

A Housing Manifesto for Residents (Final)

To be shared with all major political parties

National Tenant Panel Conference 2019,

Interactive session

21 November 2019

We considered what would make a difference to residents and communities and agreed...

A duty for landlords to:

1. Undertake community development in partnership with residents
2. Engage residents in solutions for their own safety
3. Provide support to vulnerable tenants
4. Engage residents in how they invest for social purpose
5. Incorporate resident views into the Corporate Plan and strategic direction

1. A Duty on Landlords to undertake Community Development in partnership with residents

Residents do not see this as prescriptive as no one size fits all.

Residents would like to see their landlords:

- creative partnership working initiatives. These would include a who's who of stakeholders, who would invest in communication, be community builders and connectors making use of local knowledge and promoting trust
- Landlords leading community led approaches with local strengths which invest in community spaces and physical assets. They want a mixture of contact from face to face, Facebook, twitter and what's app
- organising events open to the community with guest speakers, workshops, Q&A, and attended by the Police, Fire Service, mediation, DV and local authorities
- creating community panels made up of residents (including homeowners) and tenants from across the community so they "have a voice" no matter who the landlord is
- different voices from both smaller and diverse groups would feed into this community panel to ensure everyone is involved
- scrutiny by tenants and residents on all services in the community as an expectation
- create Neighbourhood Plans for the community and local individual plans would feed into a wider Community Plan
- support the community to be involved with the planning process and planning departments
- engagement with communities before the standard consultation goes out, before the new build properties are approved

2. A Duty on Landlords to Engage Residents in Solutions for their Own Safety

Residents would like to see their landlords:

- providing resources for meaningful engagement and partnership, to talk effectively about safety with individual tenants and groups
- asking tenants for ideas and solutions, for example on safety in communal spaces
- asking tenants about their perceptions of safety, "what would make them feel safe?" post Grenfell
- actively promoting and making public Health and Safety issues, e.g. asbestos, electrical, etc. This could be part of re-introduction of routine tenancy visits
- training residents in:
 - basic safety skills such as changing light bulbs/plugs
 - skills to do their own or each other's testing, e.g. Fire Safety Tests for lifts and doors
- for dispersed homes:
 - developing Tenant Champions for blocks/schemes
 - establishing connections between blocks to build community
 - linking residents to local services and agencies e.g. PCSOs
- develop plans for Youth engagement, for example a Young Wardens Programme, to improve perceptions of young people
- planning a structure for internal and external safety audits, prioritising key aspects such as electrical, gas and water and publish KPIs on this so they can be held to account
- publishing clearly who/where residents report issues to
- promote a "see it, say it, report it" culture amongst residents and a "listen, record and do it" culture for themselves
- enable residents with contractors to have joint health and safety checklists and do checks jointly. Where there are Independent Risk Assessors, residents want to accompany them when they carry out the Fire Risk Assessment
- Building and Fire Regulations to tally, be translated and make sense for residents
- enable residents to be able to check information available
- reporting H&S complaints and compliance back to customers
- include residents in Health & Safety focus groups, events and open days based on good practice examples:
 - Fire Safety Officers Open day - Officers from all areas attending and inspecting Communal Areas
 - Gas safety Service-user's Focus Groups involved for example in digital scheduling of services to improve efficiency
 - Pilot projects on FD30 fire doors, ledges & handles

3. A Duty on Landlords to Provide Support to Vulnerable Tenants

Residents would like to see their landlords:

- clearly defining “vulnerability” and vulnerability categories, taking account of many factors including physical & mental health, substance misuse, loneliness, domestic abuse, poverty, fuel, anti-social behaviour, protected characteristics, etc.
- conducting profiling to fully understand their customers and households, to establish what their vulnerable people want and what actually is needed from their customers
- staff and residents training to increase their awareness of vulnerability
- ensure their allocation policies provide suitable accommodation for vulnerable people
- have business continuity plans & emergency plans that cover vulnerable people
- introduce Personal Evacuation Plans for vulnerable tenants in lower level flats
- linked to Local Authorities introduce an emergency crisis team who are fully trained and resourced
- identify key partners e.g. Statutory, 3rd Sector & volunteers. Part of their work will be to develop community cohesion, so people can help others with their self-care
- feedback to customers “you said we did” to ensure they are providing and delivering on the correct priorities

In general, isolation and vulnerability would be reduced by commitments to social care becoming a reality, reversing cuts to health & social care, removing bedroom tax as vulnerable people may need a “spare” room for carers and giving more support for carers.

4. A Duty on Landlords to Engage Residents in how they Invest for Social Purpose

Residents would like to see their landlords:

- have a Tenant’s Charter setting out fundamental rights including involvement in investment choices and decisions on Social Purpose shaped by directors and employees
- train and support effective tenant board members
- enable every tenant to be a shareholder with a the right to vote at the AGM
- to develop plans, internal structures and teams such as a Community Investment Team or Social Enterprises like community bakeries, which will be subject to effective scrutiny and due diligence from tenant board members and groups. These will increase transparency and accountability to tenants on investment issues
- create opportunities within organisation for management/board to listen to tenants
- provide more face to face communication and regular updates e.g. on staff changes
- arrange funding for different events:
 - Community events i.e. coffee mornings, drop in events

- Neighbourhood events inviting housing officer
- Vulnerable tenants events
- Health and Wellbeing Team Mental Health etc. either phone or Community Base

5. A Duty on Landlords to Incorporate Resident Views into the Corporate Plan and Strategic Direction

Residents would like to see their landlords:

- involve residents from inception (a duty to involve tenants in value for money) in all policies
- supporting them to learn, engage and participate fully
- to prioritise the work of the landlord
- carry out customer profiling which is service specific to ensure communications channels work, both ways
- improve communication, through human contact and not just digitally. Use of phone and face to face contact means you get so much more information from tenant (communication is more than just social media – one size does not fit all)
- involve all groups and voices. They will capture the forgotten tenant voice, to spend money fairly not just on those that shout loudest!
- attract younger people while maybe accepting that they might not want to be involved in the same way
- ensure outcomes are fed back
- enable consistency across sector, agreed standards and enshrine for tenants & residents
- set up Tenant Panel's to scrutinise services so they report both to Board and the community
- enable resident engagement in procurement
- communicate landlord service testing with Partners and contractors
- deliver this for all social tenants to ensure upkeep of houses, so they are fit for purpose, safe and repairs are done to agreed timescales
- spend more money on ASB and communicate more effectively about it

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