

Draft Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2025 - 2028

'Your voice counts'

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HILLINGDON
LONDON

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1. Foreword by Councillor Steve Tuckwell – Cabinet Member for Planning Housing and Growth

Our residents are at the heart of everything we do. We know that the best way to improve our housing services is by listening to you, our tenants and leaseholders. Your experiences and insights help us understand what is important to you and where we can do better. That is why we are committed to continuing to listen to you and to act on what you tell us.

We want to provide the opportunities and encourage residents from all backgrounds to get involved in shaping the services we provide. Whether you have been with us for years or are new to engaging with the Council, we want to work with you. This is because you know your block, road, or estate better than anyone, so who better to represent your area?

We understand that effective engagement goes beyond consultation; it requires action. That is why we are committed on turning feedback into tangible improvements, such as making you feel safe in your home and improving the quality of our housing.

We are focused on providing a range of opportunities for resident involvement. We know we need to develop and invest in a group of residents who will provide scrutiny and monitoring of our services and performance, act as a critical friend to the Landlord Service and offer constructive feedback and challenge to help drive improvements. We know that people like to engage differently. This strategy sets out how we will maximise opportunities for residents to share information and hold us to account.

By sharing your thoughts and ideas, you will become a voice of change for the Landlord Service in Hillingdon. Together, we can create a Landlord Service that truly reflects the needs and wishes of our diverse community.

I would like to say thank you to everyone who has already given up their time to tell us what matters to you and how you want to work with us. We will continue to use your feedback to further shape this strategy and support our journey to a more effective and inclusive approach to resident engagement. We look forward to continuing to work with you and delivering on what matters to you.

2. Introduction

Tenant and leaseholder engagement, involvement, participation and critical challenge are central to Hillingdon Council's role as the largest provider of affordable homes in the borough.

This Resident Engagement Strategy sets out how we will share information, exchange ideas and proactively maximise opportunities to improve services and enable residents to hold us to account about the way we shape and deliver landlord

services. Residents of Hillingdon are diverse. Each household will have a unique perspective and experience. We want to empower residents so that their needs and aspirations are heard and actioned in a transparent and proactive way, as part of delivering a customer focussed landlord service.

This strategy has been influenced by engaging and listening to our residents. It will continue to evolve and adapt to the changing demands and expectations of our residents, and in response to internal and external factors on the Council. This Strategy reflects the conversations and engagement that we have had and will continue to have with our residents. In this context our journey has not ended and will continue to evolve and develop in response to the voice of our residents.

We are committed to ensuring there are a range of opportunities to participate and share your views and priorities. We will therefore offer both formal and informal routes to facilitate this commitment.

3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Council's Landlord Service understands that for engagement to be meaningful, resident participation needs to be representative of our residents. By understanding who lives in our properties, and having accurate data, it helps to ensure that our participation model is reflective of the community. We are working hard to ensure that the data we hold about the people who live in our properties is up to date and that we have effective processes in place to ensure that it remains up to date.

Integral to our developing approach, we are working to make sure that all our involvement opportunities are accessible to different groups. This could include by making meetings hybrid, by offering training opportunities at different times of day and by targeted outreach in areas where we have identified gaps in representation.

Our resident engagement opportunities are offered online and in person. For residents who indicate they have a mobility issue which would make travel by public transport difficult, we can arrange taxis to meetings. We offer to pay for childcare where necessary, to enable parents to attend meetings in person. We can also arrange interpreters when necessary. If you tell us what you need, we can consider reasonable adjustments.

4. National Context

Hillingdon's duties as a social landlord are set out in a range of legislation, regulations and standards. This section summarises the key areas that relate to our engagement with residents.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper 2020 aimed to reform consumer standards to ensure residents live in good quality homes, have access to redress as necessary, are safe and listened to. The Social Housing White Paper outlined that every social housing resident should be able to expect:

- To be safe in your home
- To know how your landlord is performing
- To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- To be treated with respect
- To have your voice heard by your landlord
- To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- To be supported to take your first step into ownership.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 clarifies the importance of ensuring social housing residents are listened to and empowered to get involved, setting out how social landlords will deliver against the commitments in the Social Housing White Paper. The areas covered by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 are broad and include safety, quality, transparency, tenancy, engagement and accountability, and neighbourhood. The 2023 Act led to the new Regulatory Framework for Social Housing Consumer Standards.

Building Safety Act 2022

The Building Safety Act 2022 requires social landlords to have Resident Engagement Strategies in place for its tower blocks ('higher risk' buildings) that promotes the participation of residents in the making of building safety decisions. It also requires that Strategies are reviewed at set times and revised where appropriate.

Whilst we have Strategies in place for our tower blocks, and a Housing Management Offer for all residents living in this category of our housing stock, we know we need to do more. This includes developing tailored engagement strategies for each and every tower block which ensures residents are better informed about the services delivered to the building in which they live and affords them with real opportunities to scrutinise those services and be involved in building safety decisions.

Housing Act 1985 and Housing Act 1996

Local authority landlords such as Hillingdon must have arrangements to inform and consult with both secure and introductory [Probationary] tenants who are likely to be substantially affected by changes in housing management. Housing management matters includes the provision of services, building maintenance, improvement or demolition of housing and any services or amenities in connection to such housing.

5. Our journey so far

It is recognised that engagement with residents across the Council's Landlord Service has generally operated in the background over recent years. The main focus has been on informing and engaging residents through traditional methods including statutory consultations with limited opportunities for shaping services. We want this

Strategy to drive our cultural shift to bring engagement and empowerment into the foreground as part of everything we do.

Whilst we know that there are clear Regulatory expectations associated with engagement and empowerment, we also know that effective engagement and empowerment also makes good business sense by focusing on things which matter to residents. It also has real potential to positively influence the landlord and tenant relationship via greater levels and opportunities for collaborative working and through building trust. These are all real drivers for change.

Our levels of resident engagement increased in 2022/23 with resources allocated to the Customer Engagement Team to enable the council to revamp and revisit 'tried and tested' examples of resident engagement which could be developed further. Regular forums within residents from the Council's sheltered housing and extra care housing schemes were re-established, giving residents the opportunity to come together to discuss common issues and speak to staff about specific services they received including; responsive repairs, caretaking, planned works, anti-social behaviour and tenancy management.

'Stay Safe at home' sessions were established and delivered across our tower block portfolio and 'block champions' were identified to represent tenants and act as 'go to residents'. Estate engagement sessions were also held to meet residents, promote the introduction and role of tenant satisfaction measures and to re-establish our relationship and trust with residents.

This work culminated in a Tenant and Leaseholder Conference in June 2023. This successful conference was the largest engagement event held by the Landlord Service for several years with over 100 residents attending in person and online. Feedback was positive and demonstrated resident's appetite for much more.

The first year of the Tenant Satisfaction Measure survey and the conference enabled the Customer Engagement Team to build up a database of residents willing to work with the council in the future. Capitalising on this we developed and launched a series of Special Interest Groups (SIG) focussing on:

- Neighbourhood Management
- Repairs
- Caretaking and Grounds Maintenance
- Compliments, Complaints and Learning

Inaugural meetings took place in August through to October 2024 and were well attended. More events are planned from 2025 to continue with a collaborative approach which delivers demonstrable outcomes for residents as a direct result.

During early 2025 a series of workshops were delivered with residents to discuss service standards and to provide an opportunity to shape how services are delivered across the following landlord functions:

- Tenancy Management and Tenancy Support
- Repairs & Planned Works
- Neighbourhood Management
- Complaints
- Caretaking & Grounds Maintenance
- Housing and Leasehold charges

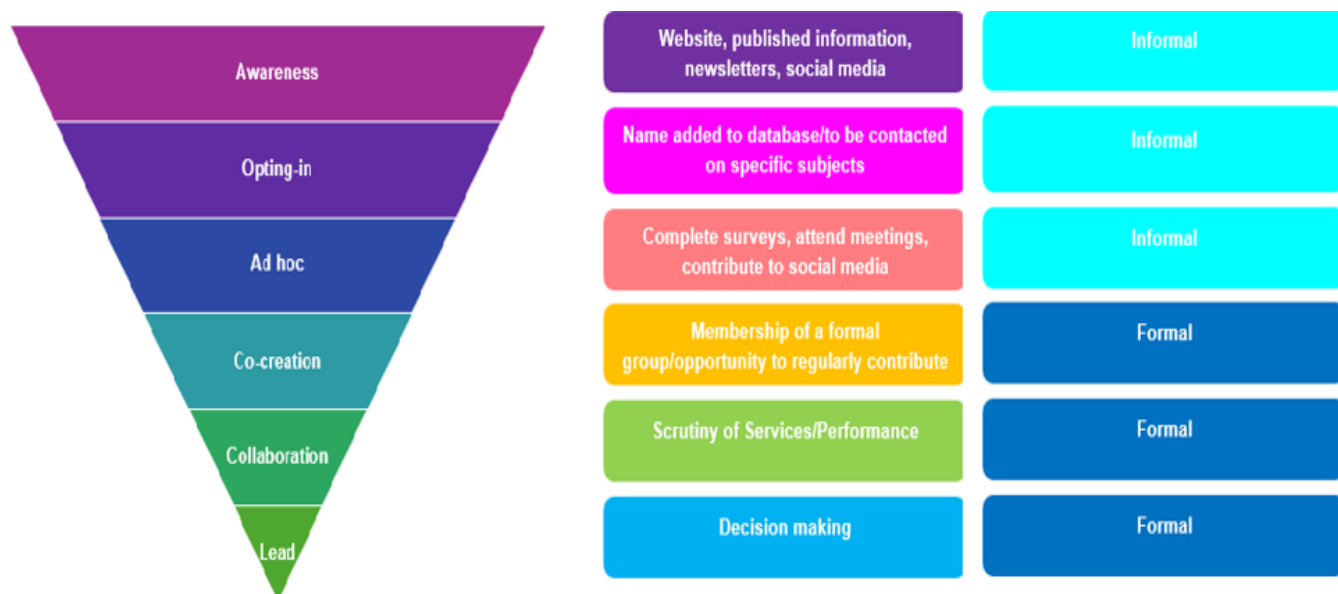
These events have been supplemented by various ad hoc engagement sessions and activities touching on 'hot topics' including damp, mould and condensation, our review of the social housing allocation policy, anti-social behaviour and our landlord strategy. Engagement has been in a variety of formats including, face to face, on-line, over the phone and in writing and has given residents the opportunity to have their views heard, shape service delivery and provide feedback on their experiences.

We recognise the need to do more and do things differently in order to demonstrate that we place residents at the heart of everything we do.

6. Developing our step change in approach to resident engagement and empowerment

The council acknowledges that engagement, involvement, and empowerment approaches should be tailored and flexible, rather than a 'one size fits all' model. It is essential to offer residents accessible opportunities that align with their needs, interests, and preferred pace, making participation meaningful and beneficial. Barriers that often prevent residents from participating more actively in housing and community activities include limited time, health or disability challenges, finances and a lack of information on how to get involved.

Below is a simple 'hierarchy of involvement' that illustrates the various levels of engagement we will further develop and refine in conjunction with residents. We will support, train and develop those residents who wish to work with us as part of our formal engagement opportunities.



This proposed ‘hierarchy of involvement’ has the real potential to offer something for everyone where the informal and the formal structures have an overriding focus on shaping services and generating better outcomes for residents.

7. Resident Engagement – our commitment

Above all we want our work on engagement and empowerment to positively influence the relationship with have with our residents and the outcomes they receive.

We are committed to actively listening to residents, engaging with them meaningfully and giving them an influential voice so that they can hold us to account.

We know that key to the success of the Landlord Service in Hillingdon, residents need to be active participants and not just recipients of our homes and services. Meaningful and collaborative working relationships between landlords and residents are core to delivering the best customer experience and continuous improvement.

To make this a reality through the way we work we will:

- Have open and honest conversations about resident feedback, both where we are successful and where we need to improve.
- Share what matters to most residents and what is important to vulnerable residents individually and collectively.
- Clearly inform residents about how their engagement makes a difference in decision-making about services and long-term priorities.

We are committed to hearing the diverse voices of residents. Our overriding objectives are to ensure that residents are:

- **Well informed** about opportunities for having a say.
- **Enabled to get involved** as much or as little as they wish.
- **Supported to engage in diverse ways** so they have choices about how they want to have a say in a way that suits their needs.
- **Actively encouraged** so people can magnify their voices to influence and shape service delivery.
- **Proactively supported** to work with in partnership with Hillingdon Council's Landlord Service, constructively challenge us and hold us to account.
- **Assisted to monitor** the delivery of this strategy and make recommendations for change and improvement.

8. Our Engagement and Empowerment Offer

To deliver on our commitments and our vision, we have proposed a model of engagement and empowerment that offers something at every level. This will include 'formal' service-wide structures to 'informal' local and one-off opportunities.

We will co-develop a clear delivery plan to support our transition to our 'hierarchy of involvement' which is clear, accessible and produces real change. We will work with you to monitor our delivery against this smart plan.

Our delivery plan will include, but not be limited to:

- How we will formalise and adopt a new three year strategy and associated delivery plan
- Development and documenting the full range of formal and informal engagement opportunities and linkage to our governance structure
- Arrangement for the co-production of an annual report to Tenants and Leaseholders
- Detailed arrangements for resident led scrutiny
- A training and development offer for residents opting to work with us across our formal engagement opportunities
- Staff training to support the cultural shift to 'every contact matters'.
- Maximising resident involvement in the review of our transactional survey data, Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Complaint handling to drive service improvement and better outcomes for residents.

9. Resourcing our approach

The Council will make available staffing and other resources to deliver this Strategy. The Strategy will be delivered by:

- Service teams who will be responsible for identifying engagement opportunities for their operational priorities and be accountable for demonstrating timely and meaningful engagement with residents and evidencing the difference made through capturing diverse voices.
- A dedicated Resident Engagement Team that will help to co-ordinate engagement activities and provide service teams with practical support. This team will also be responsible for servicing our formal engagement structure and, in conjunction with residents, assessing the success of this strategy and the delivery of our forward plan.
- The Landlord Service will make available all other resources and dedicated budgets for supporting residents to get involved and capacity building, accessible venues for meetings and all other associated costs.

10. Success Measures

In conjunction with residents we will assess the overall success of this strategy by:

- Knowing which services customers value most to help make best use of resources, maximise benefits and achieve the desired impact.
- Ensuring resident participation in engagement with the council is reflective of our customers and the diverse communities that we serve.
- Demonstrating how customer views have shaped strategic and operational decisions.
- Evidencing customer scrutiny of the council's performance as a social landlord.

We will share the results of this strategy with residents by:

- Demonstrating how we are listening to the views of diverse and vulnerable residents.
- Annually publishing the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- Evidencing the difference made by listening and hearing customer voices both at informal and formal levels.
- Annually assessing and publishing how well this strategy serves residents and supports the council

11. Related Policies and Links

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
 Draft Landlord Strategy
 Draft Vulnerable Residents and Reasonable Adjustments Policy

12. Behaviours, Competencies & Professional Standards

The Council, in its capacity as landlord, recognises that staff are the key resource in ensuring that we deliver a customer focused Landlord Service. In this context the

delivery of training to our staff groups goes beyond ensuring that they have the knowledge and competence to deliver their roles.

The Council is committed to ensuring that all staff across the Landlord Service have the skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours they need to deliver good-quality, professional services to tenants and leaseholders. The desired effects include an improved service to residents. This does not just relate to staff being better equipped to manage risks to tenants' wellbeing, health and safety but includes the necessary cultural shift to maximise the opportunities to capture the voice of our residents as an integral part of what we do and use it to shape the services we provide and improve the outcomes we deliver.

In the long term we expect that staff with the required level of skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours will contribute to an increase in tenant satisfaction scores. This includes a range of perceptions, particularly those associated with listening to tenants and acting upon their views and keeping tenants informed about matters which are important to them. Ultimately, we want our engagement strategy to 're-set' and strengthen the relationship we have with our tenants and leaseholders.

Governance			
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