TENANT ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS
tpas

East Suffolk Council (ESC)
October 2021

Smart business improvement package:
Framework

Unlock the business benefit of Engagement

SMART Review Report

During August and October 2021, East Suffolk Council worked with Tpas on a SMART review of their engagement activities. This included the following:

- A self-assessment by the organisation against the Tpas national Engagement Standards

- 1 day of focus groups, and interviews with key staff and tenants

- Producing a headline report to include recommendations for improvement, learning from the sector, and good practice identified within the organisation

I would like to acknowledge and thank Samantha Shimmon and the team for their help and support during this process and also everyone who took the time to talk to me throughout this process.

Overall assessment against the seven National Engagement standards:

THEME	ASSESSMENT
Theme One: Governance and Transparency	**Not Met**
Theme Two: Scrutiny	**Not Met**
Theme Three: Business and Strategy	**Not Met**
Theme Four: Complaints	**Not Met**
Theme Five: Information and Communication	**Not Met**
Theme Six: Resources for Engagement	**Not Met**
Theme Seven: Community and Wider Engagement	**Not Met**

A table of recommendations is provided at the back of this report.

Setting the Scene

Your Organisation	East Suffolk Council (ESC)
Your Organisation Stock Size	4,500
Is your Organisation part of a group structure?	No
Your Name	Samantha Shimmon
Your Role	Tenant Services Manager
Date of Completion	28/05/2021
Tpas Consultancy Manager	Gillian Mclaren

Please give a brief statement on how tenant involvement is delivered in your organisation and how many staff are directly involved in its delivery

Pre-Covid we had 3-4 localised residents groups who would meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues affecting them directly, they were chaired by one of the tenants but facilitated by ESC. The Chairs and some other tenants from these groups would then all meet on a quarterly basis at our Tenant's Forum to discuss common issues and be kept up to date on projects and news from ESC (landlord services).

We also have our Housing Benefit and Tenants Services consultation group (HOBTS) which is a combination of Tenants, Councillors and representatives from the third sector. I have attached the terms of reference for this group.

None of these groups have met during the Pandemic and we have not set these up virtually. Now the restrictions are lifting we will look to resume these on a face-to-face basis.

We offer a bi-annual tenants magazine which goes to all tenants by post, this carry's relevant articles for tenants, a wordsearch competition and adhoc consultation/surveys.

Our Housing Officers carry out adhoc estate inspections and are joined at times by the ward Councillors and tenants, these are prearranged but not on a dedicated schedule and tend to be upon request or where there are pressing issues.

We will consult particular residents on issues relevant to them, i.e. our tower block St Peters Court. This is our only tower block and has received a large amount of scrutiny due to the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower. We ensured officers were on site the day of the fire at Grenfell to re-assure tenants and talk to them about any concerns they have. A large amount of additional fire safety work has taken place such as the addition of a sprinkler system. We consulted with residents on this work by conducting a number of face-to-face meetings in the communal room at the block. We were also able to leave an empty flat void which had all the work completed, and became a 'show home' so the other residents could look at the work and understand what the impact would be on their flats to re-assure them.

We have 1 part-time (2.5 days per week) Tenant Involvement Officer, and then adhoc officers as required. We have written a JD for a full time Tenant Engagement Officer which has already been submitted to TPAS for comment before any recruitment is conducted.

SMART Self-Assessment

Governance & Transparency			
Standard	**Yes**	**No**	**Unsure**
There is a clearly defined and agreed role for residents in the governance arrangements of the organisation		√	
There are clear, widely publicised routes for residents to hold the organisation to account on standards for service delivery, strategy, performance and decision making		√	
There is an environment of mutual respect between the organisation and its residents with steps taken to identify and tackle negative stereotyping including understanding the impact of language and behaviours			√
The organisation regularly considers, and shares publically how it uses the learning from resident engagement as well as its data and insight to improve the services it provides		√	
The organisation provides regular assurance to its residents how it keeps them safe in their homes and how it meets the regulatory and legal requirements			√
The organisation engages with residents to produce an appropriate and meaningful Annual Report which should include resident satisfaction measures; performance against its stated commitments; how income is being spent, complaints trends, impact from resident engagement and comparisons of the organisational wage structure and management costs		√	
There is consistent and honest sharing of information with all stakeholders the risks the organisation faces, the person responsible for managing those risks, how it is meeting key organisational targets and how it plans to deal with areas of concern			√
The organisation consults at least once every three years on the best way to involve residents in the governance and scrutiny of the housing management service		√	
The organisation publishes clear information on the roles and responsibilities of senior staff, including the named persons responsible for ensuring it meets both the economic and the consumer standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing		√	

Your Observations/comments
On the 3 marked unsure:

- I am not confident that all employees have a respect for our tenants, or identify and tackle negative stereotyping. This has been identified as an area for improvement and training is in the design phase to start to address this.
- Pre-covid we provided assurance via our HOBTS meetings but this was not information provided to all residents. In addition we put articles in the tenants magazine but this is not consistent in the way an annual report would be.
- We are involved in Risk identification and management at a corporate level, but not purely for our Housing stock in the way an RP would be so I

unsure this is sufficient.

Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality

The Charter for Social Housing Tenants makes it clear that effective and authentic tenant engagement is expected and widely recognised as an essential way to ensure tenant experiences are embedded across policies, plans and services.

The organisation does have a central tenant mechanism that could report into the Housing portfolio holders and housing management team – the Tenant The Tenant Board mechanism could be used as the vehicle to commission scrutiny around any underperforming areas and also provide assurance to the organisation that tenants are involved at this strategic level.

Engagement needs to have a purpose – both organisation and those that get involved need to clearly understand the purpose and reason for the engagement

There needs to be a more structured approach to engagement both internally with staff from across the organisation, other tenants and wider communities. More emphasis needs to be placed on deciding on the purpose of engagement opportunities and then be complimented by other blended approaches to engagement e.g. task and finish approaches, virtual forums that are interest based better use of social media platforms to seek views from a wider diverse range of tenants

For the organisation to move forward and to be able to put the tenant voice at the heart of involvement the organisation needs to understand the 'Why' - wanting tenants to be involved, 'HOW' – channels for involvement 'BEING SPECIFIC' - not just expecting tenants to 'engage' 'THE DIFFERENCE MADE' - so what has changed as a consequence of the involvement mechanism 'FEEDBACK LOOP' - making sure the outcomes and impact are fed back to the community and the organisation.

Some organisations within the sector have established customer assurance boards/committees that form a centralised tenant led board. They can then direct a scrutiny function to carry out deep dive reviews within key areas not meeting their targets or areas of concern.

The formal engagement framework needs to address the issues of listening to and acting upon tenants voices within the strategic and formal engagement channels this ensures that tenants opinions (rather than lived experience) are utilised within service improvement frameworks . It is vitally important that the Governance arrangements can clearly show how tenants have influenced and made changes to the way services, etc. are delivered.
I would consider the use of a 'Tenant voice' type logo that can be utilised to show clearly that tenants have been a vital part of this process. This can be used to clearly show how tenants have been involved in the improvement processes.

The organisation should consider a Tenant assurance committee whose role is to offer 'assurance to the organisation around the consumer standards rather than being a consultative panel and would Incorporate customer influence into the governance arrangements to increase customer representation and terms of reference with the purpose of providing assurance that customer influence is strong and effective. Helping to provide assurance that the organisation is compliant with the engagement elements of the Charter for Social Housing. This committee would oversee this work and could commission scrutiny or deep dives into areas of concern. It might be worth considering that this scrutiny function could be a task and finish function to ensure that a wider and diverse range of tenants are involved to deliver the challenge to the organisation.

The Tenant assurance Committee - potential roles and responsibilities, insight and evidence could include:-
- Monitoring compliance with consumer standards / new regulation arrangements
- Monitoring compliance with health and safety standards
- Monitors performance & satisfaction levels
- Sets Customer Influence budget
- Utilises information from the 'Influence Through Insight' group to make decisions & recommendations
- Commissioning role with Scrutiny function (The service improvement and challenge panel)
- Interface with Governance about the experience of others
- Oversight of customers training and succession planning
- Decision making via evidence-based reports
- Obtaining evidence of the customers' experience (insight) – via commissioning of 'Influence Through Insight' group

An area that is missing from this engagement framework is the non-vocalised voice of tenants and those that have a lived experience. By only having a small amount of voices heard and acted upon through the engagement framework limits the range and diverse nature that tenants can really influence through their lived experiences rather than their opinions. This is tenant influence – and is currently the missing link in the approach to engagement. This could be through establishing an 'Influence through Insight' group that would be responsible to look at all the customer insight information held by the organisation and could be a staff and tenant led group.

Scrutiny			
Standard	**Yes**	**No**	**Unsure**
Scrutiny activity works to the five Tpas Scrutiny key principles; Independent, Inclusive, Positive, Constructive & Purpose			√
An appropriate and agreed scrutiny model and process is in place, with clear routes into the governance, business and service delivery operations of the organisation			√
The organisation, including its staff and governance functions, values scrutiny as a critical friend from an independent resident-led process		√	
Scrutiny produces evidence based recommendations, is designed to improve services, increase efficiency and provide robust assessment			√
Scrutiny activity is provided with the financial and administrative support it needs to carry out its business			√
Scrutiny is provided with all relevant performance, regulatory, legal & benchmarking information it needs to carry out its business			√
Scrutiny has strong links with the other organisational engagement structures and the wider resident base in order to support its overall aims		√	

Your Observations/comments
ESC doesn't have a tenant scrutiny panel, but does has a corporate scrutiny panel which is made up of elected members with no tenant's involved. I have, therefore, had to mark most as unsure as I do not know if our corporate model is sufficient for the purpose of resident scrutiny. We do take Housing related topics to scrutiny, rent arrears has been twice in the last 3 years, our fire safety work at St Peters Court (tower block) and our development pipeline have been recently as well.

Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality
A key expectation from the Social Housing White paper is around the 'scrutiny' element for organisations. This is to provide assurance that tenants are central to service improvements as well as being part of the improvement processes. This area needs to be seen as a Key Priority for the next 6 months to ensure that tenant led scrutiny becomes a key function within East Suffolk Council. For scrutiny to be effective, it needs to embrace the scrutiny key principles of independence, inclusive, positive, constructive and purpose, these principles underpin excellent scrutiny. There also needs to be an embedded co-regulatory framework in place, that includes all of the key outline principles of co regulation. It should be seen to be a real challenge and part of the performance improvement framework of the organisation so it is a key part of improving services, ensuring they are fit for purpose, value for money and are effective and efficient and meeting the needs of the wider communities. Some organisations across the Housing sector carry out scrutiny through a task and finish approach, or a bootcamp approach. The benefits of which

mean that a more diverse range of people can get involved, its time limited, has a start and finish point – this can encourage more people to get involved as they are not having to make such a big commitment.

Other LA ensure that they have the council ran scrutiny functions but also have a tenant led scrutiny approach to ensure that tenants voices are at the heart of the organisation.

Hull CC and Rotherham MBC both have excellent working models of scrutiny within a LA setting.

There also needs to be a comprehensive communication and feedback mechanism established within the organisation that both embraces and places scrutiny at the heart of its improvement function. This needs to include staff awareness of what scrutiny is and what it does and their role within it and also a real commitment from a senior level within the organisation to ensure that recommendations and outcomes from scrutiny reviews are acted upon and implemented as part of any improvement functions within the organisation.

See recommendations in table at end of the report.

Business & Strategy			
Standard	**Yes**	**No**	**Unsure**
Residents are meaningfully engaged in the co-creation, monitoring and review of the organisation's engagement strategy to make sure it delivers clear impact and value			√
Residents are meaningfully engaged in the development, monitoring and review of the organisation's policy; service; budget and strategic development as well as any local offers for service delivery		√	
Residents and staff are clear of the purpose and intended outcomes of all engagement activities with clear explanations of the time needed and their level of influence		√	
The organisation has a clear and publically stated plan for engaging residents in its health & safety responsibilities and makes clear those responsible for compliance		√	
There is an agreed timeframe to ensure that all engagement activities provide enough time to hear and consider resident views		√	
There is a clear and consistent method for reporting back to residents how their views have been considered in all engagement activities		√	
Residents are consulted in a timely and effective manner on any change in landlord or significant change in the management arrangements	√		

Your Observations/comments
Historically we have not involved residents in the engagement strategy as we haven't had one, but we are in the early stages of having one and we want to involve residents in this. We take a lot of the policies, budgets etc to Cabinet, Audit & Governance and Full Council which all involved elected members and then take to HOBTS once passed by those groups but not before as members expect to see this first at present. When Waveney DC & Suffolk Coastal DC were looking to merge (to become East Suffolk Council) we did a resident consultation that was open to all residents not just tenants and this was positively received by residents. When the merger was actually happening we informed all our tenants that we would have a new name but it was still the same team and level of service they had come to expect to re-assure them.
Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality
Underpinning the organisations approach to engagement needs to be an effective Engagement strategy. This must include the aims and objectives for engagement, that link to the organisations business objectives, to show how engagement is a key part of the organisations approach to helping deliver its business objectives – this needs to be the first priority for the organisation and could include a co-development approach with tenants and staff to

agree a shared vision.

Process & Resource: Make it slick

Pressures of the 'day job' and limited resource can limit the speed and effectiveness with which teams respond.

Given engagement experiences with retail and other sectors, tenant service expectations are high. Speed of response and quality of communication are central to creating a positive experience. In turn, this first experience will influence how meaningful the subsequent engagement is; how likely the tenant will be to subsequently engage and the nature of opinions they share with other tenants.

Furthermore, at the opt-in stage, tenant motivation is 'hot', but this heat will quickly dissipate if a quality response isn't received quickly.

Menu of Involvement: Make it simple

Limited, prescriptive or uninspiring engagement channels can no longer align with the diversity social housing populations and their modern lifestyles.

It's important to move away from one-size-fits all approaches and traditional channels such as meetings and paper surveys to more targeted and tailored approaches to engagement that reflect the diverse communication preferences of tenants. In particular, the development of more effective digital channels holds potential to make engagement easier and more rewarding for tenants whilst simultaneously reducing costs for landlords.

Lack of Clarity: Make it specific

The generic notion of 'engagement', 'involvement' or 'scrutiny' is too vague and lacks a 'hook' to capture attention and establish relevance.

Engagement opportunities that are general in nature - asking tenants to 'get involved' or join a generic panel or scrutiny process for instance - are less likely to be taken up.

The more specific we are about the nature of the engagement, the easier it is for tenants to understand what's required, conceptualise what the process entails and – crucially – how the outcomes will benefit them.

This clarity will also help shape everyone's expectations about what engagement entails. The ability to provide a service that meets the tenant's expectations is much easier when we are able to mould these expectations beforehand. Not only can the failure to meet expectations result in a spoiled relationship but simply meeting someone's expectations can help foster a positive long-term relationship.

Rather than promoting tenant engagement generally, focus in on specific engagement opportunities:
• What is this issue / service want tenant views on?
• When will they be required to participate?
• Specifically, what will they need to do to submit their views?

• How long will it take?

• What will happen as a result of their involvement?

Raise Awareness of engagement

Some social landlords lack resources and strategy in how they promote the concept of tenant engagement and specific engagement opportunities.

At a very basic level, many tenants simply aren't aware of the engagement opportunities that the landlord has to offer. Whilst this may be due to a range of factors, the teams in this project felt that there are a significant proportion of tenants who simple don't consume any landlord information at all.

Beyond basic awareness, there are also issues with misconceptions of who 'engagement' is for and why it exists. It is sometimes felt there was an assumption that engagement opportunities are merely for tenants to raise or make a complaint.

Build Trust Tenant trust is a pre-requisite for meaningful engagement. Not only does it increase the likelihood that the engagement opportunity will be taken, but it also influences the mindset that the tenant brings to the engagement.

The general sense of trust that a tenant has in their landlord can be influenced by a wide range of factors based on their wider service experience, the opinions of fellow tenants and wider reputational signals derived from the media. Tenant engagement teams have little or no influence over these wider issues.

However, in the context of tenant engagement, trust in the process is likely to be the key factor – something that tenant engagement teams can exert control over.

The key components to this trust are confidence that the team will:

• **Listen:** pay attention with an open mind

• **Understand:** see things from the tenant's perspective, not the landlord's

• **Act:** ensure that the tenant's input is acted up

• **Feedback:** let the tenant know what their engagement results in and what impact it has had.

Increase Motivation

The ways in which tenants will benefit from engaging are unclear and/or uncompelling.

Any behaviour relies on the individual being motivated enough to undertake it. Engagement opportunities are often framed in terms of how the tenant can help the organisation improve services, without having a clear enough emphasis on how this – and other elements of the engagement – will directly benefit them.

Over-and-above the abstract notion of 'improving services' there are a wide-range of benefits associated with engagement that should be communicated as part of promotion efforts. These can range from simple social engagement opportunities, and skills and confidence building, to more formal benefits that lead to an improved CV or more formal training, and this can create a number of knock on effects.

Consultation Fatigue

Tenants can tire of engagement requests through over-reliance on small groups of engaged tenants and over-use of general approaches.
Consultation fatigue becomes a barrier when tenants are continually asked to participate in
engagement opportunities, and this can create a number of knock on effects.

Firstly, they are highly likely to 'tire' of participation and stop engaging. More importantly, the views of this small pool of tenants are almost certainly not representative of the wider population, introducing the risk of designing services for the general population based on the needs of a few.
Even at the wider population level, consultation fatigue could become a factor when there is too many large scale, generic calls for participation – for example, the constant request for views and opinions on social media or the overuse of surveys.

Fear and Stigma

Choice of venues and timing, along with fear of judgement from other tenants reduce likelihood of engagement.
Issues related to fear and stigma operate at several levels. At a practical level, distance to venues and timing of engagements may reduce the number of those who are willing to engage. For example, night-time engagements requiring public transport may be unsettling or generate an element of fear. Furthermore, if the tenant happens to be behind with their rent, is the focus of an ASB case or hasn't granted access for their gas safety check, the likelihood that they will engage reduces dramatically. Understandably, the tenant will be apprehensive that they will be asked to discuss these sensitive issues, or even fearful that they will receive sanction. Under the Covid restrictions more flexible blended approaches involving virtual platforms need to be utilised and these can bring with them a wider diverse range of people wanting to get involved.

However, there is a more nuanced social level to 'fear and stigma' related to the perceptions of fellow tenants. Tenants are sometimes fearful they will be judged as 'do-gooders' by their neighbours or even be suspected of 'snitching' on other tenants in relation to income and lifestyle, property condition and anti-social behaviour.

A third level that is more nuanced still relates to a tenant's self-identity. For some, ongoing issues with the stigmatisation in the media results in a sense that social housing tenants are 'second class' citizens. In cooperating with the landlord through engagement opportunities it reinforces the individual's identity as a social housing tenant, along with the negative stereotypes that go with it.

Skills

Some tenants feel that they don't have the skills or capabilities to participate in an engagement opportunity.

Depending on the nature of opportunity, the skills required could vary considerably. Any sort of online engagement requires digital skills and confidence that some people may lack. Any forms of written or verbal engagement requires language and literacy skills that may be a barrier for some. More fundamentally, engagement that requires attending meetings, groups or workshops requires a level of confidence that many tenants may feel they don't possess.

An organisation needs to consider all of the above and ensure that its approach to engagement overcomes any perceived barriers.

Complaints			
Standard	**Yes**	**No**	**Unsure**
There is a clear, accessible and continuously publicised complaints policy designed with residents, that shows the definition of a complaint, how to complain, key timescales, routes for redress, how to access help and support and who has responsibility for the complaints process			√
The organisation ensures information on the Housing Ombudsman is readily available for all residents and provides assurance of its compliance with the complaints handling code			√
Complaints are encouraged as opportunities to listen, learn and influence change with a culture that assures that speaking out will not bring negative consequences			√
Residents are engaged in the continuous learning and development from complaints, with all improvements widely publicised to residents and staff		√	
Complaints, including those determined by the Housing Ombudsman, are documented, widely communicated and consistently publicised to all stakeholders			√
Residents are engaged in routinely reviewing the complaints handling policy & process to include self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code		√	
The organisation encourages resident involvement in complaint handling through the formation of resident panels		√	

Your Observations/comments
We come under a corporate complaints process (Customer Feedback Policy), so this isn't specific to our tenants. It does have all the right information in required in the statement above but wasn't designed with residents. Corporately and within some managers complaints are seen as opportunities, but some managers and staff do still see them as negative and try to always defend. We do publish information in relation to the Ombudsman on our website, and information is given to all complainants but we do not put in our tenants magazine for example.

Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality

This needs to be seen as a key area for improvement over the next 12 months as its one of the key expectations from the Social Housing White Paper. We would expect that tenants play a vital part in this process and that there is a link between complaints, learning from complaints into the service improvement framework for the organisation. Some organisations have set up tenant complaints champions, task and finish groups to identify learning from complaints, multi organisation tenants panels and Tenant complaints advocates. The insight from complaints should be seen as a vital part of the service improvement framework for the exec team that ensures that complaints are key to service improvements.

I have put together recommendations for improvements to this key area that we would expect to be seen as a priority.

Recommendations:
- Investigate setting up the influence and insight group that includes tenants that pull together all of the insight from the organisation and a key part of this is complaints, the trends and the learning. This needs to include a key link to the customer assurance committee, governance and improvement framework including a robust feeding back mechanism – so what's changed as a consequence from complaints
- To review the complaints process through an appreciative Inquiry approach this is a strength based approach that helps people move to a shared vision for the future by engaging others in strategic innovation – this should include those with a lived experience of the complaints process as well as key staff . This ensures that an embedded approach is developed across the organisation.
- Once the above has taken place then this vision / approach to complaints is embedded across all staff to ensure a consistent positive approach to dealing with complaints and includes working with staff behaviours and attitudes so creating a positive complaints culture.
- Consider training of tenants to become a key part of this process from being complaints advocates so helping others through the complaints process to being a key part of the organisations approach to complaints
- Learning from complaints should be a key part of the information gathering of the Customer assurance panel so trends can be analysed and the learning from complaints can be understood. This information can also be utilised by scrutiny to do deep dives around complaints trends.
- Customer journey mapping of the complaints process is an excellent tool that can involve tenants and staff to truly understand the complaints journey by those with lived experience of the process. This can clearly show what's working and what is not and the improvements required.
- Publicity of the complaints process as well as outcomes and learning from complaints needs to be well publicised through many different communication channels
- Working closer with the Housing Ombudsman service to come into the organisation and develop a webinar for staff to understand the new complaints code – Tpas have run many joint sessions on this for all of Tpas members and these webinars can be accessed and used as training materials for staff and tenants as they are all recorded and form part of the Tpas knowledge hub

Learning from others:

1. ForHousing have an insight department that brings together all of the insight held by the organisation including complaints information. They also have a one key contact approach to complaints so that the complainant knows who to contact and is kept informed of the process
2. Derwent Living now a merged organisation utilises tenants as tenant mediators as part of the complaints process
3. Hull CC and Rotherham MBC have really robust processes in place and both are LA

Utilise the Tpas knowledge hub of joint webinars with the Housing Ombudsman for both staff and tenants.

Information & Communication			
Standard	**Yes**	**No**	**Unsure**
Relevant information is provided to all recognised panels and involved residents in an agreed timeframe to allow them to monitor performance and hold their landlord to account on how key organisational objectives are being met	√		
All information provided to residents is clear and understandable with key points summarised, using an inclusive range of methods and in a format to suit the intended recipient	√		
In any ad-hoc or specifically focussed engagement activity, information is provided in an agreed timeframe before any activity takes place	√		
The organisational website holds easy to find and useful information on areas such as governance, regulatory judgements & inspections, compliance, how to get involved, management, repairs, complaints, performance and the impact made from its resident engagement activities			√
The organisation provides an accessible and unhindered route for residents to request information relating to the activities of their landlord. This should be widely publicised to reflect its resident profile	√		
The organisation regularly distributes to its residents up to date information including performance against set targets and emerging organisational challenges as well as topics of community and national interest. The frequency, content and methods of distribution will be agreed by the organisation and its residents			√

Your Observations/comments
We do provide information on performance to our HOBTS and Tenant Forum but not to wider resident's groups. We also consulted with HOBTS on what performance measures they wanted to see going forwards. No other suggestions were put forward by residents so we continued with the 6 we already reported on. I feel we have governance, compliance, management, repairs, complaints covered on our website but not the other items listed above. We have a bi-annual tenants magazine but there are no longer any residents involved in this process.

Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality
To ensure that information is available to wider communities the website needs to be reviewed and this could be through a task and finish group of tenants and staff to find out what is required on there, the format of it and the outcomes and difference made as a consequence. To ensure that information and communication is meeting the needs of tenants, the organisation needs to understand tenants preferred communication needs as a standard. This will ensure that the right information, in the right format, in the right way is targeted to those who require it. Developing a tenant logo to sense check key information clearly shows that tenants have been involved in the process of reviewing policies etc and shows the wider tenant body that the organisation is a listening organisation

Key performance indicators need to be established as outlined in the Social Housing White Paper that measure not only qualitative and quantitative outcomes from engagement but also the 'difference made' the impacts. These need to be developed with tenants and be meaningful and robust. Agreement needs to be sought how performance will be shared, with who and what can be accessed via the website

Recommendations
- Investigate how to monitor and report on the impact of customer influence, showing costs (including staff costs) and benefits – for example, the number of strategic, policy and process changes implemented – and outcomes from these changes: improvement in service delivery, improvements in VFM and other measures including potentially social value
- The Customer Experience Committee)should review progress against targets bi-annually
- Customers' views, satisfaction, commitment and personal outcomes should be tracked and analysed

Resources for Engagement			
Standard	**Yes**	**No**	**Unsure**
The organisation provides sufficient resources to deliver effective engagement and residents have the opportunity to influence the decision about the resources made available		√	
There is an appropriate system in place for recognition and reimbursement of the time given by residents for engagement activities			√
Involved residents are offered timely advice, relevant training and where appropriate, effective mentoring			√
The organisation and its involved residents independently network to gather best practice in resident engagement and increase their awareness of the wider housing sector challenges		√	
All staff can describe the benefits resident engagement can bring to the organisation, its residents and the wider community and understand how their role can enhance the organisation's ability to hear the residents' voice		√	

Your Observations/comments
We are looking to recruit a full time engagement officer, and the JD is being reviewed at present.
We do have a system for recognition and reimbursement but this requires reviewing.
Historically our involved residents had a lot of training and we have a resident training budget but this has not been utilised for some time.

Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality
The organisation does not have the necessary resources in place to develop and embed an effective approach to engagement. It needs to consider further resource/staff that has enough responsibility to act as a catalyst across departments to ensure that all staff have engagement as part of their role and responsibilities. Unless there is a real commitment to engagement it will always be piece meal or reactive rather than proactive, efficient and effective. (A further staff member will be brilliant however need to consider how all staff can be part of the engagement framework)

It's important that the right resources are in place to ensure engagement is effective and efficient central to this is the culture of the organisation, behaviours and attitudes form the foundation for any approaches to good embedded engagement . It is really clear that new resources are required to meet the expectations from the White paper especially given the emphasis on resident engagement in fire safety and the development of local engagement strategies around this area.

Being specific about engagement will also help shape customers' expectations about what involvement entails. The ability to provide a service that meets the customers' expectations is much easier when the organisation can influence these expectations beforehand. |

Not only can the failure to meet expectations result in a spoiled relationship but simply meeting someone's expectations can help foster a positive long-term relationship and begin to develop trust.

Rather than promoting tenant engagement generally, focus in on specific engagement opportunities:

- What is this issue / service want customers' views on?
- When will they be required to participate?
- Specifically, what will they need to do to submit their views?
- How long will it take?
- What will happen as a result of their involvement?

It is of equal importance to dedicate resources to track the non-vocalised customer experience, as it is to dedicate resources to listening directly to involved tenants. This information is available within existing data and its extraction and analysis can be translated into actionable insight. Transactional data analysis, alongside demographic information will reveal trends that provide a starting to point for then thinking about targeted listening, enabling non-involved customers to influence decision-making by helping to build detailed understanding of tenants' experiences of services. and share outcomes so that customers are very clear about what has changed a as result.

The Culture of an organisation is central, it's the behaviours and attitudes which run through an organisation that set the foundation for positive outcomes to take place; ensuring that all staff understand and see engagement as part of their role is important. It's the behaviours and attitudes within an organisation that form the foundations of either a good approach or not to embedded engagement . Staff need to be provided with the tools to ensure they understand and can get involved with engagement and can understand the 'difference it makes' through the positive outcomes and impacts it brings to an organisation.

For an organisation to have the correct culture it needs to develop a culture of trust both internally and externally this should include the following values and themes:- (People development magazine 2021/09/26)

1. Reliability   4 Consistency
2. Sincerity   5 Commitment
3. Integrity   6 Competence

1. Deliver on promises

2. Make it a habit to be reliable and consistent in behaviour

3. Trust with an open eye

4 Promote the tools that lead to trust

5 Give honest compassionate feedback

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Recommendations: To implement the ideas and suggestions from the above commentary

- Ensure that priorities and issues from local communities are utilised to make changes to and within communities through utilising a place based working tool
- Engagement opportunities need to be specific and focused on what is required
- Develop an organisational wide 'cultural transformation' program for staff that highlights the benefits and outcomes from engagement and that engagement is embedded within everybody's role and utilise tenant champions as part of the process and co design the programme based on appreciative Inquiry: a strength based approach to leadership development and organisational change .
- Review the resources required to ensure an embedded approach to engagement including the new expectations from the Social Housing white paper

Processes designed to support involved tenants can be sub-optimal and resource limitations can result in low quality and/or delayed responses from organisations. Given engagement experiences with retail and other sectors, customer service expectations are high. Speed of response and quality of communication are central to creating a positive experience. In turn, this first experience will influence how meaningful the subsequent engagement is, how likely the customers will be to subsequently engage and the nature of opinions they share with other customers.

Furthermore, at the opt-in stage the stage when customers have voiced they want to be involved, customer motivation is 'hot', but this heat will quickly dissipate if a quality response isn't received quickly.

Limited, prescriptive or uninspiring engagement channels can no longer align with the diversity of social housing tenants and their modern lifestyles. Again, service expectations are informed by the seamless, tailored and rewarding customer experiences that people have with commercial and retail brands. By moving away from one-size-fits all approaches, and traditional channels such as meetings and paper surveys, to more targeted and tailored approaches to engagement that reflect the diverse communication preferences of customers. In particular, the development of more effective digital channels holds potential to make engagement easier and more rewarding for customers. The organisation needs to develop further a blended approach to engagement that encompasses many different channels to get involved from opting in – completing a survey to the more formal strategic involvement.

There is a need for organisations to be 'more specific'. The generic notion of 'engagement', 'involvement' or 'scrutiny' is too vague and lacks a 'hook' to capture attention and establish relevance. Involvement opportunities that are general in nature - asking tenants to 'get involved' or join a generic panel or scrutiny process for instance - are less likely to be taken up.

The more specific an organisation can be about the nature of involvement, the easier it is for customers to understand what's required.

Organisations hold a lot of information regarding their tenants and very rarely use this information to drive engagement forward. It's about better using this intelligence into insight. It's about utilising tenant influence within the organisation to drive forward the engagement framework outcomes.

A key area that is missing from the engagement model is ' influence' 'insight' and 'evidence' this can generally be unstructured and informal and can be accessed through mechanisms like 'Rant and Rave', surveys, etc.

Commonly found key issues not utilizing insight and influence include:
- A minority of customers are involved in feedback, and those that are involved are not representative, which can lead to consultation fatigue and a narrow base of experiences
- A minority view may therefore be more influential than it should be, in the absence of anything else and the voices of customers placing higher demand on services can be unheard
- There is a risk that customer influence is not seen as integral by some staff, and its purpose is not widely understood, leaving it under-resourced and not outcome focused
- There is a minority of customers able to influence through the formal engagement structures, and it is not clear what success this achieves
- Proactive use of other insight or evidence is gathered, although it is not clear how this is used in a systematic or strategic way to drive service change/improvement as a way to understand customers' experiences

The use of insight to hear and to learn from customer experiences both within the engagement framework and outside of it should include the following:
- Insight features as a key ingredient in reports setting out strategic / policy direction (e.g. reports to Board and Committees)
- Insight obtained proactively by the organisation to help it to make decisions and recommendations within the Governance framework
- An Influence through insight group could do the 'heavy lifting' to support the 'Tenant Assurance committee' (this could utilize a task and finish approach to scrutiny)
- Insight heard throughout all involvement opportunities could utilise staff as well as strategically involved customers to shape services
- Insight proactively sought out by staff as a matter of course to hear the non-vocalised customer experience

Recommendations to include and embed Tenant influence should include the following:

- Incorporating customer influence into governance arrangements by implementing a Customer Experience committee arrangements to increase customer representation and terms of reference with the purpose of providing assurance that customer influence is strong and effective, and helping to provide assurance that the organisation is compliant with the engagement elements of the Charter for Social Housing
- Organisational leaders setting a clear sense of direction, stating intent and following through with action – including challenging incomplete information that fails to set out tenant influence in the strategic direction
- Leaders across the organisation continuing the messaging by identifying resources to support change and implementing the actions identified in this report
- Organising a programme of awareness raising for managers and staff, with resultant expectation of spending time together to identify how individual job roles provide opportunity to build in customer influence, and if necessary devising new systems and process to enshrine the opportunity in to day to day work, leaving no room for doubt or deviation, including attention to outcome measurement
- To look at investing in transactional platforms like 'Rant and Rave' to gather transactional feedback regularly
- To establish a 'group' that looks at data, experience and curiosity that tests and provides real actionable insight and provide evidence to the 'scrutiny processes'
- Reality checking the insight
- Collaboration – staff & tenants
- Undertaking the "heavy lifting" to support the Panel
- Providing flexible tenant membership – based on "lived experience"
- Enabling agility in response.

To investigate whether it would be more effective to develop a task and finish function that is commissioned by the Customer experience committee to conduct 'deep dives(Scrutiny)' in areas that have arisen from the 'influence through insight' group .

This 'Influence through insight' group would bring together the data held by the organisation, be curious about what its saying and it's based on peoples lived experience rather than opinions and thus leading to actionable insight that provides the organisation with a much wider diverse range of insightful evidence to drive forward improvements based on 'tenants voices' This group could include both staff involved in 'insight' and tenants working together in a more co-design approach

A key part of this process is understanding the difference that customer influence has made and how it can be measured – Outcome analysis –

Measuring success
- Monitor and report on the impact of customer influence, showing costs (including staff costs) and benefits – for example, the number of strategic, policy and process changes implemented – and outcomes from these changes: improvement in service delivery, improvements in VFM and other measures including potentially social value
- The Tenants Board should review progress against targets bi-annually
- Customers' views, satisfaction, commitment and personal outcomes should be tracked and analysed
- The Tenants Board / Tenants assurance panel members should undergo performance appraisals annually and the impact reported on a quarterly basis
- Must be able to tell wider communities what has changed as a result of listening
- To consider having an overarching Customer experience committee (Assurance) The Tenants Board could be part of co-designing this approach
- To consider more one off engagement, task and finish approaches, on line voice platforms
- To consider the setting up of a 'influence through insight' group that feeds into the scrutiny function and the Customer experience committee

Community & Wider Engagement			
Standard	Yes	No	Unsure
There is an appropriate menu of engagement opportunities that; reflects the resident profile; responds to the different needs in relation to equality strands and any additional support, which can be evidenced in the delivery of their services, engagement activities and communications to promote widespread engagement		√	
The organisation provides opportunities for its residents to engage in emerging social housing sector policy consultations and responses		√	
Where regeneration or planned improvements takes place, residents will be fully informed and from the start are part of the project planning, delivery and monitoring	√		
There is a clear approach to promoting and supporting community action in the communities the organisation has residents which includes any Right to Manage opportunities		√	
Community Investment activities support partnership working and provide opportunities to increase understanding of resident and community priorities			√

Your Observations/comments
Corporately we have our Community Partnership Boards but these do not have tenant members to my knowledge. These boards look at the top 3 priorities for each of the areas they cover each year and look to fund and set up projects to align with these priorities.

Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality
The organisations engagement opportunities is limited and the Community Partnership Boards who identify the priorities for each area do not have tenant representation. Clearly this does not reflect the resident profile; the different needs in relation to equality strands and additional support. Recommendations from the above themes would strengthen this approach. Priority needs to be given to collection of further information with regards to how underrepresented groups on how they might want to be involved whether its informal or formal . Also as identified within the improvement plan a comparison of the current demographic profile of those involved and wider communities would be beneficial. It's about organisations creating the links between different communities and having communication channels so that people have access to both information and also being able to voice their opinions and concerns. This is an excellent opportunity to make the necessary changes to both formal and informal engagement framework. It's important to be listening to and understanding local communities creating the links into different communities and by using a strengths based approach to working with communities. Some Local authorities have adopted place based working and utilises the Place standard tool to understand community priorities, what's good and what can be improved. This way of working needs to be utilised across all communities to ensure a real targeted approach to developing lasting sustainable communities and works on a local level to understand local issues and priorities in neighbourhoods this gives an incredible amount of information that is invaluable for the organisation. **Learning from the sector:**   - North Star Housing Group and Wythenshawe community Housing both utilise a strength based approach to working with local communities   - Kirklees council utilise a place based approach and utilise a place based tool to working in Neighbourhoods   - Hull CC – work with local community champions, and tenant inspectors

Summary Recommendations Table

Theme	Recommendations	Progress

Governance and Transparency	• To develop in conjunction with tenants and staff an engagement strategy that clearly identifies the aims and objectives for engagement as well as the links to the key Business aims and priorities,
	
	• Consider Incorporating customer influence into governance arrangements by implementing a Customer Assurance committee to increase customer representation and terms of reference with the purpose of providing assurance that customer influence is strong and effective, and helping to provide assurance that the organisation is compliant with the engagement elements of the Charter for Social Housing
	
	• Organisational leaders setting a clear sense of direction, stating intent and following through with action – including challenging incomplete information that fails to set out tenant influence in the strategic direction, service improvements, etc.
	
	• Leaders across the organisation continuing the messaging by identifying resources to support change and implementing the actions identified in this report
	
	• Organising a programme of awareness raising for managers and staff, with resultant expectation of spending time together to identify how individual job roles provide opportunity to build in customer influence, and if necessary devising new systems and process to enshrine the opportunity in to day to day work, leaving no room for doubt or deviation, including attention to outcome measurement
	
	• To look at investing in transactional platforms like 'Rant and Rave'
	
	• To establish a 'group' that looks at data, experience and curiosity that tests and provides real actionable insight to the tenant and leaseholder panel and provide evidence to the 'scrutiny processes' . This group could do the following:-
	     Reality checking the insight
	     Collaboration – staff & tenants
	     Undertaking the "heavy lifting" to support the Panel
	     Providing flexible tenant membership – based on "lived experience"
	     Enabling agility in response.
	
	• To consider having an overarching Customer experience committee (Assurance)
	• To establish a co-designed Engagement Strategy	

	• To consider the setting up of a 'influence through insight' group that feeds into the scrutiny function and the Customer experience committee
Business and Strategy	• To develop a co-design approach to all consultations and involve key staff and tenants in developing the consultation plans through to the analysis of the resulting information • To ensure a robust 'feeding back mechanism' to show the difference made and the outcomes and impact all engagement work • To publicise the 'named person' for fire safety and develop key messages and communication plans in conjunction with tenants and the wider community • To develop an embedded approach across all services to consultation and that staff understand the importance of involving tenants / communities at the start of this process – this could be through some lunchtime workshops that highlight the importance and link to the expectations of the Social Housing White paper.
Complaints	▪ Investigate setting up a influence and insight group that includes tenants that pull together all of the insight from the organisation and a key part of this is complaints, the trends and the learning. This needs to include a key link to the customer assurance committee, governance and improvement framework including a robust feeding back mechanism – so what's changed as a consequence from complaints ▪ To review the complaints process through an appreciative Inquiry approach this is a strength based approach that helps people move to a shared vision for the future by engaging others in strategic innovation – this should include those with a lived experience of the complaints process as well as key staff. This ensures that an embedded approach is developed across the organisation. ▪ Once the above has taken place then this vision / approach to complaints is embedded across all staff to ensure a consistent positive approach to dealing with complaints and includes working with staff behaviours and attitudes so creating a positive complaints culture. ▪ Consider training of tenants to become a key part of this process from being complaints advocates so helping others through the complaints process to being a key part of the organisations approach to complaints ▪ Learning from complaints should be a key part of the information gathering of the Customer assurance panel so trends can be analysed and the learning from complaints can be understood . This information

	can also be utilised by scrutiny to do deep dives around complaints trends. ▪ Customer journey mapping of the complaints process is an excellent tool that can involve tenants and staff to truly understand the complaints journey by those with lived experience of the process. This can clearly show what's working and what is not and the improvements required. ▪ Publicity of the complaints process as well as outcomes and learning from complaints needs to be well publicised through many different communication channels ▪ Working closer with the Housing Ombudsman service to come into the organisation and develop a webinar for staff to understand the new complaints code – Tpas have run many joint sessions on this for all of Tpas members and these webinars can be accessed and used as training materials for staff and tenants as they are all recorded and form part of the Tpas knowledge hub	
Information and Communication	▪ Investigate how to monitor and report on the impact of customer influence, showing costs (including staff costs) and benefits – for example, the number of strategic, policy and process changes implemented – and outcomes from these changes: improvement in service delivery, improvements in VFM and other measures including potentially social value ▪ The (Customer Assurance Committee) should review progress against targets bi-annually ▪ Customers' views, satisfaction, commitment and personal outcomes should be tracked and analysed ▪ The (Customer Assurance Committee) members should undergo performance appraisals annually and the impact of the Committee reported on a quarterly basis ▪ The organisation must be able to feedback to customers what has changed as a result of listening ▪ To consider the setting up of mystery shoppers to look at consistency of delivery of services through lived experience and feed this into the insight group as part of the organisations approach to service improvements	
Resources for engagement	To implement the ideas and suggestions from the above commentary ▪ To investigate the resources required – staff – to deliver an excellent engagement function as well as acting as a central catalyst for other teams and staff members ▪ Ensure that priorities and issues are utilised to make changes to and within communities through the place based working tool ▪ Engagement opportunities are specific and focused on what is required ▪ Develop an organisational wide 'cultural transformation' program for staff that highlights the	

benefits and outcomes from engagement and that engagement is embedded within everybody's role and utilise tenant champions as part of the process and co design the programme based on appreciative Inquiry : a strength based approach to leadership development and organisational change.

- Review the resources required to ensure an embedded approach to engagement including the new expectations from the Social Housing white paper around fire safety

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- Organisational leaders setting a clear sense of direction, stating intent and following through with action – including challenging incomplete information that fails to set out tenant influence in the strategic direction

- Leaders across the organisation continuing the messaging by identifying resources to support change and implementing the actions identified in this report

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- Reality checking the insight

- Collaboration – staff & tenants

- Undertaking the "heavy lifting" to support the Panel

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	- Enabling agility in response. **Measuring success** - Monitor and report on the impact of customer influence, showing costs (including staff costs) and benefits – for example, the number of strategic, policy and process changes implemented – and outcomes from these changes: improvement in service delivery, improvements in VFM and other measures including potentially social value - The Tenants Board should review progress against targets bi-annually - Customers' views, satisfaction, commitment and personal outcomes should be tracked and analysed - The Tenants Board / Tenants assurance panel members should undergo performance appraisals annually and the impact reported on a quarterly basis - Must be able to tell wider communities what has changed as a result of listening - To consider having an overarching Customer experience committee (Assurance) The Tenants Board could be part of co-designing this approach - To consider more one off engagement, task and finish approaches, on line voice platforms - To consider the setting up of a 'influence through insight' group that feeds into the scrutiny function and the Customer experience committee	
Community and Wider Engagement	To agree the purpose and approach within the organisation and understand how it will help to meet the organisations corporate objectives To establish a working group to agree the priorities and issues for neighbourhoods and then do some targeted work within those communities utilising a strengths based approach and a delivery action plan To agree the impact and outcomes framework to show the difference made from the different project interventions Agree an internal budget for the work and whether more resources are required in order to deliver against the action plan Agree a communications plan to enable feedback to the wider communities and internally with staff	

Tpas Landlord Accreditation

The benefits:

- **A clear framework of standards** that enables you to conduct a self assessment and review your tenant engagement approaches
- **An independent, external validation** of the scope and quality of your approach to involving residents in the design, delivery and scrutiny of the homes and services you provide against the **Tpas National Tenant Engagement Standards**
- **A visible reference** that is clear to see on all your website letterheads, marketing materials, and publications
- **A system that helps you to develop and maintain high standards for all your staff and partners,** protecting and building your reputation for quality service across the sector
- **An assurance that your approaches are inclusive,** evidencing the commitment you have to going the extra mile in ensuring that your services meet residents diverse needs.
- **Peace of mind for all your current and potential tenants, residents and partners!**

Tpas is the leading national tenant and landlord membership organisation with access to the largest tenant involvement base in the Country.
Tpas is recognised as the national market leader who set the highest standards for Tenant involvement and engagement.

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