



**Our vision is
"to deliver excellent Housing Services"**

Resident Involvement Strategy

2010-2012

Newark and Sherwood Homes Limited



The Government Standard



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE** | Gold



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Stephen Feast

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Purpose of the Strategy	3
3. Our Principles for Involvement	5
4. Outcomes of this Strategy	5
5. Methods of Involvement	6
6. Reaching the Wider Community	10
7. Supporting Involvement	12
8. Conduct for Involvement	13
9. Measuring Our Success	13
10. Strategy Review	14
11. Comments on the Policy or Service	14

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Newark and Sherwood Homes is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) which manages, maintains and improves Council housing on behalf of Newark and Sherwood District Council.
- 1.2 Our Vision is “to deliver excellent Housing Services”. Our Resident Involvement Strategy is our commitment to involving residents in shaping the services they receive.
- 1.3 We are determined to meet the challenges set out by the Government as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review which focuses on Localism, Big Society and making the public pound go further. This will demand that residents drive and improve performance through National Standards, Local Offers and the Annual Report. Our overall aim therefore, will continue to be increasing opportunities for tenants and residents to be involved in the decision making process; in a way which they want to be involved.
- 1.4 The term ‘resident’ is used throughout the strategy and this includes tenants, leaseholders and other service users who access and use the services provided by Newark and Sherwood Homes.
- 1.5 This strategy was developed with a panel of residents. They reviewed the previous strategy and examined the best ways in which we can involve current residents and future customers. Newark and Sherwood Homes would like to thank the Newark and Sherwood District Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations and residents throughout the district who have contributed to this process. Their positive and challenging input has ensured that this new strategy meets the needs of residents by ensuring effective resident involvement and empowerment.

2 Purpose of the Strategy

- 2.1 This document sets out Newark and Sherwood Homes’ strategy for Resident Involvement. It outlines how the strategy is to be implemented, the resources available for resident involvement and a framework for monitoring and reviewing the strategy.

2.2 This Resident Involvement Strategy is implemented in line with our vision “to deliver excellent Housing Services” and is further supported by the core values which underpin the work we do:

- i. Customer First
- ii. Valuing Everyone
- iii. Delivering Excellence
- iv. Making Positive Improvements
- v. Sharing Information

2.3 This strategy is also supplemented by other Newark and Sherwood Homes’ publications, including the:

- i. Access and Customer Care Strategy
- ii. Equalities and Diversity Strategy
- iii. Tenant Compact

All of which can be accessed by contacting the Customer Access Team on 0845 2585550 and via our website www.nshomes.co.uk.

2.4 At Newark and Sherwood Homes we adopt the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) definition of tenant participation:

“a two way process involving sharing of information and ideas, where tenants are able to influence decisions and take part in what is happening”

2.5 The strategy also reflects the requirements of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard established by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) which includes:

- i. providing choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of tenants in the delivery of all standards;
- ii. offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing-related policies and the delivery of housing-related services;
- iii. consulting with tenants and acting reasonably in providing opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery;
- iv. providing tenants with a range of opportunities to influence how providers meet all the TSA's standards and to scrutinise performance against all standards and in the development of the annual report;

- v. providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved;
- vi. treating all tenants with fairness and respect;
- vii. demonstrating an understanding of the different needs of tenants, including in relation to the seven equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.

2.6 Everyone in Newark and Sherwood Homes has responsibility for the implementation of the strategy and will have access to the strategy.

3 Our Principles for Involvement

3.1 This strategy continues to put residents at the heart of everything we do. This ensures that residents who want to influence the decision-making process can have their priorities reflected in the way services are being delivered, through working closely with Newark and Sherwood Homes' in a way which is suitable to them.

3.2 This Resident Involvement Strategy therefore has the following principles:

- i. to make sure residents are at the heart of decision making;
- ii. to enable residents to drive accountability and excellence in services;
- iii. to give residents the widest and most innovative choice of methods to "make a difference" to the services they receive;
- iv. to communicate transparently with residents using clear, honest, concise and 'jargon-free' language;
- v. to ensure regulatory requirements in relation to resident involvement are met;
- vi. to enable residents to monitor our performance and compare it with the performance of others;
- vii. to champion consultation and avoid confrontation.

4 Outcomes of this Strategy

4.1 This Resident Involvement Strategy will ensure that all residents who wish to be involved in the decision making of the Company are able to be involved in the decision making of the Company.

- 4.2 This will be specifically measured through the Key Performance Indicators detailed below:
- i. an increase in customer satisfaction with their views being taken into account to 68% by March 2011 and to 85% by March 2012;
 - ii. an increase in all tenant satisfaction to 87% by March 2012;
 - iii. an increase in the number of residents involved through recognised involvement mechanisms to 38% by March 2012;
 - iv. resident involvement will be representative of the local community by March 2013.

5 Methods of Involvement

- 5.1 Newark and Sherwood Homes has a vibrant and active participation movement with a Federation and Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs - which includes a leaseholder group and youth TRAs), covering approximately 85% of Newark and Sherwood District Council's housing stock. We will positively target involvement with hard to reach groups.
- 5.2 To deliver the outcomes of the Resident Involvement Strategy Newark and Sherwood Homes recognises it is important to have a wide variety of involvement methods.
- 5.3 These methods are aligned with the Company's principles of resident involvement and recognise that residents may wish to become involved through some or all of the following mechanisms:
- i. as a Director of the Board of Newark and Sherwood Homes;
 - ii. as a member of a Tenants' Panel;
 - iii. as a member of a Continuous Improvement Group;
 - iv. with other residents as members of a Tenants and Residents Association;
 - v. as part of a Street/Block Group or as a Village Voice;
 - vi. by taking part in service development, monitoring and focus groups with Newark and Sherwood Homes;
 - vii. with other individuals or agencies on community projects and estate based initiatives;
 - viii. in their own right as an individual resident;
 - ix. as part of Neighbourhood Improvement Panels;
 - x. as part of Estate Walkabouts.
- 5.4 To meet residents' requirements we have both formal and informal ways in which residents can become involved. The formal methods of involvement require a more proactive approach to participation and

involve working with other residents in more formal mechanisms as well as with Newark and Sherwood Homes.

Involvement with Newark and Sherwood Homes

5.5 Directors of the Board of Newark and Sherwood Homes

All tenants have the opportunity to put themselves forward as a Director of the Board of Newark and Sherwood Homes. Being a Board Member involves setting the strategic direction of the company to ensure delivery of our vision and objectives.

5.6 Tenants' Panel

To support the principles of resident led regulation Newark and Sherwood Homes will establish a Tenants' Panel to scrutinise the performance of Newark and Sherwood Homes' service performance. The Panel will also form the third stage of the Company's Complaints Policy. All tenants will have the opportunity to put themselves forward to become a member of this Panel which is a consolidation of roles undertaken by many existing resident groups.

5.7 Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations

The Federation is an independent, umbrella organisation made up of groups of residents who are active in their own areas and come together to discuss mutual issues relating to housing and the community, which includes monitoring and challenging the services provided by Newark and Sherwood Homes.

The Federation works to support all TRAs throughout Newark and Sherwood District in partnership with Newark and Sherwood Homes.

5.8 Tenants and Residents Associations

Residents that wish to form a group and go on to join the Federation will be supported by Newark and Sherwood Homes. There will also be provision for smaller street groups or village voices to be formed where a TRA does not presently exist or where there is insufficient interest to sustain a TRA.

5.9 Neighbourhood Improvement Panels (NIPs)

There are two NIPs; one for the East and one for the West of the District. These panels are designed to provide maximum customer impact by empowering local communities to develop innovative solutions to resolve local issues.

Positions on the Panels will be made available to:

- i. two representatives from each Tenants and Residents Association from the respective area;
- ii. District Councillors;
- iii. Police representatives;
- iv. representation from Newark and Sherwood Homes;

NIPs will meet a minimum of 4 times a year to discuss community and housing issues relevant to their area. Dates and venues will be set by the NIPs.

All residents have the right to attend a NIP.

NIPs can also work with Newark and Sherwood Homes in order to assist in the identification of funding sources to support community initiatives.

The Chair of the NIPs will liaise with senior management at Newark and Sherwood Homes to progress any unresolved issues.

5.10 Monitoring Groups

Newark and Sherwood Homes currently facilitate 3 monitoring groups covering the following service areas:

- i. Housing Management
- ii. Repairs and Maintenance
- iii. Leasehold Services

The groups are held approximately every 6 weeks (with the exception of the Leasehold Group which meets every 3 months) and are chaired by residents.

These groups exist to monitor and challenge performance and service provision and to bring forward ideas to enhance current practice and shape future service delivery.

5.11 Continuous Improvement Groups

Newark and Sherwood Homes also hosts a number of improvement groups which run in a similar way to monitoring groups but are chaired by members of the Company Management Team:

- i. Grounds Maintenance
- ii. Cleaning Contract
- iii. Asset Management and Investment
- iv. Aids and Adaptations
- v. Resident Involvement
- vi. Access and Customer Care
- vii. Equality and Diversity

5.12 Services Inspection Team

Newark and Sherwood Homes, working in partnership with Nottingham Community Housing Association, has a team of residents from both organisations to inspect and challenge service delivery.

This is a unique initiative that allows residents to inspect services from both organisations. The team inspects specific services to identify areas for improvement and feeds back the areas for improvements to the relevant organisation.

5.13 Individual Residents

As part of the structure for resident involvement there are a number of options through which individual residents can become involved. These include:

- i. Surveys in a variety of formats
- ii. Telephone Panels
- iii. Service Development/Improvement Groups
- iv. Services Inspection Team
- v. Attending our Involvement Road shows
- vi. Editorial Panel

5.14 Street/Block Group

Residents of a street or block of flats may wish to establish a group where no recognised TRA exists in order to promote the interests of their immediate community and environment.

These groups can be recognised by Newark and Sherwood Homes as an informal involvement structure should residents wish this to be the case.

A development grant and a stationery pack will be offered to the group, on satisfaction of the requirements of the Federation's Funding Policy, in conjunction with the support of their local housing officer and the Federation. The formation of the group can be reviewed after a period of 12 months.

5.15 Village Voice

In the absence of any formal TRA or Street/Block group individuals may come forward to represent their communities. In order to ensure that the views of the community are represented the individual should provide an annual statement of support signed by 25% of the designated population. The signing of this statement indicates an acceptance by the community that they are happy for the individual to bring forward their views.

The role of the village voice will be to represent the interests of the community at a local level by facilitating two-way information sharing. Access to training and travel expenses will be available. This role will be reviewed on an annual basis.

5.16 Local Surgeries

In areas where no TRA exists the Federation will work with the Tenancy and Estates Team in the provision of surgeries in these areas.

A programme of local surgeries is published each year where residents of supported housing can meet officers of Newark and Sherwood Homes to discuss specific issues.

6 Reaching the Wider Community

Involving Hard To Reach Groups

6.1 Newark and Sherwood Homes works hard to achieve greater involvement from those residents whose voice is sometimes not heard. Within Newark and Sherwood Homes we are looking to increase levels of representation and involvement in decision-making from:

- i. Young parents

- ii. Disabled residents
- iii. Residents of remote rural properties
- iv. Gypsy & Traveller Community

6.2 In order to do this Newark and Sherwood Homes will, for example:

- i. develop innovative mechanisms to engage with hard to reach groups such as “virtual TRA” using technological solutions;
- ii. set up service improvement groups where necessary to address specific needs and concerns;
- iii. using the information on our tenant profile data base we will identify and positively target under-represented groups to encourage involvement and feedback;
- iv. encourage all staff to be pro-active in creating opportunities for residents from under-represented groups to become involved and to provide support and training for the group to allow it to become more effective;
- v. support the Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice for Rented Housing;
- vi. hold district wide involvement surgeries.

Community Initiatives

6.3 Newark and Sherwood Homes supports residents wishing to become involved in community-based projects. For example community garden schemes, estate improvement groups, community clean-ups and multi-agency action weeks. All these initiatives focus on residents working together for the good of their community, adding value to their environment and daily lives.

6.4 Newark and Sherwood Homes works intensively with partners to deliver diversionary events within communities. These proactive community initiatives are designed to prevent instances of anti-social behavior and include events such as:

- i. Street dance competitions
- ii. Christmas disco’s and carol concerts
- iii. Halloween parties and activities for younger children
- iv. Family fun days
- v. Graffiti removal events

6.5 This reflects our commitment to help create sustainable and cohesive communities and we will build on these in the future to offer further community initiatives which assist in the development of community skills and local employment opportunities, thereby supporting the Big Society agenda.

Tenant Compact

- 6.6 Newark and Sherwood Homes is committed to resident involvement and participation. A regular review of the Tenant Compact reflects this.
- 6.7 The Tenant Compact is an agreement developed by working in partnership with residents. This agreement helps to formalise participation arrangements and promote an effective working relationship.

7 Supporting Involvement

- 7.1 Residents are more likely to be involved if they can see that they are making a difference, feel valued and are adequately resourced to carry out projects within the community. This will be demonstrated through the delivery of the outcomes of this strategy.
- 7.2 To support this resident involvement and to make appropriate use of the public pound Newark and Sherwood Homes, via the Federation, will provide all registered groups with financial and administrative support:
- i. annual grant of up to £450 per group (subsequent grant applications will be assessed and any monies remaining from the previous year could be deducted);
 - ii. assistance with administration from the Federation;
 - iii. developmental support and advice;
 - iv. affiliation to the Tenant Participation Advisory Service or other appropriate bodies under the Federation's existing membership;
 - v. a start-up grant of up to £150 and a stationary pack.

Funding

- 7.3 Newark and Sherwood Homes seeks to demonstrate value for money and the most appropriate use of public funding in all areas of its operation including the involvement of residents in the shaping and delivery of services. Newark and Sherwood Homes will therefore provide an annual grant to the Federation to support the achievement of its vision and objectives through the delivery of the Federations Business Plan.
- 7.4 The Federation has an agreed Funding Policy which is attached at Appendix A and is supported by Newark and Sherwood Homes in the management of funding and has an annual external audit process

which is undertaken by a Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants' (CIPFA) qualified auditor.

Training

- 7.5 Newark and Sherwood Homes recognises that if involvement is to continue to grow and flourish, residents need to have the knowledge and skills necessary to empower them to play an active part in the decision making process.
- 7.6 To increase this feeling of involvement and confidence in contributing effectively, Newark and Sherwood Homes will carry out an annual survey to identify training needs.
- 7.7 An annual training schedule will be formulated based on the results from these surveys with consideration given to the timing of these sessions to meet diverse needs. This programme will continue to be delivered in partnership with other local partners to ensure maximum return for the investment.

8 Conduct for Involvement

- 8.1 Newark and Sherwood Homes aims to make involvement as effective as possible, so in order to ensure that everyone feels able to take part we have established the code of conduct detailed at Appendix B. This is based on the InSTEP (Information Services for Tenants: Empowerment & Participation) code of conduct and is attached at Appendix C.
- 8.2 In addition, all members of the Federation and Tenants and Residents Associations are required to adhere to the Conduct of Officer and Committee Members as specified in each individual Tenant and Residents Association constitution.
- 8.3 Together these documents describe the expectation of those participating in involvement in relation to code of conduct, conflict of interest, confidentiality and breaches of the Code of Conduct.

9 Measuring our Success

- 9.1 We will publish our success in delivering the outcomes of this strategy on an annual basis through the Tenants Annual Report. This will detail the performance of Newark and Sherwood Homes against the National

Standard for Tenant involvement and Empowerment and the Newark and Sherwood Offer for Getting Involved. The Annual Report will be available on the Company's website; www.nshomes.co.uk and will be sent to each tenant.

9.2 In addition we will report further performance information using the following methods:

- i. Homes from Homes;
- ii. on the website www.nshomes.co.uk;
- iii. posters in our offices;
- iv. performance reports to Board;
- v. reports to Federation, TRA, and Monitoring Group meetings.

10 Strategy Review

10.1 Newark and Sherwood Homes will review this strategy on a two yearly basis or as required following:

- i. new legislation;
- ii. emerging best practice;
- iii. day to day operational issues.

10.2 This policy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment which is available at www.nshomes.co.uk.

11 Comments on the Policy or Service

11.1 If you wish to comment on this strategy or the service, you should do so in the first instance by writing to:

Newark and Sherwood Homes
Kelham Hall
Newark-on-Trent
Nottinghamshire
NG23 5QX

or by making any comments/complaints through the 'Housing Matters or Complaints Matter' procedure. You can do this by completing the necessary form, emailing us at housing@nshomes.co.uk or visiting our website at www.nshomes.co.uk. The issues raised will then be investigated and a reply sent in writing.

Newark and Sherwood Homes Limited
Kelham Hall
Kelham
NEWARK ON TRENT
Nottinghamshire
NG23 5QX

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please contact us.



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