



RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

Resident Involvement Statement

Our aim is to improve the quality of communication between Solon and our residents. We rely on residents for input into our policies and services. We make every effort to respond to requests from residents and welcome constructive criticism. We are striving to improve our services through involvement.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Association recognises its statutory and contractual duties to consult residents on matters that will substantially affect them. Our commitment is to go beyond that duty to create a meaningful relationship with our residents.
- 1.2 Resident Involvement is a two way process involving both residents and Solon in the sharing of ideas, enabling residents to influence decisions regarding the management of their homes, leading to greater resident satisfaction as residents will have had a say in the services they receive.

2 Key Objectives: -

- To keep residents informed using a variety of means about issues that affect them.
- To consult residents in a variety of ways to gain their views on the services they receive and use their ideas to make improvements.
- To involve the residents in actively shaping the delivery of services.
- To promote and support the Residents' Forum.
- To continue to encourage resident membership of the Board.
- To continually review and extend methods of consultation.
- To report to the Resident Participation and Equal Opportunities Working Group on all key issues and provide relevant information as requested.
- To develop the confidence and the capacity for as many residents as possible to become involved in all aspects of service delivery.
- To publish our Resident Involvement Policy Statement in our newsletter and on our website and review the Statement and Strategy with residents every two years.
- Using the Impact Assessment process, develop the partnership with residents, agreeing how they will be involved, consulted and informed and how this will be resourced, measured and monitored.

We want to continually improve the quality of the services we provide. We know the best way to do this is to find out what you think and respond to your ideas.

3 Board Membership

- 3.1 All staff, particularly those with face to face contact with residents will, where possible, encourage residents to consider Board membership.
- 3.2 All staff will support tenant Board members as appropriate, and full induction and training will be given.
- 3.3 Independent Board members will also have a duty to support resident Board members.
- 3.4 We will aim to promote and encourage Board membership from black and ethnic minority backgrounds to reflect the communities we work in.
- 3.5 Solon will endeavour to have a minimum of three resident Board members.

4 What we do together

4.1 Residents' Forum and Maintenance Forum

- 4.1.1 Resident Forum Meetings will be held quarterly unless otherwise requested by members. Maintenance Forum meetings will be held three times a year.
- 4.1.2 To assist residents to take part and make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity and is able to access resident involvement, Solon will:-
 - Pay for resident travel and child care
 - Provide hot food at resident forums, maintenance forums and editorial panel meetings.
 - Ensure dates and times of meetings do not clash with religious festivals using the shap calendar.
- 4.1.3 To assist residents develop their skills, knowledge and experience and to draw on those assets, where appropriate Solon will offer forum members training paid for by the association.
- 4.1.4 The meetings will be informal but will be chaired by a resident or Solon staff member should no residents be available.
- 4.1.5 At least two Solon staff members will attend including the Housing Services Manager who has overall responsibility for tenant participation.
- 4.1.6 Minutes of all meetings will be reported to the Resident Participation and Equal Opportunities Working Group and circulated to all members of the Forum.
- 4.1.7 The Forums will consider any aspect of Solon's activities and invite appropriate members of staff to cover issues at the meetings, including: -
 - Service reviews.
 - New or revised Policy and Procedures
 - The delivery of maintenance services.
 - Communal cleaning services.
 - Proposals for new development.
 - Service charge issues.

- Methods of communicating with Solon.
- The housing management service.
- Customer care.

4.1.8 Through the Forum we will negotiate free access for residents to Bristol City Resource Centre to use internet access and desktop publishing software

4.1.9 Members of the resident forum will be requested to submit an Equal Opportunities monitoring form annually. Training on equalities and diversity will be offered as part of Solon's Training Programme. This will assist in developing the Strategy and targeting services

4.1.10 To encourage and reward resident's contribution Solon will use incentives and prize draws mostly donated from local businesses. Donations and sponsorship will be acknowledged in our newsletter.

4.1.11 A leaflet promoting the forum will be included in the sign- up packs given to new residents.

4.1.12 All staff, particularly those with face to face contact with the residents will, where possible promote the Residents' Forum and encourage new members.

4.2 Focus Groups

4.2.1 From time to time we will ask small groups of residents drawn from the forums or other residents who have shown an interest ,to work with us on different issues e.g. surveys, service development, service standards, customer satisfaction, new policy.

4.2.2 A Focus Group will be used to review the Resident Participation Strategy and Involvement Statement every two years.

4.3 Newsletter and Editorial Panel

4.3.1 A quarterly free residents' newsletter will be produced. Residents will be involved in the design and content of the newsletter through the Editorial Panel. The newsletter will be produced in clear, concise and jargon free English.

4.3.2 All residents will be invited to contribute to the newsletter which the Resident Involvement & Communications Officer will have overall responsibility for producing.

4.3.3 Typically the newsletter will contain items covering:-

- Solon services and service delivery
- Opportunities for resident involvement
- Community events
- Training opportunities
- Feedback on impacts of resident involvement
- Advice and translation services
- Staff contacts
- Becoming a Board member
- Dates of all Forum meetings

4.3.4 A copy of the newsletter will be posted to each resident household and copies of the newsletter will be available in the office reception area.

4.4 Residents Surveys

4.1 A STATUS Residents Survey is undertaken every 3 years the next survey is programmed for Autumn 2008.

4.2 The results of the 2008 survey will be used to inform service delivery and feed into Resident Involvement Strategy review in 2010.

4.5 Further methods of consultation

4.5.1 Solon will work with residents to continually review methods used to consult with and inform residents, and look for new ways to ensure we can reach and involve as many residents as possible.

4.5.2 Methods of consultation currently adopted include:-

- Residents' Forum and Maintenance Forum
- Board membership
- Focus Groups
- Newsletters and mail outs
- Suggestion Box
- Fun Day
- New Development Open Days
- Face to Face Interviews / visits
- Consultation on proposed disruptive maintenance and improvement work. Residents' comments and any preferences are taken into account in the preparation of the specification.
- Prospective residents who have been allocated a property will be involved in the specification of development and refurbishment projects.
- Updates on Solon Website

4.5.3 The aim within the next two years is to develop further different methods of communication with residents to extend resident involvement and to be as inclusive as possible. If it proves practical and appropriate, the aim is that these methods will include:-

- Interactive Solon Website
- Contact by email available
- Customer telephone panel

4.5.4 Further methods of consultation and feedback aimed for include:-

- Customer surveys
- Mystery shopping
- Comparison of resident satisfaction levels with similar organisations
- Attendance at regional Tenant Participation Advisory Service events and other relevant conferences
- Offering a menu of options for involvement

5 Future Development

- 5.1 This revision of the Resident Participation Strategy (*August 2008*) recognises the development of resident participation in Solon through the opportunity to create the post of Resident Involvement & Communication Officer as a permanent staff resource. The aim now is to firmly embed all the existing methods and structures for involvement and build on them to improve and extend resident participation. The feedback, ideas and lessons learned from increased resident participation will in turn improve our services to all our customer.
- 5.2 Future Development is a combination of building on what we have in place and looking for new ways to involve residents so they can have a genuine influence over the services they receive and will include:-
- Ensuring all residents have a clear understanding of how they can become involved and the impact their participation will have
 - Ensuring all involvement activities are inclusive and residents feel supported to participate in the way that is best suited to them
 - Introducing a range of ways to consult and involve residents on a local level that takes account of the culture and diversity of individuals and the communities in which they live.
 - Achieving an increase to three resident Board members
 - Raising staff awareness of resident involvement through training so that they can promote involvement and support it throughout the organisation.
 - Sharing best practice with other Housing Associations to help seek out additional ways of involving residents
 - Fostering effective links between partner agencies such as Bristol Partnership for residents to provide training for all residents
 - Updating and informing residents of key changes in housing practice and legislation that may affect them or the services they receive
 - Ensuring there is sufficient budget to support resident participation
 - Running a Fun Day for residents at agreed time intervals varying the event and locations
- 5.3 The outcome we are looking for in partnership with our residents is increased satisfaction with opportunities to participate in Solon's housing decision making process and shaping and provision of services. We will measure the outcomes from all aspects of resident involvement through our annual impact assessment.

Approved by Resident Participation and Equal opportunities Working Group August 2008, noted by Board September 2008