

## Customer Involvement Policy

Policy owner	Head of Neighbourhood Services
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References/Linked Documents	<p>EHPL Customer Involvement Strategy (February 2009)</p> <p>People First: Delivering Change Through Involvement (Tenant Services Authority May 2007)</p> <p>EHPL Customer Involvement Statement (reviewed annually)</p> <p>EHPL Customer Involvement Annual Impact Assessment</p> <p>EHPL Stronger Communities Strategy (2007)</p> <p>EHPL Equality and Diversity Policy</p> <p>EHPL Annual Programme of Resident Involvement</p> <p>EHPL Tenant Participation Compact (amended 2008)</p> <p>EHPL Equality and Diversity Action Plan (reviewed annually)</p>

### 1. Key Objective

- 1.1 Eastlands Homes is committed to the involvement of customers on a range of issues that affect their homes and the way that they are managed. It will actively encourage customers to participate, to provide feedback and to discuss directly their views on the way in which its services are provided.
- 1.1.1 Eastlands Homes will enable involvement in all aspects of its activities. Customer involvement will cover four key areas: -

- Providing Information
- Seeking and responding to feedback
- Consultation
- Participation

## 2. Key Policy Standards

2.1 This policy complies in full with Tenant Services Authority (previously Housing Corporation until 30 November 2008) document "People First: Delivering Change through Involvement" published in 2007. Policy standards cover the four key areas as follows: -

### 2.2 Information

To ensure that customers are kept fully advised about services that Eastlands Homes offers and also to provide information about performance and any matters of general housing interest.

2.2.2 Information will be made available through: -

- Publishing an annual report;
- Publishing quarterly, a comprehensive newsletter sent to all tenants;
- Supporting the Eastlands Forums Editorial Panel in producing a twice yearly tenants newsletter;
- Producing and regularly updating a tenants handbook;
- Monitoring and reporting on the services provided;
- Publishing and monitoring standards against a Customers Charter;
- Publishing relevant performance and service plans and standards as part of Eastlands Homes programme of achieving best value in its service delivery;
- Holding regular local meetings;
- Encouraging, supporting and consulting with tenants and residents groups;
- Providing information, on request, in other languages to those whose first Language is not English; and in other formats e.g. large print.

### 2.3 Customer Feedback

2.3.1 To ensure that customers have easy and accessible ways to feedback to Eastlands Homes on their experiences and opinions of services available or provided.

2.3.2 To ensure that this feedback is analysed and used to inform the way that services are improved.

2.3.3 Feedback will be encouraged through

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- Operating the “Are you satisfied?” complaints and compliments procedure;
- Undertaking a range of customer surveys covering key service areas to monitor satisfaction with the investment programme, service delivery and inform service improvements;
- Undertaking sample opinion surveys from time to time on the whole range of services provided;
- Providing opportunities for feedback as part of day to day contact, for example, through repair acknowledgement processes;
- Carrying out exit surveys, mystery shopping and telephone surveys on specific aspects of service delivery;
- Incorporating opportunities for tenants to provide feedback into other activities including community based events, fun days, young people’s projects and quizzes and prize questionnaires.

### 2.4 Consultation

2.4.1 To ensure that customers are fully consulted on all issues which are likely to affect them.

2.4.2 Customers will be consulted before Eastlands Homes make any major changes, which affect them. These changes may include:

- Proposals to alter the Tenancy Agreement;
- Repair and Investment Programmes;
- Changes in the way we manage or look after our homes;
- Changes in the cost or provision of services;
- Strategic plans such as maintenance or demolition programmes.

2.4.3 Eastlands Homes will let customers know about the proposed changes in one or a combination of the following ways:

- By letter;
- By visits to the customers home;
- Through newsletters and leaflets;
- Through meetings;
- Through the website;
- By attending meetings of Tenants Associations or resident groups;
- By holding public exhibitions and drop in events;
- By opinion surveys.

2.4.4 Eastlands Homes will take customers views into account when making a decision and will tell customers what has been decided.

2.4.5 If Eastlands Homes is required by law to change policies or practice Eastlands Homes will inform customers of such changes as soon as possible and usually in writing.

### **2.5 Participation**

2.5.1 Eastlands Homes is committed to active participation within its policy and practice frameworks.

2.5.2 Eastlands Homes recognises that there are a number of motivations for individuals becoming actively involved. The Eastlands Forum has identified these as: -

- A wish to improve the local area;
- A wish to help and support other residents;
- To make a stand on specific issues of local concern;
- To obtain and disseminate relevant and useful information;
- To make a difference;
- To engage with young people;
- To gain a better understanding of issues;
- To represent the community;
- To show commitment and care for the neighbourhood;
- To provide a safety net to local residents;
- To achieve specific objectives, for example, to secure funding for environmental improvements;
- To provide social support and activities.

2.5.3 Eastlands Homes recognises that formal structures should be flexible enough to accommodate, respond to and support all these objectives.

2.5.3 Tenant representatives will be given appropriate training to ensure as effective participation by them as possible.

2.5.4 Where groups express an interest in exploring options for greater involvement in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods Eastlands Homes will work with them to develop proposals that best meet the aspirations of the group and the organisation as a whole.

2.5.5 Formal involvement can include: -

- Involvement in a recognised community group;
- Attendance at the Eastlands Forum and other events;
- Position on the Board of Management.

2.5.6 There are 5 Tenant members and one resident member on the Board of Management. There are four Council members and five Independents.

### **3. Tenant Participation Compact**

3.1 A Tenant Participation Compact has been jointly developed with the Eastlands Forum and includes a statement of aims and objectives and commitments and requirements. The Compact Document contains a plan of activities designed to ensure participation is developed and strengthened.

3.2 Eastlands Homes Tenant Participation Compact will form the framework within which formal tenant and resident participation will be undertaken.

3.3 In adopting the Compact Eastlands Homes will be ensuring that core standards are achieved under the following headings: -

- Standards for the housing service
- Standards for resources for tenant participation
- Standards for Tenant Associations and Other Groups
- Equality and diversity standards

### **4. Eastlands Forum**

4.1 Eastlands Homes is committed to having an effective dialogue with customers and aims to ensure that they can have an influence over the services that are provided. To assist with this Eastlands Homes has established an Eastlands Forum to which representatives of the various tenant associations and groups that Eastlands Homes works with will be invited.

4.2 Each recognised Group is invited to send up to 3 representatives, the majority of whom have to be tenants, to the Forum, which meets every 6 weeks. In addition an annual Forum Conference event will be held to encourage more detailed discussion on key issues.

4.3 At the start of each year the Forum will agree the issues it wishes to discuss during the year. Sub groups will be established to carry out specific functions including, for example, funding bids and an editorial group. The Forum will be the key body for detailed consultation and discussion on policy and strategy development and review, priorities for the Corporate Plan and Departmental Plans and Involvement Statement as well as reviewing specific areas of service.

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- 4.4 The Forum will be consulted about the content and priorities for the annual Customer Involvement Statement.
- 4.5 The Forum will be supported in producing a newsletter to all tenants twice a year.
- 4.6 An AGM will be held each year in September where the Forum will review its achievements over the previous year.

### 5. Other Policy Commitments

- 5.1 New and flexible ways to involve customers will be introduced, learning from best practice and responding to customer's ideas with the objective of increasing involvement. As a minimum the following actions will take place each year.

#### 5.1.1 Involvement Statement.

As part of this policy an annual Involvement Statement will be produced and made available to all customers, which will set out key actions in the coming year. Actions will result in improvements in the level of involvement and the impact of that involvement. The statement will form a key action in the Organisational Plan. The Tenants Forum will monitor delivery of the Statement

#### 5.1.2 Impact Assessment

An annual Impact Assessment is required as part of the Housing Corporation guidance. An annual impact assessment will be carried out to identify the impact that customer involvement has had over the past year, identifying specific examples of where services have been improved as a result of the involvement of customers.

#### 5.1.3 Involvement Booklet

Eastlands Homes will provide information to all existing and new tenants setting out clearly the options that are available for customer involvement. Customers will be encouraged to register their interest with us in order that we can assess the extent of customer involvement and effectively target the different methods available.

#### 5.1.4 Involvement Programme Booklet

Each year an Involvement programme will be produced to raise awareness amongst interested customers about the range of opportunities available. The

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programme will include terms of reference for groups, dates of meetings in the year ahead and training course.

### 5.1.5 Service Panels

A number of service panels will be supported to cover key service areas. The role of the panels will be to meet with officers to review performance and identify service improvements and efficiencies.

### 5.1.6 Hard to Reach Groups

Specific action plans and customer training and equality impact assessments will be used to maximise the opportunities to involve specific groups. The emphasis will be on reaching black and minority ethnic residents and other hard to reach groups.

## 6. Monitoring, Reporting and Review Process

6.1 Responsibility for the development, monitoring and review of the policy will rest with the Board. This role will encompass the following: -

- Monitoring how the strategy is implemented including consideration of an annual impact assessment;
- Training and support to tenants and their representatives;
- Managing the Customer Involvement budget;
- Information distribution;
- Operations Committee will monitor performance against the Involvement Statement.