

# Draft Resident engagement strategy 2019 - 2022

## 1. Putting residents at the heart of what we do

The mission of Sussex Housing & Care (SHC) is to *'help people live their later lives to the full'*.

Our key strategic aims include:

- To put residents at the heart of what we do
- To provide a consistently good service.

The resident engagement strategy is a vital way for us to deliver our key value that *'...we listen and respond to the views of our residents, staff and stakeholders'*.

## 2. What is resident engagement?

For SHC, engaging with our residents means:

- Finding out what our residents want and need
- Enabling residents to become involved in the ways which suit them
- Ensuring that residents can influence decisions, help to improve services and deliver value for money.

## 3. Why is resident engagement so important to us?

### What residents have told us

Three quarters (75%) of our residents are satisfied with how SHC communicates with them (up from 69% in 2016). We are keen to improve their satisfaction with how we listen and act (57% in 2018, up from 46% in 2016).

A survey last year found that 17% of residents who responded were interested in being involved in a residents group and 12% in volunteering around their scheme. A key aim of this strategy is to encourage more residents to become involved and increase their feeling of being listened to by SHC.

### National recognition of the need for resident engagement

There is national recognition of the importance of resident engagement, including:

- [A new deal for social housing](#) Green Paper 2018 which stressed the need for greater accountability to tenants

- A report by the Chartered Institute of Housing ([Rethinking Social Housing](#)) which emphasised that social landlords need to *Ensure that tenants have a voice*
- A draft plan produced by the National Housing Federation [Together with Tenants](#) to look at how to build stronger relationships with tenants and residents
- The fire at Grenfell Tower which revealed the importance of tenants being able to scrutinise services and having a 'no risk' way to escalate their safety concerns.

#### 4. Who will benefit from this engagement?

SHC believes that resident engagement will benefit:

- Residents
- Their families and representatives
- SHC staff
- Our Board members.

The benefits will include:

- Improved services which reflect residents' needs
- Enhanced engagement which builds on our existing engagement
- Higher levels of resident involvement
- Increased resident satisfaction
- Higher levels of staff satisfaction and staff retention
- Enhanced community spirit and more sustainable communities
- A better quality of life for residents
- Building mutual respect and trust between SHC and residents
- Giving residents, as well as their relatives and Next of Kin (NoK) or representatives, the chance to compare our performance with other providers
- Providing value for money
- Board members understanding the concerns and aspirations of residents and staff.

#### 5. How we developed this strategy

This strategy was developed using a project group, which included residents and a Board member, alongside a series of meetings at our housing schemes. These residents expressed significant interest in, and enthusiasm for, developing how we engage with them and their input has shaped the key features of our strategy.

## **6. The key aims of our resident engagement**

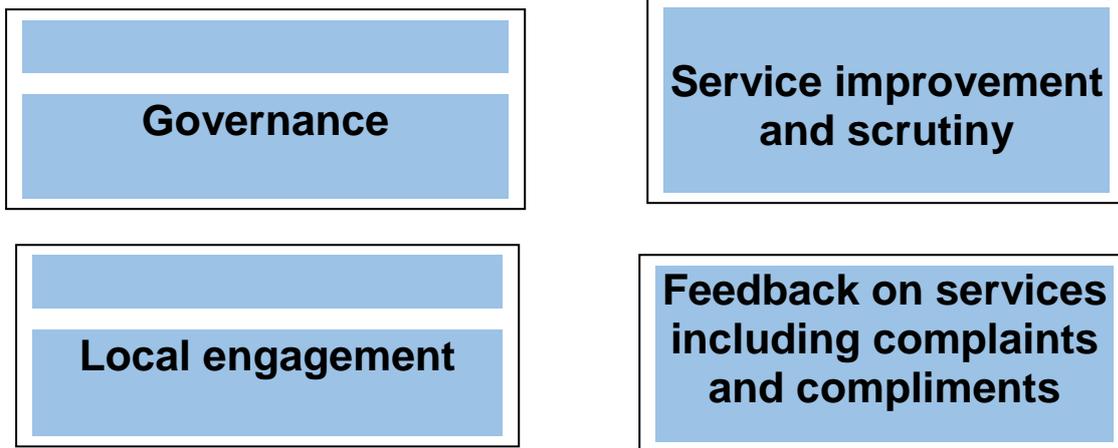
The key aims of this resident engagement strategy are to:

1. Increase the levels of resident engagement by nurturing individual, local, community and organisation wide involvement
2. Build on the existing engagement methods to develop a range of opportunities for involvement for our residents across Sussex
3. Engage the widest range of residents as possible, ensuring that we encourage hard to reach groups to become involved
4. Engage the relatives, NoK or other representatives in improving services, especially where our residents are more vulnerable or harder to engage
5. Demonstrate how resident engagement is improving services and delivering Value for Money (VFM)
6. Use digital technology to widen the levels of resident engagement and increase the ways they can become involved
7. Provide the training, resources, support and materials to ensure that the engagement activities can be delivered effectively and consistently
8. Enable staff and residents to work together in partnership to deliver high quality services, improve performance and help residents have happier lives
9. Increased resident satisfaction levels and compliments.

## **7. Delivering our engagement strategy**

Our engagement programme will provide a variety of ways in which our residents can become involved. It will enable them to choose how they wish to engage with SHC and how much they can contribute. SHC will support our residents as well as providing them with the tools they need. Although many of the methods of engaging residents are most likely to appeal to tenants and leaseholders, SHC will also work hard to engage care home residents, their relatives, NoK and other representatives.

### Our resident engagement delivery model



### Our menu of involvement

This will consist of both:

- **Formal ways** for residents to get involved, which SHC will commit to introducing which includes making positive steps to recruit a Board Member who is a resident and establishing the Residents' Voice
- **Informal ways** which will be considered, when needed and there are sufficient resources, such as Task and Finish groups and mystery shopping.

The components of this menu of involvement are set out below. It comprises of both our existing methods of engaging residents as well as options for involvement, suggested by residents and staff.

Governance:
<b>Introducing</b>
<b>Resident Board Member:</b> Making positive steps to recruit a Board Member who is a resident who could add direct customer experience to the Board. The Board provides strategic direction for the organisation, monitors performance, finance and develops key strategies and policies.
<b>Residents Voice:</b> This is a generic term to describe a number of different ways we connect with our residents. This could be an adhoc informal group that all residents are encouraged to attend or use to feedback their views on issues relating to SHC services. Alternative methods include residents providing their voice through surveys, emails, social media, virtual consultation groups or phone calls.
<b>Editorial panel for the residents' magazine:</b> New Outlook.

Service improvement and scrutiny
<b>Continuing with what is working well</b>
<b>Resident involvement in procurement:</b> Assisting in evaluating tenders and sitting on contractor interview panels, as well as Board members.
<b>Resident involvement in key posts for recruitment:</b> Where residents are involved in the recruitment of the Executive Team and Scheme Managers.
<b>Resident surveys:</b> E.g. where residents are asked what they think about SHC services to measure improvement over time and to capture views/feedback about a service or issue.
<b>Relatives surveys:</b> E.g. where relatives are asked their views on SHC services.
<b>Project (task and finish) groups:</b> Involving residents, relatives and Board Members, in groups to look at specific services/issues e.g. the website, anti-social behaviour and resident engagement.
<b>Introducing</b>
<b>Mystery shopping or quality checkers:</b> Volunteer residents (as well as Board Members and relatives) to provide feedback on the experience of using our services.
<b>Task and finish reviews:</b> To look at specific issues or services e.g. ASB. These can be virtual or physical reviews.
<b>Focus groups:</b> An informal but structured chat with residents to find out their views on a specific service area e.g. grounds maintenance.
<b>Performance information:</b> Publishing this data for the benefit of residents and relatives.
<b>Contract monitoring:</b> Resident involvement in this process, for services such as grounds maintenance.
<b>Comments cards:</b> Collecting feedback from individual residents (as well as relatives) and using this to monitor/improve services or contracts.
<b>A resident engagement toolkit:</b> To enable staff to effectively engage with residents and support their activities.

Local engagement
<b>Continuing with what is working well</b>
<b>Coffee mornings:</b> Board members to also participate in these coffee mornings.
<b>Intergenerational activities:</b> For example inviting school children to our care homes.
<b>Supporting social activities in our schemes:</b> Board members to be invited to participate in these activities.
<b>Scheme meetings for residents</b>
<b>Residents and relatives meetings</b>
<b>Service charge meetings</b>
<b>Scheme newsletters</b>
<b>Introducing</b>
<b>Scheme walkabouts:</b> Residents regularly walk round the scheme with staff to identify issues.
<b>A Volunteering Strategy:</b> To encourage residents and non-residents to support the work of SHC.

<b>Feedback on services including complaints and compliments</b>
<b>Continuing with what is working well</b>
<b>Complaints, compliments and comments Policy:</b> Which encourages residents to let us know their experiences of using our services, both good and bad, as well as stressing the importance of learning from resident feedback.
<b>Using the learning from complaints, compliments and comments:</b> To identify areas for improvement and what is working well.
<b>A 'you said, we did' section:</b> In residents' newsletters.
<b>Introducing</b>
<b>Programme of surveys:</b> Focussing on a specific issue i.e. gardening, cleaning, lifeline, social activities, new tenants.
<b>Have 'your say' suggestion post-boxes:</b> At each scheme.
<b>Texting, emailing residents with a short survey:</b> To complete after using an SHC service.
<b>Seeking 'would you recommend us?' feedback from residents and their relatives.</b>

## 7. Reaching out to everyone who wants to be involved

SHC will ensure that our resident engagement is inclusive and representative. Our Equality and Diversity Policy stresses the need for staff to value the diversity of its residents. One of our aims is to reach out to the groups who are currently under-represented in our engagement. We will monitor who becomes engaged, with the aim of making our engaged residents more representative of our resident profile. To achieve this we will:

- Encourage the development of resident interest or support groups e.g. an LGBTQ residents group. This could be a virtual consultation group.
- Encourage our residents to become Diversity Champions
- Monitor the characteristics of engaged residents e.g. ethnicity, disability and work to encourage underrepresented groups to become involved
- Make our meetings and information accessible e.g. signing, size of font for publications, accessible venues, varying locations of meetings and ensuring they are as convenient as possible for residents.

### Barriers to engagement

SHC does recognise the range of barriers which can discourage, or prevent, our residents from engaging with us. These include:

- Lack of training (e.g. using digital technology) and need for support
- Difficulties in understanding the information we provide e.g. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Physical barriers such as disability and mobility difficulties

- Travel and other expenses provided for residents who are invited to engage with SHC.

### How will we overcome these barriers?

A key concern of many residents involved in developing this strategy, was their need for training and support. One of our commitments will be to develop a toolkit for staff which will include how to provide support and training for residents. Staff will be encouraged to offer to support residents who are organising and hosting events.

## 8. Using digital engagement to widen involvement

Digital engagement is a crucial component of widening resident engagement. It can give our residents the opportunity to participate if they do are not able, or do not wish, to physically attend a meeting.

A recent survey by Deloitte indicated that 71% of 55-to-75 year olds now own a smartphone, and are the fastest growing group of adopters of smartphones.<sup>1</sup>

The most recent profile of our sheltered housing tenants found that 47%, of those completing this questionnaire, have internet access at home. This is likely to increase significantly over time, so the strategy needs to provide increasing means for our residents to engage with us on line. This could include:

- Virtual resident groups to enable residents across regions to share ideas
- Resident digital champions to encourage other residents to connect with us digitally
- Our ICT Officer as SHC's digital champion
- A resident portal on the SHC website
- A resident engagement and social events calendar on the SHC website
- Using digital means to buddy up housing schemes, hold events and share information between schemes
- Using intergenerational engagement to increase our residents' use of digital platforms
- Using social media, such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to publicise resident engagement events
- Using technology e.g. text a survey to provide feedback about a service
- Dedicated email address for Engagement [haveyoursay@sussexhousing.org.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@sussexhousing.org.uk)
- Ernie (our intranet) to share engagement information with staff.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/press-releases/articles/uk-public-glued-to-smartphones.html>

## **9. Using data to evidence our resident engagement and service delivery**

SHC will use its own data, as well as that from other sources to:

- Identify priorities, or issues, for our resident engagement programme to tackle
- Complement the information we gain from residents and others about our services
- Evidence how to shape and deliver future services.

The data we will deploy includes:

- Resident and relative surveys
- Repairs data
- Key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Complaints, comments and compliments data
- Comments cards
- Information gained from benchmarking clubs and good practice forums.

## **10. Everyone at SHC needs to engage with residents**

All at SHC, including staff and the Board, need to work with residents to give them the opportunity to regularly feedback to us, as well as challenging our performance to improve the quality of our services.

### **Who will lead this engagement?**

The Housing Operations Manager will be the lead member of staff for resident engagement and the strategy will be owned by the Business Support Team. The delivery of this engagement strategy is the responsibility of all SHC staff.

### **All staff**

All SHC staff will be expected to engage with residents, from the top of the organisation to our front line housing and care staff. To achieve this SHC will:

- Provide staff with the necessary skills to engage with residents, through induction, training and ongoing development
- Ensure that engagement is seen as a crucial part of every one's job (including 1:1s and appraisals) and its importance is regularly publicised to staff and residents
- Provide the tools and resources for staff – including a resident engagement toolkit
- Demonstrate through reports to Board how resident feedback is being used to improve services and resident satisfaction.

Our communications resources will be used to:

- Publicise where resident influence and input has added value e.g. greater efficiency and value for money
- Raise the profile of resident groups.

## **11. Working together with residents to deliver this engagement strategy**

The next stage will be to use a range of ways to present this strategy to our residents and discuss with them how we can work together to deliver it. SHC will use existing forums e.g. scheme meetings, as well as specific events (such as themed coffee mornings) to discuss issues, including the volunteering strategy.

### **What will SHC offer to residents who participate?**

SHC is keen to ensure that residents who engage with us, find it a worthwhile and enjoyable experience. To enable this we will offer them:

- Training opportunities and support
- Access to digital platforms
- Rewards e.g. vouchers as a prize
- Social opportunities
- The chance to improve services.

## 12. Our three year engagement plan

This strategy will run for three years and the projected key outcomes for each year include:

Year 1 (1919/20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rolling out the engagement strategy to residents, staff and the Board and embedding it in our work programme</li> <li>• Seeking residents' views on their priorities for introducing the menu of involvement</li> <li>• Identifying residents who want to join our pool of involved residents</li> <li>• Analyse whether we are engaging with a representative profile of residents. If necessary, introducing a programme to engage hard to reach residents</li> <li>• Identify training and support needs and agree a programme</li> <li>• Develop the process to select or elect a Board member, who is also a resident, for a specific term (e.g. two years)</li> <li>• Introduce a Volunteering Strategy to encourage both residents and supporters of our services to volunteer their time and skills to supplement and build on our work</li> <li>• Identifying innovation and good practice elsewhere.</li> </ul>
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement an agreed number of engagement options selected by residents</li> <li>• Provide training for staff and residents e.g. on task and finish groups.</li> <li>• Commence an agreed number of task and finish groups</li> <li>• Raise staff and Board awareness of resident engagement</li> <li>• Establish the Residents Voice</li> </ul>
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the outcomes of this Resident Engagement Strategy and develop a strategy for 2022-2025</li> <li>• Compare the diversity and involvement levels of our residents compared to our resident profile and develop actions to address any imbalance if needed.</li> </ul>

### Ongoing monitoring and accountability

Alongside this three year programme, SHC will also use the following means to monitor the success of our resident engagement:

- An annual report to Board, presented by resident representative

- Use the tenant satisfaction survey and relatives survey, to set targets of satisfaction that we want to achieve
- Progress being regularly reported in resident newsletters, annual report to residents and other means, including 'You said, we did.'

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