

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY - OVERVIEW OF MAIN CONSULTATION MESSAGES

The following summary highlights the key messages from the consultation on the draft Strategy that took place between 9 June and 4 September 2022, alongside the Housing Services response:

Key messages / feedback	Response
Communication and working practices	
<p>Poor communication and follow up on residents' issues and concerns is a persistent problem and could potentially undermine the Strategy.</p>	<p>We understand that a step change in our communication and follow up processes is vital to the success of the strategy, and the ongoing reputation of Housing Services. We have identified a range of actions to embed a resident first culture across the service and strengthen all of our communication and interaction with residents.</p> <p>Initiatives detailed in the Strategy such as the development of new housing service standards, weekly surgeries on estates, improved contact and signposting information, a new communication strategy, and a renewed focus on staff training and development will support this.</p> <p>We will also provide more opportunities for residents to hold us to account and for us to learn from their lived experience of our services i.e. through scrutiny reviews and involvement in performance monitoring and a new residents' complaints panel so that we can identify and make any changes needed to improve satisfaction with the service.</p>
<p>The shift to digital communication risks leaving some residents who are not able to engage this way behind.</p>	<p>An important message of the Strategy is that there cannot be a one size fits all approach to engagement - what works for some residents will not work for everyone. We have amended some of the text in the final Strategy to make this message clearer.</p> <p>Looking at our survey results it's clear that tenure and age influence individual communication / engagement preferences, with leaseholders and younger age groups more likely to prefer online engagement to face to face meetings. But there can</p>

	<p>be important variations within groups - some of our Neighbourhood Panels which are led by older residents, for example, now prefer running their meetings online and welcome not having to go to meetings on dark, winter evenings.</p> <p>In looking at ways to broaden engagement, the Strategy therefore seeks to encourage a mix of approaches, with online and face-to-face options, alongside support for those residents who want to gain confidence / address other barriers to online engagement. For many older and / or less mobile residents, weekly surgeries on our estates will bring services closer, and reduce the costs / time associated with travel to more remote Council offices.</p>
<p>There is a need to be more professional in how you manage and publicise key engagement activities such as estate walkabouts, engagement events, management of estate noticeboards</p>	<p>As part of our wider improvement priorities within the service, we will be looking to increase the visibility of housing staff on our estates and ensure that delivery of core tasks, such as estate walkabouts, surgeries and upkeep of notice boards, are managed more effectively. We will provide more details on how we intend to make these sorts of things work better in the Strategy's action plan.</p>
<p>Residents need more clarity about the roles and responsibilities of different services within Housing (and the Council as a whole)</p>	<p>The Strategy recognises that residents (and housing staff) need better support to navigate the Council more easily. We have included a proposal to improve information / signposting about who is responsible for what across Housing Services within the final Strategy. We will also seek to strengthen understanding of how housing staff can access other areas for support and information e.g housing needs / benefits /social care.</p>
<p>Housing staff need to be more visible on estates</p>	<p>We agree - and have included proposals such as the weekly estate surgeries and more regular estate walkabouts within the Strategy. We have also recognised that housing leaders need to be more visible and have included a specific proposal to increase the amount of time senior managers spend in the community, through attendance at Neighbourhood Panels, consultations and community events. A consultation suggestion to introduce shadowing of front line staff by senior managers has been included in the final Strategy.</p>

<p>The attitude and behaviours of housing staff need to change if we are to improve engagement - they need to treat all residents with respect</p>	<p>The Strategy has recognised this and has set out some principles of engagement that we will embed across the service, including a commitment that residents and staff treat each other with mutual respect. To support this we will draw upon the new 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. However, while we know that we need more consistency in our approach, it's important to remember that there are housing staff who routinely go out of their way to support and engage residents.</p>
<p>The quality of services, especially repairs, needs to improve to encourage more confidence and trust in the service and in its plans to improve resident engagement.</p>	<p>We understand that the relationship between the quality of services residents receive and their perception of how well we engage is strong; a poor experience can quickly undermine confidence and trust in the service as a whole. Accordingly, we will continue our focus on continually reshaping and improving the quality and responsiveness of Housing Services, building on the work and investment that has taken place over the last 12 months to improve the repairs service, leaseholder services and call handling. We will ensure that information on our performance - and how we are going to tackle areas of weakness - is regularly shared with residents to promote challenge and transparency.</p>
<p>You need to think how the service can draw upon the experiences / feedback from Councillors and improve communication with Councillors on housing issues.</p>	<p>There are clear benefits in closer working between ward councillors and Housing Services - and in some areas we have already worked with Members to address particular issues around anti-social behaviour, repairing issues and resident participation. We will look to see how we can build upon this work through the development of the communication strategy and consider some of the suggestions made during the consultation e.g regular meetings between area housing managers and ward councillors to share information and promote more joined-up communication.</p>
<p>Inclusivity / supporting different groups and communities</p>	
<p>The service needs to build more understanding of the</p>	<p>The Strategy recognises that we need to do more to understand the profile of residents who live in our homes and deepen understanding of the culture,</p>

<p>challenges and issues residents face so that staff are better placed to engage effectively.</p>	<p>values and practices of different communities. Proposals to develop better links with voluntary and community organisations who work in Hackney's seldom heard communities and learning from corporate work (e.g on engagement with the orthodox Jewish community, young black men and young / older people) will support this. As detailed in the equality impact assessment, the Strategy includes a number of proposals to promote inclusive engagement and remove barriers to participation. This includes looking at how we can support residents with language needs to engage with us more effectively, either via the direct provision of translation and /or interpretation services and by establishing stronger partnerships with trusted community organisations.</p>
<p>The service needs to think how it can incentivise engagement to encourage wider participation</p>	<p>The service already provides a grant of up to £600 for tenants and resident associations (TRAs), as well as access to funding for projects, trips and events. The Council additionally has a reward programme in place to encourage participation in the Hackney Matters Panel (which includes 310 Hackney housing tenants and leaseholders among its consultative membership). We will see how we can build upon this sort of approach as we deliver the Strategy.</p>
<p>You need to do more to engage younger residents, both to ensure their voices are heard, and bring new / younger people into the tenant movement.</p>	<p>In developing the Strategy we have worked closely with staff taking forward the various 'asks' in the Young Futures Commission (YFC) work, and the appointment of a new Youth and Community Engagement Officer in the Resident Participation Team is already helping us to engage young people more successfully.</p> <p>Over the last six months, 86 young people who live on seven of our estates have shaped the development of our wider youth engagement offer, with the feedback also informing the Strategy. This identified some enthusiasm for the Young People's Housing Forum proposed in the Strategy and again flagged challenges raised in the YFC work related to ASB / safety, lack of community spaces, and a need for more activities, including sporting activities, on our estates. The development of some estate-based pilot projects on estates this year is already testing approaches to address these issues. More involvement of young people in estate walkabouts is</p>

	<p>also being considered (as young residents often have concerns about safety / secure design that are not always apparent to older residents).</p> <p>Where TRAs have expressed an interest in developing more activities for young people on their estates, we are supporting them to reach out to younger residents via surveys / direct engagement. In some cases, young people are also attending, or planning to attend, TRA / RLG meetings in order to get a flavour of how these groups work - and to suggest how they could become more attractive to young people.</p>
<p>You need to think more about how Housing Services engage on regeneration estates and avoid issues related to social polarisation of neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>We recognise the challenges related to increased tenure diversification in the Strategy and the potential risk of social polarisation within some of our estates if we do not support integration of new residents effectively (especially in housing management terms).</p> <p>While estate regeneration colleagues / housing supply programme colleagues have traditionally led on resident engagement during the delivery of new housing schemes, we know that early engagement with new residents, and linking them into existing residents' groups, can be beneficial. Equally, it's important that existing residents can access the sort of support that stops people feeling 'left behind' including access to employment and training opportunities on development sites, and improved community facilities / spaces that everyone can access.</p> <p>We increasingly work more closely with regeneration teams on a number of estates, especially those which may include new community facilities within their schemes, to share expertise and plan activities that can bring people together and realise community benefit, though we accept there is much more work to do in this area.</p>
<p>You need to ensure that a focus on private renters i.e. the tenants of leaseholders, is included in the Strategy, not least as many will have views</p>	<p>We definitely want to include all residents who live in our homes within the scope of our work, including secure / non secure tenants, leaseholders, freeholders, shared owners, and private renters (and have amended some of the text in the final Strategy to reflect this more clearly).</p>

<p>/ aspirations for their estate and be long-term residents. There is a tendency to overlook this group.</p>	<p>We recognise that each of these groups can have very specific areas of concern, but our work so far has indicated that every type of household wants to see better interaction and follow up - and more focus on getting the basics right. For that reason we believe a broad resident engagement framework that will deliver benefits to every type of household is the right approach.</p>
<p>There needs to be a stronger focus on engagement with older people and intergenerational work in the Strategy.</p>	<p>Ensuring that all groups are well represented in the development of the Resident Engagement Strategy is challenging, not least as all groups with protected characteristics are included within our resident base. Nonetheless, we have sought to engage different groups in a variety of ways and take their feedback on board.</p> <p>In relation to older residents, we know that this group is more concentrated in social rented housing in the borough, with 22% of tenanted council households containing a resident aged 70 and over (compared to non LBH households at 13% and LBH leaseholders at 9%). From wider work on the Ageing Well Strategy and Health and Well-Being Strategy, we also know that some of our older residents will face particular challenges such as social isolation, fuel poverty and poor health, and that these will have been exacerbated by the cost of living crisis.</p> <p>During the course of the resident engagement strategy consultation, we ran 2 focus groups with older housing residents, engaging over 30 people. This highlighted some particular challenges around digital engagement - for example only 2 of the 16 residents we engaged at one of these sessions said they had internet access, and the group had held no online activity over the various lockdowns. In both groups there was not a strong appetite to upskill digitally. Feedback from both groups underlined the importance of social activities at an estate level for older residents to access more easily.</p> <p>In our survey work, we achieved a good response rate from older people to the STAR survey (partly as paper copies were sent to all residents' homes), and have looked at the results by age. In line with national trends in housing satisfaction, older residents have higher rates of satisfaction across all</p>

	<p>areas, but there are some important differences in communication preferences, again reflecting the so-called digital divide. These will need to be addressed in work to develop a communication strategy for the service.</p> <p>Moving forward, we are keen to join up our engagement work with older people with corporate approaches. We are already involved in the governance arrangements for the Ageing Well Strategy and have led on the development of the new cost of living handbook that includes information felt to be especially beneficial for older and low income households. We are also involved in running some pilot digital projects with an intergenerational focus on our estates in partnership with Hackney Works / Adult Education. This is the sort of partnership approach we are looking to promote more of through the Strategy.</p>
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Improving Formal Participation

<p>Too many of our estates are not represented by a Tenant and Resident Association (TRA), with too many residents not felt to have a voice.</p>	<p>We fully accept that we need to broaden coverage of our homes by TRAs, and to an extent that challenge has been made harder by the pandemic, which led to further reductions in the number of groups in operation.</p> <p>To address this, the Strategy suggests a three-pronged approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Provide better support for all existing TRAs so that they are sustainable and can be as effective as possible.</i> This will include a focus on reducing any unnecessary bureaucracy so that management of these groups becomes easier and ensuring (timely) officer follow up on the issues that TRAs raise (see actions proposed under Priority 2). - <i>Promote more awareness of the benefits of TRAs / active involvement so that more residents consider this option e.g through information campaigns, better information in new tenant packs, more networking events, etc.</i> - <i>Ensure that there are a range of ways for all residents to get involved and engage with us, with a focus on widening the options available (see proposals set out under Priority 3, page 26).</i> This is especially important given that the STAR survey
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	<p>found that 34% of leaseholders and 41% of tenants are not interested in getting involved in TRAs but are keen to engage with us in other ways, such as through online surveys.</p> <p>We have included consultation suggestions to create a clearer strategy for engaging under-represented estates and improved guidance on how we can support residents to develop a TRA within the final Strategy.</p> <p>The Resident Participation Team in Housing Services will continue to try and develop at least five new TRAs each year, but we do need to accept that this model tends to work best when there are a few active residents who are keen to progress this way of working - and willing to take on the responsibilities it entails.</p>
<p>Some TRAs are not representative of the wider community, and may only involve a small 'clique' of individuals on our estates.</p>	<p>This has been recognised in the Strategy, having emerged as a significant issue in feedback from both residents and housing staff : <i>"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)"</i>.</p> <p>In the Strategy we propose to introduce annual health checks to look more closely at how each registered TRA and supported resident group (SRG) is working. This will enable us to jointly identify support needs / good practice within each group, and provide an agreed framework to challenge any practices / governance issues which do not promote inclusivity. In the longer-term this should help to strengthen the TRA movement, with more opportunities to share approaches that could work across the involved structure.</p>
<p>TRAs need more practical support, including better advice and guidance on how to set up and manage bank accounts</p>	<p>We have included a proposal within the Strategy to improve the range and quality of guidance on all aspects of running and managing a TRA or Supported Resident Group (SRG) - and are currently finalising a toolkit for groups - this will include information on how groups can set up and manage bank accounts.</p>