

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY

1. Foreword

- 1.1 Black Country Housing Group's (BCHG) approach to resident involvement has been developed in consultation with residents. Resident involvement is recognised as part of our core business and this is clearly stated in our Business plan 2004-2008.
- 1.2 This strategy sets out BCHG's approach that is intended to give residents a wider choice of methods to be involved and provide a link to our approach to continuous improvement over the next 2 years.
- 1.3 The strategy will also give us a greater opportunity to build better partnerships with residents through increased communication and working together.

2. Background

- 2.1 Black Country Housing Group recognises that resident involvement is vital to ensuring that customers continue to receive high quality services. Through involving residents, service improvements and developments can be highlighted.
- 2.2 The Housing Corporation Inspection undertaken in 2001 found that we work well at providing great efforts to consult with and involve tenants and local residents and to respond to their identified concerns and needs. However we need to improve the range of tenants who are involved both in terms of geographical spread and in the participation of black and minority ethnic tenants.
- 2.3 We recognise that we need to vary the ways in which residents can get involved to match their lifestyles, so a range of involvement methods will be available. Residents can choose one or a number of methods as are practical.
- 2.4 The Best Value review of Tenant participation that was carried out in 2002/3 highlighted areas of best practice for engaging residents. The formulation of this strategy will enable us to incorporate those practices.

3. Aims and objectives

The Resident Involvement strategy will enable residents to influence the way that services are provided in a way that suits them.

3.1 Information

We will provide sufficient information in suitable formats to residents about the organisation and the delivery of services. Resources and training will be offered to residents so that they may be encouraged to get involved.

3.2 Resident Board members

Two places on the Board will be reserved specifically for residents to govern the affairs of the organisation. Residents will be directly involved in many aspects of running a housing association.

A programme of support will be available to resident board members in order that they can fully understand their role, participate at meetings and gain an understanding of the issues that they will be faced with.

3.3 Residents Groups

Groups local to a particular area or estate will be established if requested by residents. They will give residents an opportunity to work together to address local issues and problems and work towards making improvements. Staff will provide practical support on a temporary basis to help to establish and sustain the groups.

3.4 The Consumer Panel

The existing Consumer Panel of tenants that give their views about particular aspects of BCH's service delivery will be strengthened. The numbers of members on the panel will be increased particularly to reflect geography, male residents and BME residents.

3.5 Best Value/Social Audit Consultations/ Focus groups

Involving residents is an essential part of the continuous improvement process. The services Black Country Housing Group provides will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are meeting the needs of residents and they represent good value for money. A pool of residents will be recruited to act as a specialist focus group with staff. Roles will vary from overseeing the process, participating in working groups and monitoring the BCHG's performance against targets and outcomes.

3.6 Resident's Newsletter

A newsletter for residents will be published 3 times a year. Residents will be informed about what is going on but also have the opportunity to contribute articles. Residents will also be invited to become part of an editorial board to oversee the production of the newsletter with staff. Training will be provided by staff to assist the role.

3.7 One-Off Events/Social Events

Residents living in a particular area will be brought together in a relaxed environment to promote a residents group or to seek the views of a range of residents particularly younger residents. Staff will assist with the practical arrangements to make the event happen.

3.8 Resident's Advisory Panels

For each key department within the organisation an advisory panel consisting of residents and staff would be established just to comment on particular aspects of service delivery or to inform developments. Training will be available to maximise panel member's involvement.

3.9 Resident's Outreach

Staff from various departments will be available for residents who are not participating in any particular structure, to meet and talk to about issues that concern them. The outreach sessions will provide a good opportunity to recruit residents to actively participate in the other involvement mechanisms.

3.10 Resident Satisfaction

We will measure resident's satisfaction across all areas of the group's business from the many ways in which residents are currently asked to give their feedback, e.g. repair satisfaction slips, customer satisfaction surveys and service reviews.

The Community Regeneration department will regularly undertake an audit of the service

areas that residents are asked to give their views about so that if any gaps are highlighted, recommendations can be made to the relevant departments for them to address.

4. Equal Opportunities

- 4.1** All residents will have the opportunity to participate in the management of their homes. Barriers will be identified and measures put into place to overcome them so that residents are not hindered from being involved. We will strive to ensure that involvement is representative of the resident base and that under-represented groups will be supported to get involved.
- 4.2** Accessible venues local to residents will be used to hold meetings and events; Information will be translated into community languages where appropriate; When staff with community language skills are not available we will work with community members with those skills to support us at meetings and events; Expenses will be made available to residents to pay for childcare and carers costs so that they may participate; We will consider the environmental impact of meeting times and locations to ensure maximum involvement;
- 4.3** We will map our traditionally hard to reach residents and target the underrepresented, for example young people, black and minority ethnic residents and residents with a disability. We will put best practice measures into place to increase their likelihood of getting involved.

5. Monitoring and review

Measuring performance in resident involvement can be difficult as the benefits may not be immediately apparent. We will however carry out monitoring on a regular basis against the following:

- 5.1** Performance against targets set in the strategy;
- 5.2** Through collecting feedback from individual residents that we engage;
- 5.3** We will regularly audit the areas that residents are being involved in to identify any gaps;
- 5.4** We will seek to engage at least 100 residents in the various structures;
- 5.5** We will monitor the background and number of residents that get involved to measure the range of residents that we are engaging;
- 5.6** We will seek to organise 6 involvement actions during a 12 month period;
- 5.7** Six resident newsletters will be produced over 2 years;
- 5.8** The strategy will be formally reviewed in 2 years time to take account of changes;
- 5.9** We will compare our performance against other RSL's in the area to indicate how we are performing;
- 5.10** We will collect evidence of involvement that has led to some form of service improvement or a change to a decision or policy and report back to residents;
- 5.11** The annual cost of involvement to the organisation will also be measured to derive cost and benefit analyses and to inform future resource needs;

6. Resources

Resident involvement is a core part of Black Country Housing Group's business therefore we will ensure that funding is in place to make it happen.

- 6.1** An employee will be available to work on Resident Involvement so that practical support is available to residents who are being engaged.
- 6.2** In addition, a budget of £6,000 will be committed to resident involvement activity during 2005/06 so that residents from a range of backgrounds can participate. During 2007/08 this figure will increase to £8,000.

- 6.3** We will establish links with other funders to resource additional activities and initiatives for residents.
- 6.4** We will look into new ways of involving residents using methods of IT.
- 6.5** In house training will be delivered to staff across the organisation regarding the importance of resident involvement, its impact and resident's views.
Training will also be delivered to residents to build their capacity to become involved.
- 6.6** A programme of training will be delivered to residents who are interested in becoming board members so that they may get an insight into the role of a board member.
- 6.7** Residents that go onto become board members will receive specific training so that they can fully understand their role and participate in the business of the board.

7. Priorities 2005- 2007

AIM	ACTION	WHO	WHEN
Promote resident involvement	The new resident involvement strategy is promoted to residents and staff	Community Regeneration Manager/ Tenant Involvement Officer	April 05 April 06
Engaging hard to reach residents	Hard to reach residents are identified and a series of outreach visits are organised	Tenant Involvement Officer/ Housing Officers	May 05 and ongoing
Focus groups established	Residents are recruited to become members of specific focus groups	Tenant Involvement Officer/ Housing Officers	July 05 and ongoing
Existing involvement is sustained	Existing groups are supported and resourced	Tenant Involvement Officer	April 05 and ongoing
Support is available to resident board members	A programme of support is developed that covers all aspects of being a resident board member	Community Regeneration Manager/ Tenant Involvement Officer	September 05
Establishing a residents newsletter	Recruit 3 residents to become members of the editorial panel	Tenant Involvement Officer	May 05
AIM	ACTION	WHO	WHEN
Establishing a residents newsletter	Training is delivered to staff and residents on the editorial panel	Tenant Involvement Officer/ Marketing Manager	June/ July 05
Raise awareness of Resident board members	Promote the role of a board member through existing groups/ panels	Tenant Involvement Officer	June 05
1 resident board member is recruited	Residents are invited to apply to become a board member	Tenant Involvement Officer	December 05
Assessing performance	Information regarding similar organisations performance is obtained	Tenant Involvement Officer	October 06
The Resident Involvement Strategy is reviewed	Residents and staff are recruited to form a sub group to oversee the process	CRM/ Tenant Involvement Officer	2007

8. Conclusion

- 8.1** This strategy is intended to build upon previous resident involvement efforts across the organisation.
- 8.2** We will strive to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to get involved in the management of their homes in a way that is appropriate to their needs.
- 8.3** Resident involvement is part of our core business and we will seek to have residents involved at every level of the organisation’s business.
- 8.4** A number of initiatives therefore will be introduced over the next 2 years to increase resident participation.

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