engage with diverse groups such as BME residents & disabled residents. We will use TP Tracker system to identify diverse or under represented groups in order to facilitate these forums.

- **Local consultation meetings**

We will continue to hold meetings at local level with regard to decent homes, or other neighbourhood issues

- **Feedback from other meetings and forums**

We will listen to views of residents about the services they receive and use these to inform our service improvement programme

- **Residents' Conferences**

Themed events to inform and consult on organisational and residents' priorities

5.1.2 Working in partnership to improve services by using following methods:

- **Housing Improvement Teams (HITS)**

Teams of specialist staff and residents will form teams to tackle specific service improvement issues. These will be organised within each directorate with senior and other relevant staff working together with residents to make recommendations for improvements in service delivery – groups will be broadly structured around current Audit Commission KLOEs and in the future around the new TSA standards.

- **Estate Project Teams**

Teams of staff and residents will be set up to establish local or neighbourhood plans for improving the environment in specific localities. These might be to look at major regeneration projects or plans to deal with antisocial behaviour for example.

- **E-mail Panel**

Residents who may not have the time or ability to travel to meetings can be involved in strategic planning process by e-mail – commenting on and suggesting ideas for strategy and policy documents.

- **Readers Panel**

A team comprised of residents and staff to comment and contribute towards the H&F Homes Newsletter, “The Insider”.

- **Service Standards Panel**

A panel of residents will be brought together quarterly to monitor and review Service Standards

5.1.3 Empowering residents to monitor performance by using the following methods:

- **Mystery Shopping**

Training will be continually provided to expand, refresh and renew resident involvement in mystery shopping. A programme for mystery shops will be devised annually based on residents’ priorities and corporate objectives. Mystery Shopping will take place quarterly and assessed as part of the annual impact assessment of Resident Involvement

- **Resident Quality Assessors**

As residents gain more experience of Mystery Shopping and/or HITs we will seek to develop the internal inspection/quality assessment functions. These roles will be offered to residents who show capacity or those willing to undergo training to ensure they have the relevant competencies to carry out such roles. This will in turn begin to develop the skills and capabilities of residents to feed into the pool of talent for future board membership.

- **Resident Estate Inspectors**

At local level we will encourage and incentivise the role of resident estate inspectors. Residents will be appropriately trained to carry out periodic inspections of cleaning and grounds maintenance

5.1 Improving opportunities to hold H&F Homes to account

It is important that robust structures are in place to allow residents to hold H&F Homes to account. There are good structures through HAFFTRA and resident board membership to achieve this aim, but there is still room for improvement particularly in building capacity of and supporting residents to be involved in formal structures. The aim of this strategy in this respect is to enhance the ways in which the residents views can be incorporated into strategic planning, by strengthening mechanisms for involvement and training for residents involved up to committee level. For example, residents involved in training and other involvement activities are likely to have improved capacity to make meaningful contributions at board level. H&F Homes will continue to support the existing accountability framework whilst enhancing it in the following ways:

- **HAFFTRA – TRAs**

Close working relationship will continue to be central to our resident involvement strategy – H&F Homes recognises the importance of democratically accountable and representative involvement structures and supports the independent status of HAFFTRA maintained by the levy on rents.

- **Various Forums**

We will continue to arrange and attend Borough & Local and Leaseholder Forums to ensure residents are able to ‘have their say’ about H&F Homes

- **Leaseholder Forums**

We recognise the need to allow leaseholders a special forum to deal with matters that affect them. These quarterly meetings hold H&F Homes to account.

- **Resident Board Members**

We will continue to encourage residents to take part in the board. Better training for current and prospective board membership will continue to strengthen the resident contingent on the board and increase the pool of residents with competencies and talents. This will mean that the effectiveness of the resident board members will improve over time.

- **Resident Led Self Regulation Group**

In order to benefit from the proposed lighter regulatory touch residents must be at the heart of the organisation, working in partnership, with access to all relevant information about performance, policy and procedure to ensure that the organisation is meeting regulatory requirements under the TSA. Comprehensive training will be given to suitable candidates to take on the role of ‘Resident Regulators’.

- **Residents’ Training**

We will provide training for residents to enhance their capacity to be involved effectively in accountability structures and service improvement activities.

5.3 Developing and strengthening communities

We are also committed to promote and resource community initiatives that will build the capacity of our residents to engage with H&F Homes and the community as a whole. We will continue to support local groups, and build partnerships to help residents in H&F Homes to be involved in achieving and maintaining strong communities. We are also committed to involving residents in regeneration of their neighbourhoods by setting up project teams made up of residents and staff working in partnership.

- **T&RAs**

Registered TRAs will give feedback and assist residents at local level – H&F homes will continue to work with HAFFTRA.

- **Local/ Neighbourhood Panels**

Panels of residents, usually set up for a specific purpose

- **Neighbourhood Agreements**

Agreements drawn up with residents around neighbourhood issues, such as ASB or Benefits take-up

- **Local Respect/ Equalities events**

Each month an event is organised on an estate inviting residents to meet and engage with H&F Homes, and local support services

- **Young people engagement methods – (P2P)**

Working with other agencies and housing providers to fund a youth worker to work with young people to build the social capital, through training and skills development and to combat crime and social behaviour

- **Engaging with disabled people - HAFAD**

Empowering disabled people to be involved in improving facilities and services for disabled people – e.g. to carry out audits to improve accessibility of

5.4 Support for residents to be involved

We understand the importance of supporting residents to be involved through training to improve their knowledge and skills and therefore the effectiveness of residents who are, or wish to be, involved in the improvement of services. We will, therefore:

- Support residents with disabilities to be involved by offering help with transportation, offer of hearing loop.
- Offer assistance to those for whom English is not their first language
- Offer help with childcare to allow attendance at meetings or events
- Use of profiling information to maximise the inclusion of all diverse groups
- Offer incentives for some involvement activities where there are significant time commitments.
- Provide a range of training opportunities for residents, including recruitment and selection training

5.5 Mainstreaming involvement throughout the organisation

Making use of internal communications structures to keep staff updated on resident involvement activities and by introducing a training programme for customer facing staff, a system of resident involvement champions, and including residents in recruitment and selection, involvement will be embedded and mainstreamed within the organisation.

5.7 Knowing our residents

We will use TP Tracker to build our information database to allow us to tailor involvement activities to suit the needs of a diverse range of residents.

6 H&F Homes approach to partnership working

It is recognised that high quality resident involvement brings an array of benefits ranging from improved service delivery through to sustainable and revitalised communities. In order to harness the energy that exists within H&F Homes' communities and address the issues that are important to them, H&F Homes and its residents will need to work with a range of partners and agencies to develop and implement solutions. To this end we will continue to develop new partnerships on training and employment with other Housing providers and voluntary agencies in the borough.

Specifically we will:

- Aim to expand our work with young people (P2P) to build the social capital, through training and skills development and to combat crime and social behaviour
- Target areas of high deprivation, crime, and unemployment for special projects
- Use our own profiling database, and information from Department of Work and Pensions to identify areas and individuals who would benefit from training, employment help etc.
- Record information on our TP Tracking system of those we engage with in order to monitor involvement and evaluate the impact of the projects
- Work with the Council and HAFFTRA to review the Borough Tenant Participation Compact

7 Equality and Diversity

One of the main goals of involvement other than its main set of purposes (see Introduction) is to ensure that all residents have equal opportunities to be involved. To this end we are widening the range of involvement activities to appeal to a wider range of residents and targeting under represented groups, giving additional support to those who need it, to ensure a "level playing field" for diverse groups and individuals within the population. We recognise that equality requires the

recognition of diversity. In terms of involvement for service improvement it is the aim of this strategy to increase the numbers of residents involved and to broaden the range of diversity of those involved. We will carry out equality audits and equality impact assessments of involvement activities.

8 Impact of this strategy

We will undertake regular assessments of outcomes and annual impact assessments to ensure that the overall strategy for involvement and the methods contained within are effective and represent value for money. Annual Impact Assessments will be reported to board in April and results publicised to all residents. These Impact assessments will include specific targets linked to an RI action plan and a cost benefit analysis of the different methods for involving residents.

It is intended that this strategy will have the following impact: To increase the number and diversity of residents involved, to provide information that reflects the views of the whole customer base. This will improve the quality of feedback to enable better decision making and improved services.

For our customers: Improved services, - continuously improving towards excellence, strengthened communities, decent homes and strong formal accountability (so that residents collectively feel in control of their housing and neighbourhoods and individually happy with the service they get as customers)

For H&F Homes: Higher levels of customer satisfaction, reduced levels of complaints and an accumulative advantage gained from removing failure demand. (Failure demand can be defined as all demand on the service which is as a result of a failure to do something right or to do it right first time).

8.1 Monitoring progress

We will conduct an annual impact assessment using mystery shopping, surveys and internal audit to measure involvement activities and the annual action plan. Service Standards for involvement have been published and a more comprehensive set of measures will be introduced as part of an annual Resident Involvement Statement and Impact assessment.

8.2 Ownership of the strategy

The Executive Management Board - The Director of Customer Services will have overall responsibility for ensuring that this strategy is implemented

8.3 Future review

This will be reviewed in January 2012