

Harrow Council Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2021-2024



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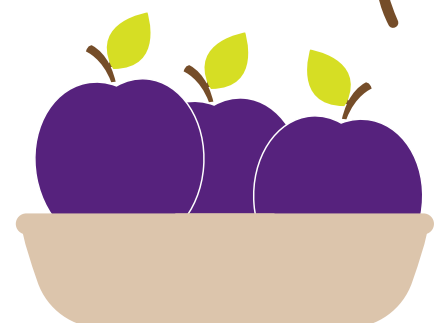
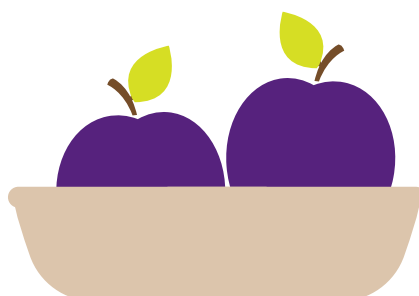
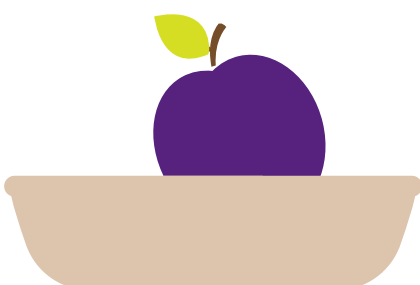
- Commonplace estate-based websites
- Estate Inspections
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- Surveys and Social Media

Medium level of commitment

- Leasehold improvement group
- Community Projects

High level of commitment

- Residents' Board
- Harrow Sheltered Residents Association
- Grange Farm Resident Steering Group





Introduction by Residents Board chair

“The aim of this Strategy is to ensure that all residents know who and where to go – to be heard. They will be able to do this in a variety of ways, depending on how much time they are willing to give, as we are working closely and flexibly with the Council.

We encourage and welcome any involvement because we want to make our communities better, positively influence services and improve outcomes.

Getting involved can be anything from making suggestions to your caretaker or housing officer, becoming an Estate Champion, or sitting on one of the groups, including the Residents’ Board.

Whoever you are, however, young or old you are, whatever needs you may have and wherever you live in Harrow, we want you to feel seen and heard.”



Introduction by Housing Portfolio Holder, Cllr Mina Parmar

Housing is very much about Putting Residents First. We will ensure we are really listening to residents and respond to service requests in a timely manner. Our vision is to ensure Harrow is a place we can take pride in and that it’s a place where we feel respected, safe and enjoy living.

My priority is to improve the existing complaints feedback process. It is important to me that we improve the experience for our residents and we are transparent with our processes. We will develop a proactive strategy to review common complaints so that we can improve services before issues occur. By doing this, we will reduce the number of complaints that we receive and be able to respond to complaints quicker. We have adopted an approach of rapid response resolution wherever possible.

We will publish performance outcomes in an Annual Report and in Homing In, (the resident’s magazine), whilst the Residents’ Board continues to hold the service to account.

I recognise the concerns many people have with the cost of living crises. The winter months will be especially challenging, but I will ensure the Council works closely with residents to ensure they receive the support they need.

Our Housing Service commitment is for “great customer experiences and community outcomes”

Our Engagement Vision

For Harrow residents to enjoy living in their home and their neighbourhood.

- Council staff to listen, follow up and provide feedback
- Communities encouraged to get involved in improving their neighbourhood
- Opportunities to have a role in evaluating and improving housing services

Our commitment – we will:

- Strive for a culture where resident feedback is welcomed and the focus is on resolution
- Have a broad range of ways to engage and be listened to across all services that ensures equality of access for residents of all abilities
- Consciously seek views from a representative proportion of tenants and leaseholders
- Ensure you are not out of pocket for attending meetings and offer training, support and mentoring
- Take advantage of technology and modern market research techniques to enable as diverse a range of residents as possible to contribute their views and shape services
- Have clear outcomes for involvement activities, allowing everyone to clearly see the value of being involved
- Learn from our service failures

What we are doing



Council staff listen, follow up and provide feedback

- Staff will follow clear customer service guidelines for housing service requests and complaints, focusing more on solutions and outcomes to our residents
- Adopt a fast resolution approach where possible to service complaints and keep the resident informed of the progress
- Produce an internal quarterly report of all customer feedback including complaints and compliments showing trends, common themes and lessons learnt
- We have set up virtual teams for six pilot estates to improve communication, speed up response and drive estate improvements which we will roll it out to all estates
- Introduced Commonplace websites - digital platform based around individual estate websites – trialling on 5 estates and we have just added Stonegrove estate
- Utilise social media such as neighbourhood WhatsApp groups
- Holding regular Housing Matters webinars open to all residents (dates published in Homing In) where you can ask questions and choose future subjects
- Publishing an Annual Report highlighting outcomes, service improvements and how we have engaged and we welcome articles or ideas for articles for Homing In magazine

Communities encouraged to get involved in improving their neighbourhood

- Looking at using social media such as Next Door
- Staff will facilitate the progression and aspirations of residents through involvement, training and mentoring and facilitate opportunities for residents to come together to improve their community
- Residents on the Grange Farm regeneration scheme represented by a strong, committed Steering Group and leverage social value benefits and grow community development partnerships
- Held several joint workshops with residents and staff to evaluate our minimum estate service standards, published Autumn 2022. This work will lead to an Estates Steering Group which can raise issues and help monitor the service
- Opportunity for residents on an estate to join the Estate Inspection and become a Resident Estate Champion. Opportunity to develop as a community leader by building skills and knowledge e.g. safety, poverty prevention, crime initiatives
- Opportunity to access Flying Start grants for local community initiatives or events
- Opportunity to access social value help from our contractors such as help in kind or small donations for community projects

Opportunities to have a role in evaluating and improving housing services

- Surveys will ask your opinion about housing services
- Staff will facilitate the progression and aspirations of residents through involvement, training and mentoring and facilitate opportunities for residents to come together to scrutinise services
- Opportunity to join the Residents' Board. This is the overarching resident group which meets bi-monthly (hybrid), sets its own agenda and decides which areas to scrutinise. All other groups are linked into the Residents' Board.
- Leasehold Improvement Group – meets bi-monthly, open to all leaseholders, help set the agenda
- Harrow Sheltered Residents Association – meets bi-monthly, attended by representatives from sheltered schemes, set their agenda
- COMING: Asset Management scrutiny group, Customer Experience Scrutiny Group and Social Value Engagement Group

Priorities going forward



1 Identify a plan to broaden the role of staff and contractors in delivering resident engagement by building skills and knowledge e.g. safety, poverty prevention, crime initiative

2 Publish Annual Report

3 Set up:

- Asset Management group
- Customer Experience Scrutiny group
- Estate Co-design for 6 pilot estates
- Estates Steering group
- Resident Estate Champions
- Social Value Engagement group

4 Agree how to measure outcomes – methodology

5 Develop a Charter for Residents – issues around stigma of living in social housing and how tenants should be treated, what residents can expect from Harrow

6 Engage with younger residents, ensure we hear their voice

7 Outcome - develop a minimum of 5 community leaders by building skills and knowledge e.g. safety, poverty prevention, crime initiative



*If you are interested, please email:
rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk*

What success looks like

- Residents like and feel safe in the place they live
- Residents take responsibility for their own environment (joining estate inspections, estate champions, community events)
- Residents feel supported about tenancy sustainment and debt management
- Evidence of increased residents' satisfaction who feel listened to and whose enquiries have been responded to (fewer service enquiries and complaints)
- Demonstrated community benefits from leveraging social value
- Well communicated range of ways to be involved, with support and amount of time involved
- 40+ regularly involved residents broadly representing our tenant and leasehold profile
- All residents feel they have a voice
- Younger tenants have a voice
- Leasehold representation
- Sheltered tenants' representation



Charter for Residents

Annual Report

Repairs Charter

What you'll get out of it

Volunteering can help you learn new skills, gain experience and really help make a difference

- A chance to influence the way services are shaped
- Training and support to develop your talents
- Working as part of a team
- A sense of purpose from the work you carry out
- Develop your skills and improve your CV.

Support

- Holding joint or separate training for tenants, leaseholders and staff
- Keeping tenants, leaseholders and staff up to date with best practice
- We will cover the cost of attending official meetings, visits and authorised training
- Whenever possible we would encourage you to share lifts to meetings with fellow volunteers and where you are unable to share a lift, use public transport or your own car, we will cover the cost of a taxi providing that this has been agreed by the Resident Engagement Team in advance.

If you have questions about any of this, please contact a member of the Resident Engagement team, we would love to hear from you:
email rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk

Commonplace estate-based websites

What's involved?

- Regularly visit the website to check the latest news updates or report estate concerns
- Offer regular feedback about the service provided on your estate
- Make helpful suggestions to improve communication with the residents on the estate

Skills you'll need

Willing to check the website from time to time, respond to any e-surveys, and report estate issues, using photos where necessary

Level of commitment: low 🍏

Click on the estate commonplace website from time to time

How we will support you

We will respond to concerns or estate requests within 3 working days

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Estate Inspections

What's involved?

- You are welcome to join the Housing Officer on a council estate inspection which is held twice a year. The dates of all estate inspections are published on the website [here](#)
- You may also be living on an estate with a Commonplace website, in which case you can also report any issues on the estate directly via the [website](#)

Skills you'll need

No skills needed, just a keen interest in the appearance and upkeep of your estate

Level of commitment: low 🍏

Once every 6 months. However, if you are really interested in your estate please speak to the Resident Engagement Team about becoming an Estate Champion:

email: rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk

How we will support you

All actions are written up and reported on a formal Estate Inspection report and this is published on the [website](#)

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Housing Matters

Open Meeting

What's involved?

- Attend the 6 weekly open public e-meeting held via Microsoft Teams, where you can learn more about housing services, hear guest speakers, suggest future topics and ask questions

Skills you'll need

- Able to log onto Microsoft Teams. Support is available from the Resident Engagement team
- Ask questions via the CHAT function during the meeting

Level of commitment: low 🍏

One and a half hours every 6 weeks

How we will support you

- Dates for Housing Matters meetings are published in the Homing In magazine and are on the council website
- Or you can email: rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk to get all the details about dates and log in access
- If you have any special needs, please advise the Resident Engagement team, as we can pay for signers etc if needed

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Homing In Residents Magazine

What's involved?

- Send in photos, jokes or stories to the editor
- Suggest subjects for inclusion
- Volunteer to write and edit articles

Skills you'll need

- Able to email in information to the editor
- An interest in what tenants and leaseholders want to read about
- Good writing and editorial skills

Level of commitment: low 🍏

- As little as emailing in a photo to taking the time to research and write an article for inclusion in the magazine

How we will support you

- All published photos or contributions are rewarded with a £10 shopping voucher
- The Editor can work with you to develop and shape an article if needed

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Surveys and social media

What's involved?

- We will be launching surveys from time to time to measure satisfaction with housing services, such as your latest repair. It is extremely helpful for us to learn where we are doing well and where we need to put more effort to get it right.
- You can also let us know on Harrow Council [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) what you are thinking, and we have whatsapp groups on some estates where major works are being carried out – speak to your Housing Officer

Skills you'll need

- Willing to respond to a request for a survey, which could be a printed, or online or by phone
- Feedback to us on social media what you think about housing services

Level of commitment: low 🍎

Feedback as and when you wish on social media or fill in the Harrow Council satisfaction surveys if you receive one

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Leasehold Improvement Group

What's involved?

- Give the leaseholder a voice in key decisions affecting leaseholders and shared owners in Harrow
- Help form policy for leaseholders
- Provide feedback to the council on the services offered leaseholders
- Help with the Improvement Plan to improve trust among leaseholders
- Understand the themes of leasehold issues and hold us to account in resolving them
- Work with senior managers in an influencing and challenging role
- Hold us to account in treating residents with respect in accordance with our Regulator
- Work in collaboration with Leasehold services team to ensure accountability, transparency and performance

Skills you'll need

- Confidence to speak in a group
- Passionate about people and our tenant-led approach
- Ability to understand the bigger issues faced within social housing
- Willing to read documents provided, ready to comment on them
- Be open to feedback from other tenants and leaseholders

Level of commitment: medium 🍏 🍏

Formal meetings are held bi-monthly

How we will support you

- Training can be offered as requested, as well as the council providing good practice training
- External speakers can be invited to share expertise

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Community Projects

What's involved?

- Have the passion and drive to own a community project idea such as a gardening project or health enhancing project etc.
- Promote a project idea that is in the best interests of local residents
- Canvas for support for ideas that benefit the local residents
- In liaison with Resident Engagement Team, plan and budget for projects
- Complete Flying Start grant form (with support) or see what social value support is available
- Work in collaboration with other residents on your estate and staff and external partners to help deliver your project
- Help to publicise outcomes

Skills you'll need

- Have the passion and drive to improve your local community
- Confidence to speak to other residents to canvas support for a community project
- Willing to complete a funding grant form and report on activity outcomes
- Be open to feedback from other tenants and leaseholders

Level of commitment: medium 🍎🍏

Commitment to see through a community project from the beginning, through to the planning phase and implementation phase

How we will support you

- Training can be supplied as requested, such as support to fill in the grant form or in budgeting for a project
- Support with creating posters or carrying out surveys
- Flying Start grant available
- Photographers supplied to capture and publicise outcomes

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Residents' Board

What's involved?

- Promote improvements that are in the best interests of tenants and leaseholders
- Be responsible for overseeing scrutiny and making it happen
- Understand the themes of tenant issues and hold us to account in resolving them
- Work with senior managers in an influencing and challenging role
- Give the tenant a voice in key decisions being made
- Hold us to account in treating tenants with respect as defined by our regulator
- Work in collaboration with us to ensure continuous improvements to services are embedded to boost customer satisfaction
- Check the Annual Report to ensure it is an accurate reflection of our service and review the Resident Engagement Strategy annually
- Be willing to attend conferences and visit other leading housing providers to learn about good practice

Skills you'll need

- Great at working as part of a team
- Confidence to speak in a group
- Passionate about people and our tenant-led approach
- Ability to understand the bigger issues faced within social housing
- Ability to use a digital device and read documents provided, ready to comment on them
- Be open to feedback from other tenants and leaseholders

Level of commitment: high 🍎🍎🍎

- Formal meetings are held bi-monthly (hybrid)
- Informal contact via a WhatsApp group

How we will support you

- Can attend as an Observer to get a taste of what is involved
- Members receive a tablet and training if required
- Members can request specific training and request shadowing and mentoring support

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Harrow Sheltered Residents Association

What's involved?

- Represent the tenants in your sheltered scheme
- Promote improvements that are in the best interests of sheltered tenants
- Understand the themes of tenant issues and hold us to account in resolving them
- Work with senior managers in an influencing and challenging role
- Give the tenant a voice in key decisions being made for the sheltered service
- Hold us to account in treating tenants with respect as defined by our regulator
- Work in collaboration with us to ensure continuous improvements to services are embedded to boost customer satisfaction
- Carryout monthly walkabouts with the Scheme Coordinator

Skills you'll need

- Great at working as part of a team
- Confidence to speak in a group
- Passionate about people and our tenant-led approach
- Ability to understand the bigger issues faced within social housing
- Ability to read documents provided, ready to comment on them
- Be open to feedback from other tenants and leaseholders

Level of commitment: high 🍎🍎🍎

- Formal meetings are held bi-monthly (hybrid)
- Monthly inspections
- Elections are held bi-annually to elect Tenant Representatives per scheme

How we will support you

- Training can be supplied as requested, as well as the council providing good practice training, such as diversity and inclusion
- External speakers can be invited to share expertise
- Minute taking service can be provided as well as help with setting the agenda

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Grange Farm Resident Steering Group

What's involved?

- Give the tenant a voice in key decisions being made for the regeneration of the estate
- Represent the tenants, leaseholders and shared owners on Grange Farm estate
- Promote improvements that are in the best interests of estate residents
- Understand the themes of tenant issues and hold us to account in resolving them
- Work with senior managers in an influencing and challenging role
- Hold us to account in treating tenants with respect as defined in the regulations
- Work in collaboration with us to ensure new processes, products and services meet tenant needs

Skills you'll need

- Great at working as part of a team
- Confidence to speak in a group
- Passionate about people and our tenant-led approach
- Ability to understand the bigger issues faced within social housing
- Willing to read documents provided, ready to comment on them
- Be open to feedback from other tenants and leaseholders

Level of commitment: high 🍎🍎🍎

- Preparation and Formal meetings are both held monthly
- AGM is held annually (members can re-stand)

How we will support you

- An Independent Tenants Advisor has been appointed to support the Steering Group throughout the process, and they provide secretarial support and provide training for the chair and vice chair
- A Community Development Officer supports the Steering Group to organise social events to enhance community cohesion and support the AGM process
- The council supports a weekly Kids Club on the estate
- Training can be supplied as requested, as well as the council providing good practice training
- External speakers can be invited to share expertise
- Trips to other development sites can be organised
- Public meetings with the local MP can be arranged

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