

Rotherham Tenant Involvement Strategy

2016 to 2019



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Foreword

Rotherham Council is determined to make Tenant Involvement central to the way that the Council's housing service works. We want to make sure that we adopt appropriate good practice and innovation. We have a long-standing tenant involvement movement that we are proud of. We want to build on this and develop our experience, expertise and reputation to set Rotherham at the forefront of Tenant Involvement.

We have an opportunity to develop a genuine partnership with our tenants and leaseholders who live in and around our estates. We will work with them to shape the future of the housing service, our services and their homes. We want to create a way of working together that is based on learning, sharing information and rewarding good performance.

The Tenant Involvement Strategy sets out how we plan to do this over the next three years and how tenants can get involved.

The Tenant Involvement Strategy has been put together by tenants working in partnership with the Council and Rother Fed (an organisation that supports TARA development and builds tenant empowerment).

Thanks to everyone who took part in the consultation and help to develop this Strategy and also the members of the of the New Tenant Involvement Strategy Working Group who gave so much time and commitment to writing this Strategy.



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(Cabinet Member for Housing)



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Introduction

This Strategy ensures our tenants have a say at a strategic and local level. Having involvement that is meaningful, accessible and which allows them to influence services and the Housing Strategy which ensures that the Council puts tenants at the heart of everything we do.

Tenant involvement is characterised by constant change and the regulatory framework governing tenant engagement, involvement and empowerment has changed significantly in the last few years, placing a greater emphasis on accountability and “co-regulation”.

This Tenant Involvement Strategy 2016-19, is the first stage of turning actions into reality and with your involvement, this can result in better decision-making and an improved quality housing service.

This Strategy demonstrates how the Council, Rother Fed and tenants and leaseholders will work in partnership together to shape and deliver a high quality housing service.

The Council has a long established commitment to engaging with its local communities, and recognises its responsibility to involve local people in the issues that affect or interest them. Going forward we want to build on this and engage people in a way that that offers choice and flexibility by offering a range of different opportunities to get involved.

It is recognised that the Council has a continually evolving and diverse customer base and as such continued efforts are needed to promote equality and diversity and develop links with all under-represented groups including BME (Black, Minority and Ethnic) groups, young people and those with vulnerabilities or disabilities.

TPAS (Tenant Engagement Experts)

Rotherham Council Housing & Neighbourhood Services are now confirmed as a TPAS accredited landlord for Resident Involvement Excellence from 2016 for a period of three-years.

This is great news, and shows how committed we are to making sure tenants’ views and input is at the heart of our housing and neighbourhood services. It follows a rigorous assessment process during which TPAS looked at how Council’s Housing and Neighbourhood services engage with tenants. It reflects the strategic improvements we have made recently with regards to Tenant Involvement working alongside Rother Fed (Tenant Federation), tenants and staff.

We are working hard to widen and improve opportunities such as digital inclusion for tenants including under-represented groups such as younger tenants to make a positive difference to the services they provide. The Council will use this award to continue to raise our standards of our services working with tenants and leaseholders.



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Vision

The Council owns and manage around 21,000 properties in the Borough. The Council wants to be the best housing provider in the country, delivering high quality services and support, and peaceful and well-managed neighbourhoods.

Aims and Objectives of the Strategy

Aims

- To set out our approach to tenant involvement including the reasons why we seek to involve tenants
- To set out ways in which we will enable and encourage tenants to be actively involved and demonstrate that tenants are part of the continuous service review and improvement process
- To be innovative in our approach to involvement to achieve equality and diversity in the services we provide and the opportunities we offer ensuring that all tenants, regardless of particular circumstances, have access to the same rights of engagement and consultation
- To ensure that we meet all statutory requirements demonstrating best practice in accordance with government legislation and guidance.
- Enhancing tenants skills, knowledge, confidence and quality of life.

Objectives

Objective One

- Make tenant involvement an integral part of our business by involving and consulting tenants to shape services to best meet their needs

Objective Two

- Ensure that we are fully inclusive and provide opportunities to widen engagement by offering a range of ways that tenants can get involved, at a level and pace that is accessible to all

Objective Three

- To provide and support training and development opportunities to enable all tenants to make a difference

Objective Four

- To maximise accountability and value for money to ensure that tenants have confidence in our services.

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What is Tenant Involvement?

The overall aim of tenant involvement is to understand the needs, expectations, aspirations, achievements and experiences of Council tenants and to improve services as a result of this.

We aim to achieve this by following the new TPAS community engagement standards which we have already started to achieve below.

TPAS Community Engagement Standards

1

Engagement Strategy

Make sure your tenant engagement links directly to business plan objectives.

2

Resources for Engagement

Your engagement has got to be resourced to ensure it is effective in delivering planned outcomes.

3

Information and Insight

Provide access to information at the right level, at the right time, to the right people in the right way.

4

Influence and Scrutiny

Ensure tenants, leaseholders and communities can influence appropriately.

5

Community Engagement

Engage with communities and local stakeholders to develop projects and plans to meet jointly identified needs.

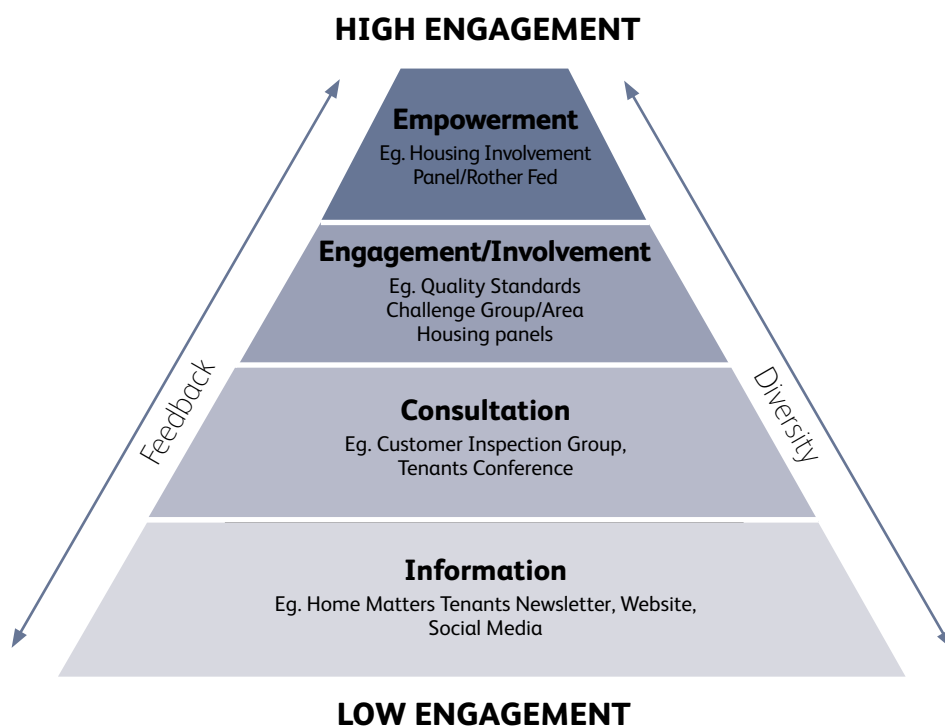
6

Valuing Engagement

Ensure your tenant engagement outcomes will benefit stakeholder organisations, tenants, leaseholders and communities.

5 Ways to get involved

The models below show different levels of engagement right from information to empowerment. We want to give tenants a menu of involvement, so they can decide the extent of their involvement.



6 Menu of Involvement

Below are a number of options available to tenants as to how they may get involved in accordance with the models above. The list is not intended to be an exhaustive one, as new mechanisms will be developed to offer maximum choice and opportunities for people to get involved at the level they prefer.

Menu of Involvement	Role
Empowerment: The Council delegates various aspects of management to tenants	
Housing Involvement Panel (HIP)	<p>Useful for: The Housing Involvement Panel acts as a consultation and discussion forum and strengthen their role for the Housing Service.</p> <p>Key Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To play an active role in developing policies and strategies to continually enhance the quality of housing services. • To oversee the Tenant Involvement function and ensure it is playing an effective role in service improvement and the sustainability of housing and neighbourhoods across the borough <p>Commitment Level: Bi-monthly</p>
Rother Fed	<p>Useful for: Rotherham Federation of Communities (Rother Fed) supports communities to grow and develop, working with them to build their sense of belonging, community pride and spirit.</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means working with Neighbourhood Partnership Team and through grass roots community groups that are committed to bringing communities together, giving all communities a voice and creating local solutions to local issues. • Managing and monitoring small grant schemes for community groups are a central Rother Fed activity. Ongoing activities include grants to support Tenants and Residents Associations (TARA's) and community groups, start up and maintenance grants for groups with 20 % council tenants in their area of benefit.. • Manage the Environmental Exchange Grant to assist with running costs in exchange for a commitment to undertake specific, mutually agreed activities on the communal areas of estates and communities such as litter picking, emptying litter bins, grubbing out weeds and so on. This is a grant run in partnership with RMBC Streetpride. The maximum amount you can receive from this grant is £250. • Tenants are trained in consultation and scrutiny skills and creating improved housing services. • Carrying out two scrutiny reviews per year on behalf of the Council. <p>Commitment level: will vary.</p>

Menu of Involvement	Role
<p>Right to Manage</p>	<p>Useful for: Housing law in England gives local authority tenants a collective right to take on the management of the council housing where they live.</p> <p>Key features: This may happen where a local tenants' group believe that they could provide a better or more cost effective service, like arranging repairs or estate cleaning, if they were to have direct control of the money that the council spends on that service.</p> <p>When tenants join together to manage their own homes they set up a 'tenant management organisation'.</p> <p>Commitment level: Full-time</p>
<p>Engagement: Working together. The Council and tenants decide together on what is best and work in partnership to carry out the work</p>	
<p>Quality Standards Challenge Group</p>	<p>Useful for: QSCG (Quality and Standards Challenge Group) is the scrutiny panel that forms part of your governance structure)</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Quality Standards Challenge Group leads the assessment of performance against the customer defined local service standards (local offers) • The group work closely with tenants that monitor the local service standards through mystery shopping and reality checking exercises. • The Quality and Standards Challenge Group role involves looking at any performance 'hot topics' or 'cause for concerns' in relation to customer satisfaction and help in providing a standard of service the customer wants. <p>Commitment level: Quarterly</p>
<p>Involvement: Deciding together. The Council encourages additional options and ideas from tenants and provides opportunities for joint decision-making.</p>	
<p>Area Housing Panels</p>	<p>Useful for: We have 7 Area Housing Panels which provides an opportunity to have a say on both local issues and borough wide housing issues:</p> <p>Key features:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Gathering feedback and views of tenants and residents in the area on housing and estate management matters;

Menu of Involvement	Role
	<p>2 Identifying and considering projects to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account allocated budget in accordance with current guidance;</p> <p>3 Contributing to activities to assess and improve housing and estate management services;</p> <p>4 Respond to housing related consultations.</p> <p>Commitment level: Meets bi-monthly at a venue within the Panel area and at a suitable time which maximises attendance.</p>
<p>Estate Walkabouts</p>	<p>Useful for: Meeting with your Council Officer and representatives from other agencies who work in your area to identify issues that could be improved.</p> <p>Key features: Having an influence on what is undertaken to improve the local community. Getting local housing and environmental issues dealt with and resolved.</p> <p>Commitment level: 2–3 hours, for each walkabout and between 2–4 estate walkabouts per year in each area.</p>
<p>Consultation: The Council offers options and listens to feedback, and may change proposals</p>	
<p>Customer Inspection Group/ Learning from Customers Forum</p>	<p>Useful for: The Customer Inspection group test the most popular service areas</p> <p>Key features: Using a variety of access channels and methods e.g. mystery shopping, reality checking exercises, observations, website tests, exit polls, journey maps, test performance against service standards. They also conduct additional activities to see the service through the eyes of the customer!</p> <p>Commitment level: Variable</p>
<p>Tenants Conference</p>	<p>Useful for: Updated about RMBC Housing Performance and information about other services and how you can get involved.</p> <p>Key features: Allows a wider audience from the total tenant population, to find out more information about housing and housing related issues in Rotherham and the rest of the country.</p> <p>Commitment level: One day per year</p>

Menu of Involvement	Role
Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments	<p>Useful for: If you have a complaint, suggestion or compliment</p> <p>Key features: You can contact us in a number of ways: Via the online form on the Council website: www.rotherham.gov.uk/complaints Email: complaints@rotherham.gov.uk By post: Using a complaint form or by letter with a free post address. Housing Officers carry out visits to tenants to address any complaints that come forward.</p> <p>Commitment Level: Variable</p>
CIH (Chartered Institute of Housing) Annual Exhibition	<p>Useful for: Learning about new developments in the housing industry.</p> <p>Key features: Tenants, Rother Fed and RMBC Officers attend the conference to explore current government housing related policy, visit exhibitions from housing related organisations, identify good practice and do networking. Feedback is provided to tenants via Rother Fed.</p> <p>Commitment Level: One day per year.</p>
<p>Information: The Council tells tenants what they are going to do.</p>	
Information, Handbooks and Leaflets	<p>Useful for: Keeping tenants up to date. Easy access to information about services and how to get involved.</p> <p>Key features: Tenancy Agreements are provided to all tenants when they move in. These provide advice on rights, responsibilities and how to report faults. Other leaflets are available from the providing information how to get involved available from Neighbourhood Development Officers.</p> <p>Commitment level: Variable</p>
Digital Inclusion	<p>Useful for: Keeping tenants up to date. Easy access to information about services and how to get involved.</p> <p>Key features: Tenant Involvement Twitter page and Tenant Involvement website page regularly updated and continuous improvements will be made as part of the website improvement plan.</p> <p>Commitment level: Variable</p>

Menu of Involvement	Role
Home Matters (Tenants Newsletter)	<p>Useful for: Keeping you up to date on what is happening both in Housing and your area and providing information on our performance.</p> <p>Key features: Produced 4 times per year and sent to all tenants. Tenants can be involved as part of the Editorial Board, or they can send articles to the tenant representatives in the local areas.</p> <p>Commitment level: 2 - 3 hours, quarterly</p>

7 Tenant Involvement Review

In 2015, a review of Tenant Involvement in the Council was undertaken by speaking to tenants, different officers and Rother Fed representatives. As a result, we have developed a Tenant Involvement Service Improvement Plan which identifies areas

for improvement and aims to embed and improve the Tenant Involvement service over the next three years. As part of the review, it was identified that we needed to develop this Tenant Involvement Strategy





Priorities to improve Tenant Involvement

We held a Tenant Involvement Strategy workshop in June 2015 to consult with tenants about what we should be prioritising as part of this Strategy.

Below are the key priorities that we have agreed. These seek to improve Tenant Involvement further over the next three years.

Priority	Action
<p>Listen to more 'disadvantaged' and 'under-represented' individuals and groups, and act upon their advice/opinions/views</p>	<p>Over the past few years we have found that young people, disabled, Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME), carers and tenants living in rural areas are typically the under- represented groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to explore new and innovative ways to encourage more involvement from these sections of our tenants. • We understand that for a range of different reasons some people find it hard to become involved, even when they would like to be. • They may require additional support or different and flexible ways to engage with us rather than the tried and tested methods. • The Council will make sure that our staff has the necessary knowledge and training to support tenants and giving guidance on how they can become involved and seeking to find out how under-represented groups would like to be involved. • We will also ensure that all groups have the opportunity to let the Council know if they are happy with the service we provide through a variety of different ways. • We will work with young first time council tenants including vulnerable young prospective council tenants using innovative and targeted methods.
<p>Improve the range of ways to be involved</p>	<p>We are committing to offer a wide range of ways to be involved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will also improve our digital methods to communicate and involve tenants in our services. This includes using modern technology, for example social media such as Twitter, these ideas are contained in our digital inclusion action plan. • We will have a new Housing website promoting more self-service, with easier and quicker ways for tenants to let us know what they think about our services. • We also know that some of our tenants still prefer to be involved in a more traditional manner, such as face-to-face, postal questionnaires and attending community meetings so these traditional methods will still continue. • Through the Neighbourhood Partnership Team, they will support and empower tenants to access resources and funding. • Encourage better integration between TARA's, area housing panels and parish and town councils in areas where they co-exist.

Priority	Action
<p>Communication</p>	<p>Our tenants told us they would like us to communicate better with them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes they don't know how they can get involved or they find it difficult to resolve their housing issues. • We will address this through training for Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership staff so they are aware of how they can engage tenants and improve communication with them. • Through the Home Matters (tenants newsletter), we will keep tenants informed of what we are doing and include good news stories and more of 'we ask, you said, we did'.
<p>Improve the promotion of how to be involved and the benefits it will bring to tenants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will always consult and feedback any changes within the service delivery that directly or indirectly affects our tenants. • With the help of our tenants we will develop new and exciting ways to promote tenant involvement, working with current and new tenants already involved. • The Neighbourhood Partnership and Rother Fed Staff will recruit more tenants and volunteering opportunities to be involved and the benefits it brings will continue to be promoted through a number of avenues such as outreach, roadshows, events and consultations.

9 Training Offer

Through Rother Fed and the Neighbourhood Partnership Team, we currently offer a selection of learning courses:

- Training for Community Strength is delivered in committee, organisational, community development, diversity and practical skills and increasing tenant's knowledge in mentoring, housing issues and confidence building.
- Rother Fed leads the development of the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Network to enable tenants get online.
- As well as helping new Tenants and Residents Associations (TARA's) and Community Led Organisations (CLOs), crisis support is given to groups undergoing change tackling difficulties and obstacles, including support with closure.
- Rother Fed helps to develop high quality TARA's/CLO's awarding Rother Fed accredited quality marks to groups demonstrating competence in different quality areas.
- A wide range of practical advice and services are available including community accountancy, legal, insurance, various collective services, help with funding bids, marketing and communication services including advice and practical resources to produce newsletters, posters and other resources, mentoring and support for community leaders and organisations in relation to safeguarding including DBS checks for community leaders. Support with bookkeeping and yearly examination of accounts is also provided.

- Adult Community Learning Courses and Taster Sessions.
- Training to support tenants to access community facilities.

For more information about these courses, please contact Rother Fed on (01709) 368515 or email on info@rotherfed.org Although some of our tenants feel they would like to be more involved, there may be personal difficulties such as transport, child care, and choice of venue just to mention a few. The Neighbourhood Partnership Team and Rother Fed will work with tenants to remove these barriers and trial new and innovative ways.

We will reimburse 'out of pocket' expenses subject to budget and need.



10 To help you be involved

Although some of our tenants feel they would like to be more involved, there may be personal difficulties such as transport, child care, and choice of venue just to mention a few. The Neighbourhood Partnership Team and Rother Fed will work with tenants to remove these barriers and trial new and innovative ways. We will reimburse 'out of pocket' expenses subject to budget and need.



11 Equality

We are committed to treating people respectfully, fairly and equally, tackling discrimination and harassment and ensuring our services are accessible irrespective of race, religious belief, disability, gender, age or sexual orientation.

We will make sure all groups and individuals have equal access and opportunity to engage in activities.

We require all groups and individuals involved with tenant involvement to act to promote equality and welcome participation from all our community.



12 Monitoring and Reviewing this Strategy

The overall measures of success will be monitored through:

- The Tenant Involvement Service Improvement Plan of activities included in this Strategy will be reviewed frequently with our tenants
- Monitor our progress against the TPAS Community Engagement standards
- Monitor our progress against the recommendations which came out of the TPAS accreditation to achieve maximum improvement over the next three years
- Continued monitoring of the number of tenants involved in different ways to ensure they are representative of our customer base
- Service improvements will be monitored to ensure they are being made as a direct result of tenant involvement and insight
- Monitoring and evaluating customer satisfaction through our annual satisfaction survey (STAR), We will use 2 questions in the STAR survey to performance manage against Tenant Involvement:

1. % Satisfaction that we listen to and act on views
 2. % Satisfaction with the opportunity to make their views known
- Using more 'We asked, You Said, We Did' case studies that have happened because of tenant involvement so we have positive stories to feedback to tenants.



13 Glossary of Terms

Best Practice Looks for examples of positive practice and innovation, creative ways of overcoming barriers and resistance to change, and ways of making better use of resources

Co-regulation A joint approach to managing the delivery of services which puts residents in the driving seat

Leaseholder An individual(s) who has purchased the lease of a former council dwelling (usually a flat)

Mystery shopping A method of testing the quality of services whereby an individual (for example, an existing customer, or an

independent person) will ask for information, or test out the process of reporting a repair or visit estates to examine caretaking standards – to see how well services are being delivered

Tenant Involvement Strategy Agreement between the Council and its tenants describing how tenants will be involved in the decision-making processes affecting the delivery of the housing service

Neighbourhood Partnership Team Empowering and supporting communities and tenants to be involved.

14 Contact Information

If you would like more information about this Strategy or would like to get involved, then please contact us on 01709 822786 or customerinvolvement@rotherham.gov.uk

You can also follow us on [Twitter@RotherhamTI](https://twitter.com/RotherhamTI)

