



City of London Housing Service

Resident Communications & Engagement Strategy

DRAFT

Approved by:	Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee
Approved:	
Review Date:	2 years from approval date

1. Equal opportunities

The City of London operates an Equality & Diversity policy and this applies to all aspects of its services. When communicating and engaging with residents, we will ensure that no resident is treated less favourably on the grounds of age, race, religion or belief, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership

This strategy and all related information can be made available in different formats and languages on request.

2. Legislative and Policy framework

There is only one legislative requirement for landlords to undertake consultation with leaseholders under the Landlord & Tenants Act of 1985 (revised by the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act of 2002) on works and services which will result in direct financial charges to them over specified limits.

Owing to the lack of formal requirements this strategy has been developed with regard to existing good practice within this department and others across the City, good practice amongst other social landlords and recommendations made by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS).

3. Scope of the strategy

The strategy applies to the City of London Housing Service's work with tenants and leaseholders of its thirteen social housing estates. It also applies to work with other residents on the estates, such as freeholders and the tenants of private landlords. We have used the term 'residents' throughout to reflect all of these groups.

The strategy does not formally apply to our work with tenants of commercial properties on our estates; however, general principles regarding communication do apply to them.

We are working to bring together communities and neighbourhoods that reach across estate boundaries, therefore, the principles of this strategy also apply to those who do not live on our estates but live, work, study or trade in the surrounding area. There is a Communications Manager for Property Services who will develop the approach relating to major works and new development projects.

4. Introduction

The City of London believes that high quality and consistent communication and engagement with residents are vital to a positive landlord and resident relationship. This strategy has built upon the previous successes and recognises the need to continue to improve our approach to involvement and engagement across our services.

Resident's views are central to the continuing development of our strategic direction. Residents have supported the drafting of this strategy and we will continue to work closely with residents to develop the themes and the work that is delivered under this strategy.

The aim of resident communications and engagement in the Housing Service is to keep our residents fully informed about their homes and estates and to engage and consult with them

about matters affecting them. We encourage our residents to engage in a dialogue with us in a variety of ways that suits them, and support a range of activities which build strong communities, individual skills and inclusive groups, working together.

5. Vision

Our vision is to engage effectively and work collaboratively with residents so that they may influence our priorities and the way we work. We believe that true customer satisfaction is experienced where services have been developed, shaped and reviewed in conjunction with our customers, our residents.

The four key principles that capture our strategic vision are:

- Commitment to working together
- Sustainable community engagement
- Supporting Social Wellbeing
- Communicating effectively with our residents.

In the next section we set out the key strands of work under each of these principles. The Resident Communications and Engagement Strategy Principles Diagram (Appendix 1) which sits alongside this strategy also summarises these principles.

6. Principles

6.1 Commitment to working together – from idea to implementation

We commit to working collaboratively on projects and new initiatives with residents, our City colleagues and our external partners. We will be clear about available options and the decisions that will be taken. This co-operation means issues can be raised in a constructive manner and appropriate solutions found in a way that involves residents and officers.

- Collaboration – our estate teams and our Neighbourhood Development and Engagement Team together with our colleagues across the City of London and our external partner will work together with residents.
- Projects and the HUB – we will establish working groups to develop projects such as Residents Celebration Day and local, estate-based projects. We will develop and expand our Housing User Board (HUB). This will enable residents to shape the work that we do from an early stage.
- Landlord Accreditation – we will undertake a programme of work leading towards a nationally recognised accreditation in resident involvement and engagement.

6.2 Sustainable Community Engagement – supporting residents to participate

We believe true community development is more than one-off events. We will work with residents to think through their proposals and assist them to develop and undertake activities that are inclusive and enjoyable for all which in turn leads to long-term, workable community groups.

- Resources – we will assist residents to identify funding and other avenues for resources. This will enable community members and groups to become self-sufficient and skilled on a longer-term basis.

- Mediation and Time Credits – we will use mediation to improve communications with both newly-established and existing groups, to secure on-going relationships. We will use Time Credits as an empowerment tool for both estate staff and residents.
- Evidence – we will measure what we are doing and the impact it has to showcase the value of our work with residents. We will encourage resident groups to cross estate boundaries and share what they do with others, working towards a City of London Community.

6.3 Supporting Social Wellbeing – connecting residents to activities and services

We recognise that a strong and inclusive community can help people to feel less socially isolated. We commit to supporting the public health agenda to improve social wellbeing by working with our residents to develop their communities.

- Community Connectors – we will pilot a community connectors project, which is intended to encourage neighbourliness and support within the community, decreasing feelings of social isolation.
- Neighbour Network – we will develop and expand our existing Neighbour Networks, providing support where necessary to foster these growing communities.
- ‘Remembering Yesterday, Celebrating Today’ – we will continue to support this programme of events which enables integration and cross-generational relationships to thrive.

6.4 Communicating effectively with our residents – sharing our work through a variety of channels

We believe communication is vital to building strong and effective relationships with our residents. We deliver our statutory duties in relation to resident consultation. We are continually working to ensure the right information is shared in good time, and where we receive feedback we will act upon it appropriately.

- Accessibility – we will provide readily accessible and timely information via a range of methods, from newsletters to noticeboards, to ensure all residents are informed of necessary information.
- Diversity – we recognise that different customers wish to communicate in different ways. We will continue to explore methods of communication, ask for feedback and adapt our service to meet our customer’s needs.
- Technology – we will continue to develop our use of technology, including expanding our website in consultation with residents and reviewing our use of social media and email, whilst ensuring that those who do not engage with technology are not excluded from engaging with us.

7. Delivering this Strategy

This strategy builds on the work of our 2014 Resident Communications and Engagement Strategy. We remain committed to the approach we have delivered to date. Our approach to delivering communications and engagement with our residents continues to develop to meet their needs, therefore the following list is not exhaustive, however a number of highlights of our work are set out below:

- Estate-specific Newsletters, published four times a year and made available to all households and a one-page Estate Bulletin, published weekly.
- Estate Plans – produced in conjunction with our residents.
- Inviting and welcoming feedback via an annual satisfaction survey, the HUB, and the complaints process.
- An Annual Report of our performance, provided to all residents.
- Regular Estate Meetings or drop-ins open to all residents and held at least twice a year, and estate ‘walkabouts’ where staff and residents review the estate together.
- Offering small grants to individuals and groups to support the costs of running community activities and events, through a simple and transparent application process.
- Supporting a range of community groups, including Resident Associations and working groups for specific projects.
- Continuing the Remembering Yesterday, Celebrating Today programme of community development activities.
- An annual Resident Celebration Day to recognise our achievements together.

Appendix 2, Protocol on Meetings & Drop-ins and Appendix 3, Protocol for Working with Groups give more detail of our commitment in these specific areas.

8. Monitoring the strategy

The Projects & Improvements Manager is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this strategy. Reports will be brought to the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee to update Members on resident communications and engagement.

The efficacy of the strategy will be monitored through the following key performance indicators:

- % of residents satisfied or very satisfied with communications and customer service on their estate
- % of residents who feel their views are taken into account
- % of residents getting involved in community activities are completely new to volunteering
- % of residents in the Time Credit programme reporting an increased quality of life

These will be measured by the annual satisfaction survey, the Time Credit impact survey and the STAR survey usually held every three years.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Resident Communications and Engagement Strategy Principles Diagram

Appendix 2 – Protocol for Estate Meetings & Drop-ins

Appendix 3 – Protocol for Working with Groups