

# RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY 2024-27



# Introduction

We are passionate about our communities and residents. We believe that everyone should be able to play an active role in the things that matter to them the most.

That is why we are committed to listening to our residents throughout East Devon to hear about the things they would like to see changed and improved in our Housing Services. Our Resident Involvement Strategy sets out what we are going to do to achieve this.

It builds on the things we currently do to involve our residents and outlines what we aim to do to improve and expand upon them.

We hope that all our residents will be able to find a way to have their say and get involved in The Housing Service. This strategy has been developed following consultation with residents, staff, and stakeholders from across East Devon.

We have also carried out a detailed review of the latest best practice, and the requirements of the Social Housing Act.

This strategy will be led by The Communities Team who will be supporting all teams across the Housing Service to gather effective customer feedback and to involve residents in the development and shaping of our housing services.

# Why are we doing this?

We are proud of the services we provide to our residents. However, we are always looking to improve those services and make sure that they meet all your needs.

Our residents are at the heart of everything we do, so we have refreshed our Resident Involvement Strategy to make it easier and more appealing for more of you to get involved and have your say.

We believe that including the opinions and thoughts of our residents within our decision-making process is key in building a successful housing service which works well for everyone. We need to know what matters to you, and how the things we do in our capacity as landlord, impact upon you and your lives. When we understand this, we can change our services to improve your experience as residents of EDDC housing.

By giving you more ways to make your voices heard, we can be sure that as many of your opinions as possible are included in the decisions that we make.



The government also recognises how important it is that landlords listen to what their tenants have to say. This is why they have introduced new rules and regulations which we must follow. They will be checking that we are doing all that we can to listen to, and consider the views of as many, and as wide a range of our tenants as we can. Details of these regulations can be found in Appendix 1 .

Our existing Resident Involvement Strategy was produced in December 2019. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic hit within weeks of the launch of that strategy. All face-to-face contact with our residents ended. Our tenant participation groups stopped running, and frontline staff were placed onto alternative duties.

Our new strategy redefines our commitment to Resident Involvement and opens doors for more of you to get involved and have your voices heard.

We want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who took the time from your busy lives to make comments regarding our priorities and targets for 2023- 2027.

Without all your support, co-operation, and contributions we would not have been successful in developing the priorities and targets to such a high standard.

# Our Vision

*Our vision for the Housing Service is to ‘**Create Better Communities for All**’.*

To achieve our vision, we must listen to what our residents want. We have had conversations with some residents who are already involved, and some who are not. We have also spoken to Councillors, housing managers and staff to find out what good resident involvement looks like to them. We have adopted their ideas in the development of this strategy.

Some of the key messages from those conversations were:

- A more diverse mix of residents needs to be involved.
- We need to increase the variety of ways for our residents to get involved, by for example implementing a digital inclusion programme.
- The focus of formal resident involvement groups needs to improve.
- Performance information and reports need to be presented to residents in a clear and concise format.
- Training needs for involved residents should be identified and met.
- More attractive incentives should be offered to involved residents.

We have used these messages to help us create our 5 Aims for Resident Involvement over the next 3 years. We have also reviewed all the new and existing legislation, researched current Best Practice advise, and drawn ideas from other providers of Social Housing. (A full list of research sources used can be found in Appendix 2)

# Our 5 aims..



## 1. Understanding more about our residents

- ✓ Through surveys and tenancy visits, and partnership working, we will build a clearer picture of who our tenants are and get a better understanding of their service needs.
- ✓ We will find out how they prefer to be contacted, and the best ways for them to get in touch with us.
- ✓ We will promote equality within our service delivery and remove any discrimination/barriers that we find.

## 2. Improve the value of our resident Involvement

- ✓ We will make sure that the time our residents give to help us make changes and improvements is valued and impactful.
- ✓ We will give them the training and skills they need to get the most from their experiences of working with us.
- ✓ We will make the time spent with officers as productive and useful as possible so that best use is made of their time too.
- ✓ We will make sure our involved tenants understand what is expected of them, and what they can expect from us in return.
- ✓ All information shared with residents will be provided in a clear, concise way, which is easily understood. We will not expect them to read through pages of jargon and confusing figures.
- ✓ We will tell our residents what happens/changes as a result of their input.

## 3. Increasing the Diversity of our Involved Residents

- ✓ We will identify which groups of residents are not currently sharing their ideas and experiences with us.
- ✓ We will develop targeted plans to improve our relations with those residents and encourage more of them to become involved.
- ✓ We will make greater use of social media and online methods to make it easier for younger and working residents to have their say.

#### 4. Improving our communication and consultation with residents

- ✓ We will find out how our residents would like us to contact them, and how they prefer to speak to us.
- ✓ We will tailor our services to meet these preferences wherever possible.
- ✓ We will make greater use of social media and online methods to consult with our residents, to make it easier for more of them to have their say.
- ✓ We will not use jargon when we are talking to our residents.

#### 5. Value our involved residents, volunteers, and Communities

- ✓ We will update our training and expenditure policies to make sure that our residents are suitably rewarded for their time and consider if more needs to be done in this area to encourage others to take part.
- ✓ We will stage an annual Resident Connect event to highlight, appreciate and celebrate our involved tenants.
- ✓ We will look at the different regions within our district to check that all our represented, and included within our service delivery, including our more rural residents.



# Ways to get involved.



**Why should you get involved?** We want to provide the best service we can, and to do that we need your help. As a resident living in East Devon, you have first-hand experience of our services. If you get involved and tell us what you think works well, or where we can improve, you are giving us the feedback we need to help improve services for everyone.

**What experience do I need?** You already have all the experience you need to get involved with us. As our Tenants and Leaseholders, you are experiencing our services firsthand, and this experience is what we are looking for to make our services the best they can be.

**What support will I get?** We can give you training and support if you feel you need it to get involved. This will be different for everyone. You can trial any of our groups or activities before you commit and if you just want to come along and watch to start with, that is okay with us.



## How Can I Get Involved?

We have lots of different ways for you to find out more about the housing service and have your say.

We have put together a menu of Resident Involvement Activities for you to choose from. Many options only ask you to give a small amount of your time, as and when you would like to. Others ask for you to make larger, and more regular time commitments. Whichever option you choose, you will be playing an important part in helping us make a housing service that works for everyone.

All You Can Eat		
HRB – Housing review Board	The Housing Review Board meets 5 times a year and reviews new Housing Policies, procedures and budgets. Requires reading and research in own time.  Our Panels are consulted on policies and procedures. They review feedback from residents and performance information, which they can question and query. They can make suggestions based on this information on improvements that can be made.	Take part in our largest projects, influence key decisions, and scrutinise our services.  These groups/panels will require the most time and commitment.  2- 4 hours per meeting. 4 times a year. Preparation and reading in advance of meetings required.  *This group can meet or liaise as often as weekly when working on a project.
Resident and Lease Holder Panel		
Repairs and Maintenance Panel		
Scrutiny Panel *		
Housing Complaints Support Panel		
Light Bites		
Estate Walk abouts	By joining in with these activities you can	Perfect for people who have a little time to spare. Commitment can be as little as 20 minutes to an hour as many times as opportunities arise throughout the year
Mystery Shopping		
Resident Housing Service drop ins		

Surveys and Focus Groups	provide support and take action to make improvements to specific areas.	
Resident Training events		
Resident Associations		
Recruitment and selection Panel		
Editorial Panel		
Annual Resident Connect event		
<b>Takeaway</b>		
Website- online surveys	Keep up to date with current issues and events with no commitment required.	Is designed to keep you informed and provide ways in which you can stay connected with us, with no commitment needed.
Pop up events/ Neighbourhood Engagement Days		
Housing Matters Magazine		
Annual Report		
Facebook/Twitter(X) pages		
E Mail		
Phone/Write/Visit Offices		
Community Centre Noticeboards		

## ***All you can eat***

### **The Housing Review Board**

This group is one of the council's formal governance committees, made up of 5 councilors, 5 tenants or leaseholders, and 2 independent community representatives.

The Housing Review Board meet every 3 months to hear about and discuss the current and planned future work within the Housing Service. Their approval is needed before some changes can go ahead.

Their views are taken into account on housing policy and practice where this affects tenants and leaseholders. They also monitor how well we are performing against our targets.

### **Resident Involvement Monitoring Group**

This group will meet every 6 months. They will monitor our progress against our Resident Involvement Strategy, ensuring that we are keeping to our performance targets. The group will review progress against the detailed action plan which has been drawn up alongside this strategy, and hold EDDC accountable for achieving our aims. They will ensure that resident feedback is incorporated into our service planning.

### **Resident and Leaseholder panel**



NEW!

To be the resident voice on proposed strategies, policies, standards and changes to service delivery.

The Resident and Leaseholder Panel is designed to bring tenants, leaseholders and EDDC together as a collective independent voice for consultation between tenants and their Housing services.

### **Repairs and Maintenance**

This group of tenants meets regularly in a formal meeting environment.

They look at the performance of the council and its contractors against its expected or target goals. They ask questions about any areas where performance is not where it should be making sure that they understand any issues and are happy with any measures being put in place to resolve those issues.

They identify areas for improvement in the provision of Housing Repairs and are included in decisions surrounding the selection and appointment of contractors.

They look at the budgets for the various areas within the Repairs service and check that the council and its contractors are providing value for money.

### **Housing Complaints Support Panel**

This group offer a support and advisory service to any other tenant who is unhappy with the service they are receiving from the Housing Department of East Devon District Council. Residents have the opportunity to analyse complaint data, ensuring that lessons are learnt and that service delivery improvements are made as a result of complaints

This group holds regular meetings to review the effectiveness of complaint handling within the Housing Service and can offer suggestions for improvement.

### **Housing Tenant's Scrutiny Panel**

This group meet regularly to investigate and review specific topics or areas within Housing. They undertake detailed research and suggest improvements that can be made to the Housing review Board.

They plan to complete 3 areas of scrutiny each year. They also regularly review previous scrutiny reports to ensure agreed recommendations are implemented and to measure the effectiveness/results of those improvements.

## ***Light Bites***

## **Residents Associations**

A tenant/resident association is a group of people living in an area, block or street. They meet together to discuss ways to improve their community. This can include working together to find solutions to issues such as parking and anti-social behavior. They can also have a social side, and arrange social events for the local community to enjoy, and make improvements to communal areas.

## **Recruitment and Selection Panel**

When recruiting new staff to our Housing Service we always invite a member of this panel to sit on the interview panel. We know how important it is to include the views of our customers if we are to successfully recruit the right people into our Housing Services. Staff and residents on the interview panels are considered equal members of the recruitment process and receive the same training.

## **Editorial Group**

The Housing Matters magazine is produced three times a year. By being part of the editorial group will you play an active role in producing and creating content for your magazine and have a say in what topics we publish. Residents will also have the opportunity to be involved in other resident related published communications.

## **Mystery Shopper**

Mystery shopping is a way of finding out about the actual tenant experience and the outcome is objective and measurable. It is particularly effective at investigating how staff interact with tenants and how they make tenants feel.

## **Tenant Conference**

This annual event is our opportunity to thank and reward all those who have given up their time to have their say, and get involved in the Housing Service. It is a fun, celebratory day, and all our tenants are welcome to attend. There will be entertainment, awards and food. There will be plenty of chances to speak to staff, and information stalls where tenants can get answers to their questions and find out more about what goes on behind the scenes in a relaxed environment.

## ***Takeaway***

### **Website**

You can view all our policies, strategies and procedures on our website. These documents will tell you all about how our housing service runs, and the way we manage what we do on a day-to-day basis. There will also be opportunities to participate Insert QR code/link to website

### **Pop up events/Neighborhood Engagement Days:**

From time to time, the housing service will put on events in the community. This gives you the chance to come and have some fun and speak to us face to face and find out more about the services we deliver, or indeed get more information if there are major housing related projects happening in your local area. Information about all our events are posted to our Facebook feed, on our website and in the Housing Matters Magazine.

# How will we measure the impact and what will success look like?

As we roll out our Action Plan, we will be recording information about each project and activity that we carry out. We will be looking at which residents take part, the cost of the project, and what it achieves.

We will measure the effectiveness or impact of your involvement and the difference it makes to our Housing services through specially designed KPIs (key performance indicators). These KPIs will help The Communities Team to demonstrate the changes that have been made as a direct consequence of your involvement. They will allow us to see which projects or activities lead to the greatest impacts, and which offer the best value. This helps us to plan our future projects and activities.

We have also created a detailed action plan that shows all the things we need to do to bring this strategy to life. We will keep checking our progress against this plan over the course of the next 3 years, to make sure we stay on track to complete it. The Resident Involvement Monitoring group will receive 6 monthly reports and help us to monitor our progress.



## By 2027 we aim to have:

We have created a comprehensive action plan which shows how we will achieve our aims over the next 3 years. A few of the key points are summarised here:

<b>Aim 1:</b>	<b>Understanding more about our residents</b>
<b>Actions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Completion of tenant profiling survey</li> <li>○ Creation of area- based analysis of our residents, to guide the development of area-based community development.</li> </ul>
<b>Aim 2</b>	<b>Improving the Value of our Resident Involvement</b>
<b>Actions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide training on report scrutiny and debating skills.</li> <li>○ Create a clear training plan for each involved group.</li> <li>○ Review the Terms of Reference for each involved group.</li> <li>○ Develop and agree an annual scrutiny plan.</li> <li>○ Produce annual reports for Housing Review Board for each of the involved tenant groups. These reports to detail their Terms of Reference, their plans for the next 12 months, and the training needs of their members, alongside a summary of their achievements for the previous 12 months.</li> <li>○ Develop Key Performance Indicators for Resident Involvement</li> <li>○ Share our performance against agreed Key Performance Indicators with relevant tenant groups.</li> <li>○ Annual presentations to tenants on performance information which are clear and easily understood.</li> </ul>

Aim3:	<b>Increasing the diversity of our Involved Residents</b>
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recruit new members to our involved groups through varied involvement activities and look to include online and out of hours options where needed.</li> <li>○ Tailor methods of communication with residents in line with the outcome of tenant profiling exercise</li> <li>○ Begin the process of recruiting resident Champions.</li> <li>○ Use results of tenant profiling survey to identify groups and communities. Seek out the most relevant partnership agencies to work with to improve our communication and engagement with those groups and communities.</li> <li>○ Develop a clear plan for recruiting residents and for succession of residents onto involved groups.</li> <li>○ Promotion of the positive outcomes of tenant involvement on website and social media</li> <li>○ Include performance in Resident Involvement as part of the Annual Report to residents.</li> <li>○ Use of welcome pack to promote involvement to tenants of all ages.</li> <li>○ Explore the use of incentives for getting younger/different residents involved</li> </ul>
Aim 4	<b>Improving our Communication and Consultation with Residents</b>
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal reports should include a compulsory section on tenant consultation in their standard format.</li> <li>○ Implementing a Digital Inclusion Programme</li> <li>○ Increase tenant involvement through online surveys, online chat, What's app, Instagram</li> <li>○ Consider the creation of a Young Persons Tenant Panel</li> <li>○ Use of Welcome Pack to promote involvement of tenants of all ages.</li> <li>○ Use of tenant profiling results to help develop a targeted plan to actively engage with younger residents and other under-represented groups, using communication methods tailored to meet their preferences.</li> <li>○ Providing information to residents which is relevant, concise, and easily understood.</li> </ul>

Aim 5	<b>Valuing our involved residents, volunteers and Communities</b>
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Stage an annual Residents reconnect day.</li><li>○ Develop a plan to improve our community centres.</li><li>○ Develop and publicise reimbursement and training policies which adequately reward tenants.</li><li>○ Consider the inclusion of reward incentives to increase levels of tenant involvement.</li></ul>

## Appendix 1

### Statutory and Regulatory requirements

#### The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

This introduces Regulatory Consumer Standards with effect from April 2024. These standards cover four areas, one of which is Tenant Involvement and Empowerment.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Amongst the requirements we need to demonstrate compliance with are;

- i. The provision of choices, information and communication that are appropriate to the diverse needs of tenants.
- ii. We must show that we treat all tenants with fairness and respect.
- iii. We must ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:
  - the formulation of housing-related policies and strategic priorities
  - the making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
  - the scrutiny of our performance and the making of recommendations about how performance might be improved.
  - the management of repair and maintenance services
  - agreeing local offers for service delivery.
- iv. We must provide support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved
- v. We must consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving them in the governance and scrutiny of our housing management service.
- vi. We must demonstrate that we have a clear approach to complaint handling.

The Regulator for Social Housing is responsible for ensuring that all social housing landlords meet these standards.

### The Charter for Social Housing Residents:

In 2020, Government published its White Paper “The Charter for Social Housing Residents”, to raise the standard of social housing and meet the aspirations of residents. Whilst resident involvement runs throughout the White Paper, of relevance to this strategy is Chapter Five, “To have your voice heard by your landlord”. This requires us to ensure that residents are a key part of our governance and that consumer-led assurance arrangements are in place. Residents who do not wish to attend formal meetings or join a formal group must have alternative ways to feed back to us. We must ensure that their voices are heard, and their needs identified. It is our responsibility to make sure that the communication channels and involvement opportunities that we offer, are tailored to meet the differing needs of our residents.

The Charter places an expectation on the Regulator of Social Housing to require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually encourage, improve, and support engagement with their social housing tenants.

### Tenant Satisfaction Measures:

The Regulator for Social Housing published its new Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard on 21st September 2022. From 1st April 2023 all social housing providers must collect and publish a wide range of performance information, to be known as Tenant Satisfaction Measures. These 22 Measures will look at complaints handling, neighbourhood and anti-social behaviour handling, and repairs and safety. Ten of these areas will be measured by landlords directly, and 12 will be measured through tenant perception surveys.

All Tenant Satisfaction Measures will be reported from April 2023. They will give tenants transparent and meaningful information about their landlord and help the Regulator of Social Housing ensure landlords are meeting the new consumer standards.

The Regulator of Social Housing will also have the powers to carry out spot checks on individual social landlords where they feel this is needed.

The Equality Act 2010:

The Council has a duty to ensure the following:

- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (i.e. their age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; gender, and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic, and those who do not share it;
- Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low; and,
- Ensure people from all sections of our community are given equal opportunity to participate

Data Protection:

The Privacy Notice (Resident Involvement), may be found at: [add link](#)

## Appendix 2

We have reviewed all the new and existing legislation, researched current Best Practice advise, and drawn ideas from other providers of Social Housing. Full list of resources and best practice are below.

- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- The Regulator of Social Housings' Regulatory Consumer Standards
- The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard
  
- TPAS National Tenant Engagement Standards
- TPAS Report 'Engaging and Empowering tenants in council-owned housing'
- Notes from conference speech made by Kate Dodson, Chief of Regulatory Engagement at the Regulator for Social Housing Conference
- Copperworks Housing Association
- East Ayrshire
- L & Q Housing
- Cambridge City Council
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Dartford Borough Council
- Winchester City Council
- Phoenix Housing Association