

Housing & Property Services

Resident Engagement Strategy

2023 - 2025

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North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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1. Introduction

The new strategy sets out the Council's approach to resident engagement for the next two years from April 2023 to March 2025. A key focus of the new strategy is to expand the amount of digital engagement by utilising social media, text messages, videos, and apps. This is so a wider range of residents can get involved, including those who don't normally get involved. These methods will complement more traditional activities such as residents' meetings, estate events and the Tenants Liaison Panel.

Housing & Property Services will work with the Tenant Liaison Panel to improve their ability to hold the Council to account and ensure they can play a role in effective co-regulation. The panel will also help with co-design of policies and services.

Feedback gained through engagement will be used to co-design and improve services. This will mean residents have a voice, get a choice and can influence decisions made about their homes. To gain relevant, useable feedback we will review our approach to carrying out surveys and improve tenant profile information.

The strategy will also look at current communication methods, to ensure the most appropriate channels are used to communicate key messages that matter to residents and meet transparency objectives. This will help the Council to be trusted, transparent and accountable to its tenants.

In summary, the strategy will ensure effective and meaningful engagement, which meets both the current requirements of the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing, and emerging requirements from the Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper.

2. Background

Resident engagement is all about working with tenants and all housing customers to shape and improve services. North Kesteven District Council has a long-standing commitment to the involvement of tenants in its landlord services and ensuring that tenants are engaged with and consulted on the management of their homes and communities.

With the release of the Charter for Social Housing Residents and the additional regulatory requirements emerging from it, there is a need to rethink and modernise resident involvement. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had an impact on involvement yet has given an alternative view of how tenants might wish to be involved with the service in the future.

Resident engagement will also play a key role in helping the Council meet Net Zero by involving residents in and consulting residents on the Council's retrofit programme.

For more detailed background information, please see Appendix A, which covers:

- Current position
- National context - current and proposed regulatory framework
- Local context
- Changes to the Housing Ombudsman.

3. The New Strategy

Vision

‘A modern engagement service, where resident feedback helps to drive improvement and deliver high quality housing services’

Objectives

To achieve this vision, three objectives have been developed:

1. Expand digital engagement. We will use social media to engage with a wider audience of residents, doing so will allow us to involve them in surveys and online discussion groups. The housing online project will allow us to explore other methods of digital engagement such as an online hub for consultations and information for residents.
2. Co-design and co-regulate services with all residents. We will work in partnership with residents by using their feedback to shape, change and improve our services. Using this feedback will result in services that are more customer friendly and effective. We will also work in partnership with our residents to co-regulate our services by giving them the opportunity to hold us to account over performance and standards.
3. Communicate key messages to residents. We will ensure we have a planned approach to communicating key messages to residents and find out their preferences for communications. We will utilise more digital channels, and communication methods such as videos, infographics, and text messaging. This will allow us to meet a key requirement in the Charter for Social Housing Residents around utilising technology to communicate performance outcomes more regularly, as well as in the annual report. The objective will also see us reviewing the At Home magazine to find out if this is still the most appropriate method of communication.

To deliver the objectives a delivery plan has been developed and this can be found at page nine, this sets out the actions that will be taken between April 2023 and March 2025 to deliver the strategy. This is a live document so actions will be developed as needed throughout the two-year period.

What will success look like?

- The ways residents can get involved digitally have increased, and residents use these channels to engage with us.
- Services have been designed from start to finish using resident feedback, resulting in greater satisfaction with those services.
- What matters to tenants and residents is measured, and this data has been used to improve services.
- Transparency has increased transparency through publishing performance data on a regular basis and tenants are actively involved in monitoring performance.
- Key messages, that matter to tenants and residents, have regularly been communicated using a variety of channels.
- Residents are satisfied we have taken their views into account and listened to them.

Links with Other Strategies, and The Green Thread

- **Housing & Property Services' Vision is:**

Together we put the meaning of 'home' in housing.

- **Housing & Property Services' Mission is:**

To work together to provide high quality housing services, to meet the needs and aspirations of North Kesteven customers.

- **Housing (Revenue Account) Business Plan 2021-2051**

The 30-year HRA Business Plan sets out Housing & Property Services' priorities over the next thirty years and will help to deliver the NK Plan. Resident engagement will be needed to inform and develop the implementation of the Plan, to ensure that services delivered are resident focused. A key activity within the HRA Business Plan Delivery Plan is to:

- *“Develop a Resident Engagement Strategy that widens the opportunities for tenant and residents have a voice, and influence decisions that affect them.”*

- **The 2030 Community Strategy and the NK Plan**

The Council has a longer-term focus through its [Community Strategy 2030](#). This sits at the heart of the Council's strategic planning framework, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and setting the aspirations and desired that all the Council's other plans and strategies must align to. The NK Plan, as the primary short to medium term

delivery vehicle provides the more detailed direction for all other plans and strategies – with all working towards the aspirations and outcomes identified in the 2030 Community Strategy.

North Kesteven District Council Plan has a vision for: ‘A District of Flourishing Communities’ and objectives that include:

- Working in partnership to improve the quality of life, economic performance, and environmental sustainability for all our communities.
- Inspiring our communities to participate in the design and delivery of local aspirations and community-based services.
- Understanding all our communities and transforming services to meet the changing needs of North Kesteven.

- **Other Strategies & the Green Thread**

The strategy will link into several of the Council’s other strategies, including:

- Our Customer Strategy; and the
- Climate Emergency Strategy.

The Resident Engagement team work jointly with the Communications team, Customer Services team and the Corporate Information team on tasks such as communications and collecting customer insight, and will help to deliver objectives within the Our Customer and Our Community Strategies including:

- Communicating with customers by their preferred method
- Getting important messages out to customers
- Ensuring communications can reach a wider audience

The Council is committed to tackling climate change, with a stated ambition to reach net zero by 2030. Therefore, the resident engagement strategy will look at ways to reduce the carbon footprint of the service, this includes using more digital engagement and reviewing the At Home magazine.

The strategy will also play a key role in helping to achieve the anticipated retrofit programme for council housing. To be successful in this programme, residents will need to be involved from the concept of the programme right through to the post project review. Residents will be involved in the project by giving feedback, ensuring communications are tenant friendly and that the needs of tenants are considered in the project design. Residents will then be involved through consultation on project details, and type of work to be completed in their homes. Residents will also need to be engaged to enable monitoring and evaluation of the works completed, to ensure the retrofit measures are working efficiently, and demonstrate the impact of the project following completion.

Monitoring the strategy

Monitoring will be undertaken by the Housing and Property Services' Departmental Management Team, the Flourishing Communities Scrutiny Panel, and the Tenant Liaison Panel. The Resident Engagement team have the day-to-day responsibility of delivery of the strategy, overseen by the Housing Regulatory Assurance Manager. All colleagues and councillors have a responsibility to deliver resident engagement as part of their roles.

The progress of the Resident Engagement Strategy in delivering the council's equality related aims and objectives will also be monitored.

Menu of involvement

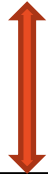
Residents can get involved in the following ways:

- Tenant Liaison Panel
- NKDC Housing Facebook page
- Online focus groups
- Tenants investigating services
- Mystery shopping
- Residents' groups
- Appeals panel
- Taking part in surveys
- New homes focus group
- Social listening
- Community projects
- Completing satisfaction surveys
- Attending estate-based consultations and events.

Tenant Liaison Panel (TLP)

Tenant Liaison Panel is an advisory part of the council's decision-making process that provides tenants with a voice to promote the interests of tenants in partnership with the council. The panel provides a forum in which tenants can influence matters affecting housing management and how the service is delivered to tenants. The panel's role includes:

- Reviewing housing related reports before officers to submit report to the council's Executive Board for decision making.
- Carrying out scrutiny reviews and making recommendations on service improvements.
- Working in partnership with the council in developing new services and policies.
- Checking performance and standards to co-regulate.



NKDC Housing Facebook page

Tenants can take part in surveys, receive information and give feedback.



Complaints, Comments and Compliments

Submitting a complaint, comment, or a compliment.



Consultations

Complete surveys, attend residents' meetings and consultation events.



Social listening

Chatting with our staff, councillors, and tenant panel reps about how you find our services.



Residents' groups

We will support and work with residents who want to set up residents' groups.

4. The Delivery Plan

Objective	Action	Measure	Timescale
1) Expand digital engagement	Carry out a survey with residents about how they would like to be involved digitally.	Survey carried out and recommendations implemented.	March 2023
	Increase use of NKDC housing Facebook page.	Monthly follower increase, 1000 reached by 2025. Amount of reach and engagement on posts.	March 2025
	Identify and use more social media platforms to involve residents.	Implementation of social media platforms.	March 2023
	Set up and feed into community Facebook pages.	Number of pages set up.	March 2023
	Develop online engagement such as a digital engagement platform and focus groups on social media.	Implementation of platform. At least two focus groups held.	March 2023
	Continue the use of 'snap polls' on FB to capture feedback.	Number carried out annually.	March 2025
	Provide opportunities for residents to undertake digital access training.	Number of residents trained per year.	March 2024

2) Co-design and co-regulate services with residents	Use customer feedback to develop NKDC plans, policies, and procedures in partnership with residents and ensure there is a consistent approach across housing.	We can demonstrate customer feedback is considered and considered during policy review.	March 2025
	Seek out best practice in resident involvement and implement where appropriate.	Changes as a result of best practice. Demonstrable involvement in TPAS/HQN best practice.	March 2025
	Collect and report on new tenant satisfaction measures.	Report TSMs to regulator in accordance with their timescales.	March 2024
	Develop estate based and school engagement.	At least two estate engagement events carried out annually.	March 2023
	Review TLP and other tenant groups to ensure they can meet the requirements in the white paper.	Bring in external accredited body to review and outcomes implemented.	March 2023
	Introduce an incentive scheme to encourage residents to get involved.	Incentive scheme implemented and take up monitored.	March 2023
	Review current leaseholder involvement.	Outcomes of the review implemented.	March 2024
	Review involvement from tenants who don't normally get involved.	These groups identified. New ways of engagement developed. Involvement levels increased from hard these groups.	March 2025
	Review HPS approach to surveys to ensure a consistent approach and that we measure what matters.	Surveys are consistent and we can demonstrate how feedback received is used.	March 2024
	Take into account customer feedback from STAR, complaints and other satisfaction surveys and make service improvements where possible.	Number of services changed as a result of customer feedback.	March 2025

	Develop, review, report and check progress of the HRA business plan with residents.	Amount of involvement from residents. Monitored bi-annually by TLP.	March 2025
	Publish performance information on a regular basis.	Demonstrate reporting performance at least quarterly.	March 2023
	Review approach to estate action plans to ensure we have a consistent approach.	Action plans reviewed and any recommendations implemented.	March 2024
	Review, implement and monitor local offers.	Local offers implemented and monitored on a quarterly basis.	March 2023
	Providing training and information to staff and members on how to involve residents.	Number of staff and members trained.	March 2023
	Develop a new homes focus group, which will include looking at what younger residents want from new homes in the future.	Number of recommendations gained from the group and acted upon.	March 2023
	Regularly monitor the progress of the Resident Engagement Strategy in delivering the council's equality related aims and objectives.	Monitored by Tenant Liaison Panel, Department Management Team, and Flourishing Communities Scrutiny Panel on a bi-annual basis.	March 2025
	Investigate a customer insight model and feasibility of carrying out psychographic audience segmentation for resident involvement.	Options investigated and report produced.	March 2025

	Engage NKDC tenants to understand how they would like land within existing and new NKDC Housing developments to be managed in order to consider opportunities to increase green infrastructure, biodiversity, and to design out dead concrete spaces.	Consultation carried out and feedback from tenants which shows how they would like the land to be managed. Tenant feedback on the type of green infrastructure they would like to be included.	March 2025
3) Communicate key messages to residents	Develop a housing communication plan that sets out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key messages for both housing and residents. • How we will communicate messages to residents. 	Plan implemented and key messages communicated.	March 2023
	Establish residents' preferred communication channels, response times and hours the council is available for contact.	Surveys carried out and recommendations implemented.	March 2023
	Review the content, style and publication method of At Home magazine.	Magazine reviewed and recommendations implemented.	March 2023
	Publish the annual report but review format to ensure it meets needs of SHWP and make it more appealing to a wider audience.	Annual report published on an annual basis.	March 2023
	Create videos to communicate key messages.	Number of videos published. Total number of views per video.	March 2023
	Upskill the resident involvement team in social media, video production and graphic design.	Resident involvement team producing social media graphics and videos.	March 2025

	Implement tenant bloggers. Tenants will be invited to write articles for the At Home magazine.	Number of articles written by tenant bloggers.	March 2024
	Develop the use of text messages to communicate key messages.	Number of key messages communicated via text message.	March 2023

Appendix A - Detailed Background Information

Why do we involve tenants?

Involving tenants and residents is crucial in helping us to deliver outstanding housing services and without their input it would be difficult to provide quality services to tenants that meet their expectations.

The principles of effective involvement are that:

- Having a choice matters
- It helps to get services right
- They hold us to account
- It empowers communities
- It helps people-to learn new skills and gain experience.

Existing regulatory framework

Until the requirements of the Social Housing White Paper come into force, we must continue to work under the existing framework whilst preparing for the new standards. Some of the standards set out in the existing regulatory framework that relate to involving tenants include:

- Supporting the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups and responding in a constructive and timely manner to them
- Consulting with tenants about services by setting out clearly the costs and benefits of relevant service options and changes to services.
- Consulting tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service.

Proposed regulatory framework

A new charter introduced by the Government, the Charter for Social Housing Residents (government Social Housing White Paper 2020). One of the main parts of the white paper is refocus on resident involvement and to ensure landlords are putting residents at the heart of their organisations. The proposed consumer standards in the white paper are:

- To be safe in your home
- To know how your landlord is performing
- To have complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- To be treated with respect
- To have your voice heard by your landlord
- To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- Be supported to take a step to ownership.

In terms of monitoring compliance with the proposed standard, there will be a re-introduction of inspections. This is a change to the current regime, where the regulator only gets involved in cases of 'serious detriment.'

The Social Housing Regulation Bill is currently making its way through Parliament, this will create the necessary primary legislation to bring these changes into place. Further guidance is also being developed through a review of the consumer standards and we expect this to come into place in 2023.

New Tenant Satisfaction Measures to be introduced by the Government

New Tenant Satisfaction Measures are being introduced to assess how well we are performing against the standards.

Ensuring compliance with the new framework

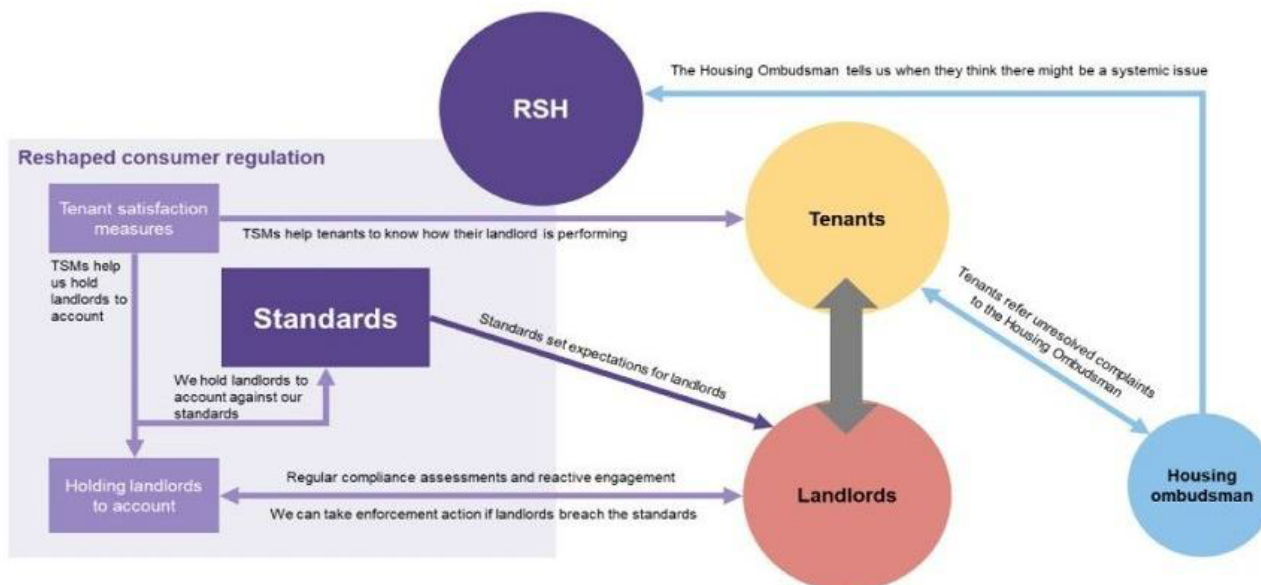
To ensure compliance with the new framework Government wants to:

- See a transformed consumer regulatory regime which holds landlords to account in maintaining good quality homes and services, prioritising safety, treating tenants respectfully and being transparent with information.
- Retain the principle of co-regulation, as it ensures that the focus is on driving good outcomes for existing and future tenants.
- Introduce new regime for regulating social housing.
This will give tenants confidence that their landlord is being properly scrutinised.
- Put safety at the heart of social housing regulation
- Make social landlords more transparent and accountable
- Strengthen the regulator's powers to enforce.

Building and Fire Safety

Following the tragic events of the Grenfell fire in 2017, the Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Act 2020 were created. These aim to make safety improvements to high-risk buildings by introducing new requirements for landlords. The key requirements for resident engagement focus on communicating safety information and ensuring tenants are informed about their safety responsibilities.

Bringing it all together



This chart shows how the government wants to bring everything together.

What these things mean

Housing Ombudsman

Resolve complaints and disputes between individual residents and landlords

Regulator of Social Housing

Ensures sector is well run and viable and can deliver homes for residents.
Sets standards for landlords and can act if they are breached.

Building Safety Regulator

Will help ensure residents of all high rise buildings are safe.
Will oversee safety and performance of all buildings.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Puts forward legislation
Directs regulators and ombudsmen
Sets rent rules

Resident Engagement – where are we now?

Resident engagement has continued to decline over the past years, in particular tenant involvement with the service. The main challenges for resident engagement are:

- Reluctance of people to engage above and beyond contacting us for a service.
- NK tenant/resident communities are spread out across a large rural District.

- Lack of connectivity related to digital inclusion.
- Traditional engagement locally is predominantly older people.
- Younger tenants and young people living in council homes are reluctant to engage.
- Lack of information and reliable data to differentiate different needs of tenants, e.g. which tenants need help to get back into work, skills training, or social interaction.
- As less tenants are formally involved, there has become less opportunity to be involved and less benefits of being involved are offered throughout the service.
- Satisfaction levels in STAR surveys of the past few years suggests that NK Housing and Property services already offers a good service to tenants and residents. However, the key measure of 'satisfaction with how the council listens and acts' is consistently lower than other measures. Improving customer service, customer experience, and communication is important.
- Customer's expectations are rising. People living in NK homes do not compare the service NK provides with other housing providers; they compare us to companies like Amazon or their banks and mobile phone companies. They expect to be able to interact using their channel of choice at a time that suits them, to get up-to-the-minute status updates on their mobile and pay using the method that suits them.



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