

Southside

HOUSING ASSOCIATION

SHA Resident Involvement Strategy

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Strategy describes how Southside Housing Association will promote resident involvement.

1.2 The Strategy uses the term “resident involvement” throughout, to cover:

- Tenant participation, and
- Involvement by other Southside customers, such as people receiving factoring or housing support services.

Where the Strategy refers to “tenants”, this means that the matter being described relates to Southside tenants only (for example, when we are consulting about changes to tenants’ rents).

1.3 The Strategy is in two parts:

- **Part 1** describes what we hope to achieve and the various ways that residents can become involved.
- **Part 2** is our Action Plan setting out what we will do to put the various parts of the Strategy into practice over the next three years.

1.4 The Action Plan will be reviewed annually, and we will ask for input from residents when we do this.

Part 1: Resident Involvement Strategy

1. Strategy Objectives and Outcomes

- 1.1. As a community-controlled social landlord, the Association welcomes the involvement of residents in the management of their homes and services. We believe that this empowers residents and benefits the wider community. It also helps the Association, in our efforts to continually improve our services and performance.
- 1.2. Equally, the Association is clear that resident involvement is a right, not a duty. It is up to each resident to decide if and how they would like to get involved and for the Association to shape its Resident Involvement Strategy accordingly.
- 1.3. The Association has set the following **objectives and outcomes** for this Strategy:

- 1) All residents who wish to influence our service standards and delivery can do so.
- 2) Different options for involvement are available, to match individuals' preferences.
- 3) All sections of the community take part, in line with our values of inclusion and equality.
- 4) The Association uses resident feedback to improve our service delivery and the value for money we provide.
- 5) We achieve high standards when communicating with residents.
- 6) We remove barriers to involvement and make sure there is a good fit between resident involvement activities and the Association's increasing role in community development.

2. Background: Legal and Regulatory Requirements

- 2.1. The Strategy has been designed to comply with the Housing (Scotland) Acts (2001 Act and 2010 Act) and the Equality Act 2010. The Association has a legal obligation to:

- Work with tenants to agree a Tenant Participation Strategy
- Consult with individual tenants on changes to their rents and service charges and all housing service policies that will significantly affect them
- Provide tenants with information upon request as set out in the Tenancy Agreement
- Make sure we do not discriminate against any individual or group on the bases of the nine "protected characteristics" in the Equality Act 2010.
- Achieve the outcomes and standards set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter when we are providing housing services to our tenants and other service users.

- 2.2. The Scottish Social Housing Charter states that social landlords should “manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.” The Association must involve customers in assessing our performance and publish an annual report on how we are meeting the Charter. Our performance on all of these matters is regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator, in accordance with its “Regulatory Framework”.

3. Equality and Inclusion

- 3.1. The Association will promote involvement by people from all sections of the community:
- We will recognise that everyone is an individual and adjust our approach to meet individuals’ needs, where this is feasible.
 - We will comply fully with our duties to prevent discrimination.
 - We employ bilingual staff, to help remove barriers to communication.
 - We will provide training for staff and committee members to ensure equality and inclusion are part of the Associations culture
 - When organising meetings or events, we will be sensitive to, where practical:
 - The needs of people with young children, people with disabilities and people who care for a dependent relative
 - Religious and cultural requirements.
- 3.2. The Association may also support initiatives within the community that will help address barriers to involvement. For example, we currently provide the Govan/Craigton Integration Network with a flat at Moss Heights to support outreach activities.

4. Context for Resident Involvement

Governance Structures

- 4.1. Residents are formally involved in the strategic management of the Association and in overseeing service delivery at neighbourhood level. This is achieved through membership of the Association’s Management Committee, and of our two Neighbourhood Committees in Cardonald/Halfway and Pollokshields/Shawlands.
- 4.2. The Neighbourhood Committees are tenant-led and have responsibility for a number of matters that are directly relevant to this Strategy, including:

- Contributing to policy reviews on housing services
- Monitoring service outcomes, value for money, tenant satisfaction and complaints
- Deciding and overseeing the local approach to customer consultation and involvement
- Deciding priorities for community development and wider role spending
- Encouraging tenant involvement in work relating to the Scottish Social Housing Charter, including the Association's annual reports on the Charter

4.3. In total, around approximately 30 Southside customers are directly involved in our decision-making. This is of great assistance to the Association since relatively low numbers in the general tenant population wish to be involved in more formal types of resident involvement.

Tenants and Residents Groups

4.4. There are two established tenants groups active in our area, at Herriet Court and within Nithsdale/Newark Drive sheltered housing. There are no Registered Tenants Organisations active in the area, however the two Neighbourhood Committees in Cardonald /Halfway and Pollokshields/Halfway deliver a similar function for the tenants of the Association.

Community Development Activities

4.5. Following the appointment of a Community Initiatives Manager, the Association has a growing role in community development activities. The Association now runs a full programme of community involvement activities from our community bases at

- 150 Berryknowes Avenue
- 15 Queensland Gardens
- Hartlaw/Chirnside
- Moss Heights
- Sheltered Complexes at Herriet Court and Nithsdale/Newark

Activities include:

- Digital Learning classes
- Easy Exercise
- Gardening Clubs
- Arts and Crafts
- Book Bug
- Coffee Afternoon
- Men's Club

4.6 The Association have also built up successful partnership working with:-

- Nan McKay Hall
- Glendale Women's Café
- Govan and Craigton Integration Network
- Pollokshields Mobile Crèche
- Ready Steady Grow

As well as providing our own in-house community initiatives and involvement activities we also partner with the above organisations, which gives us both a strategic as well as a community anchor role in delivering community involvement in the wider community.

4.7 As a result of these initiatives, the Association is developing relationships with residents who may not have been involved in previous resident involvement activities. The Association will explore joint working with the community groups who manage the bases, to identify what scope there is for the bases being used to support resident involvement activities under this Strategy. This will require the agreement of the groups themselves, since each sets its own priorities in deciding how the community bases will operate.

What Southside Customers Have Told Us About Resident Involvement

4.8 The Association's most recent large-scale tenant survey was carried out in February 2016, with more than 500 customers taking part.

4.9 The survey results told us that:

- **99% of tenants** were satisfied with the Association's performance in keeping them informed about our services and decisions (up from 91% in our last survey in 2014)
- **96% of tenants** were satisfied with the opportunities the Association provides to participate in our decision making (up from 87% in our 2014 survey)

4.10 Tenants were also asked to specify what types of involvement they would be interested in. Two types of involvement were the most popular by an overwhelming margin:

- **Receiving regular information about the Association's decisions and activities** (for example through the Association's newsletter, mailshots, Facebook and other social media platforms)
- **Providing views about our services.** In addition to our large-scale tenant satisfaction survey, the Association also conducts surveys about specific services e.g. repairs, estate management and welfare rights services.

4.11 Tenants expressed some interest in participating in consultation exercises on specific issues, but there were very low levels of interest, less than 10%, on all other involvement options, such as:

- Membership of tenants groups or area associations
- Using the Association's website or social media to contribute views
- Taking part in focus groups or surveys by email or by text

4.12 The Association will continue to encourage tenants and residents to become involved in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods and offer a range of options for doing so. However, reflecting the feedback received, we will give top priority to:

- Maintaining levels of satisfaction with the quality of information we provide
- Continuing our programme of customer survey work
This includes the systems already in place for housing repairs, new homes and major repairs, concierge service, welfare rights service, factoring service, estate management as well as the large-scale survey we conduct every 2 to 3 years.
- Taking consultation activities to customers in their neighbourhoods, rather than expecting residents to come to us in large numbers to provide their comments and feedback.

5. Routes to Involvement

5.1. There are many ways in which tenants and residents can become involved in the Association's work, depending on what they are interested in and how much time they have to spare. The choices currently on offer include:

Consultation

- Attending a roadshow event or public meeting organised by the Association in your area
- Joining the Consultation Register, to receive information on topics you are interested in or to give your views on service policies and standards when they are being reviewed

Providing Feedback

- Responding to a survey about a service you have used, or about the Association's services as a whole
- Taking part in a focus group meeting, where a small number of participants discuss the Association's services
- Taking part in a working group to develop proposals or find solutions to a particular issue
- Taking part in practical activities that examine how well services are working, for example estate walkabouts with staff and Neighbourhood Committee members
- Attending informal social gatherings which also provide information or discussion about housing matters

More formal types of involvement

- Setting up or joining a tenants or / and residents association group or a registered tenants organisation
- Becoming a shareholder in the Association
- Joining one of the Association's Neighbourhood Committees, which oversee the local delivery of housing and maintenance services
- Standing for election to the Association's Management Committee

6. Registered Tenants Organisations

- 6.1. A Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO) is registered by the landlord, but operates independently in tenants' interests. It has the right to be provided with information and to be consulted about decisions on housing services. A mixed group (made up of tenants and other residents) can also become registered.
- 6.2. At present, there are no RTOs in the Association's areas of operation. As required by law, the Association has developed a registration scheme for RTOs and this is available on request. The Association will also establish a Register of any RTOs that become registered and this will be available for public inspection.

7. Consultation

- 7.1. The Association has an ongoing programme of policy reviews. With the co-operation of customers, the Association will meet its obligations to consult and take account of customers' views on a range of policy and service delivery matters, including:
*(note: items marked * are issues which the 2001 Act indicates must be consulted on.)*

- Our rules for letting houses*
- Changes to tenancy agreements*
- Proposals for rent restructuring*
- Increases in rents and service charges*
- How repairs are carried out*
- Major works to customers' homes*
- Estate management and environmental issues*
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour and harassment*
- Resident participation*
- The Association's policies and procedures for service delivery, including any significant changes to existing arrangements that will have a direct impact on customers*

- Customer service standards
- Communication with customers
- Equal opportunities
- Complaints procedures

7.2. The Association will:

- Publicise proposed significant changes in service delivery arrangements, for example by letter or in the Newsletter
- Maintain a Consultation Register which tenants can join in order to receive information about all proposed consultation activities or for specific topics
- Tailor our approach, to use appropriate consultation methods for the matter at hand. For example, consultation meetings with people from the Register of Interested Tenants; discussions at local resident events; or questionnaires and surveys involving larger groups of customers.

7.3. The Association will make sure that our approach is proportionate and represents a good use of resources. For example:

- We will always use the Consultation Register to identify customers who have expressed an interest in being consulted.
- We may supplement this if the matter at hand has significant implications for customers as a whole, for example by holding local consultation meetings or conducting customer surveys.
- We will allow greater time for consultation on issues that will the greatest impact on tenants (for example, annual rent review proposals; rent restructuring; changes to the repairs service).

7.4. The Association will always provide tenants and residents with feedback about views they have contributed during consultation exercises. We may do this by:

- Publishing information in our Newsletter
- Issuing consultation reports or individual letters
- Telephone residents directly

8. Communication and Information

Contacting the Association

8.1. Tenants and residents can communicate with the Association in person at our offices in Cardonald and Pollokshields, in writing, and by telephone or email.

Providing Information to Tenants and Residents

8.2. The Association will provide tenants and residents with information about our services and policies that is clear, easy to read and in plain language. In doing so:

- We will always try to meet any requests for information in a form that meets an individual's needs.
- We will comply fully with the obligations stated in the tenancy agreement to provide a range of information to tenants, upon request.

8.3. The Association will make information available through:

- Personal contact between residents and members of staff
- The Association's newsletter, published 4 times a year
- The Association's annual self-assessment report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter in October.
- The Association's Annual Report
- Regular mailshots on specific topics
- The Tenants Handbook and related leaflets
- The Association's website and Facebook page
- Meetings organised by the Association, such as neighbourhood-based roadshows
- Other events such as the summer gala day and pensioners' parties
- Community bases, where the residents who manage activities agree to this

Tenants' and Residents' Priorities

8.4. In the 2016 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, customers said that they prefer to receive information by:

- A quarterly newsletter for tenants and residents (81%)
- Letters / correspondence (79%)
- Telephone (28%)

Other suggested methods would include:

- The tenants handbook
- Information leaflets about our main services, how to make a complaint, and the standards of service that customers can expect from us
- An annual consultation calendar showing the service areas we will be reviewing and advising tenants and residents how they can get involved.

These priorities are fully reflected in the Association's Action Plan.

Areas for Development and Improvement

- 8.5. In implementing the Strategy, the Association intends to make a number of improvements to our communication methods, with input from tenants and residents.
- 8.6. The aspects of communication targeted for improvement in our Action Plan include:
 - The Association's website and Facebook page
 - The Association's tenant information leaflets
 - Installing LCD screens in our reception areas, to provide information to tenants and residents visiting our offices.

9. Support for Resident Involvement

- 9.1. The Association's Management Committee will approve an annual budget to support the implementation of the Resident Involvement Strategy and the associated Action Plan.
- 9.2. We expect that the resource will be a combination of direct cost (approximately £50k e.g. newsletters, mailshots etc) as well as staff time spent on consultation activities and associated costs (such as room hire, refreshments, and assistance with the cost of caring for dependents)
- 9.3. The Association can also provide practical support to help existing or new residents groups. This help includes:
 - Providing information about the Association's operating structures and policies
 - Staff attendance at residents' meetings
 - Financial and administrative assistance such as providing stationery, photocopying, places to meet and help with distributing newsletters or flyers
 - Small grants to constituted groups undertaking projects or activities that are relevant to the Association's work
- 9.4. The level of any financial assistance or support in kind will be decided by the Management Committee or Neighbourhood Committees, based on whether a group is registered or informal and also its size and how representative it is. The Association will administer financial assistance, if a group is not constituted and does not have adequate financial procedures.
- 9.5. The Association will also assist residents groups who wish to develop their skills and knowledge. We will do this by providing briefing sessions on those topics that are of interest to those concerned.

10. Tenant Scrutiny of the Association's Performance

- 10.1. The Association will involve customers in the production of our annual self-assessment report on the Charter, by working with customers on the Consultation Register.
- 10.2. The Association has two priority areas for tenant scrutiny, the repairs service and neighbourhood management. We do not intend to adopt a formal, inspection-based approach, since the Association's recent experience of this approach was that it delivered limited value. Instead, we will focus on feedback provided by the customer panel set up for the repairs service and on establishing an expanded programme of estate walkabouts involving residents as well as staff and committee members.

11. Monitoring and Review

- 11.1. The Association's Management Committee has overall responsibility for approving and reviewing the Resident Involvement Strategy. The Association's two Neighbourhood Committees are responsible for monitoring the local implementation of the Strategy.
- 11.2. The Strategy will be formally revised every three years. The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure:
 - Continued compliance with statutory and regulatory obligations
 - Performance in meeting the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcome on tenant and resident participation, as well as the Association's own objectives and priority actions and the difference these have made.