

# Resident Engagement Strategy

Hackney Housing Services  
2022–2025



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# Foreword

As the Cabinet Member for Housing Services and Resident Participation I am committed to promoting resident engagement in how we plan, design and deliver our services. Residents who live in our homes need to be confident that we are listening to, and acting upon their feedback, whether they are a council tenant, leaseholder, private renter, shared owner or homeowner.

The Covid pandemic and the cyberattack posed immense challenges to Housing Services in Hackney. I know only too well that we have not always responded to residents' concerns and issues as promptly – or as well – as we should, and that some residents feel let down.

Against this backdrop, this new Resident Engagement Strategy 2022–25, which was co-produced with residents, will help us look afresh at how we engage with residents. It will offer more opportunities for residents to influence our decisions and work with us to improve the quality of life on our estates. It will also provide a framework to forge stronger relationships with other services, partner agencies and the voluntary sector, helping us to better respond to the immense financial challenges posed by the cost of living crisis and Government rent cap.

Importantly, the strategy recognises that the housing sector and our own operating context is evolving – and that we need to broaden our approach to engagement to meet residents' changing needs and aspirations. But it also reaffirms our commitment to supporting our residents groups. Tenants and residents associations and our wider participatory structure are an integral part of our resident engagement culture in Hackney – and we remain deeply indebted to all involved residents for their hard work in supporting residents, driving improvements, and challenging us to do better.

Over the next three years, my focus will be firmly on

delivering the proposals we set out in this strategy. I want our Housing Officers to be more visible on our estates, to ensure that our housing services meet the standards we set in partnership with our residents, to improve the quality of our service offer, and to give seldom heard residents more opportunity to influence our decisions.

Above all, I want to make sure that we are much more responsive to the concerns and suggestions made by residents – and to promote a culture where every resident's voice is valued and respected.

I would like to thank the many residents who have taken time to influence and shape this strategy – and look forward to working together to drive it forward.

## **Councillor McKenzie**

Cabinet Member for Housing Services and Resident Participation



Resident engagement matters. As Resident Liaison Group Co-Chairs, we see brilliant examples of the value added by our involved residents every day – and the impact that residents can have when they work together to champion change or deliver community projects on their estates.

Over the last year we have been working closely with Housing Services and residents to build on this valuable work and look at how we can strengthen the approach to resident engagement. In doing this, we have heard the views of thousands of residents – through surveys, focus groups and informal discussions – including feedback from some seldom heard groups who we don't always reach.

This strategy reflects the outcomes of this work. It sets out in an honest and straightforward way what residents told us about the engagement issues they face and what needs to change – and goes on to identify five strategic priorities and related actions to drive improvement.

A big message from Hackney residents is that Housing Services needs to do more to communicate with residents effectively – and follow up on their concerns and suggestions in a more timely way.

Feedback also pointed to a need to widen engagement opportunities, invest more in community projects, and provide better support to involved groups.

The consultation on the draft strategy which was carried out over summer 2022 showed overwhelming support for the direction we are taking, with over 90% of respondents to our survey expressing support for our proposals. However, we know that creating a 'Resident First' culture will not happen overnight. Much more work will be needed to drive the changes required, and we will be monitoring progress regularly to hold the service to account.

We very much hope that the strategy marks the start of a new and positive chapter for resident engagement in Hackney – and that it will encourage more residents to get involved.

**Steve Webster and Helder da Costa**  
Resident Liaison Group Co-Chairs



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**We want this strategy  
to put the resident's  
voice at the heart of  
our service...**

# Our context

This 2022–2025 Resident Engagement Strategy sets out how we want to strengthen engagement with tenants, leaseholders, private renters, shared owners and homeowners (collectively known as residents) who live in Hackney Council managed homes.

We want this strategy to help us achieve our aspiration to be an exceptional housing service – putting the resident’s voice at the heart of our service, and working in partnership with residents and other stakeholders to build strong, inclusive communities.

To succeed, we must ensure that resident engagement is understood as everyone’s responsibility right across the service. This means that the leadership, culture and management of Housing Services has to reflect a stronger and more consistent focus on putting residents’ needs first, treating all residents with respect, and responding to their feedback.

On a day-to-day basis we want all housing staff to see every contact they have with residents as an opportunity to learn and to demonstrate our commitment to excellence. This will build greater confidence and trust in our services, and help us identify and drive forward the changes needed to increase resident satisfaction.

The strategy recognises that the way we engage needs to change. While traditional methods of engagement, such as tenant and residents’ associations, provide a voice for some, they do not work for everyone. We need to enhance our approach and offer a broader range of options reflecting the diverse needs, lifestyles and interests of our residents. This will include making more use of digital options and offering more opportunities for residents to genuinely influence our service planning and decision-making.

Addressing the wider challenges some residents face, such as poor health, social isolation, poverty and unemployment, is an equally important priority. This will require us to build stronger partnerships with residents, other Council services, and community and voluntary groups to deliver community projects which add real value. Making better use of our community space will be integral to this, and help us to increase the accessibility of our offer.

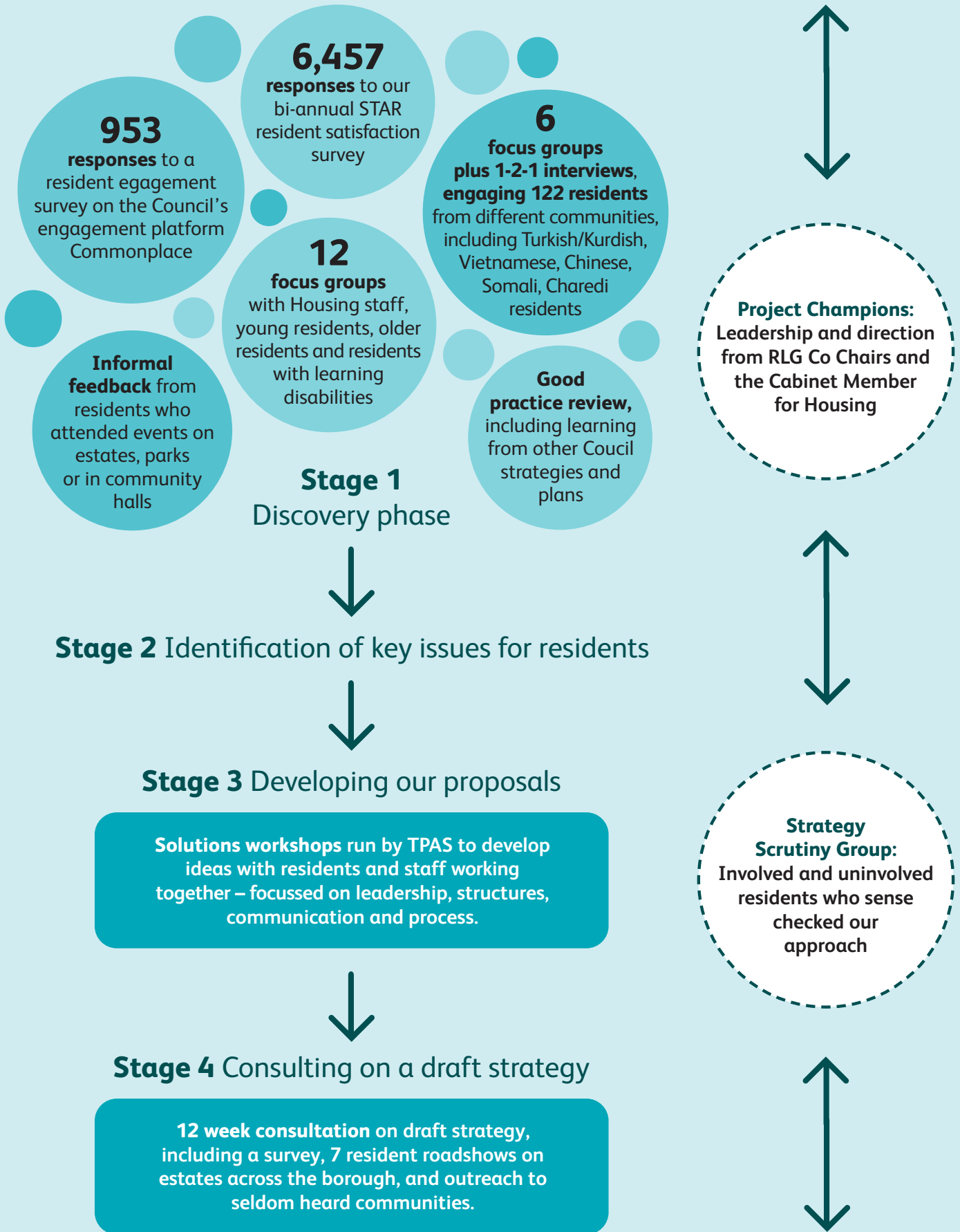
We hope that the proposals in the strategy will encourage more residents to get involved, help us build stronger communities, and ensure that the residents’ voice is heard, understood and, most importantly, acted upon. By working together, we know we will achieve more – and deliver housing services that better meet residents’ expectations.

*We want this strategy to help us achieve our aspiration to be an exceptional housing service – putting the resident’s voice at the heart of our service, and working in partnership with residents and other stakeholders to build strong, inclusive communities.*





Figure 1: Developing our strategy





To work in partnership  
with residents to  
build strong inclusive  
communities...

## Our approach to resident engagement


Resident engagement can mean different things to different people at different times. In this strategy we have defined it as opportunities through which residents can:

- provide feedback on our services
- directly influence our services, policies and decisions; and
- contribute to (or benefit from) the development of communities and neighbourhoods through local action or engagement.

We currently offer a wide range of opportunities for residents to engage with us, including both formal and informal options, with varying levels of time commitment (see Figure 2). A more detailed overview of these options is set out in the Appendix.



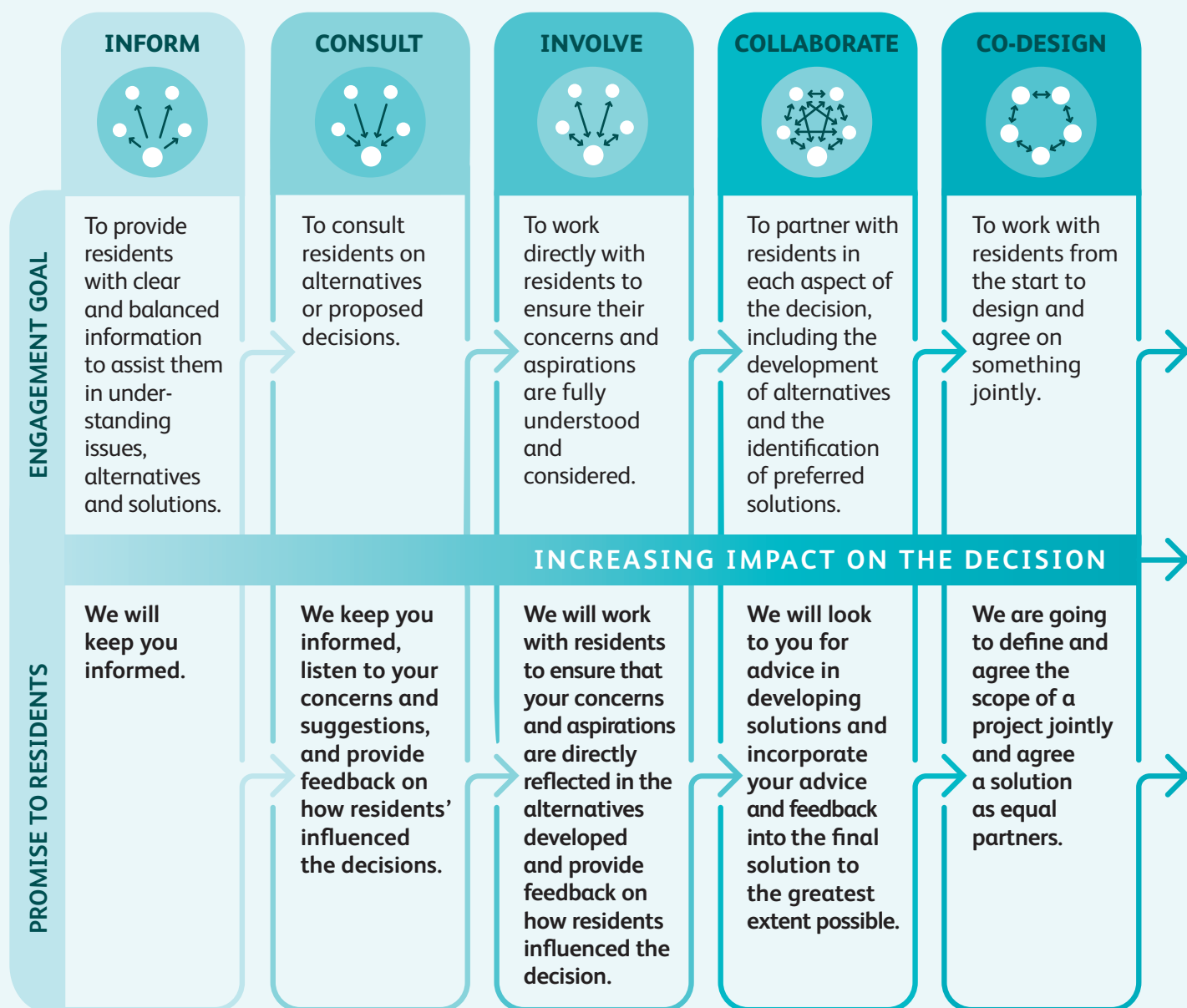
**Figure 2: Hackney Housing Service engagement framework**

<b>Involvement type</b>	<b>Role</b>
<b>Borough wide/strategic engagement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resident Liaison Group (RLG)</li> </ul>	<p>Contributes to decision-making on housing matters Focus for consultation on strategic and service matters</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) Forum</li> </ul>	<p>Primary forum for consultation between the Council and TMOs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RLG Scrutiny and Service Improvement Groups (SSIGs)</li> <li>• Resident Scrutiny Panel</li> <li>• Service Task and Finish Groups (ad hoc)</li> </ul>	<p>Undertake resident-led reviews to drive improvements in housing policies and services</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resident Procurement Representatives</li> </ul>	<p>Brings resident perspective to contract procurement</p>
<b>Area based engagement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant Management Organisations (9)</li> </ul>	<p>Self-management of their estate or a block under a contract with the Council</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighbourhood Panels (6)</li> </ul>	<p>Consider housing and community issues, review service performance and influence policy and decision-making</p>
<b>Locally based engagement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenants and Residents' Associations</li> <li>• Supported Resident Groups</li> <li>• Key Representatives</li> </ul>	<p>Address housing issues at a local level and can bring communities together through events, fundays and community projects</p>
<b>Specialist interest groups</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Youth Panel</li> <li>• Over 50s Groups/Forum</li> <li>• Street Properties Forum</li> </ul>	<p>Represent the interests of particular 'communities'</p>
<b>Informal engagement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gardening Groups</li> <li>• Community fundays</li> <li>• Community projects</li> <li>• Annual Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR)</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Focus Groups</li> <li>• Hackney Matters Citizen's Panel</li> <li>• Public Meetings</li> <li>• Estate walkabouts</li> <li>• Text messaging/social media</li> <li>• Complaints</li> </ul>	<p>Offer less formal ways to give resident feedback on housing matters or to get involved</p> 

Different engagement options give residents varying degrees of influence and decision-making power, and the right option will depend on what you are trying to achieve – and how residents want to be involved. In some cases, simply providing information – say about a programme of community activities taking place on an estate – could be enough. However, where major changes are being proposed to estates or

services, working with residents to agree the way forward or to actively design a solution together can be the best way to ensure that the residents’ needs and preferences are properly reflected and understood (see Figure 3). When we engage with residents it’s always important to be clear about the terms of our engagement, and residents’ scope to influence or change the outcome.

Figure 3: Models of engagement and outcomes





When done well, resident engagement can deliver a number of important benefits:

- Build greater trust between residents and their landlord
- Ensure that decisions and policies are informed by the needs, aspirations and real life experiences of residents
- Ensure that services are tailored to the needs of diverse communities
- Allow residents to hold their landlord to account and challenge under-performance
- Encourage innovation and drive improvements in service quality
- Help residents build their confidence and develop new skills and knowledge
- Help to build social networks and promote community cohesion

### **Working with our tenant management organisations**

Around one-fifth of Hackney's council homes are managed directly by nine Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs). TMOs directly involve residents in an area or estate in the management of their homes, and are responsible for engaging their own residents in service improvement and decision-making. Housing Services works closely with all TMOs and through this strategy we aim to do more to learn from each other's experience of engagement, identify what works well and explore opportunities to work together to support Hackney's communities.

## Our changing context

Hackney Housing Services is responsible for providing housing management services to all residents, including tenancy management, repairs, planned maintenance, resident safety, rent collection and leasehold services. Together our services aim to make sure that all homes and estates are well-maintained, safe and well-managed – so that residents can be proud of where they live.

Involving residents in our work is already deeply rooted in the way we develop and deliver our services. But wider changes and new digital options mean that we need to review how we engage – and understand what we need to do differently.



**Changing places:** A total of 30,761 households live in Hackney council homes, but only 21,250 homes are now council tenancies, with the number of homeowners increasing steadily. As our

tenure pattern changes, we need to engage in new ways to meet the needs of different types of households. And as regeneration schemes reshape some of our estates, we need to support those residents who may feel less connected as their communities and places change.



**Increasing needs, reducing resources:** Residents living in Hackney managed homes have different circumstances, characteristics, and life

experiences. But the high concentration of older people and single person and low income households living in social housing means that our residents are more likely to experience financial hardship, social isolation and poor health. For some households with children, rising fuel costs, and overcrowded homes, will exacerbate the problems they face. At the same time, the rent cap will significantly reduce the amount of funding available to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents and invest in our homes. This means that a clearer framework is needed to ensure we focus on those issues that matter most to residents and involve them in our decision-making process.



**Technological change:**

Growing use of smartphones and tablet computers has given residents new ways to engage and gain access to information and services.

During the COVID-19

pandemic, online consultation was increasingly found to be a good way to get views and feedback on Council services and to target and deliver some services more effectively. In future, we will need to take full advantage of digital engagement – but offer different options (and support) to those unable to engage in this way. The Residents' Survey 2022 found that while only 6% of Hackney residents do not have access to the internet, this proportion is significantly higher among those aged 65+ (33%), disabled residents (18%), social renters (9%) and those struggling financially (9%).



**National Housing Policy:** The recent publication of the 2020 Social Housing White Paper 'A Charter for Social Housing', highlights the need for more transparency, openness and

accountability between landlords and residents, and puts a strong focus on listening to, and acting upon, the residents' voice (see box A). This strategy will help us meet new regulatory requirements but we aim to go beyond this. By setting out our principles, priorities and commitments, we aim to embed resident engagement in all aspects of our work and ensure residents are active partners in shaping and improving our services.

## Box A

The 'Charter for Social Housing' White Paper sets out what every resident should be able to expect:

- To be safe in your homes
- To know how your landlord is performing
- To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- To be treated with respect
- To have your voice heard by your landlord
- To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- To be supported to take your first step to ownership

In September 2022 the Social Housing Regulator confirmed that there will be three tenant satisfaction measures focussing on respectful and helpful engagement:

- Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenants views and acts upon them
- Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them
- Agreement that landlord treat tenants fairly and with respect

### Building safety resident engagement strategy

– All residents need to be confident that their home is safe and to understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to health and safety. A separate Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy (RES) for Housing Services is being developed to meet the requirements of the new Building Safety Act. This will set out how we will involve residents in shaping fire and safety standards. We will use learning from this wider strategy to support this work and to encourage more residents to get involved in decision-making about the safety of their block.

*“The best landlords engage well with their residents and listen to them with respect”*

The Government's Charter for Social Housing, White Paper, 2020







**RLG provided an opportunity to change the 'them and us' narrative and come up with ideas...**

# What you told us, what we learned

Our discovery phases highlighted some strengths in our current approach to resident engagement, as well as the issues we need to address. This section summarises the feedback from residents and housing staff.

## Theme 1 – Strengthening participation, promoting engagement

*“My TRA is run by a small clique on the estate and it’s quite hard to join or be involved in for most other residents.”*

*“How to involve the uninvolved is an issue.”*

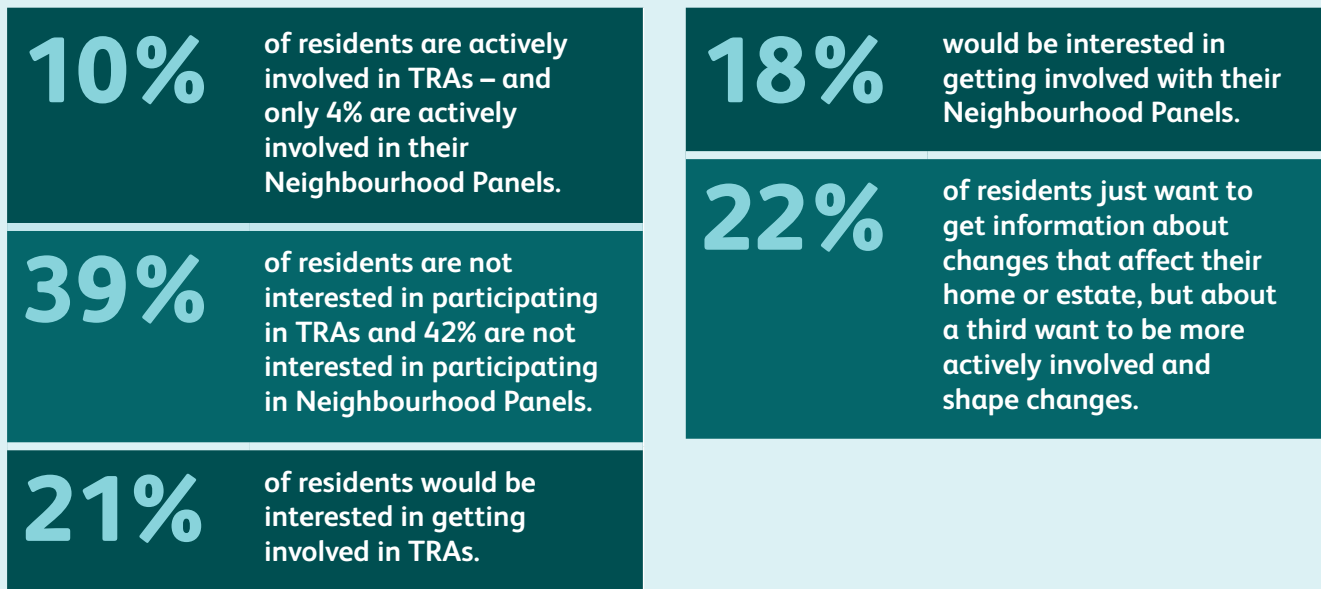
Participation can be a rewarding experience. Involved residents were mainly positive about their experience of engagement, and gave good examples of how their group made their estate a better place to live and helped residents resolve their housing problems. For some, involvement had supported their personal development, helped them to build social networks and given them the confidence to challenge how we do things. It also provided opportunities for residents to use their personal skills and life experience to support others, to ‘give something back’ to their community, and to feel more connected.

However, we also learnt that:

- Involved residents say that they don’t always get the support, advice and resources they need to run their groups well – and some feel they struggle to get matters of concern followed up satisfactorily.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly weakened the formal resident involvement structure with an increasing number of existing TRAs folding. Out of the 84 TRAs and supported

residents groups operating in March 2020, only 58 are now active, leaving many of our 260+ estates unrepresented.

- With only a minority of residents involved, some TRAs were not always felt to be representative of the wider community or to be doing enough to consult with, and bring on board, other residents (and groups who do try to reach out can still struggle to get more residents involved).
- Many residents are unaware of local TRAs or the Neighbourhood Panel that covers their area – though some would like to find out more about them and get involved.
- Some housing staff are unsure about the role of different resident groups, and are not always confident about working with them, particularly when there are contentious issues to resolve.
- Some residents said that the formal structure was just ‘not for them’, and would not want to commit to regular meetings. Both residents and housing staff wanted more informal engagement options, and want us to do more – and be more imaginative – in the way we engage young people and seldom heard groups.



## Theme 2 – Improving communication and working together

*“There should be easier access to the Council via just one person instead of many.”*

*“Treating others the way you want to be treated should be applied in all aspects of dealing with residents.”*

*“Fix the small problems that residents complain about. Once you re-establish that basis of trust you can move forward with your residents as allies...”*

Good resident engagement depends on timely, transparent and honest communication – and regular opportunities for residents to give feedback and influence service design. Housing Services currently uses a wide range of methods to communicate with residents and enable them to get their views and opinions across – and involved residents gave good examples of influencing budget and policy decisions through our formal structure, often making proposals which were taken on board.

However, we also learnt that:

- For many residents, including those from seldom heard groups, their experience of our services informs their view of how well we engage – and a poor experience can quickly undermine trust and confidence. Difficulties getting through on the phone or a lack of follow up on matters raised are seen as ‘engagement’ problems.

- Residents (and staff) can struggle to ‘navigate the housing system’, understand who does what, and get the right information. Residents are often unaware of our housing service standards, so they don’t really know what to expect.
- The majority of residents do not feel satisfied that we do enough to listen and act upon their views or involve them in decision making. ‘Listening to our views’ is the thing that most residents feel would improve Housing Services the most.
- Housing staff and resident groups are making much more use of digital communication – such as Whatsapp, text messages and social media. But some older residents are often less confident about using online options, and a lack of wifi access, reliable equipment or cultural sensitivities can pose barriers for others.
- Communication needs and preferences vary across different age groups and tenures. For example, flyers, newsletters and ‘Our Homes’ are the most popular ways of receiving information among Council tenants, but Council leaseholders prefer emails and e-bulletins.
- Residents who do not speak English too often rely on family members to communicate with Housing Services. Most wanted more information in their own language and better access to interpretation facilities – and to be more assured that we act on their feedback.

## Results from the STAR survey, 2021

**35%**

of residents are currently satisfied that the Council listens to their views and acts upon them.

**32%**

of younger residents aged 16–34 are satisfied that the Council listens to their views and acts upon them.

**25%**

of residents are not satisfied with opportunities to get involved in decision-making.

**51%**

of residents feel that housing services keep them fairly well-informed about things that may affect them.

**53%**

of residents found the Council’s website a useful source of information and advice about being a tenant.



## Theme 3 – Building stronger communities

*“The community hall is life. It’s something to look forward to. Otherwise if we didn’t have that weekly yoga class, most of the ladies, particularly the older ones would be completely housebound.”*

*“I wanted to learn how to use the computer, so that I don’t have to ask my children for help. I went to one class and the teacher only spoke in English... I didn’t go back after that.”*

*“Events... like the fun day carried out by Resident Participation are great! I don’t know my community yet. Good way to connect!”*

Housing Services play an important role in promoting community activities that bring people together and help them stay connected. Feedback from residents underlined the value of many community engagement activities within the current offer. Community lunches, gardening groups and grow projects, older 55+ groups, exercise classes, bingo clubs and arts and craft groups, were all seen as good ways to improve residents’ health and wellbeing, reduce isolation and promote more community cohesion.

### But we also found that:

- Many residents don’t know about community activities available in their area or how to access them. Barriers to involvement can include lack of time, child care responsibilities and language.
- There are a wide range of community groups (and expertise) which we need to do more to tap into.
- Information about the diversity profile of our residents, and our understanding of the values, culture and practices of different communities and the challenges they face, needs to be strengthened.
- Lack of affordable space to run community projects is an issue, with some community groups and young people wanting free access to community halls.

- Take up of the funding offered through the Housing Community Development Fund is low, and has dipped further during the pandemic. Where funding is allocated, there is a need to be clearer about the outcomes achieved, and how some of the projects we support can be sustained in the longer-term.
- When the aerial mast programme ends in 2023, there will gradually be less money available for housing resident participation grants, making it more important to secure external funding for projects.

### Results from the STAR and Commonplace Survey, 2021





## Our strategic priorities

- 1.** Embed a 'Resident First' culture across the service
- 2.** Support our involved residents' groups to thrive
- 3.** Widen the ways residents can engage with us
- 4.** Ensure that residents influence our decision-making and drive service improvement
- 5.** Promote engagement activity that strengthens our communities

# Our strategic priorities

Based on the feedback from residents and staff, we have identified five strategic priorities to focus our work on resident engagement over the next three years:

- To embed a 'Resident First' culture across the service
- To support our involved residents' groups to thrive
- To widen the ways residents can engage with us
- To ensure that residents can influence decision-making and drive service improvement
- To promote engagement activity that strengthens our communities

These priorities link directly to the issues and concerns that mattered to residents. For each priority, we set out below what our overall approach will be and the actions we will take to make a difference. Figure 4 spells out the principles which will guide our approach to engagement and help us build a culture of mutual understanding and respect.

**Our engagement principles – in taking our priorities forward, we will apply the following:**



**Meaningful** – we will only consult and engage when there are genuine opportunities for residents to influence the outcome.



**Timely** – when we engage we will make sure there is enough time to hear and consider residents views.



**Transparent** – we will be clear about the purpose and intended outcomes of any engagement at the outset, and its level of influence.



**Respectful** – residents and staff will treat each other with mutual respect, with a shared commitment to listening and working together.



**Inclusive** – we will make sure our engagement considers the needs and preferences of seldom heard residents, reflects the diversity of our communities and actively addresses digital exclusion.



**Accountable** – we will feedback to residents on how their views have been taken into account, and deliver on what we agree to do.



**Joined up** – we will ensure our community engagement activities reflect the Council's corporate priorities and wider strategies and plans, and actively address digital exclusion.

## Strategic Priority 1

### Embed a ‘Resident First’ culture across the service

A positive culture of resident engagement starts at the top. Through our behaviours and working practices, Housing Service leaders will demonstrate that the voice of residents is at the heart of good service delivery and lay the foundations for continuous listening and learning across the service.

We will ensure that we provide opportunities for residents to hold us to account and share information about our performance openly. Where major changes are needed to our policies or services, we will increasingly look to co-produce solutions with residents, involving them in shaping new arrangements from the start.

We understand that better outcomes for residents will often depend on all staff being empowered to take decisions at the right level, being accountable, and having the skills to engage confidently. We will invest in training and developing our staff to make this happen – and ensure that all managers take responsibility for engaging with residents effectively. We will monitor overall progress on implementing the strategy closely with regular reports to housing services management team and the Resident Liaison Group.

To realise our leadership role we will:

- Ensure that residents are engaged in shaping significant changes to housing policy or management arrangements, and have genuine opportunities to influence new ways of working.
- Make sure all major housing reports and new policies show how residents have been consulted, and how the proposals will affect residents.
- Promote more visibility of leaders and managers in the community, through attendance at Area Panels, consultations, shadowing of front-line staff, and community events.
- Update and publicise our housing services standards in partnership with residents – and present them in ways which are meaningful and measurable.
- Draw upon the Chartered Institute of Housing Professional Standards to shape a staff training programme that promotes collaborative working and equips staff with the skills and knowledge to engage with residents effectively.
- Develop a Housing Communication Strategy setting out how we will keep residents informed – and tailor our approach to meet different needs.
- Publish ‘you said, we did’ updates in each edition of ‘Our Homes’ and via our housing e-newsletters.







## Strategic Priority 2

### Support our involved residents' groups to thrive

We want groups at every level of our involved structure to have the support and resources they need to promote good governance, play an active role in improving our services and run community activities on their estates. To achieve this, we will support residents' groups to be as effective as possible in securing external resources, in building community networks, and championing (and addressing) the housing issues that matter to them.

Through investment in training and guidance we will ensure that all groups have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to engage with us effectively. In doing this, we will recognise the considerable skills and expertise within our residents' groups – and promote more opportunities for groups to independently network to share good practice with each other, and to learn from the wider housing sector.

We want all involved groups to work in ways that reflect our engagement principles and will support them to reach out to seldom heard groups who are under-represented in our involved structures. Where groups have successfully engaged different communities, we will learn from their experiences and seek to build upon approaches that work.

#### To support our residents' groups to thrive we will:

- Develop an agreed support offer for RLG, Area Panels and TRAs setting out the support they can expect from Housing Services.
- Improve the range and quality of guidance on all aspects of running and managing a TRA or Supported Resident Group (SRG) – and actively support the development of new groups.
- Set out a route map to show how we will develop more TRAs and other resident-led groups on under-represented estates, alongside other forms of involvement.
- Jointly undertake annual health checks with TRAs/SRGs to identify their support needs and better understand how they promote the involvement of the wider resident community.
- To continue our work to revitalise Neighbourhood Panels, including proposals to raise awareness of their role and increase attendance at meetings.
- Deliver a well-advertised annual residents training and development programme, taking account of the training needs identified by involved residents and the skills required to ensure good governance.
- Provide more opportunities for residents' groups to learn from each other, via buddying/mentoring schemes and networking events.
- Review our Code of Conduct for involved groups in partnership with RLG, Neighbourhood Panels and TRAs, and ensure its principles and values are followed consistently.
- Increase awareness of involved residents' groups both inside and outside of the Council via staff training, show and tell sessions, and community roadshows.
- Provide better information on the involved structure to new residents at sign-up, and via welcome events on completion of housing regeneration schemes.
- Monitor the profile of those leading Tenants and Residents' Associations and Neighbourhood Panels to identify sections of our community who may be under-represented and actively work with groups to broaden their reach.

## Strategic Priority 3

### Widen the ways residents can engage with us

Our approach to resident engagement will recognise that one size does not fit all. We will offer a menu of engagement options, tailored to the different needs, lifestyles and interests of Hackney's diverse communities, and make better use of new digital (online) tools. This will allow more residents to play a part, with more flexibility to match personal involvement to individual time commitments.

We will increasingly make more use of digital communication. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that many residents want to communicate with us in this way, and it can help us hear a wide range of voices more quickly and more often. But we understand that this approach will not suit everyone – so we will focus on promoting a balanced approach. We will still offer face to face meetings, and hold surgeries and walkabouts on our estates to reach a wider audience.

Working with our partners, we will also do more to help residents use the internet and gain confidence to transact online, with more digital training opportunities in our local community spaces. In doing this we will reflect the principles set out in the Government's checklist for digital inclusion.

We will review all of our engagement options on a regular basis to ensure they remain fit for purpose and make a difference. We will not be afraid to abandon things that do not work and to redirect resources to more effective and efficient engagement methods.



To widen engagement and make more use of digital communication we will:

- Encourage more housing residents to join the 'Hackney Matters' Online Citizens Panel and promote its use across Housing Services to test residents' views and opinions.
- Develop a wider range of informal mechanisms to promote engagement, including gardening groups, focus groups, service specific task and finish groups, readers' panels, webinars, networking events, and snap surveys.
- Develop an **@activeresident** programme to engage people who want to 'drop in' to neighbourhood panel meetings, provide ideas and issues to improve their estates, feedback on issues of concern or develop new community projects.
- Establish a Young People's Housing Panel to explore issues facing young people on our estates and promote more engagement of young people in our service planning and delivery.
- Invest in digital skills training and support for those residents who want to gain confidence to engage online, including inter-generational training, silver surfer classes, and 'how to' guides.
- Review our approach to language support and translation, including the potential to use digital solutions e.g handheld translation devices and translate options on our webpages.
- Identify 'Community Connectors' within Housing Services to engage with, and provide information to, residents from seldom heard communities via voluntary and community groups.
- Introduce a programme of weekly housing surgeries across our estates so that residents can raise any issues and concerns with their housing officer face to face and access other community services.
- Introduce a twice yearly programme of estate walkabouts to identify issues of concern, including communal repairs, anti-social behaviour and estate cleaning.

## Strategic Priority 4

### Ensure that residents influence our decision-making and drive service improvement

We want our residents to play a greater role in informing our decisions and driving improvement in our services. With more pressure on our resources, we need to work together to make sure that our budget decision-making and service planning reflects residents' priorities and concerns – and delivers value for money.

This will mean providing more opportunities for residents to actively scrutinise our services and challenge our performance, through resident-led scrutiny reviews, mystery shopping as well as regular performance reporting through our involved structure. We will also strengthen resident involvement in our complaints process, so that we are better placed to learn how to put things right.

In doing this, we will seek to present all performance information in ways that are understandable and meaningful – and recognise that independent support, facilitation and training will sometimes be needed to equip residents to challenge and engage as equal partners.



To ensure that residents can influence our decision-making and drive service improvement we will:

- Ensure that learning and feedback from complaints, resident satisfaction surveys, and other data and insight, is used to improve all areas of the housing service.
- Ensure that our Annual Report to residents is produced in partnership with residents, and includes information about the impact of our resident engagement activity.
- Refresh our approach to resident-led scrutiny reviews and provide resources for at least two reviews per year.
- Ensure that recommendations from resident-led scrutiny reviews are presented to, and monitored by the Housing Services Management Team and Resident Liaison Group.
- Publish scrutiny role opportunities across our different resident communities and develop accredited training packages for scrutiny group members.
- Introduce a new programme of mystery shopping across the services to provide a resident perspective on our service delivery.
- Ensure that contract procurement for major works and repairs contracts routinely includes input from residents, so that their lived experience shapes future service delivery.
- Set up a residents' complaints panel to explore our learning from complaints, and consider what we can do differently to stop things going wrong again.



## Strategic Priority 5

### To promote engagement activity that strengthens our communities

We will continue to invest in community projects and activities that promote the integration and resilience of our housing communities. We will publicise our grant programmes and projects more widely to improve our use of resources and encourage more residents to take part. Our funding will be available to all residents, not just groups within our involved structures, though there will always need to be wider resident support for any project proposal.

Increasingly we will look to build partnerships with other services and community and voluntary organisations to develop and pilot new projects that deliver community benefits. In deciding what to fund, we will look to ensure that our priorities fit with the Council's strategy framework, linking into our wider work on employment, digital skills training, health and well-being, and regeneration.

We will also explore how our spaces can better support delivery, with more opportunities to trial new projects for free in our community halls. In some cases, we may also provide some start-up funding to support projects led by other services, but only if benefits to housing residents are clear.

We will actively use our funding to promote inclusivity. We will continue to support and grow our over 50s groups and increase our investment in projects to support children and young people on our estates. We will also strengthen links with community groups that represent and work with our diverse communities to help us develop projects that better meet their needs.

Building the capacity of groups to develop and run community activities successfully, improving our capacity to target resources effectively, and routinely evaluating what we do (and what we achieve) will be important cornerstones of our approach to delivery.

### To promote engagement activity that strengthens our communities we will:

- Build our understanding the profile of residents including the culture, values and support needs of different communities to better inform our approach to engagement.
- Promote the availability of grants to support community projects and social activities more widely, with more use of case studies to show how the funding can be used.
- Offer training, mentoring and support to TRAs and other resident groups to enable them to bid for funding more successfully.
- Provide support to gardening groups to ensure they can operate well and provide opportunities for all residents to be involved, including the development of a new gardening forum to network and share good practice,
- Pilot new estate-based delivery of activities and programmes for residents that support wider strategic priorities, such as health and well-being and employment and skills, in partnership with Council services and other stakeholders.
- Actively engage in work to deliver Council strategies and plans which benefit residents, including the Ageing Well Strategy, Young Futures Commission Delivery Plan, and Health and Well-Being Strategy, and Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.
- Identify a RP budget for projects for children and young people, directly managed by the new Housing Youth Panel.
- Continue to support and develop engagement activity for older residents, including intergenerational programmes.
- Pilot free use community halls for trial periods of up to 12 weeks to test whether a project can become financially sustainable e.g for health and fitness classes, homework clubs, and food projects which actively support residents.
- Develop a clear evaluation framework for community projects so that objectives, deliverables, expected outcomes and any plans for longer-term sustainability are clear at the outset.



- Measuring our impact
- Appendix

# Measuring our impact

Delivering on the commitments made in this strategy will be critical if we are to achieve our ambition to be an exceptional Housing Service and to restore residents' confidence in our services.

Once the strategy has been agreed we will produce an action plan setting out key timelines for our actions and who is responsible for what. We will report on progress in delivering on the plan each year and refresh the plan annually to reflect what we have achieved, and new things that we need to do. The Housing Services Management Team and the Resident Liaison Group will monitor progress on the plan and we will update residents through reports on our website, and Our Homes.

We will use a range of different ways to see if we are making a difference, including:

- Analysing results from our annual Resident Satisfaction Survey, including the Charter for Social Housing tenant satisfaction measures.
- Regular 'You said, we did' features showing how we responded to your feedback and suggestions
- Monitoring levels of participation and engagement in our formal structures, including diversity profiling
- Routinely reviewing our community engagement activities to identify impact, participation, inclusivity and value for money
- Informal feedback from our involved groups

After the first year of strategy implementation we will additionally seek TPAS landlord accreditation against the Tenant Participation Advisory Service National Engagement Standards.



# Appendix

## Hackney Housing Services framework for engagement

### Strategic resident involvement

#### Resident Liaison Group (RLG)

RLG is the key strategic residents' forum which influences housing policy and service decisions and scrutinises housing performance. The group is consulted on new strategies and changes to service delivery which will affect housing residents, ensuring that the interests of residents are considered in strategic decision-making. The group's meetings are attended by senior housing management staff and the Cabinet Member for Housing Services. The group is made up of 2 representatives from each Neighbourhood Area Panel and 7 independent residents, as well as representatives from housing's specialist interest forums.

#### Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) Forum

The TMO Forum provides oversight of the relationship between the Council and the nine TMOs that operate across the borough. It is the primary forum for consultation with TMOs and is open to any TMO that wishes to attend, represented by TMO Officers or Board Members. The Forum allows TMOs to feed back to the Council on potential value for money savings and can help to resolve matters which could lead to formal disputes or disagreements between the Council and TMOs.

#### Resident Scrutiny Panel

The Resident Scrutiny Panel is a group of 8 tenants and leaseholders from across the borough who are recruited to carry out reviews of service areas and make recommendations for service improvements. Following initial training, residents can participate on a project-by project basis, depending on their interests. Agreed recommendations from the Resident Scrutiny Panel are presented to, and monitored by, the Housing Services Management Team and RLG.

#### RLG Scrutiny And Service Improvement Group (SSIG)

A SSIG is a task and finish group set up by RLG to undertake a review of a particular housing service or housing issue, with the way forward set out in a detailed service improvement plan, agreed with relevant service managers.

#### Service Led Task And Finish Groups

From time to time, senior housing managers may set up a task and finish group to look at a specific issue in their area and ensure that the needs and aspirations of residents are met. Once the work is complete, the group disbands with recommendations embedded within the service. Resident involvement in these groups is determined in partnership with residents and the format and frequency of meetings will vary.

#### Resident Procurement Representatives

Where major housing contracts are let for repairs and maintenance or major works, we involve residents in the process, with training and support provided. While involvement will vary from contract to contract, residents may be involved in specifying the contract, developing selection criteria, and shortlisting and/or interviewing contractors.

## Area based resident involvement

### Neighbourhood Panels

Neighbourhood Panels consider housing issues and wider community concerns raised by TRAs and residents in their area. They provide a forum for residents of any tenure to influence housing policy and decision-making, and provide an opportunity for residents to examine housing performance and suggest improvements. The Panels are resident-led and are open to any Hackney housing resident. The six Panels broadly match neighbourhood housing management areas:

- Clapton
- Central, including Queensbridge and De Beauvoir
- Homerton
- Shoreditch
- Stamford Hill
- Stoke Newington

### Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)

TMOs are organisations set up by tenants and leaseholders to manage their estate or block. Each TMO has a legal contract with the Council known as a management agreement. Each TMO will elect to self-manage some services which could include cleaning, repairs, rent collection or other housing management services. Each TMO has its own Board which is chaired by a resident and includes both residents and independent Board members. Hackney currently has nine TMOs which range in size from 114 to over 1,100 homes:

- North and South Arden TMO
- Clapton Park Management Organisation
- Cranston TMO
- Downs Estate TMO (also known as DEMO)
- Lordship South TMO
- Suffolk Estate Co-operative
- Tower Management Organisation
- Wenlock Barn TMO
- Wick Village Tenant Management Co-operative
- Wyke Tenants and Residents Co-operative

## Locally based resident involvement

### Tenants And Residents Associations (TRAs)

Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) bring together residents in a defined area, usually an estate or a block(s), to represent the interests of residents and bring about improvements in services. They adopt a formal constitution and are recognised by Hackney Council, meaning they will be formally consulted on major issues which could affect their homes or estate and are eligible for funding to help with their running costs. Many TRAs also organise social events and run community projects which help to bring residents together. Housing Officers attend TRAs meetings on a quarterly basis to update on housing issues in their area and get feedback on existing services.

### Supported Residents Groups (SRGs)

SRGs operate in broadly the same ways as TRAs, but are informal groups of residents who decide to come together at least 4 times per year to discuss service and community issues on their estate/block. These groups can be a stepping stone to becoming a TRA and are eligible for support and funding from the Housing Services Resident Participation Team.

### Key Representatives

Key Representatives are active residents who regularly attend Neighbourhood Panel meetings and give informal feedback on residents' issues/concerns on particular estates and/or blocks, attend estate walkabouts, and report communal repairs. Key Representatives are generally from estates with no TRA or SRG, and only operate in the Shoreditch and Stamford Hill Panel areas. The role of key representatives is currently being reviewed as part of our wider work to revitalise Neighbourhood Panels.

## Specialist interest groups

### Over 50s Groups/Forum

We support 13 Over 50s Groups across Hackney estates, as well as an Older People's Forum. The groups provide a range of activities and events for older people, including arts and crafts, bingo, community lunches and 'silver surfer' training sessions.



### **Housing Youth Panel**

We are currently setting up a Housing Youth Panel for residents aged 16–25 to give them more opportunity to have a voice in housing service delivery and ensure their needs and aspirations are taken into account. The format and scope of the panel will be determined by young people who live in Hackney managed homes.

### **Street Properties Forum**

This is an online forum open to all residents of street properties to raise concerns and issues that affect them and ensure their voices are heard in wider housing service planning and delivery.

## **Informal resident involvement**

### **Gardening Groups**

There are over 50 gardening groups on Hackney housing estates, with 14 more in development. The community gardens can help the local wildlife thrive and give people the chance to grow their own food, helping their communities become more environmentally sustainable. Maintaining the gardens can also be a great way for people to relieve stress and be more physically active.

### **Estate Fun Days**

TRAs often arrange fundays on their estate, with funding provided via Housing Services Resident Participation Team. Fun Days can be a good way to bring people together and encourage new residents to participate in existing groups and activities, especially if food and children's activities are included in the mix.

### **Community Projects**

The Resident Participation Team provides funding via the Community Development Fund for a wide range of community projects, including employment and training initiatives, youth activities, gardening projects and sports and fitness classes. Project proposals can be put forward by TRAs, SRGs or other groups of residents.

### **Annual Survey Of Tenants And Residents (STAR)**

Housing Services carries out a full survey of housing residents, including TMO residents, every year. This helps us to track our performance in

meeting residents' needs and aspirations – and also collect the performance information required by the Social Housing Regulator.

### **Online Surveys/SMS Polls**

We use a variety of online surveys and SMS polls to capture residents' views on services issues and seek suggestions for improvement.

### **Focus Groups and Public Meetings**

We occasionally hold public meetings or focus groups to look at particular issues, including anti-social behaviour and parking on estates and /or provide information about major works that will take place on an estate or a block.

### **Hackney Matters Citizen's Panel**

Hackney Matters is an online citizens' panel of local people. The panel is a group of residents who are regularly asked for their views. We collect feedback and insight from the members on a range of topics, including housing and non-housing issues. There are just over 1000 members signed up to the panel, with 286 being Council tenants, leaseholders and homeowners. As part of this strategy, we will aim to increase the number of housing residents who participate in the panel.

### **Estate Walkabouts**

An estate walkabout is planned and publicised walkabout around your block or an estate with housing staff. It is a good way to identify safety and communal repairs issues. As part of this strategy we propose to carry out up to two walkabouts per estate each year.

### **Social Media**

Many residents' groups – and the Council – increasingly use social media, including facebook, whatsapp and Twitter, to publicise meetings or events, raise issues or get people involved.

### **Complaints**

Residents who are dissatisfied with the service they receive can use the Council's formal complaints system to give feedback and raise concerns. We aim to respond to all complaints about housing services within 10 working days. As part of the strategy we will be setting up a new Residents' Complaints Panel to review our performance in handling complaints, look at trends and ensure we learn from complaints.