



## **Resident Involvement and Engagement Policy**

**Date submitted to Board: 26.7.22**

**Policy to take effect from: 1.8.22**

**To be reviewed: 2025**

**Version No. 1.0**

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### **Introduction and National Context**

#### **Consumer Standard – Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard**

The Regulator of Social Housing 'Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard' outlines social landlords' obligations with regards to customer service, tenant involvement and empowerment, and responding to the diverse needs of tenants. Section 1.2 requires that:

*"Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:*

- (a) the formulation of their landlord's housing-related policies and strategic priorities*
- (b) the making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards*
- (c) the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved*
- (d) the management of their homes, where applicable*
- (e) the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and*
- (f) agreeing local offers for service delivery."*

The standard puts a requirement for housing providers to ensure that tenants are given a range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the development of policies, decision-making, scrutiny, right to manage and, where appropriate, agreeing local offers.

## **The Charter for Social Housing residents: Social Housing White Paper**

The government's Charter for Social Housing: Social Housing white paper sets out what every social housing resident should be able to expect from their landlord: -

1. **To be safe in your home.** The government will work with industry and landlords to ensure your home is safe and secure.
2. **To know how your landlord is performing,** including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so that tenants and residents can hold their landlord to account.
3. **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,** with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
4. **To be treated with respect,** backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
5. **To have your voice heard by your landlord,** for example, through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.
6. **To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in,** with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
7. **To be supported to take your first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

The white paper sets out what the government will do to ensure landlords live up to the new charter. The government states that the most important step is to work with the Regulator of Social Housing to create a strong, proactive consumer regulatory regime, strengthening the formal standards against which landlords are regulated and requiring them to:

- be transparent about their performance and decision-making – so that tenants and the regulator can hold them to account;
- put things right when they go wrong, and;
- listen to tenants through effective engagement.

## **The National Housing Federation's Together with Tenants Charter**

The Together with Tenants Charter aims to strengthen the relationship between residents and housing association landlords. EPIC has committed to working towards adopting this charter, which asks housing association landlords to commit to:

- **Relationships** – Housing associations will treat all residents with respect in all their interactions. Relationships between residents and housing associations will be based on openness, honesty and transparency.
- **Communication** – Residents will receive clear, accessible and timely information from their housing association on the issues that matter to them, including important information about their homes and local community, how the organisation is run, and information about performance on key issues.
- **Voice and Influence** – Views from residents will be sought and valued and this information will be used by their housing association on the issues that matter to them and can speak without fear.
- **Accountability** – Collectively, residents will work in partnership with their housing association to independently scrutinise and hold their housing association to account for the decisions that affect the quality of their homes and services.

- **Quality** – Residents can expect their homes to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.
- **When things go wrong** – Residents will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress. Residents will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.

## **Our Corporate Plan 2022 to 2025**

Our new corporate plan and strategy sets out EPIC's clear purpose **to be a good landlord** and also focuses on our key themes of:

- Services – providing inclusive and accessible services meeting local and regulatory standards.
- Asset Management – providing good quality and safe homes.
- People – valuing and investing in our people to deliver desired outcomes.
- Governance – operating as a well-governed, financially viable organisation and ensuring our services meet the required standards.

## **EPIC's Vision for Resident Involvement and Engagement**

EPIC's vision is to put tenants and residents at the heart of everything we do to ensure that our homes and neighbourhoods are sustainable, safe and secure.

- ✓ To make resident involvement an integral part of the business by involving and consulting tenants and residents to enable services to be shaped to meet the needs of tenants.
- ✓ To widen and increase involvement by offering a range of ways that tenants can get involved, comment and participate in decision-making.
- ✓ To ensure that our Corporate Plan and strategies reflect residents' interests.
- ✓ To ensure that we support tenants and residents in obtaining the knowledge and skills required to play an effective part in the management of the Company.

## **Policy Statement**

We are committed to delivering high-quality services which meet residents' needs and recognise that resident involvement should be a core driver for improvements to services. We are also committed to holding ourselves accountable to residents, ensuring they are able to judge our services and tell us how we might need to improve.

Furthermore, we believe we have a duty to help develop the social capital of Bentilee and the wider North Staffordshire area, and that customer involvement can help build links between residents and improve the confidence of the communities in which we operate.

We define residents as anyone living in one of our homes, including tenants and leaseholders. We define resident involvement as all of the activities and processes that we carry out to help us know what our customers want, enable residents to be involved if they wish and allow them to have influence over decisions that affect them.

## **How and when we will involve residents**

In line with the Regulatory Framework, we will develop a set of standards for our residents which set out what they can expect from us in relation to tenant engagement and involvement. We will involve residents in the development of these standards and keep them informed of performance against these via the Annual Tenants Report.

We believe that our residents have a right to influence decisions that we make. Specific examples of how we may involve residents include:

- Tenant membership of our Management Board;
- Site visits and 'Estate Walkabouts';
- Attendance at the Annual General Meeting;
- Tenant panels including scrutiny, either in person or virtual;
- Consultation register, where tenants advise us how and when they would like to get involved.

We will ensure that our methods of recruiting involved tenants are transparent and meet the provisions of this policy. Where relevant we will also involve residents at an early stage of developing new initiatives in order to agree criteria for evaluating success and customer satisfaction with the final product.

We will carry out regular consultation with residents on our performance and their experience of our services. We will also carry out detailed consultation with residents on any issues that will materially affect them. This may include:

- Changes to services or the Tenancy Agreement;
- Policy reviews, where appropriate;
- Any new initiatives funded by rental income;
- Opportunities to scrutinise our performance;
- Opportunities to scrutinise and help us develop our services.

We will provide information to residents and invite feedback in the course of day-to-day business. Where appropriate, we will handle negative feedback via our Complaints Policy. We will also publicise the results of involvement activities in order to demonstrate to residents the benefits of becoming involved and encourage further involvement.

We will publish regular tenant newsletters to keep tenants up to date and well informed about our services and performance.

## **Ways to get involved and ensure our tenants and residents can have their say**

### **Information**

**Our website** will be key to ensuring that our tenants have the information they need about our services and how to access them.

**EPIC News** – our customer newsletter will be published regularly to keep tenants up to date and well informed about our services and performance.

**Our Tenants Annual Report** will be published annually and will include all the performance data our tenants need in order to see how we are performing and our plans to improve performance, where we are not meeting our targets.

## **Consultation**

**Complaints and compliments** – we will use feedback and learning from complaints to improve our services and use feedback from compliments to ensure our employees know when we get things right. We will ensure that our tenants know we welcome their complaints and feedback and ensure we put things right promptly when things go wrong.

**Surveys** – we will carry out satisfaction and opinion surveys and utilise the feedback to ensure we develop our services to meet the views of our tenants.

**Consultation Events** – where appropriate, we will hold consultation events to seek feedback from our tenants on specific issues that affect their homes or our services.

**Our Involvement Register** – we will develop a register of tenants and their interests and ask them in what ways they wish to be involved.

## **Engagement**

**Estate walkabouts and inspections** – we will carry out estate walkabouts and inspections to ensure our estates are clean and safe and involve our tenants in these in order to hear their views on the areas they live in.

**Tenant panels** – we will develop tenant panels in partnership with our tenants in order to engage with them on specific areas of our services to help us develop and improve our performance.

## **Empowerment**

**Membership of our Board** – we aim to have a tenant as a member on our Board.

**Tenant Groups** – we will support the formation of tenant groups should our tenants wish to be involved in this way.

## **How we will resource involvement**

We will allocate staff resources to deliver regular involvement activities.

We will ensure that staff receive appropriate training to allow them to meet the fundamental provisions of this policy, in the course of carrying out their roles.

We will identify opportunities for partnership working with other agencies where appropriate, to reduce the risk of consultation fatigue and achieve more cost-effective involvement activities.

We will provide training opportunities for residents interested in becoming involved, in order to provide them with the skills necessary to develop their capacity for involvement.

## **Equality and Diversity Statement**

We are committed to ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity for all. We are therefore opposed to unfair discrimination on any grounds, including race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age, or any unjustifiable criteria. In accordance with this commitment, we will provide a range of opportunities for involvement, and make information available in a variety of formats, to ensure accessibility to all residents.

**Monitoring and Reporting**

We will publish information on the costs and effectiveness of our involvement activities in our Annual Report.

**Responsibilities**

The Director of Housing Management will hold responsibility for resident involvement activities.

**Review Mechanism**

This policy will be reviewed every three years.