



North Wales Housing

Annual Tenant Participation Report 2017-2018

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1. Introduction

The report sets out what tenant engagement opportunities are available and the activities that have taken place from April 2017 to March 2018.

Our aim is to improve our services by fully involving tenants in developing and influencing how these services are provided.

The Strategy during this reporting period sets out our aim to improve our services by fully involving tenants in developing and influencing how these services are provided.

Working together we will:

- Increase the participation of tenants and service users in the planning and operating of services
- Improve the quality of participation
- Promote a wide range of options for tenants and service users across the organisation
- Improve our feedback to tenants and service users so that we can prove where they have influenced or shaped services
- Encourage involvement of under-represented groups such as young people and sheltered housing tenants
- Make sure that we communicate effectively with our tenants and service users, and provide good quality, accessible
- Improve the quality of life in the communities in which our tenants and service users live
- Increase skills and training opportunities for our tenants and service users

This this final report for the Tenant Participation Strategy which covered the period 2015-2018

Consultation with tenants for a new Tenant Participation Strategy also began towards the end of this reporting period.

2. Events and Activities

We organise a number of events and activities to engage with our tenants. These events and activities should give the tenants the opportunity to get involved at North Wales Housing and improve the quality of life in communities in which our tenants live. Events and activities can also give the opportunity to learn and develop new skills.

Since April 2017, 483 tenants have engaged with us.

Events can include half term/summer activities on our schemes, and supported housing activities such as gardening projects, cook and eat, and house meetings. Our extra care and over 55 schemes also arrange a number of events and activities such as crafts, trips/days out, and coffee mornings, and Age Connect Forums. Residents meetings are also held within these schemes following a “You said – we did” format, dealing with management issues e.g. gardening complaints, and feedback on menus and standards.

Supported Housing have again undertaken an annual service user consultation.

We delivered Get to Know Your Landlord events on Cae Bold and Llain Cytir. These events were used to consult on our new Corporate Plan and also identify issues of importance to those residents.

A further event was held in Llain Cytir to determine whether residents would be interested in working together to organise community events or project for the benefit of all the residents. We are still working with this group with the aim of putting on a summer event. Similar work is being undertaken at Maes y Llan.

Our gardening competition has continued to be popular and following comments made in our consultation with tenants and staff for our new Tenant Participation Strategy, a good neighbour award will be developed.

Residents’ Associations are not as popular as it was a few years ago, which is common across many Housing Associations; however we still offer support to any groups and those wanting to set one up.

We have a residents association operating within the Metropole building which receives support from the Tenant Participation Co-ordinator. During this reporting period the Tenant Participation Co-ordinator has also assisted a group of residents in Llys y Coed to set up a residents association.

Our outdoor activities project, Opening the Doors to the Outdoors has continued during this reporting period which will be discussed further on page 6.

3. Residents’ Advisory Panel

The role of the RAP is to act as a ‘critical friend’ challenge to executive policy makers and decision makers, and enable the voices and concerns of residents to be heard.

The Panel has the following aims and objectives:

- To form an integral part of NWH’s governance and co-regulation management structure and can be directly accountable to the Board of Management
- To work constructively with the Board, Senior Management Team and all NWH employees to improve services and outcomes for customers and service users
- To form effective links with the Board, Senior Management Team and other tenants
- To provide an independent view to the Board of how the organisation is performing; aiming to fairly and broadly represent the views of NWH’s customers and service users

- To challenge NWH to achieve continuous improvement in services standards and efficiency
- To influence policy and decision makers in NWH by monitoring progress to ensure that accepted recommendations from scrutiny activity shape future policy and strategy development

During this reporting period the Panel was meeting on a monthly basis alternating between Bangor and Llandudno Junction and has 8 members (Has changed to every two months from April 2018).

Food and refreshments are provided, as well as travel and child care expenses to assist tenants in participating.

Notes are taken at all meetings which are submitted to the Landlord Services Committee.

Since April 2017 the key areas for the Panel have -

- Monitoring performance on a monthly and quarterly basis. The Panel have chosen the PI's they wish to monitor. Have been monitoring repairs, complaints, customer services, and tenant satisfaction
- Had input on the Corporate Plan. Also reviewed draft plan before it went to Board.
- Taken part in the self evaluation process. Attended July workshop with LSC members.
- Reviewed the self evaluation report before it was submitted to LSC
- Developed the Customer Charter
- Inputted on the new customer service structure and work practices. Input on the call waiting system.
- Reviewed our complaints report. The Panel have recommended raising awareness of our complaints procedure. Because of RAP recommendation, articles published in tenant newsletter and social media posts on how to make a complaint.
- Reviewed the fire safety report and provided input from tenant perspective.
- Inputted on tenant participation strategy and reviewed draft before it was submitted to LSC
- Began attending LSC meetings. Improving links between RAP and LSC
- Members attend TPAS network quarterly meetings. Whoever attends reports back to fellow RAP members at the next RAP meeting. Network meetings provide tenants with updates on what's happening in the social housing sector and an opportunity to meet tenants from other landlords. Topics at this year's meetings have also included – delivering the best repairs service, value for money, and abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill

The next reporting period will see some changes for the Panel. Meetings will be every two months and a forward work programme has been developed. The aim over the next

reporting period is to strengthen the role the Panel and ensure they are involved in projects/decision making at an earlier stage.

The next reporting period will see the continuation of developing the Panel's relationship with the Landlord Services Committee.

4. Sounding Board

The Sounding Board is a database of tenants and service users who are interested acting as a 'reader' of leaflets, forms, policies etc. and providing feedback.

By being a member tenants will be able to take part in occasional surveys, focus groups, and hear about new ways of getting involved as they develop.

This is the perfect opportunity for those tenants who are unable to commit to regular meetings such as the Residents' Advisory Panel.

Since its creation the Sounding Board had lost its momentum. This was due to a lack of opportunities given to its members to have their way.

During this reporting period we have re-launched the Sounding Board and offered more incentives for those joining and taking part.

The Sounding Board provided input on the development of the new Tenant Participation Strategy. They've also participated in a project to improve customer service.

During the next reporting period we will aim to have provided members with more opportunities to take part and raise its profile.

We currently have 32 tenants signed up to the Sounding Board.

5. Opening the Doors to the Outdoors

This is the second year of a 5 years partnership project between the Outdoor Partnership and North Wales Housing.

The aim of the project is to provide opportunities for our tenants on low incomes and economically inactive to be able to participate in outdoor activities.

The project also aims to develop opportunities for participants to gain employment and volunteering opportunities in the outdoor sector. Tenants have since had opportunities to participate in hill walking and canoeing, with mountain biking due to start in September as the final activity of the year.

During this reporting period tenants have had opportunities to participate in the following outdoor activities –

- Hill walking

- Paddling (canoeing and kayaking)
- Mountain Biking
- Indoor Climbing

Hill walking

Number of participants 13

Number of participants completing course 5

Paddling (canoeing and kayaking)

Number of participants 11

Number of participants completing course 5

Mountain Biking

Number of participants 12

These are comments given by some of the participants about the benefit of taking part in these activities:

- Improved my fitness
- I've lost weight
- I've enjoyed the company
- I've enjoyed meeting up with different people
- Meeting new people and going places new and not been to before
- Made friends
- Done things that I would normally not done or had a chance to
- I'm better around people now. I talk more often and much more open

6. The Bus Stop Project

The Bus Stop Project is a mobile community development project which is free and confidential.

North Wales Housing is a project partner along with Grŵp Cynefin, Cartrefi Conwy, and Conwy County Borough Council.

The Project offers a wide range of services and opportunities, including:

- Informal and accredited learning for those wanting to gain new skills, including CV writing, interview techniques and confidence building
- Information and support on relevant topics; including benefits, health and wellbeing and your rights
- Opportunity to take part in local community projects
- Projects that encourage young people to positively engage in their communities
- Opportunities for people to share their thoughts and feelings on their local communities

All the above can take place from the Project's vehicle which can be parked right outside people's front doors or any other convenient location.

Since April 2017 the Bus Stop Project has delivered a number of projects on behalf of North Wales Housing. Below are just some examples of the projects completed during this reporting period.

Woodlands, Llandudno Junction

A health and wellbeing project undertaken with young people and children living Woodlands.

The aim of the project was to provide sessions for young people that includes an educational element around health and wellbeing; engage with young people and encourage them to positively engage within their community; and consult with adults on what they know about health and wellbeing, and what it means to them.

17 participants.

This project was replicated on other schemes throughout the Summer of 2017.

Taverners Court

The aim of the sessions were to reduce Social Isolation through brining a group of residents together for crafts and activities; provide materials and resources they wouldn't normally have; and fun and informal guided crafts sessions that encourage participants to develop hobbies and creativity.

8 Participants

May half term 2017 Nature projects

Over the May half term summer period Bus Stop delivered a number of sessions on the following schemes:

- Cae Bold (4 participants)
- Maes y Llan (12 participants)
- Parc Clarence (7 participants)

The aims of these sessions were get the children to appreciate the environment; getting the young people to take interest in nature and the green areas on their estate; and getting them to engaged in their communities.

February half term 2017 ASB projects

Over the February half term period Bus Stop delivered sessions on the following schemes:

- Gallt y Sil (4 participants)
- Woodlands (5 participants)

The aims of these sessions were to provide activities on young people's estates to promote engagement and reduce chances of Anti-Social Behaviour/Bullying and unwanted behaviour over school holidays; increase awareness of safety online for children and young people; and facilitate a fun and informal yet educational session that the young people in the community would benefit from.

7. Community Fund

Our Community Fund has been developed to provide funding to assist voluntary, community, recreational or residents groups that are based in the counties of Conwy, Gwynedd, and Ynys Môn.

These organisations/groups should be developing projects and initiatives that benefit the local community. Organisations applying for funding must be:

- A constituted organisation/group and have a bank account with a minimum of two signatories
- Follow an open access policy towards membership, use of their facilities and participation in activities
- Be non-political

During this reporting period small grants have been awarded to:

- Clwb Pel Droed Mynydd Tigers – A football club based in Bethesda with the primary objective of providing opportunities to young people in the area to participate in organised football
- Friends of Llanfairfechan Community Library – A group that has taken on the running of the library on behalf of the community

Clwb Pel Droed Mynydd Tigers said this about the grant – *It has helped us to operate 8 teams from Under 6 to Under 16 years old. Due to the support we have been able to provide opportunities to 125 children.*

8. Personal Development Grant

Our Personal Development Grant has been developed to tackle financial barriers that may be preventing our tenants from accessing education, training or employment.

Examples of what can be funded include:

- Tools or equipment for a job or qualification e.g. hairdressing kit or books for college
- Course fees
- Interview clothes

The eligibility criteria are as follows:

- Applicants must be aged 16 or over and reside at a NWH property
- Applicants should not have a history of substantial rent arrears or tenancy management issues (such as anti-social behaviour)
- Applicants should be in receipt of either a means tested benefit or tax credits due to low income
- Applicants in receipt of Disability Living Allowance will also be eligible to apply
- Applicants should not be an employee of NWH

We had one successful applicant during this reporting period. Chloe from Bangor was given assistance to purchase a bus pass to start and apprenticeship at a nursery.

9. Newsletter

All tenant engagement opportunities are promoted in the tenant's newsletter.

We've had two newsletters during this reporting period, two postal newsletters and one digital

We have been keen to get some tenant input on the newsletter and perhaps have a team of editors or contributors.

Tenants are always asked to contribute to the newsletter and are asked what they would like to see in it.

The newsletter is developed by our Communications and Marketing Manager. While she is on maternity leave it is being developed by a marketing agency called Ateb.

10. Facebook

Our Facebook page is monitored by our Customer Service team. While our Communications and Marketing Manager is on maternity leave Facebook postings can be made by our Tenant Participation Co-ordinator.

During this reporting period number of likes for our Facebook page has increased from 1601 to 1734.

We continue to inform our tenants about tenant engagement opportunities and other information about our services. Facebook is also an opportunity for tenants to communicate with us by either posting comments or sending direct private messages.

10 Tenant Participation Strategy Consultation

Our most recent Strategy covered from 2015 to 2018, therefore towards the end of this reporting period we began developing a new Strategy to be approved by our Residents' Advisory Panel and Landlord Services Committee.

We carried out a consultation with both residents' and staff to identify what we are doing well and how we can improve tenant participation.

The Sounding Board and the Residents Advisory Panel also had input on the development of the Strategy.

When compared to the previous Strategy, we believe the new Tenant Participation Strategy puts more emphasis on tenants influencing what we do at North Wales Housing. We have been guilty in the past of not giving enough opportunities to tenants to influence decision making at an earlier stage.

The Residents' Advisory Panel says we give plenty of information but this is often at a stage where a decision has already been made; therefore tenants have not influenced that particular decision.

Other common themes and comments we identified from the consultation were –

Looking at the options currently provided (see above) can you think of any other ways North Wales Housing could involve tenants?

- Short story competitions, venue cymru trips for good tenants who don't cause trouble. Nominations for nicest neighbour etc
- Tenant drop-ins and focus groups
- More interactive on Facebook - polls etc
- maybe by asking families about things which would benefit them in the community or encourage them to meet up to do community projects

Are there any barriers that stop you (or other tenants) from getting involved?

- I personally feel that I have no barriers to participation, I think the service is effective and provides a manner of tools for tenants to get in touch with the Service and conclude any issues etc
- Confidence perhaps
- lack of transport. lack of experience
- Time, family commitments, shyness of speaking up, can't be bothered attitude, or leaving it to someone else but moan constantly?
- Usually having no babysitters or the times are no good for me
- Young tenants would find difficulties attending meetings due to caring for youngsters at home or due to school drop offs/pickups etc. Same applies to carers and so forth.

Any other suggestions on how North Wales Housing could improve tenant participation?

- To encourage more Tenant participation, perhaps consider more incentives to do so. Look at smaller inexpensive prizes that can be won by more Tenants or awarded for participation
- Perhaps have a 'drop in' coffee morning every now & then. Instead of so many questionnaires & panels
- Keep asking tenants what they want via survey and prize draw
- Keep in touch
- more online participation

We used the results of the consultation to help develop our new Strategy. TPAS Cymru guidelines were also followed when developing the Strategy.

11 Conclusion

There has been some success during this reporting period; however improvement can be made to how we involve our tenants.

Our Residents' Advisory Panel has carried out some valuable work during this reporting period. This reporting period has also seen the beginning of the process of strengthening the relationship between the Panel and Landlord Services Committee.

As already stated on page 6 of this report the aim moving forward will be to strengthen the role of the Panel and ensure they are involved in projects/decision making at an earlier stage.

We have also re-launched the Sounding Board and we need to ensure over the next reporting period that momentum is continued and its members have enough opportunities to have their say.

Our Opening the Doors to the Outdoors continues to be a success and has had a positive impact on those taking part. We need to look at ways of increasing the numbers of those taking part and ensure staff in contact with tenants are able to promote the project.

Finally moving forward we will be working to a new Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan. We believe it is an improved Strategy and will put more emphasis on tenants influencing our decision making.

During the next reporting period we will also be looking at ways to increase the number of tenants getting involved.