

London Borough of Havering Housing Services Respecting our Residents

Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-25



Cleaner, Safer, Prouder *Together*



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

Foreword



Havering Council understands the importance of openness and accountability when engaging with our residents and communities.

We want to demonstrate the highest standards of resident engagement and, as a borough, our commitment to being Cleaner - Safer - Prouder - *Together* will help us to achieve this.

Our housing team provides housing management service to residents living in our 9,200 homes, as well as approximately 2,000 homes owned by leaseholders.

I believe that the residents living in council homes have the best insight into what they need from their housing service.

Through this strategy, we are therefore committing to offer a range of opportunities for residents to share their knowledge and experiences with us.

Our aim is to work in partnership with tenants and leaseholders, and the communities they live in, to improve the housing service, making a positive difference to you, your neighbourhood and the wider community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joshua Chapman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Councillor Joshua Chapman

Cabinet Member for Housing



I feel that this new Resident Engagement Strategy will encourage more residents of all ages to get involved. This will provide residents and leaseholders with a clearer journey on the roadway to effective participation. All residents will benefit from the wide range of involvement options available to them.

Communication is key to engaging residents in worthwhile involvement. So, the website needs to be clearer and user friendly to enable residents to access this important document supporting the aims of the government's White Paper.

Shane Marshall, Chair of Resident Participation Panel

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Introduction

This 2022-2025 Resident Engagement Strategy sets out how Havering Housing Services intends to communicate, engage with, and involve its tenants and leaseholders, (collectively known as residents), living in council managed homes and estates within the borough. We want to put our residents at the heart of everything we do.

In this strategy, our vision is:

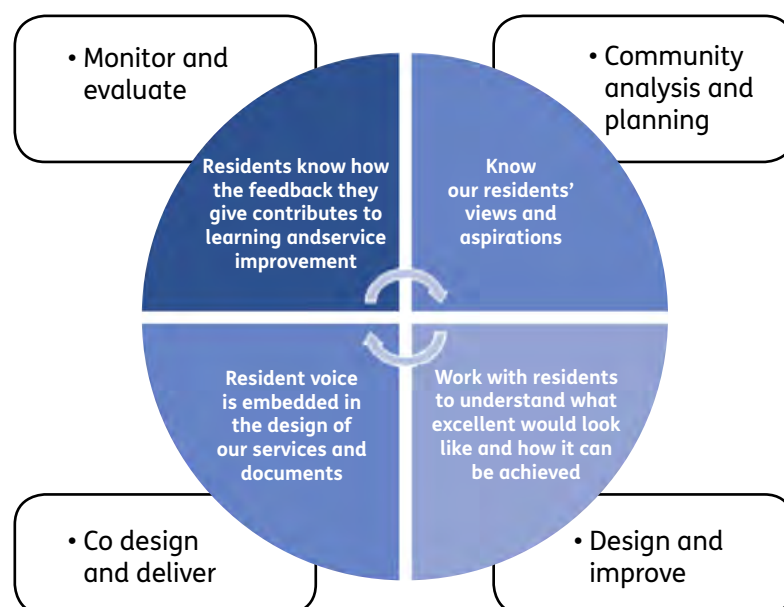
“That all residents feel satisfied that they are respected by the Council Housing Service.”

So, our commitment to you is that we will promote a culture of mutual respect, that establishes a level of excellence in customer service and ensures this level of service is consistently delivered by us through innovation and improvement.

Understanding the changing needs and aspirations of our residents is vital if we are to deliver a truly excellent housing service. The Council has developed this strategy jointly with residents to ensure that the variety of opportunities created for genuine engagement include things that interest them, are accessible to all, and take into account different lifestyles and availability to participate.

We hope as many residents as possible will want to take up the engagement opportunities on offer in this strategy and ensure the residents' voice is heard, understood and acted upon. It is essential that we enable residents' access in several ways, to influence our services to ensure that they are fit for purpose and tailored to their needs. It is essential that residents can dip in and out of 'getting involved' with us and that they are able to participate in a variety of ways, with varying degrees of time and personal commitment. All our engagement with residents in some way influences and steers the front-line housing services available to

Cycle of mutual respect



This three-year Havering Housing Resident Engagement Strategy has been developed to fulfil the current and future regulatory requirements of social housing providers, and whilst it seeks to ensure compliance with the regulatory standards, the primary purpose looks to go further than this. We want to demonstrate that we recognise the powerful and crucial role that the voice of 'lived experience' has in delivering our vision for building strong communities and helping to improve our neighbourhoods.

Section 1

National Policy

The Housing Act 1985 (Section 105), sets out the legal obligations of a Local Housing Authority for consulting with tenants on 'matters of housing management'. This is supplemented by the government's 2017 'Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard', which is one of four consumer standards that all social housing providers need to meet.

The Consumer Standards cover three required outcomes, and these underpin the commitments made in this strategy:

- Customer service, choice and complaints
- Involvement and empowerment
- Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants



Charter for Social Housing Residents (White Paper)

On 17 November 2020, the then MHCLG (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government), published its Charter for Social Housing Residents, setting out what every social housing resident should be able to expect from their landlord.

It makes it clear that effective and authentic tenant engagement and empowerment is expected and widely recognised as the only way to ensure tenant experiences are embedded across policies, plans and services. The

Charter sets out the following expectations: -

- ✓ *To be safe in your home*
- ✓ *To know how your landlord is performing*
- ✓ *To have your 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*
- ✓ *To be supported to take your first step to ownership*

Section 1



Local Context

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) is the body that is responsible for ensuring compliance with legislation.

The Government's Charter for Social Housing Residents (White Paper) recognises that: -

“Residents should be treated with respect – the voice of your residents should be at the centre of everything you do.”

The Charter states that social landlords need to: -

“Listen to residents through effective engagement – be transparent about their performance and decision-making – so that residents and the regulator can hold them to account.”

and

“Put things right when they go wrong.”

Section 1



The Charter not only strengthens the existing formal standards against which landlords are regulated, but it creates new powers that ensure residents get the best possible service from their housing service. The Regulator will be introducing new 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures' or key performance indicators that have to be met.

For Havering Council, this presents an opportunity to work closer with our residents to ensure we are open and accountable. It is essential that we focus on the resident experience. By directing service improvements that will increase resident satisfaction with the service, this will help drive improved performance.

Havering Council homes and estates

Havering Council has around 11,200 homes occupied by tenants and leaseholder. Whilst this is all considered to be 'social' or 'affordable' housing, a large proportion of our council managed homes are 'Supported' or 'Sheltered' housing. Supported housing is a property where housing, support, and sometimes care services, are provided as an integrated or associated package and Sheltered housing which is usually only available to those aged 55 and over.

Havering Housing Services is responsible for providing a housing management service to all residents, which includes communicating, engaging and involving everyone in the way that their estate and neighbourhood is managed and maintained regardless of the type of home they live in.

Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs), directly involve the tenants that live in a particular area or estate in all aspects of managing their homes, taking responsibility for day-to-day management and repairs. The council still retains ownership of the properties and tenants keep their secure tenancy.

We have three TMOs in the borough: - BETRA (Barnstaple Estate Tenants and Residents Association); DELTA (Durham and Elvet Avenue Tenant Management Organisation); and PETRA (Parkhill Estate Tenants and Residents' Association). We work closely with these TMOs and their residents as they are part of the wider estates and communities that Housing Services manages directly.

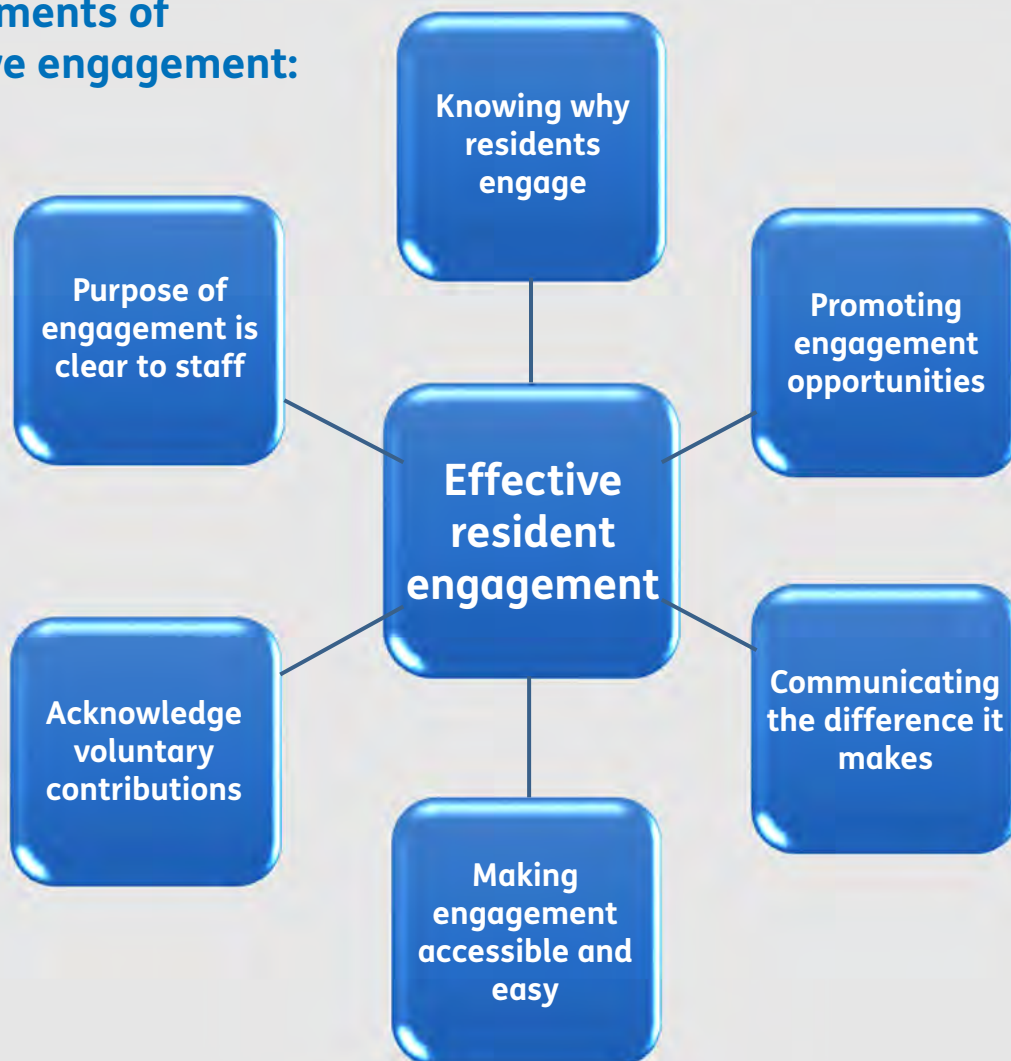
Section 2

Resident Engagement in Housing

Resident engagement is a term used to cover many different activities through which residents can contribute to how the housing service is delivered. It is our responsibility to ensure that residents are provided with a range of flexible options for involvement and engagement at different levels, which include both formal and informal settings in person and online, (referred to in this strategy as digital engagement).



Key elements of effective engagement:



Section 2

Who supports Resident Engagement?



Resident Engagement is everyone's responsibility. The value of engaging with residents is embedded in the work of every housing team. The culture of partnership and collaboration with tenants and leaseholders across all of housing is vital in the successful delivery of this strategy.

Havering Housing Services has a dedicated Resident Engagement Team whose work is specifically aimed at actively promoting community and resident engagement.

The team adopts a collaborative relationship between residents and housing services, supporting tenants and leaseholders to develop and get involved.

If you are interested in contacting them, their email is: getinvolved@havering.gov.uk

Who is involved? – formal engagement opportunities



There are currently a small number of valued and dedicated tenants and leaseholders who are actively involved in working with the council at a strategic level on improving housing management and service delivery.

Our foremost resident-led group is the Resident Participation Panel. These residents work hard and give a great deal of their time to being part of formal engagement, for which we are very grateful. We are keen to 'spread the load' and identify more residents to be involved in both our Resident Participation Panel and service specific panels or focus groups, so more residents can have a say in decisions affecting their homes and communities.

If you're interested in this, please do contact us. We welcome your knowledge and experience and are happy to help you learn, by offering training and support to get involved at this level if you wish to do so.

Current engagement activities



Officers have met with residents to share with them the feedback from our resident engagement consultation. The group discussed different activities which they felt would increase opportunities for resident engagement as well as their own experiences of being involved.

Some groups have previously been involved in reviewing policies and strategies that the Council has produced as well as attending meetings to hear how the Council is responding to complaints. Two of our residents have also spent some time reviewing bids and taking part in interviews with contractors in preparation for new repairs contracts to be awarded.

Section 2

Who is involved? - informal engagement opportunities

Some residents prefer to get involved in a less formal way and so we currently offer a variety of methods for residents to give us their opinion and contribute to service improvement.

All our residents have a unique insight into what it's like living in a council managed home and community, so we want to hear about your experience. We are aiming to build up a 'pool' of residents that would like to 'dip in and out' of different types of engagement. See Section 4 for more information about 'Your Choice' for getting involved.

Currently Housing Services has a range of ways in which residents can quickly give us their views without having to attend a formal meeting. This includes surveys and face to face events.

During the summer, residents had the opportunity to attend community days, which were held on local estates across Havering. At these events residents were able to take part in our engagement consultation, meet with contractors and learn how to do simple repairs. Residents were also able to receive guidance about managing debt or returning to employment. Our staff have previously taken their mobile unit to visit residents across the borough to hear about the types of improvements that would want to see on their estate.



Section 3 - Communication and Consultation



Communication

High quality communication is key to keeping residents informed, and to developing a landlord/tenant relationship that encourages feedback and engagement. The quality and effectiveness of our communications can be measured in terms of the style, frequency and content.

As part of this strategy the council Housing Services will: -

- ✓ ***Publish a regular housing newsletter/bulletin to inform residents of important aspects of the housing service and provide guidance for residents (currently called 'At the heart')***
- ✓ ***Produce key performance information, outcomes and actions to improve services***
- ✓ ***Ensure all consultation documents and housing correspondence are produced in a clear and accessible style – and establish a readers panel so that we work with residents to agree the style and content***
- ✓ ***Maintain an accessible and up to date housing section of the council's website***
- ✓ ***Maintain a regular and up to date presence on social media***

Section 3 - Communication and Consultation

Consultation

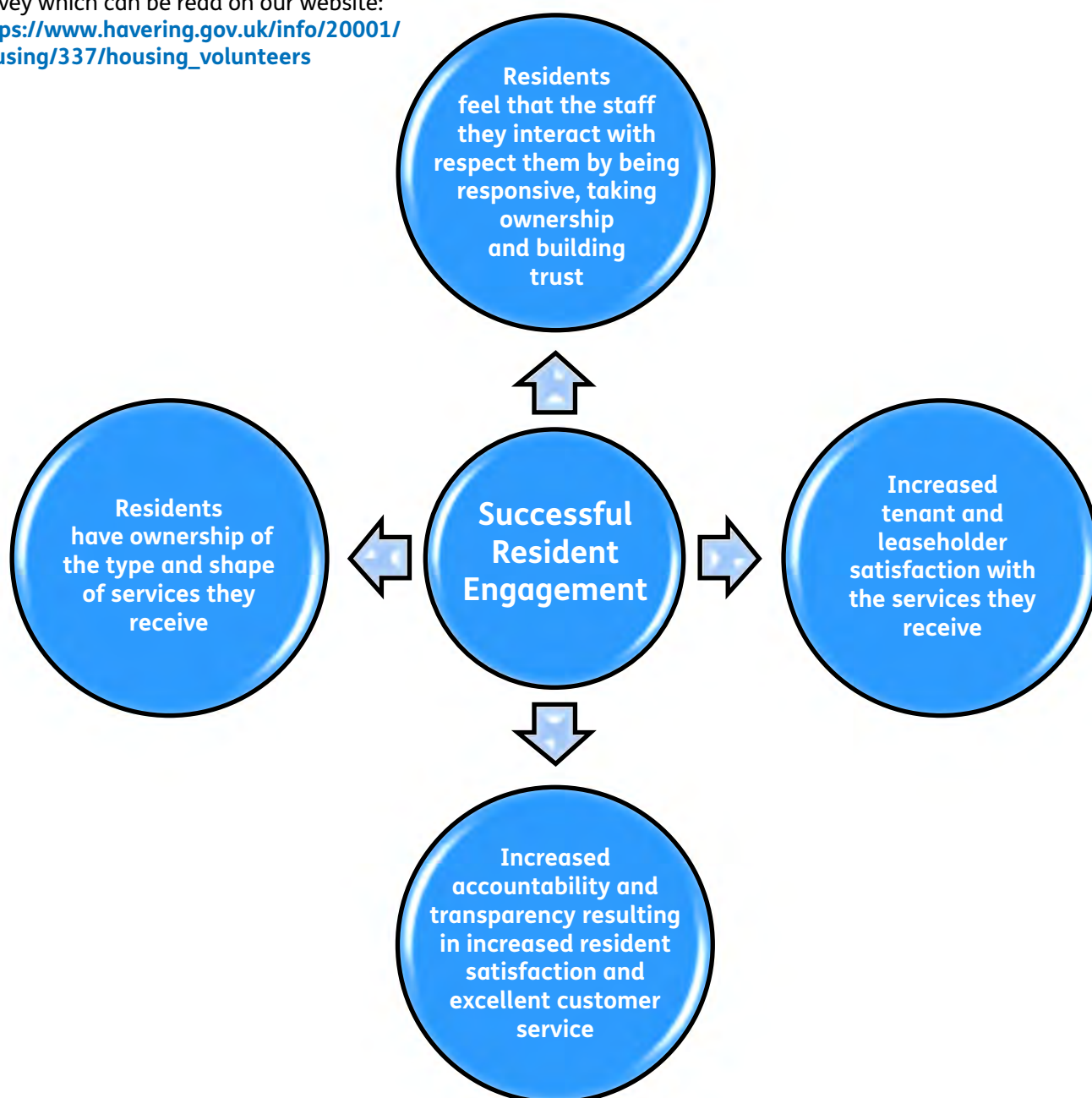
Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey 2020

Havering Housing Services has a good track record of communicating and engaging meaningfully with residents. We regularly carry out extensive consultation exercises to determine how residents are feeling about our service delivery.

In 2020, we commissioned a broad ranging survey of all tenants and leaseholders. At the end of the data collection period, a total of 3,059 responses were received, with many residents giving us some really good feedback. We published the results from this survey which can be read on our website:

https://www.havering.gov.uk/info/20001/housing/337/housing_volunteers

So in the context of a challenging year, although residents told us that we are performing well in many areas, overall residents told us that whilst we are performing well in many areas, overall resident satisfaction wasn't as high as we would have wished. It was clear that some work was needed to ensure that, as a 'social housing landlord', we need to not only listen to residents' views but also "*act upon them*".



Section 3 - Communication and Consultation

Consultation on the Resident Engagement Strategy – what residents have told us?

It was important to us to find out whether Havering residents and stakeholders thought the four aims were the right ones, and what other information they would like to see in this Resident Engagement Strategy.

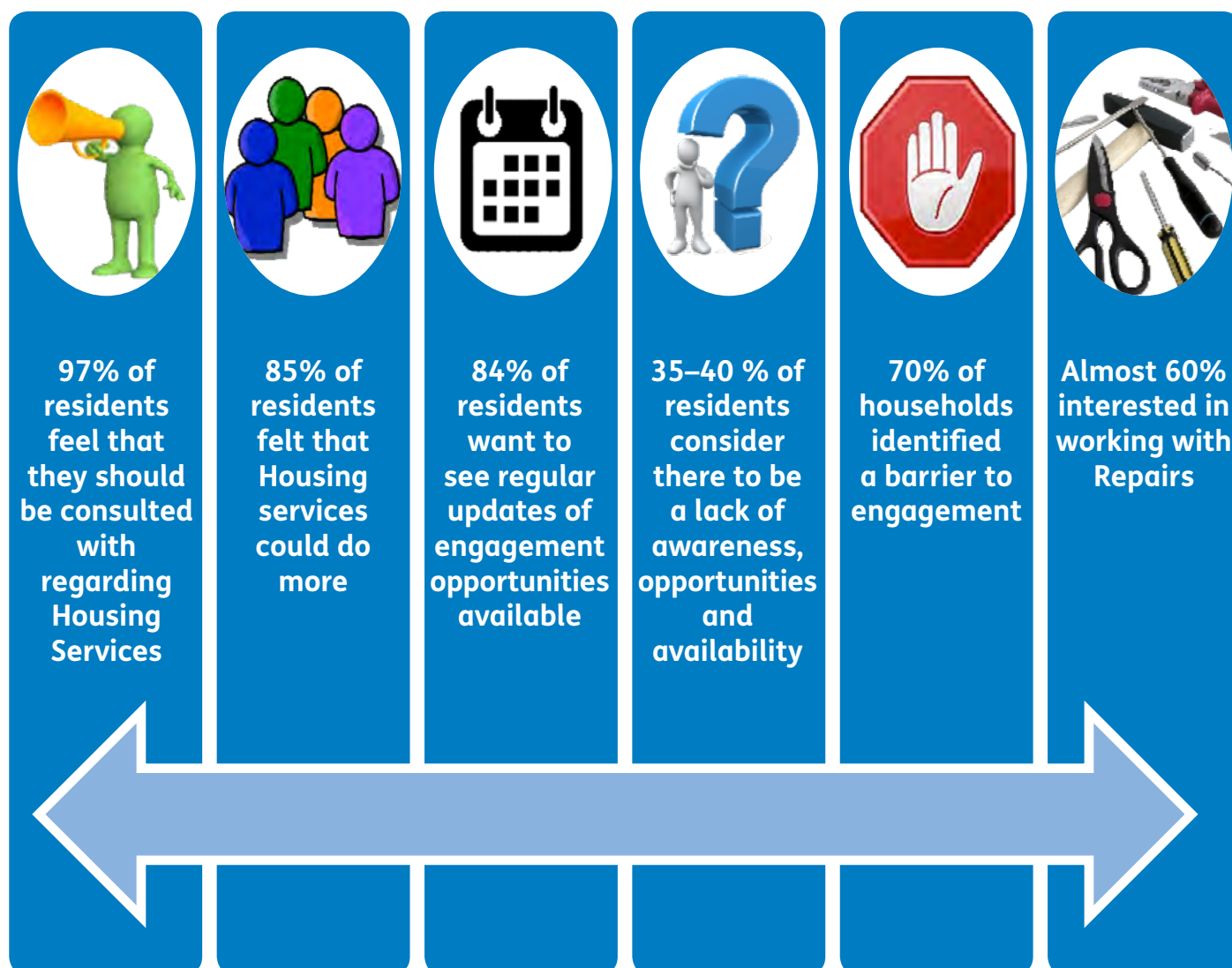
Therefore a nine-week consultation was completed online between August to October 2021, using the Council's Citizen Space consultation platform. 234 tenants and leaseholders responded. This was facilitated by workshops with council staff and focus groups with a variety of residents and community groups.

In total, over 300 stakeholders have been involved in the creation of this strategy, which brought about lots of promising ideas about how to develop the strategy with clear priorities.

Respondents agreed overwhelmingly that the four aims were the right ones for the Council's Housing Services to focus on. The feedback we gathered has been useful in developing the commitments we have made in this strategy.

Key findings

What became clear from the consultation is that residents do want more consultation and involvement with Housing Services. However, residents did highlight that there was apparently a lack of availability of engagement options at all levels.



Section 3 - Communication and Consultation



When asked further about what would encourage residents to engage, and at what level interests lie, most residents want to be able to 'dip in and out' of the engagement process. Most residents showed an interest in the short online surveys before, during and after a service, as well as completing questionnaires.

Residents preferred activities

Occasional short surveys following a completion of a service (transactional – online)

Complete postal / online questionnaires

Focus Groups on specific service areas (virtual, face to face or hybrid)

Service improvement workshops to guide future service planning

Mystery Shopping / online Mystery Shopping

A positive finding from the consultation was that when asked, "Would you like to get involved with the Housing Service?" 76 per cent said yes or maybe.

When asked about the barriers to getting involved, 99 respondents said the main barrier was that they 'did not know what they can get involved in' and 92 residents said they 'did not know how to get involved'.

When asked specifically about barriers to digital engagement the top three digital barriers were:

- Confidence in using online services
- Access to services such as Skype or Zoom
- Not being aware of the digital channels available

We have listened to this feedback and in Section 5 of this strategy under each of the four key aims, we set out some of the ways that we will improve our service.

Section 4 – ‘Your choice’ engagement

Following the consultation, we have developed several options for our residents to ensure that, should they wish to, they can get involved at the level of their choosing.

So, if they want to give us their views, or contribute on a one-off basis they could choose:

Inform and contribute

Or, if they want to get more involved and perhaps collaborate with us on improving services, they could choose:

Involve and collaborate

It's important that we aim to remove any barriers to engaging with us in whatever way suits residents, so below we have broken down a list of some of the activities they could choose to get involved with. These are separated both in terms of the level of commitment required and possible training needed to fully understand the role and be as effective as possible in your engagement.

It's 'YOUR CHOICE' to get involved in a way that suits you

INFORM AND CONSULT

– quick and no regular time commitment



**NO
TRAINING
NEEDED**

- ✓ **Online/Postal satisfaction surveys**
- ✓ **Telephone surveys/Text surveys** after a service has been completed – e.g., after a repair
- ✓ **Website or 'Webchat'**
- ✓ **Social Media** – e.g., Housing Twitter feed
- ✓ **Drop-in Housing surgery sessions** at Community Hubs
- ✓ **Attending Estate Inspections / Online input /or Contributing to Estate Improvements**
- ✓ **Events /or 'Hot Topic' meetings**
- ✓ **Reading 'At the Heart' Housing information Bulletins**

INVOLVE AND COLLABORATE

– we do need some of your time



**TRAINING
PROVIDED
(if required)**

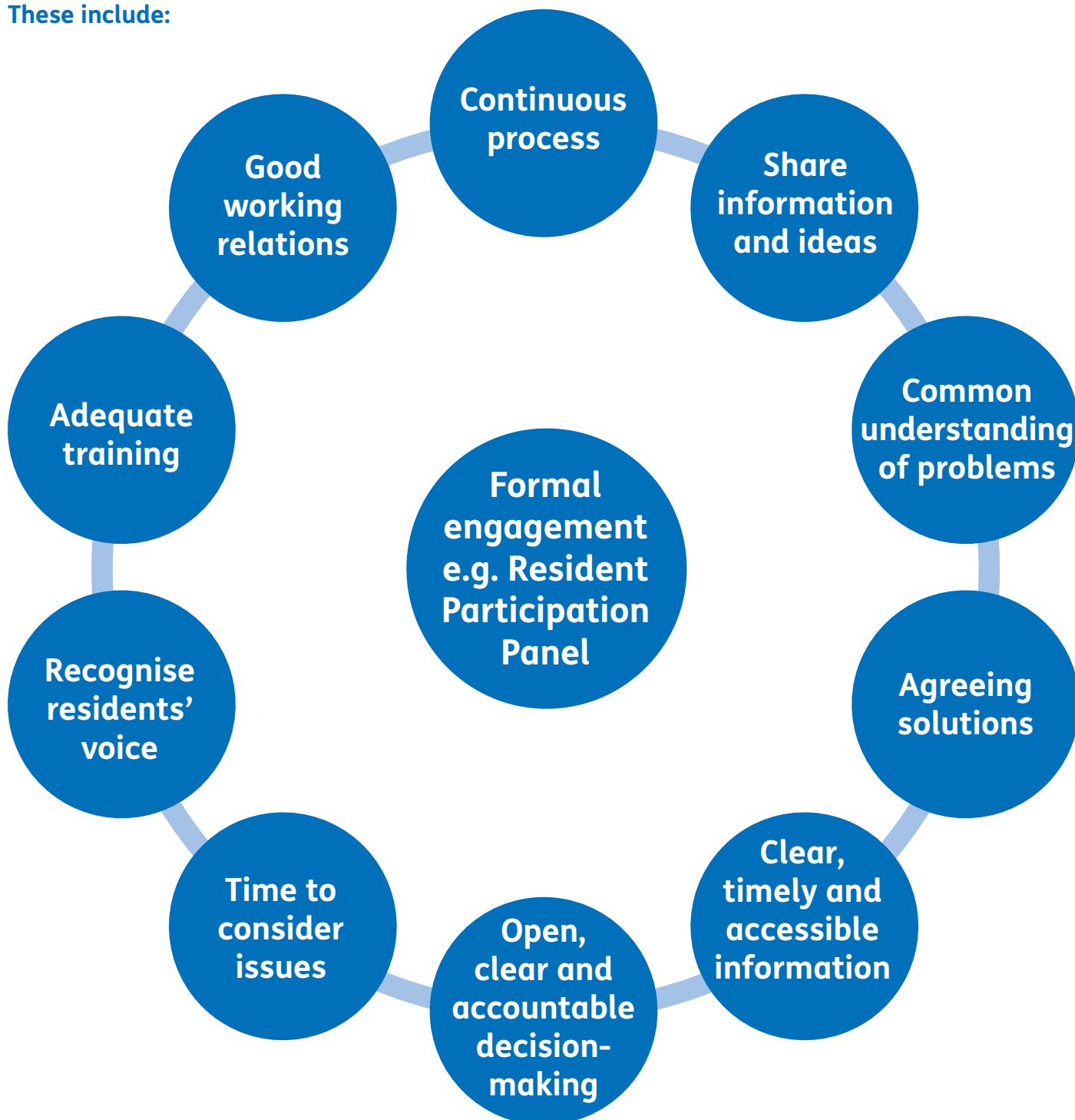
- ✓ **Resident Participation Panel (RPP)**– oversees performance at a strategic level and contribute to decision-making
- ✓ **Service Specific groups** – e.g., Monitoring Repairs performance
- ✓ **Task and finish' groups** – that are set up to work on a project in collaboration with staff and other residents
- ✓ **Focus groups** – e.g., to help us test out a new service or review solutions to a problem
- ✓ **Service Improvement workshops** – e.g., to develop new policies and strategies
- ✓ **Mystery Shopping/ Online Mystery Shopping** – to test our service as a user
- ✓ **Readers Panel** – to contribute to customer facing documents

Section 4 – ‘Your choice’ engagement

Formal engagement - Involve and collaborate

It is important that if residents agree to get involved and collaborate with housing services, in turn we need to set out the principles under which we will operate at the more formal level in terms of developing mutual respect.

These include:



Section 5 – Aims of the Resident Engagement Strategy

1. To develop a collaborative resident engagement culture within Housing

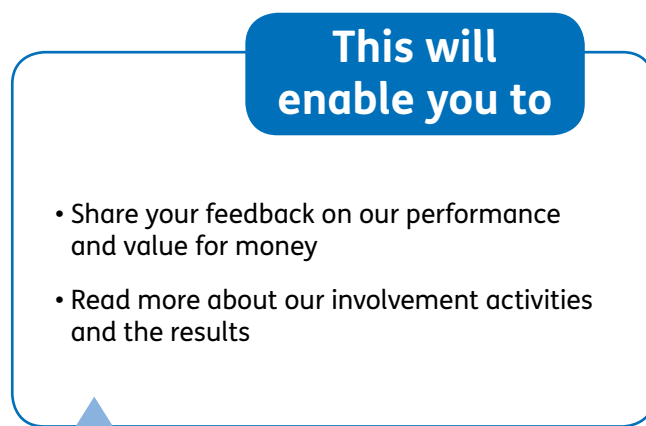
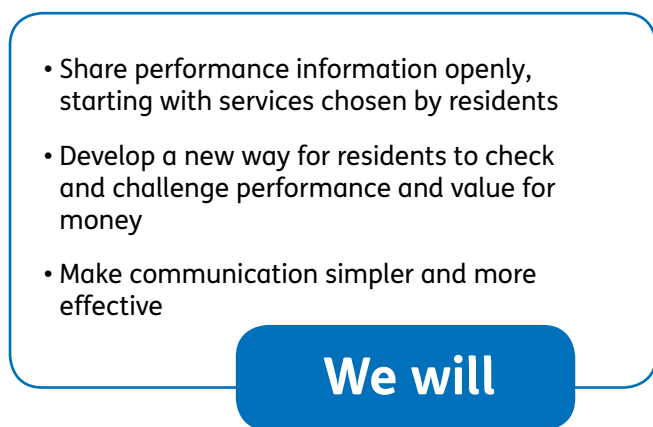
We recognise the value of residents' experiences, and we will listen and work together in partnership. Collaboration ideally needs to start from an early point, with residents being part of development of policies, plans and services.

We want all residents to have the opportunity to engage with us in whatever manner they choose. We value the diversity of our residents and promote equality and inclusion at all times.

We want to understand the needs of our residents

and to make sure our engagement activities are representative of our communities. We therefore want to promote initiatives that seek to inclusively engage with all residents and communities, including targeted activities for young or elderly residents.

The health and wellbeing of our residents is of vital importance to us. We are committed to doing everything we can to reach out to those residents that currently aren't able to engage with us for whatever reason and support them to do if they wish to.

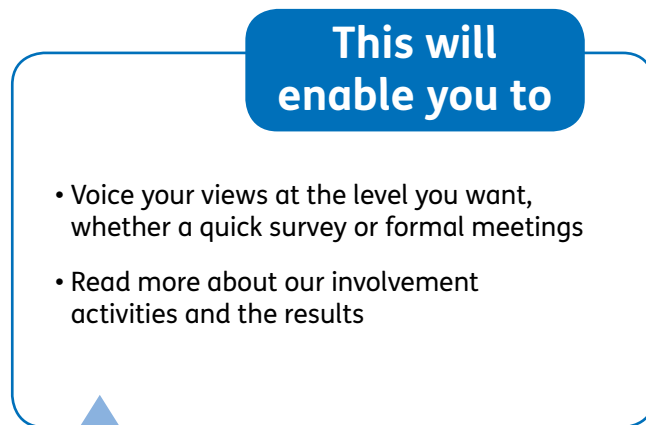
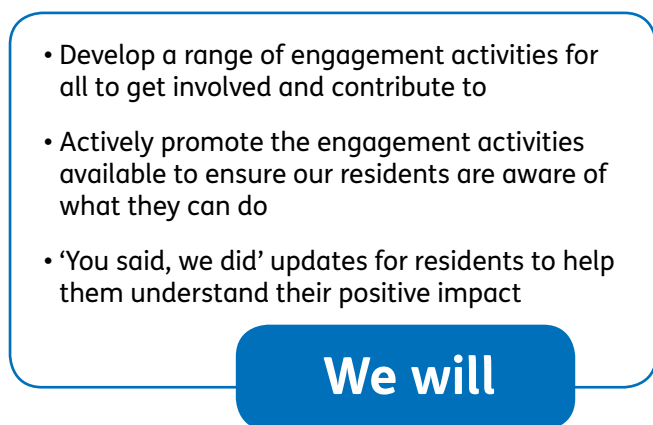


2. To engage and involve residents in helping us improve housing services

We want to get more residents involved in influencing, improving, and helping us design housing services. You told us that to do this we need to promote activities better, keep things simple and have something for everyone. We are committed to continuously improving the service we deliver to our residents.

So, whether residents want to be involved at a strategic, policy, standards or project level, influencing decision-

making, or whether they would rather be involved on an estate level, perhaps contributing to estate or scheme improvements, we will offer information and access to our engagement activities. We will offer training and guidance if required, to ensure participants are able to fulfil their potential in engaging with Havering Housing Services.



Section 5 – Aims of the Resident Engagement Strategy

3. To deliver a right first-time service

We will listen to and act on the views of our residents. We will provide information that gives assurance that the management of homes and communities is in safe hands. Residents told us that you want more opportunities to communicate and engage with us about services and issues that concern them, and that more needs to be done to get things right the first time.

We need to do this regularly and pro-actively using a variety of methods, including the option for face-to-face interaction when we can. We will ensure that our staff

and contractors understand the need to be open and transparent and we will publish performance, outcomes and actions to improve services.

Our Repairs team are currently developing new ways of working as part of the new repairs and maintenance contract. That will increase our engagement with residents. This will be through more detailed satisfaction surveys and a systematic approach to gathering and recording resident feedback. We are confident that this approach will lead to improved resident satisfaction.

- Share performance information openly, starting with services chosen by residents
- Develop a new way for residents to check and challenge performance and value for money
- Develop service specific resident panels e.g. Repairs panel to monitor contractor's performance

We will

This will enable you to

- Share your feedback on our performance and value for money
- Monitor our performance
- Read more about our involvement activities and the results

4. To embrace digital communication and engagement

Rapid developments in technology, social media, smart phones, and the increase in Wi-Fi availability have transformed how we communicate and engage with residents. The Council is committed to constantly improving our website and access to online self-serve via the My Havering <https://my.havering.gov.uk/pages/login.aspx> account and tenant portal.

Residents tell us that getting involved online and digitally is quick and easy, especially quick text feedback. However, not everyone has access to the Havering Council website and some residents may not

have the correct digital device to be able to engage with us in this way should they chose to do so. Therefore, we are committed to sharing best practice in digital innovation and taking advantage of initiatives that aim to tackle digital exclusion, achieving the best possible outcomes for all our residents.

As our resident engagement activities develop, we will ensure we offer the digital engagement option to everyone and support and assist those that need more help to get involved at whatever level of engagement they wish to participate in.

- Improve and promote our online presence
- Promote Digital Inclusion
- Commit to providing clear and concise digital communications

We will

This will enable you to

- Engage with Housing Services in a few clicks
- Develop your digital skills

Section 6 – Measuring Success

To capture the impact of the strategy, we will find the best ways to measure and promote our progress in meeting our objectives through: -

- ✓ *Establishing a system of recording and using resident and customer testimonials as part of the communication process, highlighting good news stories which may inspire others to get involved*
- ✓ *Reviewing involvement activities for impact, effectiveness, popularity, access and diversity and value for money*
- ✓ *Developing a database to capture engagement information – the number of residents and customers involved at various levels, and a profile broken down by the different diversity strands of our residents and customers*
- ✓ *Monitoring compliance against the Social Housing White Paper / ‘Tenant Satisfaction Measures’ and linked to Resident Standards*
- ✓ *Producing biannual reports for Resident Participation Panel and senior management, of key activities and progress made*
- ✓ *Reporting resident engagement programmes and impacts through social media, the website, through newsletters using the ‘you said – we did’ format*
- ✓ *Recognising and celebrating resident engagement outcomes and the contribution of involved residents in service improvements*
- ✓ *Monitoring against the Tpas* seven National Tenant Engagement Standards*

**Tpas – Tenant Participation Advisory Service*

Section 7– Equality and Diversity Statement



The Council will seek to ensure that this strategy is, at all times, applied fairly to all sections of the community.

We are committed to the promotion of a digital agenda but also, we will provide information in other formats when required. Residents will be invited to indicate if they wish to make use of the Council's translation and interpretation services, or if they require additional services to enable them to access or understand the strategy, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in any way.

They will also be invited to provide details of their ethnic origin, sexuality, disability and other equalities information. Provision of this information is not obligatory; however, such information will help the Council to monitor the number and types of protected characteristics accessing this strategy and will help ensure that service improvements evolve in line with any changing local needs.

Equalities records will be kept and monitored to ensure they remain up to date. This strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure it is not operated in any way that could discriminate or disadvantage against any particular group of people.

Havering Council takes personal privacy very seriously and will never share a resident's personal data without their prior knowledge, unless required to do so by law. All information provided will be kept confidential and treated with respect at all times.

For full details about how the Council protects personal data, please visit [Havering Council Data Protection policy](#).

Section 8– Summary



Delivery of the commitments made in this Resident Engagement Strategy will be dependent on genuine, long-lasting partnership working between residents, stakeholders and council staff.

To achieve the Resident Engagement Strategy's vision: - ***"That all residents feel satisfied that they are respected by the Council Housing Service"***, it is vital that all staff and residents demonstrate the right behaviours that lead to mutual trust and respect.

Havering Housing Services is providing a good level of service to our residents; however, we want to make our services excellent. By adopting a resident-

focused culture and championing effective resident engagement with every member of staff throughout Housing Services, we are confident we will achieve our proposed outcomes.

This will require a comprehensive training programme to help develop the right culture within the Housing Service. This culture will be based on Havering Council's ICARE values that promote the behaviours of:

**Integrity - Creativity - Ambition
- Respect - Everyone.**

We hope that after reading this Resident Engagement Strategy, as a resident, you will feel inspired to contact us and get involved in some way in making a difference and helping the council to deliver an excellent housing service to each and every resident.

Contact us at - getinvolved@haverling.gov.uk

Website - https://www.haverling.gov.uk/info/20001/housing/337/housing_volunteers

Phone - **01708 432679**