

Resident Involvement

Impact Assessment

Sept 2019 - Aug 2020



Introduction

Hightown Housing Association owns and manages over 7000 homes across Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. The views of residents are a key part of decision making on service delivery and Hightown's future direction. We recognise that involving residents in developing services is an important way in which to shape and deliver high quality housing services.

Following the coronavirus lockdown in March 2020, we had to make changes to the way we run certain resident involvement events, and were unable to hold the usual summer activities on our estates. We are very much looking forward to meeting residents at these sorts of events when we can.



Why get involved?

By getting involved, residents can make a difference by:

- changing the way Hightown works to improve the services provided, including setting standards
- improving the area and community they live in
- scrutinising Hightown's performance
- learning new skills, and building confidence through working with Hightown staff and other residents.

Why is involvement important?

Resident involvement has been shown to benefit residents by helping to improve services and homes. It is central to the way housing services are regulated and is a key theme of the Regulator's consumer standards.

The value of involving residents can be demonstrated by looking back to see how residents have influenced improvements - this 'impact assessment' helps us examine what has been done and how useful it has been.

Why produce an impact report?

We work closely with residents to measure and evaluate the difference made to services by involving residents. This impact assessment report illustrates the ways in which Hightown's customers have been able to influence services and the management of their homes between September 2019 and August 2020.

- Members of the Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel have considered our involvement activities and their feedback has been used to produce this report.
- Residents will be able to see the influence that their involvement can have on Hightown's General Needs housing services.
- Hightown will be able to evaluate areas that have benefited from resident involvement.
- It will show our partners and stakeholders the benefits of working with Hightown and our commitment to working with residents and to continuous improvement.

Effectiveness

How effective is resident involvement?

To show at a glance the level of impact made by Hightown's various resident involvement activities we have used a star system – the more stars, then the more impact the initiative has had.

High Level of Impact



Low Level of Impact



Are you getting Value for Money?

To check that we are using Hightown's resources in the best way, we have also assessed the Value for Money each initiative offers. When organising an activity, Hightown must carefully consider what we hope to achieve, and also consider the costs and time (both of staff and residents) required. This enables us to ensure that the best services and activities are provided with the limited resources available, and in response to customer priorities and needs.

The following symbols have been used to indicate the overall Value for Money achieved, as assessed by residents. Even if the cost is high, if the outcomes and impact are high then good Value for Money can still be achieved.

Good value for money



OK value for money



Poor value for money









Don't know


















Resources

An annual budget is allocated for resident involvement initiatives (excluding staff costs). Staff working in the Operations Department have responsibility for promoting resident involvement, and activities are co-ordinated by a lead officer in the Housing team.



Route to involvement	What we did	What it means to you	Value for Money / Impact
Quarterly Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel meetings	<p>Four Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel meetings were held and were well attended by a core group of regular attendees. Following the coronavirus lockdown, meetings were held via Zoom. During the year, the Panel reviewed and assessed the impact and value for money of resident involvement for the annual impact assessment.</p> <p>Residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussed the ways in which residents are involved in the management of Hightown's repairs and maintenance services reviewed Hightown's Local Arrangements, received and gave feedback on an independent review of Hightown's speed of responsive repairs and repairs timescales agreed a service area for the next independent review reviewed the draft annual report to residents and scrutinised Hightown's performance in key service areas. 	The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel has kept abreast of current issues in the Housing sector, and had looked in detail at the draft Annual Report to Residents. Residents' views were incorporated into all of the documents that resulted from the discussions, helping Hightown to tailor services based on resident feedback.	 
Quarterly Complaints Scrutiny Group meetings	The group gave feedback on complaints, including complaints relating to caretaking, contractors, estate management, anti-social behaviour case management, and customer service. The group gave feedback on complaints which were escalated through Hightown's complaints process, including making suggestions on where Hightown could make improvements, or manage the expectations of complainants.	Suggestions and comments made by residents were taken into account for future complaints handling and lessons learned.	 
Retirement Leasehold events	Throughout the year a number of activities were held in communal lounges at retirement leasehold schemes. These included Coffee Mornings, Afternoon Teas, Yoga, Lunches, Knitting Club and Bingo.	An opportunity for residents living in Hightown's retirement schemes to take part in activities, which builds a community spirit and facilitates discussions with the Scheme Managers. It gives residents an opportunity to get involved without travelling.	 

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Estate Meet and Greets	Throughout the year a number of activities were held in communal lounges at retirement leasehold schemes. These included Coffee Mornings, Afternoon Teas, Yoga, Lunches, Knitting Club and Bingo.	Hightown staff, contractors and residents discussed different issues, including grounds maintenance, communal cleaning, and anti-social behaviour. Feedback from residents was taken, and they were given information regarding how to report anti-social behaviour.	 ★ ★
Community Engagement Day	Events were held at three of Hightown's estates at Hitchcock Court in Borehamwood, Spencers Park in Hemel Hempstead, and Millstone Way in Harpenden to give residents an opportunity to meet with Hightown staff and give feedback on their local area and Hightown's services.	The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel felt there was a low impact on Hightown residents, as no Hightown tenants attended. However, the Panel felt Hightown attending the event was value for money as there was no cost to Hightown and it is important for Hightown staff to attend to improve and maintain working relationships with partner agencies.	 ★ ★
Repairs Contractor Tender Evaluation	Two residents took part in the tender evaluation and interview processes for the out of hours repairs contractor for evening and weekend work on Hightown properties.	Residents assisted the Procurement team with assessing and scoring tender bids, gave feedback on the tender review, and took part in the interviews with prospective contractors which ensured that residents had a say in the awarding of the contract.	 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Door knocking events	Hightown staff and the Police held door knocking events at four of our estates: Oldfield Street in Aylesbury; Waltham House in Waltham Cross; Gadebridge Point in Hemel Hempstead; and Bowling Court in Chesham. These events gave residents an opportunity to meet members of the Housing team and to raise any concerns.	Residents were able to meet their Housing Officer and staff from the Police to give feedback about issues arising on their estate from their own homes, which gives a wider opportunity for residents' views to be heard. Residents were given information about how to report concerns to Hightown and the Police, and some residents signed up to the Online Watch Link (OWL) service which gives information and advice.	 ★ ★ ★ ★
Living at Height Panel	The Living at Height Panel was newly set up in the year. The purpose of the panel is to share information, listen to feedback, and understand the tenant experiences and perspectives of living at the 5th Floor or above.	Following the coronavirus pandemic, the scheduled meeting of this new panel had to be cancelled; instead individual telephone calls were made to residents to gather feedback. Suggestions were made for topics for future meetings.	 Impact not known

Route to involvement	What we did	What it means to you	Value for Money / Impact
Community Fire Prevention event	Hightown staff and staff from Hertfordshire's Fire and Rescue team hosted a fire safety event at Perrycoste Court in St Albans. Residents also had an opportunity to meet with their Housing Officer and give feedback.	Local residents received information and advice on fire safety and prevention, and gave feedback that the event was very enjoyable.	 
Mystery Shopping programme	A new programme of mystery shopping was launched to measure customer service delivery against Hightown's Customer Charter, and to gather feedback regarding customer service from a resident's perspective.	Feedback has been received on the Mystery Shoppers' experiences when contacting Hightown about a range of scenarios including Reception Services, Housing Management, Income Recovery, and Property Services. Suggestions for improvements have been implemented.	 
Focus Group: Anti-Social Behaviour Policy review	The Head of Housing carried out a telephone focus group to give residents the opportunity to contribute to the two-yearly review of Hightown's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.	Residents' comments were incorporated in to the review of the policy, which ensured that the policy is shaped around resident feedback.	 
Leaflet reviews	Residents took part in reviews of information leaflets to ensure that they are useful and easy to read.	Residents provided feedback and changes have been suggested for the leaflets to make them user friendly.	 
Joint Estate Inspection with Estates Champions	The Estates Champion at Culverhouse Way, Chesham, met with the Property Services Inspector to carry out a routine estate inspection.	The Estates Champion gained more understanding on how Hightown carries out inspections and gave feedback on the grounds maintenance contractor's performance. Following this, the Property Services Inspector discussed the concerns with the contractor which led to improvements in the quality of the service provided to local residents.	 
Hightown Heroes feedback	Residents were asked to give feedback in relation to the staff nominations for Hightown Hero awards.	Residents helped to evaluate and judge the members of staff nominated as a Hightown Hero using a points based system.	