

Ealing Council, Resident Involvement Strategy 2014 – 2016

1. Introduction

We believe that by working closely with residents we can continually improve the services we deliver. This strategy sets out how we plan to engage you in shaping the services they receive using a range of interesting and engaging activities. It is our aim, that the impact from these activities can be clearly seen and that there are real tangible benefits from your involvement.

2. Context

Over the last two years the social housing landscape has changed dramatically. Reduction in council budgets, scaled down regulation and welfare reform have brought about new challenges. The business case for resident involvement is now stronger than ever and the relationship with our residents is vital in delivering services that are tailored, efficient and value for money. This strategy addresses the continuing need to put residents at the heart of everything we do.

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing 2012 continues the principle of co-regulation where landlords self-regulate in a transparent manner, subject to tenant scrutiny and challenge, thereby enabling a reduction in direct, central government regulation. The Ealing Council Housing Forum, our flagship approach to resident-led scrutiny, is fast approaching its second birthday. Residents have spent the last two years scrutinising our housing service, listening to other residents, and helping to make real improvements. The residents involved with the Housing Forum play a vital role in monitoring the housing service. This scrutiny is making a real difference by driving continual improvements and demanding excellent services whilst ensuring Value for Money

3. Our commitment

We are committed to working with our residents in developing our service. We will ensure your voice is heard when we make important decisions about everything from budget setting and business planning through to choosing contractors and collecting the rent. A shopping list of involvement activities can be found in our resident participation agreement (compact) a document that details our commitment to involve residents in our decision-making and service delivery.

The Resident Involvement Strategy aims to complement the corporate priorities of Ealing Council. By listening to what all borough residents have been telling us Ealing Council have developed these five priorities.

- Make Ealing safer – Make Ealing one of the safest places in London by lowering crime rates, reducing fear of crime and tackling anti- social behaviour and hate crime. Ensure that Ealing is a safe place for children and young people to grow up.

- Secure our public services – Deliver high quality public and community services which residents find easy to access.
- Secure jobs and homes – Improve the quality and supply of homes across all tenures and increase significantly the number of affordable homes. Confirm Ealing’s position as a high quality metropolitan centre.
- Make Ealing cleaner – Improve the cleanliness, design and quality of our streets, town centres, housing estates and parks.
- Deliver value for money – Promote value for money and efficiency in service delivery by providing community leadership, working effectively with our partners,

The Scrutiny Panels and Housing Forum scrutinise the Housing and Regeneration department to make sure we are meeting the council’s corporate priorities. We are committed to involving our residents in developing the Housing Service plan which sets out the annual objectives of the department. At a yearly event, residents provide us with their priorities, which are then incorporated into service planning. The Housing Forum also play an integral part in Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget setting and work with officers in agreeing yearly Landlord Services expenditure.

4. Equality and Diversity

We value the rich diversity of Ealing’s tenant and leaseholder communities and we are committed to making our involvement activities as inclusive as possible. We actively encourage and support involvement from all our residents regardless of age, sexuality, ethnicity, faith, gender or additional need. We have seen an increase in underrepresented groups becoming involved in our structures. We must however not rest on our laurels and continue to target ‘hard to reach’ communities with opportunities to get involved in ways that suit them.

In order to do this we will:

- Monitor our activities to see where underrepresentation occurs and use targeted publicity to address this
- Produce and act on an annual Resident Involvement Impact Report to monitor representation and value for money
- Provide travel expenses and arrange pick-ups for residents less able
- Provide childcare expenses
- Make sure information is available in different languages or large print
- Ensure the venues where we hold activities are accessible to disabled residents and provide hearing loops where necessary

5. Resident Priorities

In consultation with our residents we have developed five new strategic objectives to allow us to better involve you over the next three years and to ensure we are held to account for delivering on our promises.

Objective 1. Provide a range of involvement opportunities for residents to monitor, scrutinise and influence our services. You have told us you would like to scrutinise services such as Repairs and Maintenance, Housing for Older People, Cleaning and Caretaking, Antisocial Behaviour and Tenancy issues (Allocations, Rent collection and Tenancy Management). We will utilise new methods of involving residents such as digital media and web 2.0 social networks.

Objective 2. Increase participation from underrepresented groups. We want our involvement activities, groups and forums to reflect the diversity of our communities. Using profile data we will target underrepresented demographics such as younger residents, families, BME groups and older residents living in general needs housing.

Objective 3. Increase the usage of our community centres on estates across the borough. We want to work with our residents to ensure our community centres are self-funding thriving hubs of activity that meet the needs and expectations of communities.

Objective 4. Measure the impact of resident involvement initiatives, ensuring we provide value for money. By empowering residents to monitor the impact and effectiveness of our involvement activities we can be sure we are providing value for money

Objective 5. Promote resident training opportunities at venues across the borough. We will facilitate an annual training programme for residents that will not only enable them to more successfully 'get involved' but also enhance their CVs and employment chances.

6. Involvement Activities

We have a dedicated Resident Involvement Team supporting groups and individuals to enable them to become involved in their communities and Ealing Council. These activities include formal and informal methods of involvement such as:

Ealing Council Housing Forum – The Housing Forum is an advisory body for tenants and leaseholders. The group enables real scrutiny and accountability of the department and its services. The Forum monitors performance through tenant led 'reality checks' and larger pieces of scrutiny work. Chaired by the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Forum works with the council's Management Team, officers and stakeholders. The group also allocate funding to small improvement projects on estates. To date the Forum has allocated over £100,000 to schemes put forward by fellow residents.

Resident Scrutiny Panels – Scrutiny Panels are teams of residents who monitor and develop the performance of services through interviews, inspections and scrutiny exercises. Residents have chosen which service areas they wish to scrutinise and have selected their fellow 'scutineers' through interviews held independently from the council. Scrutiny Panels are formed in the following service areas: Repairs and Maintenance, Cleaning and

Caretaking, Tenancy, Quality of Accommodation, Housing for Older People and Antisocial Behaviour.

Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) – Tenants have the right to take over the management of their homes. Under the legal ‘right to manage’, residents can establish a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) to manage the housing services within their area. Residents can also receive funding to assist them in the development of a TMO from the Department for Communities and Local Government. In South Acton, The South Action Residents Action Group (SARAG) has achieved guide TMO status and is working towards responsibility for day-to-day running of services such as repairs and cleaning and caretaking.

Resident and Community Associations – Over 30 Resident Associations play a vital role in resolving issues at a local or estate level. Resident Associations work closely with staff to champion continuous improvement in services. Ealing Council supports the start-up of Resident Associations by providing financial and capacity building assistance. We also monitor and regulate groups to make sure they are accessible to all sections of their community. We have produced a Resident and Community Association Governance Manual, which gives associations information on how to set up and run their group. It also details how groups become ‘recognised’ by Ealing Council. Community Associations are often formed to manage the running of their local community centre. They are recognised by Ealing Council and have a formal constitution and structure.

Ealing Council Leaseholders Association – The Leaseholder Association (ECLA) gives leaseholders, whose landlord is the London Borough of Ealing, the opportunity to meet with ECLA Committee Members and staff, view presentations and discuss various topics of interest or concern such as service charges. The committee is formed by nomination and open election. Members come from areas across the borough.

CASH (Campaigning for Action in Sheltered Housing) – Resident from Sheltered Schemes work in collaboration with Ealing Council staff to discuss services they receive and explore how they can improve them. The group have been influential in re-shaping the Sheltered Housing Offer in the borough.

Customer Access Resident Inspection Team – Resident Inspectors test our services to ensure they meet service standards expected by customers. By carrying out checks on different aspects of the organisation, they are able to provide us with information that helps us improve the services we provide. They report their findings and make recommendations to Service Heads who make changes to their service areas.

Focus Groups and Service Specific Forums – Residents with a particular interest in a specific service will work with the council on improvements. This may include developing new policies or strategies, working on procuring new contractors or identifying the impact of changes to our services on particular groups.

Informal Activities – There are a host of other less formal activities in which residents can become involved as little or as much as they like. These range from completing surveys to attending fun days and award ceremonies. There are a number of regular informal activities taking place on estates such as estate walkabouts and block inspections.

Social Media Forums and Websites – By using virtual communities such as Facebook and Twitter residents and officers can exchange information and ideas instantly on any topic or subject. On large-scale regeneration/improvement projects, such as the Copley Close estate, pages such as www.facebook.com/CopleyCloseRegeneration give residents the opportunity to view designs and plans and quickly provide their feedback. Twitter feeds such as <https://twitter.com/livEaling> gives the housing department a channel of communication to its customers and can target promotion of events.

7. Resident Training

We are committed to engaging residents in effective training. Our approach to resident training has been produced in response to training needs identified through borough wide consultation and feedback from resident groups. The ongoing training programme and will continue to be influenced by the changing needs of our residents.

Aims

The key aims of the resident training programme are;

- To provide a comprehensive range of training opportunities to enable them to gain knowledge and skills
- To develop a clear process for identifying training needs and monitoring effectiveness of training provided
- To enable residents involved in community and council activities to fully participate in such structures
- To work in partnership with local training providers to maximise value for money
- To promote opportunities to communities who do not normally access training

Monitoring Training

Each year the training programme will be evaluated. This will be informed by the overall costs of providing training; numbers attending courses; learners' individual evaluations; and longer term impact assessments by Resident Involvement staff.

In order to help our residents become more active in their communities and help us to improve our services we currently offer a number of free training opportunities in five core modules;

- Resident Association Capacity Building. We offer training to support Resident Association members in areas such as committee skills, effective meeting skills, minute taking skills, Finance and fundraising.

- Resident Scrutiny Panels. We offer scrutiny panel members bespoke training in scrutinising our services. This includes a Trafford Hall residential training course, customer services training and specific scrutiny training in areas such as Repairs and Maintenance.
- Resident Inspector Training. We offer CIH accredited resident inspector training to support the work of customer access mystery shoppers.
- Community Centre Management Training. Practical training for community associations wishing to take on the management of their community centre. The training includes financial planning, hall bookings and managing contracts.
- Computer skills and CV writing. We hold monthly IT basic training and CV writing courses at locations across the borough.

Accredited training

We provide free accredited training for residents looking for additional skills to help them find employment. Working with providers we offer vocational and short courses in Customer Services, Retail, Business Administration, Business Administration, Hospitality and Catering, Healthcare and Support Services and Team Leading and Management.

Residents can also identify their own training courses and conferences. These courses must relate to resident involvement, housing or community development. Residents complete an application form, and are notified about the decision and level of support granted. Each case will be judged on its own merit.

8. Estate Greening

We are making it a priority to improve green spaces on estates throughout our communities. We intend to work with two independent charities with extensive urban greening experience to pilot a programme of 'open space transformation' at sites across the borough. The organisations will work with groups of residents and volunteers (from either constituted groups or active individuals) in developing and implementing projects to improve sites into new community gardens, wildlife areas, food growing plots, urban orchards playgrounds or a combination.

The charities will support these groups over a period of 6-9 months carrying out consultation, delivering capacity building and community gardening training sessions. They will work closely with the residents in designing their project and support them through delivery utilising landscape and construction professionals.

In the first year we will pilot two landmark projects to transform/improve open spaces, playgrounds or similar, one in the East of the borough and one in the West. We also intend to pilot a number of smaller projects at Sheltered Schemes across Ealing. The project will be publicised across neighbourhoods with residents given the opportunity to bid for funding for a project in their area. This process will gain buy-in from potential groups and

help ensure sustainability of projects. It is anticipated that if the projects are successful then the programme will continue beyond one year.

9. Community Hubs

Our 14 Community centres play a vital role in bringing residents together and building stronger neighbourhoods. The centres provide flexible, economical space for community groups, teams from across the council and social enterprises to operate in, co-produce and deliver services from. We aim to make our community centres thriving hubs of activity with a range of services chosen by and often delivered by residents. The government funding for Early Years childcare has seen a number of new providers delivering services from our centres and has brought more children and their families through community centre doors. Following this increase in resident usage we want to work with our partners in the council and other statutory bodies to provide a range of additional services such as work clubs for our residents. We have developed five priorities to support our aim.

1. Increase statutory services available in community centres
2. Listen to local residents – what do you want to see in your community centre
3. Support community groups in management of their community centres
4. Maximise the provision of Early Years Childcare for 2 year old children on our estates
5. Ensure all community centres are financially sustainable

10. Reviewing the Strategy

The Housing Forum and Resident Scrutiny Panels have contributed to the development of this strategy and have led on setting its priorities. The Housing Forum will launch the strategy and monitor its progress each year.

The Resident Involvement Team produces an annual Resident Involvement Impact Report, which details the outcomes, representation and impact of each activity. This report is presented to the Housing Forum who gives a value for money rating for each activity. This process ensures that we are dedicating our resources towards those initiatives that benefit residents the most.

Monitoring the strategy

The Resident Involvement Team will regularly monitor the strategy and provide quarterly updates to the Ealing Council Management Group. Residents will monitor the strategy via the Housing Forum who will carry out quarterly monitoring of the action plan and make recommendations.

11. Achievements to date

- **Development of the Ealing Council Housing Forum and Scrutiny Panels.**
In its first year the Housing Forum and supplementary Scrutiny Panels completed over 1000 individual pieces of monitoring and scrutiny work. This work has been used to improve services across the Housing department and in 2013 the groups were nominated for a TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) award for excellence in Tenant Scrutiny.
- **Creation of the LivEaling website specifically for young people living in council properties.** Our Youth Forum worked with web developers to produce a website specifically aimed at Young people and potential tenants. Working with social services the young people produced web pages contacting housing information for young people leaving care.
- **The LivEaling Twitter page** now has over 500 followers giving us an instant channel of communication to young people and partnership agencies across the borough.
- **Held the fourth annual ROAR (Recognising Outstanding Achievements of Residents) award ceremony** where active residents across the borough were recognised for their valuable work. The event has become a permanent fixture in our involvement calendar and an opportunity for us to thank our residents for their hard work.
- **Our Customer Access Mystery Shoppers recently reached the milestone of having carried out monthly inspections each month for the last five years.** This work has been used to improve the council's approach to customer services in teams ranging from Tenancy Management, Leaseholder Service and Homelessness.
- **The CASH Sheltered Housing Forum has played an integral role in developing the new Sheltered Housing Service.** The group worked closely with officers and partnership groups in reviewing and re-launching the new service. Sheltered Housing Officers are now responsible for individual schemes and there is a greater emphasis on face-to-face contact and social events.
- **We have seen a 50% increase in residents engaged in training.** We now offer a range of vocational courses and two young residents are currently training to become 'Green Champions' as part of the governments Green deal.
- **Hosted Welfare Reform Roadshows at venues across the borough.** To support residents through changes to Welfare Benefits we have hosted targeted events for residents affected.

Get Involved

If you would like more information about any of our involvement activities or training opportunities please get in touch:

Resident Involvement

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Email: crankm@ealing.gov.uk

12. Action Plan

Priority 1 Provide a range of involvement opportunities for residents to monitor, scrutinise and influence our services.

Action	This will be achieved by	Outcome	Milestone	Responsibility	Deadline
Develop involvement structures on improvement estates	Working closely with contractors and colleagues in regeneration on developing models that are fit for purpose	Residents living on improvement estates are engaged in involvement structures. These structures will allow residents the opportunity to influence decisions on design, community space and lettings.	Involvement structures established on Copley Close, High Lane, Islip Manor and Rectory Park	Regeneration department and Resident Involvement Team	August 14
Deliver a programme of scrutiny exercises and Housing Forum meetings	Coordinate five service specific scrutiny panels to carry out work and feedback reports. Incorporate Leaseholder standards	Recommendations on service improvements are fed back to the Housing Forum and action taken. Leaseholder standards are formed and monitored.	4 Scrutiny Reports produced per panel and reported to the Housing Forum meetings	Resident Involvement Team	July 14,15
Review Community and Resident Association structure	Carry out an audit of activity of existing groups. Promote the benefits of community and	Estates will have active community and resident association who are engaged in dialogue with the council to resolve local issues.	30+ resident/community associations established and active. AGM held each year	Resident Involvement Team	March 15

	resident groups				
Develop new and engaging scrutiny methods	Consult with existing scrutiny panels and potential 'scrutineers' around possible new methods	Residents will be able to carry out scrutiny exercises using accessible tools and at times that suit them.	Carry out a consultation exercise with residents into new methods. (exploring social media)	Resident Involvement Team	Oct 14

Priority 2 Increase participation from underrepresented groups

Action	This will be achieved by	Outcome	Milestone	Responsibility	Deadline
Compare demographics of involvement groups with resident population to address underrepresentation	Collect profile data on each involvement group	Resident Involvement groups will be more representative of the Ealing Council resident population and those hard to reach communities that are identified can be targeted	Action plan developed – how to make groups more representative	Resident Involvement Team	Oct 14
Increase the numbers of young residents involved	Deliver a range of engaging youth activities at community centres on estates	Young residents involved in developing service improvements in areas such as Rents (welfare reform), cleaning and caretaking and Repairs.	Recruitment of apprentice to work specifically with young people on our estates.	Resident Involvement Team	Oct 14
Increase	Promoting the	The Housing and Regeneration Department	All older tenants	Resident Involvement	June 14

involvement with Older Tenants living in general needs accommodation	'Wiser Heads' Elders Forum across the tenant base	will understand the current/future needs of older tenants living in the borough. In accessing the Wiser Heads Elders Forum, there will be an reduction in social isolation of older tenants in general needs housing.	(aged 65+) living in general needs housing contacted about the Wiser Heads group. An increase in 30 residents attending	Team	
Involve faith groups and local partners in involvement activities	Using links with key individuals – target specific faith groups	Community leaders identify appropriate mechanism to engage with hard to reach groups	Community leaders identified from local faith groups. Talo – South Acton Barwaqa – Copley Neighbourly Care - Southall Leaders consulted when delivering key messages	Resident Involvement Team	Oct 14

Priority 3 Increase the use of community hubs by residents to maximise income and generating links between council residents and wider local community

Action	This will be achieved by	Outcome	Milestone	Responsibility	Deadline
A 'shopping list' of activities produced for	Carry out consultation with local	The provision of activities in community centres will meet the needs of local communities. Residents will more readily	An increase of 50% in council residents accessing their local	Resident Involvement Team	May 14

each estate/area with a community centre	Resident Associations, Community Group and estate residents on what they would like to see form their community centre.	use their community centre for leisure, training, statutory services and childcare.	community centre		
Deliver estate based work clubs	Holding work clubs in community centres	Residents will have access to training and employment opportunities	6 work clubs established in community centres, holding monthly sessions	Housing Employment Team	July 15
Hold regular 'Connections' events with partnerships agencies	Attending and hosting regular networking events to maximise the resources shared by partnership agencies	Enhanced communication between the statutory and voluntary sectors	3 networking events held annually	Resident Involvement Team	July 15
Increased presence of both voluntary and statutory services in community centres	Working with colleagues across the council and the ECVS to extend provision to	Community centres offer a wide range of both voluntary and statutory services that residents can access daily/weekly on estates	Childcare setting in each community centre. Increase the provision of statutory services in centres by 50%	Resident Involvement Team	Jan 14

Priority 4 Measure the impact of resident involvement initiatives, ensuring we provide value for money

Action	This will be achieved by	Outcome	Milestone	Responsibility	Deadline
Continue to use HouseMark benchmarking data to compare VFM	Annual data input of involvement activities/costs.	Involvement activities represent value for money	Benchmarking data used in business planning exercise.	Service development team	Nov 14
Carry out an annual Resident Involvement Impact Report.	Detail the cost, purpose and demographics of each involvement activity	Residents will give a clear indication of which activities they believe are value for money. This data will be used to plan annually and targeted publicity can be carried out to address underrepresentation.	Report produced and VFM rating provided by the Housing Forum members.	Resident Involvement Team	April 14
Work with Service Heads across Regeneration and Housing to meet the expectations of the Housing Regulatory Framework	The Housing Forum will continue to develop activities/panels to meet expectations outlined in law	Forum Members made aware of regulatory expectations and will be involved in delivering activities such as the complaints tenants' panel.	Expectations of the regulatory framework met and detailed/monitored in the customer annual report.	Resident Involvement Team and Housing Forum	March 14
Review the suite of KPIs reported	Consult the Housing Forum	Regular performance reports will be provided to residents on service areas	Quarterly KPI reports delivered to	Service Improvement Team	March 14

to the Housing Forum	on the type of performance information they would like to receive	prioritised by them. This information can then be used to gauge satisfaction and instigate improvements.	Housing Forum.		
Produce the Customer Annual Report	Working closely with residents produce the Annual Report detailing years progress against local standards	Residents will have an easily accessed reference point detailing progress of the council's housing department against resident-led indicators.	Report produced and distributed to all residents	Resident Involvement Team	Oct 14 Oct 15

Priority 5 Promote resident training opportunities at venues across the borough.

Action	This will be achieved by	Outcome	Milestone	Responsibility	Deadline
Hold monthly IT and CV writing courses	Working closely with training providers and community groups managing centres	Resident across the borough will have access to free local IT/CV training	Bi-Monthly sessions held on estates in different locations. X 3, IT classes held in work clubs (Acton Vale, Northolt, Copley Close)	Resident Involvement Team	July 14
Production of a West London Involvement training brochure	Work with the West London Benchmarking group to produce the	Residents across 6 London Boroughs will have a range of training opportunities they can access. The Local Authorities, ALMOs and Housing Associations can better allocate resources and share providers so	Training brochure produced and distributed to all residents	WLEG (West London Engagement Group)	April 14

	brochure	reducing cost and wastage.			
Re-launch the Active Communities newsletter	Production of a six-monthly newsletter for active residents highlighting training and funding opportunities	The newsletter will provide a regular channel of communication with Resident Associations, Scrutiny Panels, Active Residents and Community Groups. It will detail a rolling programme of training opportunities and funding available.	5 editions produced and distributed	Resident Involvement Team	March 15
Promote the new training programme 2013/14	Deliver publicity campaign through around Ealing and targeted literature		Increase in residents engaged in training by 50%	Resident Involvement Team	April 14