

# Chapter 6: How you can get involved

We want you to get involved in making decisions which will affect the way we manage your home and the services which you receive. You will be more aware of local issues and more likely to help us to identify solutions to problems in your area. This will help us to set priorities so that we can use limited resources in the most effective way.

The **resident involvement team** offers advice, training and help with the cost of getting involved in shaping our housing services.

#### **Contact details:**

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There are different ways you can be involved, which we have explained below. For any information on any of these choices, please contact the resident involvement team.

## **Getting involved at a local level**

### **Estate inspections and estate meetings**

We encourage residents to get involved in estate inspections and meetings. Inspections take place at least twice a year on each estate and involve tenancy management officers, estate services managers, local councillors and contractors if this is appropriate.

We welcome residents who want to be present at either the inspections or meetings to raise issues of concern about the shared parts of the estate. You can get details about these activities on your estate from your tenancy management officer, from estate notice boards, or from your estate bulletin or newsletter.

### **Monitoring estate services**

You can receive training and help us monitor the services we provide to your estate.

## Local agreements

If associations are keen to strengthen their role in monitoring and developing the housing service locally, we will work with them to set up estate agreements. We can also help groups (not necessarily associations) to develop local agreements, often involving several agencies with a local role such as the police, youth services, wardens and other community-based groups.

## Residents' associations

Residents' associations are groups of tenants and leaseholders who have come together because they want to have a say in issues that affect the area where they live. As a member of a group, it is sometimes easier to put forward your views because together you have a stronger voice and can really make a difference.

Residents' associations discuss issues that can have a real effect on their local community, such as repairs and estate improvements, play facilities, car parking, antisocial behaviour and many other issues. They can also influence housing policy, campaign for a better environment, help to build community spirit and organise social activities.

Your area may have a residents' association which you can join. The resident involvement team will have details of the local residents' association. If there is not one in your area and you are interested in setting one up, we can provide information, advice, training and support to residents' groups. We can help groups in the following ways.

- **Getting you started** – advice on how to go about setting up a new group or association, including producing a set of rules, booking venues, helping with the first meetings, help with producing publicity such as posters and leaflets, photocopying, and arranging for translations and interpreters.
- **Annual recognition** – to become recognised and receive a grant, tenants' and residents' associations must meet a number of conditions, including:

- having a constitution (set of rules);
- meeting equal opportunities requirements; and
- representing the community they serve.

We will monitor groups and help you to work through any problems.

- **Offering training** – there is a choice of free training courses for individuals and groups.
- **Grant funding** – providing a start-up and development grant to recognised associations.

### Advocates

We are keen to build contacts with residents on estates and in areas where there are no recognised residents' associations. We want to do this through advocates – residents who are prepared to act as a local contact.

The role of an advocate is to:

- go to estate inspections if you are representing an estate (if possible);
- work with your tenancy management officer regarding shared areas of estates on behalf of your community;
- be consulted on any planned improvements in your area; and
- advise other residents in your area or on your estate of the correct ways to report problems.

We offer free training and advocate support group meetings where advocates can meet each other and housing staff. We will also organise informal tenant involvement parties for advocates and residents' associations to meet and discuss their issues.

### Tenant management organisations

We support tenant management organisations if a group of tenants wants to manage an estate or area. A number of options are available and we will work closely with tenants to discuss the most suitable options for each estate. You may be able to get a government grant to help assess these alternatives.

## Neighbourhood assemblies

Neighbourhood assemblies give residents an opportunity to discuss wide-ranging issues affecting the quality of life for all residents in their area. The aim of the assemblies is to bring together everyone with an interest in a neighbourhood to improve the overall standard of living.

Topics may include policing, planning, leisure, environmental and health issues. You can get details of the next neighbourhood assembly from the resident involvement team.

## Getting involved at a borough-wide level

### Our board

This is our decision-making body which the chief executive (and all staff) report to. It has places for residents alongside councillors and independent experts. At the first annual general meeting, six residents will be appointed to the board following an election. Two of those places will be refilled at each annual general meeting starting from the third annual general meeting.

### Resident involvement agreement

This is a formal agreement between us, the council, tenants and leaseholders that sets out how residents can be involved, consulted and informed. It contains standards which should be met and makes it clear what can and can't be done. If you would like a copy, or have any questions or comments, please contact the resident involvement team.

### Residents' consultative forum

If you have never been involved before, this is a good place to start because most of what is happening in Homes for Haringey will be discussed in this forum. There is no fixed membership – you can just turn up. However, to make sure you are sent invitations, you should register with the resident involvement team.

## Tenants' and leaseholders' conference

This one-day event is designed as a series of discussion groups on themes chosen by residents. All council tenants and leaseholders are welcome.

## Panels and groups

We have a number of panels and groups that you can join. They will meet regularly to look at different aspects of our services. Groups and panels may change, but at the moment the groups include the following.

- Residents' repairs panel
- Tenancy and estate management panel
- Finance panel
- Communications panel
- Leaseholders' panel and leaseholders' forum
- Disabled people's group
- Turkish- and Kurdish-speaking forum
- Somali-speaking forum
- Supported housing panel
- Young people's sounding board
- Resident involvement panel
- Tenant training group

## Other ways to hear your views

### Surveys

We carry out a satisfaction survey each year to find out more about the views of tenants and leaseholders. This is a survey we post to a sample of about 5,000 households. From time to time, we may run other surveys by post, phone or face-to-face.

### Focus groups

Sometimes we will use 'focus groups' to consult residents on local and borough-wide issues. These are informal, one-to-one meetings to collect people's views. If you are asked to take part in any of these, please do because they help us to get services right for you and other residents.

## **Topic groups**

We provide a range of ways for residents to be involved in improving borough-wide services. We arrange working groups or review groups to look into specific aspects of the housing service, such as planning the tenants' and leaseholders' conference. You can register with the resident involvement team to receive full details as and when these groups are formed.

## **Sheltered housing (housing for elderly people)**

Sheltered housing or good-neighbour schemes are entitled to have a representative at both the elderly and special needs panel and the independent association of tenant representatives.

## **Comments and complaints**

Please see chapter 20 for information about our feedback team.

