



NORTH STAR

North Star's Resident Involvement Strategy 2016-2018

“We have adult to adult relationships with our actively engaged customers and the power imbalance between us is minimised as much as possible. We call this ‘co-creating’.” *Leading and Growing - North Star 2018*

Introduction

North Star Housing Group (NSHG) is committed to providing a range of different ways for residents and our other local partners to be involved in their communities and the running of the organisation. We recognise that our residents are all individuals with different needs and aspirations who will want to participate in different ways and to different degrees. We want to make sure that they have the opportunity to participate at a level that is both meaningful and convenient for them.

We want to improve on our existing approach to involvement to create more meaningful opportunities as we believe this will result in more engaged residents who feel they can have an impact on the services we provide, improved services, better and increased choice for residents and higher levels of satisfaction.

This strategy sets out how we will increase and improve upon our resident involvement practices and opportunities in 2016-18 and how we will measure its effectiveness. This strategy will sit alongside, and work with, the new Volunteer Policy for NSHG.

The main objectives of the strategy are to:

1. Improve services to residents and / or make them more effective, using residents' views, feedback and Involvement; and improve customer satisfaction;
2. Provide residents with a wide range of opportunities that allow them to participate at the level, and in a way, that they prefer; to express their views and help shape service design and delivery;
3. Enhance scrutiny of NSHG's performance through resident involvement;
4. Ensure involvement opportunities are accessible to all residents, taking account of diverse needs, and encouraging under-represented sections of the community;
5. Provide training and support to ensure that actively involved residents can be effective and become empowered;
6. Ensure the approach taken provides good value for money;

Our priorities for involvement in 2016 - 2018 include:

1. Recruitment

Increasing the numbers of residents and community volunteers actively involved through marketing the opportunities for involvement, recruiting new people and offering appropriate and good quality training

2. Strategic planning

Tenants to be involved in strategic planning and decision making

3. Digital engagement

Improving digital resident involvement opportunities – review of LINK Online, is there a better way to engage with tenants electronically

4. Co-Creation

Ensuring North Star has a strong relationship with actively involved tenants and the power balance between us is minimized as much as possible, through co-creation. Engaging staff in all departments and posts around resident involvement and agreeing roles and responsibilities

5. Student volunteers

Establishing links with local colleges and Universities to develop opportunities for placements and volunteering

6. Tenant Advisors

Expanding Tenant Advisor activity, recruiting more Tenant Advisors on a flexible basis

Where we are now

There are already a number of ways that tenants can get involved in their local area and with the organisation ranging from estate inspections to being part of the organisation's Scrutiny Panel. The range of activities on offer would suit tenants with differing levels of commitment and styles - some are formal and require considerable commitment, and others are simply about expressing a one-off view on a service. All the current involvement opportunities with NSHG are captured in the ladder of involvement below. It should be noted that some of these opportunities are more active than others at present and some need further development.

<i>Tenant Board Member</i>	Control	Level of Involvement
<p><i>LINK Group</i></p> <p><i>The group represents the views and promotes the interests of all tenants by influencing our services.</i></p>	Joint Management	
<p><i>Tenant's Voice Scrutiny Panel</i></p> <p><i>Tenants Voice Scrutiny Panel is a group of North Star residents, who look at our services in depth to make recommendations for improvement.</i></p>		
<p><i>Tenant Advisors</i></p> <p><i>Tenant Advisors test out our services and make recommendations for improvement. They take part in activities including mystery shopping, surveys, visits, work shadowing and interviews with staff and tenants</i></p>	Participation	
<i>Local Tenants and Residents Associations</i>		
<i>4U</i>		
<i>Estate Inspections</i>		
<i>Focus Groups</i>		
<i>Community Events</i>	Consultation	
<i>Customer Insight Methods; surveys, focus groups etc.</i>		
<i>Complaints</i>		
<i>Residents Newsletter/Website</i>	Information Giving	

As highlighted in the table above, we already have a number of existing involvement opportunities available to our residents.

Our future plan

1. Marketing and Recruitment

Marketing

In order to involve residents successfully a number of communication channels and methods need to be used so that a wide range of people have the opportunity to get involved. These can include:

- Face to face contact
- Social Media
- Websites
- Written materials
- Interactive media
- Texts and phones
- Using networks – word of mouth

We recognise that we cannot rely solely on inactive methods i.e. information on the website, but need to adopt a more proactive and planned approach to encouraging involvement. This will include using a range of media and methods to reach a wider audience. Currently the use of visual and audio communication is underused (including videos, photographs, animations and audio recordings) to increase interest and accessibility. These methods make it easier to get the message across quickly and are more appealing and grab the attention. They are also more accessible to those who have difficulty with written English.

Recruitment

Recruitment of residents to involvement activities is currently undertaken on an ad-hoc basis. To encourage more involvement and increase the numbers involved, we will develop a more formal and organised approach to recruiting residents to the different levels of involvement.

We have developed a detailed recruitment plan that will involve online and local campaigns, with local staff involved in sharing information about involvement opportunities, finding out what specific areas of work residents are interested in and how much time they can commit. This will help residents identify the right channel of involvement for them and promote all the benefits, including influencing service provision and the training that formally involved residents will receive.

2. Training

In order to support formally involved residents and widen the skills mix of individuals and groups, so they can take on different levels of involvement, a new involved resident training programme will be introduced. This will start at a basic level to provide skills and understanding for anyone – resident or student – getting involved with NSHG, so they have a solid grounding in what is needed for effective involvement.

This training may be delivered in one of two ways, or a combination of both:

- Through bespoke online provision from an experienced provider; and/or
- Internal training provision

Whichever route is followed, the basic involvement 'course' will include some training for involved tenants, such as:

- Working in partnership
- Being solutions focussed
- Equality and diversity
- Maintaining 'professional' boundaries
- Value for Money

Every involved resident will take part in this training.

Other training will link into the Link and Scrutiny Panel's training programme that has been developed. Involved residents can choose or be nominated for different parts of this additional training dependent on their specific needs and role. By including other involved residents in the training of LINK and Scrutiny panel members, it will also allow for wider networking and the potential for building more interest in taking on these higher level involvement roles.

Opportunities to network with other housing providers and other residents' groups will also be considered.

Tenants to have the confidence and ability to actively challenge staff and decisions.

3. Involving students

In order to provide volunteering and work experience opportunities for local students and increase the networking and exposure opportunities for our residents, we want to create links with local colleges and universities. Our aim is to involve students with a range of skills in different parts of the involvement framework so they can both learn about social housing and share their skills.

Not only will NSHG and residents gain from involvement from students, but students will be able to shape communities they may live in in the future and gain beneficial experience and development in a work based environment to assist with securing employment. There are also opportunities to attract talent to work within the social housing sector and bridge gaps between different generations

4. Expanding and improving opportunities

To build on the above we want to develop some specific areas of involvement further, these include:

- ***Tenant Advisors***

We now have a group of Tenant Advisors who have completed specific training to support them in their roles. The Tenant Advisors have been involved in Anti-Social Behaviour mystery shops, procurement activity (scoring tenders / interviewing contractors / mystery shopping), supporting the TVSP with their reviews with site visits and interviewing. To improve the Tenant Advisor activity we need to expand their roles and recruit further tenants. The current Tenant Advisors have DBS checks and have had the three day training; we can be more flexible with newer Tenant Advisors who would like to focus on Mystery Shopping/site visits to increase membership.

- ***LINK Online***

We now have a Yammer account which we update prior to the LINK meeting with the paper work that will be sent out to LINK. We can ask specific questions on this page to attract further insight from tenants, who want to have their say, but don't want to/are unable to attend the LINK meetings. At the moment this page is not used as well as we hoped. We will look at the possibility of emailing all LINK Online direct with LINK agenda items and specific questions. With the Tenancy Profiling information we will have further tenant emails to increase the LINK Online membership.

- ***Estate Inspections***

There is already a structure for Estate Inspections and the dates and times of these are advertised on the websites well in advance. However, we currently have very little engagement from tenants on the walkabouts. The process for Estate Inspections will be reviewed including: How they are advertised; how often they occur, the proactive encouragement of residents and other stakeholders to attend; what happens as a result of them; and how the quality and success of a walkabout is measured.

- ***LINK Group***

LINK group are currently involved in strategic planning on an ad-hoc basis. The group often feel they are just 'rubber stamping'. It is important for tenants to be strategically involved as it is within the consumer standards. It is also a core value for the organisation. It is important that LINK have a programme for the year, which is consistent with Boards. This process needs awareness across the organisation, formalising and planning.

5. Involving staff

It is important for staff throughout the organisation to take ownership of resident involvement and that it becomes embedded in their everyday work. For example, by making sure that residents are asked about their experience of the service and their

preferences for future services, and by staff being aware of opportunities for involvement and encouraging residents to take part.

In order that no opportunity to recruit a resident into involvement is missed, we will fully brief all staff who has contact with residents on the range of resident involvement activities that we actively promote. To help facilitate this, briefings on involvement will be provided periodically by the Community Investment Team.

Senior managers will also be part of promoting resident involvement and for identifying and creating value added involvement opportunities in their service areas. This includes creating opportunities for support function teams to participate in resident involvement.

6. Measuring impact

In order to check that we are encouraging more residents and others to get involved, we will introduce a simple measuring framework to collect numbers of involved residents but also quality indicators such as their experience of it, if they felt it added value and how they would improve it. These will be collected by the Community Investment team who will make any recommendations for changes to involvement opportunities that will be actioned by the appropriate team or manager.

The success of the involvement strategy will be measured through this framework and the strategy reviewed after 12 months to check it is being effective.

Summary

NSHG has already created a number of opportunities for resident involvement and now we want to build on this, widen it and make it stronger. We want to take our staff with us and involve a range of stakeholders in implementing this new plan.

We commit to investing in our new involvement plan.

Our senior leaders will make sure that this strategy is implemented and adds value to our business. We will measure what we put in place so we know that it is making a difference to our residents and the services we provide. We will make changes and/or add to our plans as required.

