

Resident Involvement Impact Assessment

September 2022 - August 2023



Introduction

Hightown Housing Association owns and manages over 8,600 homes in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. One of Hightown's values is to put residents and service users first, and we acknowledge and value engagement with residents to help us to improve, shape and deliver high quality housing services.

Hightown is committed to involving residents in influencing our services by offering a range of ways to get involved which suit them. We are mindful that catering to everyone's different needs is important to maximise resident involvement. We offer a variety of ways for residents to give feedback and scrutinise



our service. We offer remote and in person opportunities for our residents to get involved, whether for one off feedback or as part of a regular panel or group.

Why get involved?

Residents can make a difference by:

- Evaluating our policies and procedures to improve services provided and set expectations
- Improving and maintaining standards of the environment and community in which they live
- Scrutinising Hightown's performance
- Learning new skills in an area they are interested in.

Why is involvement important?

Resident involvement helps to shape our day to day working practices and deliver housing services that meet residents' needs. Our policies, procedures and services have a direct impact our residents. Without our residents' involvement and feedback, improvement would not be as effective. Resident involvement and ensuring that residents' voices are heard is central to the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards.

Why produce an impact assessment?

The value of involving residents can be demonstrated by looking back to assess how residents have influenced and helped shape service improvements. This impact assessment examines Hightown's engagement with residents between September 2022 and August 2023, how effective it has been and the value for money of this work.

This impact assessment was carried out by Hightown's Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel, and measures and evaluates the effect resident involvement has and the difference it has made to services. This impact assessment demonstrates how Hightown's customers have given us feedback, the outcome and impact it has had.

It shows our partners and stakeholders the benefits of working with Hightown, and our commitment to ensuring that our residents' voices are heard.

In the formulation of this assessment, the Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel considered in detail the engagement activities held between September 2022 and August 2023 and have rated them using the assessment criteria described overleaf.



Effectiveness



How effective is resident involvement?

To gauge this, Hightown uses a Red, Amber, Green rating system. If a green rating has been deemed by the Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel as having had a high level of impact on service improvement. The Amber rating has been considered less effective, and a red rating shows that the activity had little or no impact on service improvement.



Value for money

To ensure that we are using Hightown's resources in the best way, the Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel also assessed the Value for Money each initiative offered, considering the financial cost and time of staff and residents related to the activity. This enables us to ensure that the best services and activities are provided with the resources available, and in response to customer priorities and needs.



The value for money has been assessed on a star rating system. Even if the cost is high, if the outcomes and impact are high then a good Value for Money rating can still be achieved.











Resources







An annual budget is allocated for resident involvement initiatives (excluding staff costs). Staff working in the Housing Directorate have a responsibility for promoting resident involvement, and encouraging feedback across service provision. Activities are co-ordinated by a lead officer in the Housing Management team.



Route to involvement	What we did	What it means to you	Value for money/ impact
Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel meetings	<p>Quarterly meetings to give feedback and scrutinise Hightown's performance. During the year, the panel met four times. They reviewed the proposed changes Hightown's Local Arrangements which set out the standards of services to be delivered under the Regulator's Consumer Standards (Home, Neighbourhood and Community, Tenant Involvement and Empowerment) , reviewed and updated Hightown's Customer Charter and allocated the budget for estate improvements which had been put forward by residents. The Panel also reviewed and provided feedback on the results of an independent review of Hightown's Domestic Abuse Service which they commissioned and agreed on a service area for the next independent review. The Panel also received quarterly reports outlining Hightown's work on Community Development and Resident Involvement. Hightown staff presented the Panel with information on Damp and Mould casework and they monitored progress against the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) survey action plan. The panel assisted with drafting Annual Report to Residents and scrutinised Hightown's performance in key service areas.</p>	<p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel has kept abreast of current issues in the Housing sector, and assisted with the drafting of the Annual Report to Residents. Their review of Hightown's Local Arrangements and Customer Charter ensured that residents' views were incorporated into the documents, helping Hightown to tailor services based on resident feedback.</p> <p>The Panel considered that their work over the year had had a high level of impact, but the value for money was given four star rating due to the cost of the annual thank you dinner. The Panel agreed that they would review the arrangements for the annual dinner to ensure value for money.</p>	
Complaints Scrutiny Group meetings	<p>The group met quarterly to review complaints received in the previous quarter to give feedback, identify any patterns and improve the services provided.</p>	<p>The group gave feedback on complaints relating to a range of service areas, including caretaking, contractors, estate management, anti-social behaviour and customer service. The group provided feedback on complaint escalations and suggested ways Hightown could improve complaint outcomes. They discussed Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight Reports published during the year relating to damp and mould, and noise complaints. Panel members gave feedback on Hightown's handling of complaints and Hightown's 'Lessons Learnt' and actions taken to provide further staff training in various areas.</p> <p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel gave the Complaints Scrutiny Group and amber rating for impact as they felt the way in which complaints information the group received was presented. The Panel noted that the group had reformatted the presentation of information during the year, which would enable enhanced scrutiny of patterns and trends in complaints.</p>	

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Joint estate inspections with Estate Champions	An Estates Champion met with their Property Services Inspector and grounds maintenance contractor to carry out routine estate inspections.	<p>Residents gave feedback on estate management, suggesting cleaning and maintenance improvements whilst inspecting the grounds. The improvement suggestions were actioned on the day by the contractor.</p> <p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel agreed that the inspections had a high level of impact for residents on the estate and provided good value for money.</p>	
Policy review – neighbourhood	Five residents took part in the review of the Neighbourhood Management Policy as a focus group.	<p>Residents' comments and suggestions were incorporated into the review of the Policy, which was approved by Hightown's Board.</p> <p>The impact and value for money was assessed as high as the residents' voice was incorporated into the Board approved policy.</p>	
Resident involvement festive estate events	Hightown hosted several festive events in December 2022 to get feedback on Hightown's services and suggestions and improvements for services provided. Events took place at seven Hightown estates, and 26 residents attended in total.	<p>Residents had the opportunity to meet Hightown staff, Board members, and partner agencies including the Police, waste management services, Local Authority staff and local Councillors. Residents gave feedback on Hightown's services, and Hightown staff addressed tenancy and estates queries raised by residents on the day. The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel assessed the value for money as 4 stars due to a relatively small number of attendees across the estates in comparison to the cost of the activity.</p>	
Door knock resident involvement events	Face to face door knocks with police were carried out at three estates for residents to raise Anti-Social Behaviour concerns and receive information. 14 residents gave feedback.	<p>Residents gave feedback regarding recent anti-social behaviour reports on the sites. The joint approach had a positive impact toward partnership working, where residents felt more listened to regarding their community.</p> <p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel assessed that these activities had a high level of impact and provided excellent value for money.</p>	

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Resident involvement Open Day at Hightown House	<p>Hightown House opened its doors to residents to host an open day for residents to meet with and speak to staff and stakeholders at Hightown House. 34 residents attended and gave feedback regarding the quick response to repairs, the quality of their homes, Hightown customer service and individual staff members.</p>	<p>Residents were given information about tackling anti-social behaviour on their estates and spoke with the local crime prevention officers about their concerns. Housing Officers identified estates for future community events following residents feedback at the event. Residents gave feedback regarding Hightown's website and communication methods for residents. The residents entered a raffle for various luxury prizes, received free energy-saving sustainable merchandise and selected the new name for Hightown's resident newsletter. The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel felt the event was attractive for all residents due to the various members of Hightown staff being available on the day, as well as first hand experience from Panel members showing how residents can get involved.</p>	
Have Your Say – Door knocking events	<p>We held “Have Your Say” events, which took place in person on three estates and gave residents the opportunity to give feedback and make suggestions for improving different service areas. Door knocking events at various sites allowing residents to speak with their Housing Officer and five residents provided feedback.</p>	<p>Door knocks were carried out on the estates.</p> <p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel considered that the events had a moderate impact due to a low response rate. Suggestions for improvements were made during the assessment, which included reviewing the way door knocks are communicated and further discussions regarding increased presence on estates.</p>	
STAR survey action plan focus group	<p>Hightown held a focus group to gain resident comments and suggestions for developing an action plan following the results of the 2022 STAR survey. Three residents participated.</p>	<p>The residents voice was instrumental in the formulation of the action plan, and the actions were based on how residents felt services could be improved.</p> <p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel felt this was important to residents as it demonstrated Hightown is listening to the views of residents when implementing service improvements.</p>	
Resident involvement strategy review focus group	<p>Hightown held a focus group to gain resident comments and suggestions for the draft Resident Involvement Strategy review. Four residents took part.</p>	<p>The feedback from the focus group was incorporated into the strategy review, which was approved by Hightown's Board.</p> <p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel assessed that Residents suggested improved communication and promotion of resident engagement. They felt their voices being heard in review of the overall strategy.</p>	

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<p>Follow up resident meeting</p>	<p>Hightown held a follow up meeting with residents of an estate in Hemel Hempstead which was requested by residents following a previous meeting held in January 2023 regarding of anti-social behaviour, cleaning and maintenance. However, no residents attended.</p>	<p>Hightown has taken several measures to address resident concerns about anti-social behaviour, building security and cleaning and maintenance. Hightown arranged quotations for additional CCTV and regular police patrols in the block. The Housing Team continues working closely with police to monitor and prevent further anti-social behaviour. The Property Service Inspector instructed a deep cleaning of the communal areas.</p> <p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel considered that this activity was of low impact and poor value for money as no residents attended. The Panel noted the other actions that had been undertaken to address the residents' concerns.</p>	<p> </p>
<p>Contractor selection and tender</p>	<p>One resident took part in the tender evaluation and interview processes for the communal areas and window cleaning. The resident took part in the shortlisting, scoring and interviewing the tender. They gave feedback during the tender process and ensured issues which matter to residents were considered as part of the tender process.</p>	<p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel considered resident involvement in contractor selection to be of high impact and excellent value for money, as this ensures the views of residents are included in the tendering process for services delivered to residents.</p>	<p> </p>
<p>Resident involvement summer estate events</p>	<p>Hightown hosted eight summer events focused on sustainability to engage with residents and get feedback about Hightown's services. Approximately 200 residents attended in total.</p>	<p>All the events had a sustainability theme and offered residents the opportunity to meet with Hightown staff and partner agencies, including the police, waste management services, representatives from local authorities and their local counsellors. Residents met with staff and gave feedback on Hightown Services. Hightown staff addressed tenancy and estates queries and issues such as bins sheds, recycling, anti-social behaviour, ground maintenance and parking concerns.</p> <p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel assessed that the summer events were of high impact and excellent value for money. The Panel commented that this was very successful engagement that enabled Hightown to meeting with a lot of residents.</p>	<p> </p>

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<p>Parking consultation</p>	<p>Following a parking complaint, Hightown carried out a parking consultation on an estate. The majority of residents responded to the consultation regarding the implementation of parking controls.</p>	<p>Hightown received a majority outcome in support of parking controls and started the process to change to parking arrangements onsite. Hightown sent a follow-up letter outlining the result to all residents and confirming the actions that would be taken.</p> <p>The Residents Voice and Scrutiny Panel rated the consultation as high impact and excellent value for money for the residents on the estate, who had their views taken into account.</p>	