

# **Ealing Homes**

## **Resident Involvement Strategy**

**2008**



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**Appendix 1 – RI KLOE Workshop Report**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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Ealing Homes' mission is to achieve the highest levels of resident satisfaction in everything we do.

Our objective is simple: we want the homes we manage to be places where people want to live and Ealing Homes to be a place where people want to work. Working with residents, the local strategic partnership and our contractors we aim to improve the quality of life in our neighbourhoods. There are some 18,000 council homes in Ealing. Our drive for an excellent management service, delivered by quality staff and driven through resident involvement, supports Ealing Council's own priorities for cleaner streets, safer communities and value for money.

Resident involvement is an integral part of this process. It will ensure that the decisions made and priorities addressed are reflective of residents' needs, therefore providing greater value for money and sustainability in all aspects of the housing service.

### **A New Approach**

Over time, there has been a gradual decline in the level of interest and the effectiveness of traditional involvement structures. Following consultation with existing residents associations and active residents, Ealing Homes has recognised that a different approach is needed to inject a new energy into involvement and commitment.

This strategy will introduce a community centred approach to participation, encouraging residents to become more involved in local initiatives, therefore creating a sense of pride and belonging in their estates. Our approach will encourage learning and development, while offering residents opportunities to get involved in exciting projects and activities. It is anticipated that this will encourage residents to become more involved in the planning and delivery of housing services that affect their lives.

## **LOCAL CONTEXT**

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### **London Borough of Ealing**

Ealing is an extremely diverse and vibrant borough, home to 300,000 people. Nearly 55 per cent of residents come from ethnic minorities, making Ealing the fourth most ethnically diverse borough in the country. Over 100 languages are spoken in our schools. Some people will have lived locally for their entire lives; some only live here for a few months before moving on. This diversity also extends much further than ethnicity and covers ages, family types, faiths, languages, cultures and traditions.

The area boasts prosperous employment and above average incomes, with a job growth rate three times that of the rest of the UK. Skills levels amongst adults are also above London averages. The general prosperity of the borough is not shared by all of our communities however. Poor standards of health and education, low household incomes and high benefits dependency are concentrated in the borough's poorer areas and among particular communities.

### **Ealing Homes**

Ealing Homes isn't just about bricks and mortar; it's about people and communities. Our responsibility extends beyond the provision of Decent Homes; we need to ensure that we contribute towards the development of strong and cohesive communities that take an interest in and responsibility for their own change. In doing this, Ealing Homes has a key role in the implementation of Ealing's Community Strategy<sup>1</sup>, which seeks to develop Ealing into a successful borough, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper and live fulfilling lives in communities that are safe, cohesive and engaged.

The Community Strategy meets the specific needs of our residents, who form a very different demographic to the wider communities they live within. Although Ealing is a prosperous borough, there is often a large gap between the situation of people living in our properties and the areas surrounding them, particularly in terms of education, health and income. Additionally, 65 per cent of Ealing Homes residents are BME, inclusive of white minorities. This is significantly higher than the borough average. In addition to this, the majority of our residents, nearly 58 per cent are women, and we have a very high proportion of lone mothers and elderly women.

Ealing Homes recognises that there are numerous aspects within our diverse communities that need to be taken into account during planning processes. We need to ensure that our services are inclusive and that there is special consideration for our more vulnerable residents.

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<sup>1</sup> The Community Strategy has been developed by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which Ealing Homes is partner to.

## **DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY**

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In developing a new strategy for resident involvement, Ealing Homes has undertaken a thorough consultation process with staff, residents and external stakeholders between May 2007 and April 2008. This strategy builds on existing strengths and good practise within Ealing Homes, and looks at new ways to address the gaps identified.

### **Residents**

In accordance with the Resident Participation Compact, revised in October 2007, we have used a variety of methods to obtain residents' views on how Ealing Homes involves its residents. In May 2007, Residents Associations were invited to a meeting to explore the issues they were facing, and the level of support they expected from Ealing Homes in order to revive community level involvement. This was followed by consultation with residents at the Annual Open Day, and at a series of thirteen Roadshows that were held across the borough, including one at Bashley Road Travellers site. The final version of this strategy has been discussed with the Tenants' Forum Steering group, before being approved by the ALMO board.

### **Staff**

In order to ensure that all Ealing Homes employees are aware of the significance of Resident Involvement in relation to the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE), the Strategic Involvement Team organised a series of workshops.

Seventeen one-day workshops were arranged between January and May 2008, facilitated by members of the Strategic Involvement Team. By the last workshop, 154 people, almost two thirds of identified staff had attended a workshop. As a result, considerably more people are now better informed about resident involvement, and their role in developing an excellent service. During the course of each workshop a note was made of any issues that required further action. Where ever possible, these "action points" have be incorporated into the Resident Involvement Strategy currently being written.

This process enabled all teams to become involved in setting their own agenda for resident involvement, therefore buying in greater ownership of any plans for change.

### **Partners**

In developing this strategy and prioritising key areas of work, we have worked closely with several voluntary and statutory sector partners. Ealing Homes has developed a good working relationship with Ealing Community Network, Ealing Volunteer Bureau, TIDE, Acton Community Forum and EASE, which we hope to build on through this strategy. In addition to this, we have recently explored new opportunities for joint working with the Extended Schools Service and Housing Associations in Ealing.

We have had the opportunity to work closely with a number of Decent Homes and Repairs Contractors, whose generous offers for support have helped to enhance many of our involvement initiatives, particularly around the Residents Open Day and improvements to community facilities. Discussions with them have helped to set the agenda and identify good partnership working practices that can be implemented over the next few years.

## **Links**

The Resident Involvement Strategy is closely linked to the following strategies and documents, and should not be read in isolation:

- Ealing Homes Business Plan 2008-2011
- Ealing Homes Single Equality Scheme 2008 -2011
- Communication Strategy for Ealing Homes
- Resident Participation Compact
- Ealing Community Strategy (Ealing Council)
- Audit Commission Resident Involvement Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE)
- Ealing Homes' Resident Involvement Toolkit
- Ealing Homes Strategy for Youth Involvement
- Ealing Homes Strategy for Apprenticeships

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

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This strategy aims to enable Ealing Homes' residents to actively participate in and influence the development of high quality housing services, creating cohesive and sustainable communities, with a greater sense of pride and belonging.

### **Specific Objectives**

This strategy aims to empower residents to develop their communities and be involved in decision-making processes that affect key housing services. We will achieve this by implementing change in the following areas:

1. Improve communication between Ealing Homes, its staff and residents, through access to relevant information and resources
2. Work with residents to develop new and innovative opportunities for them to be involved
3. Promote opportunities for residents to learn new skills that will improve their access to employment and contribute to the social and economic development of their communities
4. Develop stronger and sustainable neighbourhoods through the development of community hubs
5. Use tenant profile information and effective monitoring tools to identify gaps in resident involvement and inform planning of services
6. Measure the impact of resident involvement initiatives, ensuring that resources are managed strategically and maximum benefits are achieved

### **Ownership of the Strategy**

The Strategic Involvement Team has overall responsibility for supporting resident involvement activities. The team works with residents to build their capacity through training, funding and provision of information.

At the same time, the team equips staff with the knowledge and skills to provide accessible housing services for our diverse resident base. By mainstreaming resident involvement into all aspects of our business, we ensure that staff involve and consult with residents when making key decision that affect the services they receive. Therefore, responsibility for implementation of this strategy doesn't just lie with the Strategic Involvement; it rests with every section of the organisation that is involved in the planning and delivery of services.

## **CORE PRINCIPLES**

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In achieving the objectives set out in this strategy, we will ensure that several principles of good practice are reflected in all modes of implementation. We have identified four core principles for this strategy.

### **Consultation and Participation**

Ealing Homes will ensure that consultation and involvement occurs at the start of any process, giving residents more influence in important decisions. Residents will be involved through a planned programme, rather than one-off exercises, to allow them to choose where they would like to be involved. Making participatory approaches integral to our work will enable us to analyse problems together, find solutions and shape common plans.

### **Equality & Diversity**

Ealing Homes' Single Equality Scheme sets out our vision and commitment to ensure equality of access and opportunities for all our residents and staff. By involving a diverse and representative range of residents, we will embrace their skills, experiences and perspectives and will be more effective in providing services that are accessible and appropriate to all sections of the community.

### **Continuous Improvement**

We will develop processes to enable us to learn actively, systematically and continually from our own and others' experiences so that we can build upon our skills, knowledge and understanding to maximise our effectiveness and impact. We will promote sharing of good practice organisationally as well as amongst our residents' groups, and will work more closely with our partners to increase our ability to learn with and from them.

### **Value for Money**

Ealing Homes recognises the importance of achieving value for money in all aspects of its work. Increasing efficiency will enable us to get proportionately more for residents, in terms of service delivery. We will develop a comprehensive approach to comparing the amount of resources used with what is achieved for residents. We will build partnerships with statutory and community organisations in order to engage additional resources, expertise and influence, and to increase efficiency. This will maximise our impact and make effective use of limited resources.

## **ENABLING INVOLVEMENT**

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Ealing Homes is committed to involving residents in the development and delivery of its services. At present, resident representatives play a fundamental role in organisational governance and overall management. However, residents need to be empowered through capacity building and structural support so their participation is mainstreamed in to every aspect of our work.

Ealing Homes assists community capacity building through activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills and abilities of residents and community groups. This will enable them to take effective action and leading roles in the achievement of decent homes, better housing services and developing their communities. In order for these processes to be more sustainable, and to ensure their wider impact, local groups and residents will be supported more strategically.

### **Improved Communication**

**Improve communication between Ealing Homes, its staff and residents, through access to relevant information and resources.**

Actively ascertain residents' views and concerns using a variety of means, using the most appropriate means too achieve the necessary results. One such way of doing this is by accessing the existing database of Interested Residents, who have expressed their interest in getting involved in different process.

Ensure that we provide information to residents that is easily accessible and relevant to their needs. This will enable them to make informed decisions about issues that concern them.

Develop a calendar of resident involvement initiatives, providing staff and residents with a menu of involvement options that they can choose from. This will contain relevant contact details and further information about the particular initiative.

Use existing mechanisms, such as the Intranet, Internet and relevant newsletters to publicise the impact of Resident involvement activities. This will also demonstrate the success of the initiatives, and encourage more people to become involved.

Use formal structures such as the Tenants Forum, Leaseholder Forum and Residents Council to communicate with residents and obtain opinions on important issues

Work with Jargon Busters to review surveys, documents and publications to ensure that our written information is in Plain English, in a format that is easy to read and understand.

### **New Opportunities**

#### **Work with residents to develop new and innovative opportunities for them to be involved.**

With the involvement of residents, carry out a strategic review of all community consultation, engagement and cohesion initiatives including forums, networks and compacts. This will help to identify what is working well, and where there is scope for improvement.

Harness local knowledge and expertise through development of partnerships with community groups and voluntary organisations.

Explore new ways to build the capacity of local activists, including youth champions, in order to engage less involved sections of the community. This objective will also be met through the apprenticeship scheme, mentioned below.

Introduce mechanisms to ensure that consultation takes place at the start of the planning process, and that managers are held accountable.

Make better use of staff who are more visible and accessible in the community, such as caretakers and estate services, to engage with residents. We will also work with existing structures and teams, such as the Tenancy Support Team, to improve access for vulnerable groups, such as young care leavers and elderly residents.

### **Developing Communities**

#### **Promote opportunities for residents to learn new skills that will improve their access to employment and contribute to the social and economic development of their communities**

Develop a volunteer scheme for in partnership with Ealing Volunteer Bureau, giving Ealing Homes' residents the opportunity to develop their experience in different aspects of the business and acquire new skills for employment.

Provide basic and vocational skills to help socially excluded young people living in social housing build careers in the Housing Sector and to provide opportunities for unemployed young people into work. Ealing Homes will achieve this through its Apprenticeship Scheme, which aims to provide 'real' training opportunities for young residents of Ealing.

Review the Youth Involvement Strategy in partnership with the Tenancy Support Team, to develop new ways for young people to develop new skills, access employment and become involved with shaping the services they receive from Ealing Homes. This ties in with the Tenancy Support Team's approach to working with young care leavers, who are recognised as vulnerable tenants.

Work with Housing Associations in Ealing to encourage participation in lifelong learning and resident involvement through the delivery of an accredited resident training programme. The training programme will focus on Resident Involvement, Youth work and volunteering, Preparing for work and Housing Studies

Review partnership agreements with TIDE, EASE and other local voluntary sector training providers and Housing Associations, to develop the capacity of community groups. This will be done through bespoke training courses and one to one support.

Look at innovative ways of utilising staff skills to train residents, such as training sessions at Golflinks IT suite and sharing knowledge on specific aspects of the housing service.

Publish and regularly update a training calendar on the Internet so that residents are aware of the training provided by Ealing Homes, as well as partner agencies. Increase awareness of this calendar and guide to training.

## **Community Hubs**

### **Develop stronger and sustainable neighbourhoods through the development of community hubs**

Develop a three-year programme to improve the management of community centres, through the promotion of self-management of remaining community centres. Ensure that the management agreements are reviewed on a regular basis and measures are introduced to hold community associations accountable to their users.

Explore funding options for community associations and groups, such as grants and the development of social enterprises, and offer training and support to encourage this.

Encourage a diverse range of educational, recreational and social activities at community centres, offering match funding and subsidies for groups where a clear local need has been identified.

Ensure residents are consulted in the development of activities at their local centre and that results of these consultations are reported back to residents in a timely and appropriate manner.

Explore opportunities for residents to access ESOL classes, making referrals to local providers. Carry out an options appraisal of providing Ealing Homes own ESOL training for residents.

Ensure that community centres are made inviting and accessible by carrying out planned improvements and repairs to the centre, and ensuring that they are affordable venues for local residents. Involve user groups in setting standards for improvement.

## **Informed Planning**

### **Use tenant profile information and effective monitoring tools to identify gaps in resident involvement and inform planning of services**

Carry out regular reviews of service such as surveys and sounding boards to ensure that residents are able to express their views and concerns about the services they receive.

Develop performance indicators for resident involvement and set targets on the basis of equality strands. Monitor performance on a regular basis, using the information to inform service planning across the organisation.

Develop a Resident Involvement Benchmarking club for West London to help raise standards and enable sharing of good practice.

Develop clear procedures for staff on how to set up and facilitate sounding boards and focus groups. This will provide support to different service areas so staff are better equipped to facilitate feedback and use this information in development of services.

Prepare a disabled resident involvement plan. Set up a disability and access group to scrutinise performance against the Resident Involvement Strategy and Equality Scheme action plans. Explore feasibility of organising an annual disability consultation event with residents and key partners, to help inform planning of services.

Investigate all possible points of staff contact with residents that can be used to update and verify tenant diversity information, without increasing work load or affecting performance targets. The obvious areas are Repairlink, decent homes and surveyors. Look at ways of involving contractors in this process without breach of data protection.

Review existing surgeries and estate interventions to enable proactive planning of services. An example is that estate surgeries may be more effective where there are no active residents associations or community groups. We also need to monitor the

attendance and impact, of mobile surgeries and look at increasing the frequency and types of face-to-face interaction.

## **Impact Assessment**

### **Measure the impact of resident involvement initiatives, ensuring that resources are managed strategically and maximum benefits are achieved**

Ensure that all options for involvement and empowerment have been discussed with residents. This can be done by “mainstreaming“ consultation and resident involvement in all aspects of our work, or more specifically, by adding a section to project planning templates and to the service plan.

Regularly review where models of residents’ involvement and empowerment have or will add value, and collate evidence of where policies and practices have changed as a result of residents’ views. This can be done through the development of a central online impact assessment form so that all staff can record outcomes and impact of their resident involvement activities centrally.

Heads of Service will involve team leaders in planning and setting budgets for Resident Involvement within their own areas of work. Allocating resources for resident involvement will ensure that staff consider it as part of their work plans, rather than an afterthought.

Explore existing technical infrastructure such as OHMS (Open Housing Management System) and Agresso to record resident involvement information at an organisational level. This includes recording tenant profile information and monitoring the cost of resident involvement.

Use monitoring information to review involvement of community groups, associations and networks against the six target groups, including allocation of resources and funding.

## Resident Involvement Strategy Action Plan 2008- 09

Ref	Project/Task	End date
<b>1</b>	<b>Improve communication between Ealing Homes, its staff and residents, through access to relevant information and resources.</b>	
1.1	Update Database of Interested and Involved Residents (the DIRECTORY) so that it gives details of their specific interests and communication needs, and monitors the ways in which residents have previously been involved	Jun 08
1.2	Develop a reporting mechanism so front line staff can contribute to the Directory based on their interactions with residents	Jun 08
1.3	Develop a calendar of resident involvement initiatives for residents and staff, with links to relevant contact details and further information	Jun 08
1.4	Produce quarterly update on internet and intranet and in Key Issues to publicise the impact of resident involvement activities.	Jun Sept Dec Mar
1.5	Develop Jargon Busters group to ensure that our written information is in Plain English, in a format that is easy to read and understand on a monthly basis	Monthly
1.6	Update Resident Involvement pages on the Internet and Intranet	Jul 08
<b>2</b>	<b>Work with residents to develop new and innovative opportunities for them to be involved.</b>	
2.1	Use innovative ways to consult with residents on how they would like to be more involved, and recruit, at the Residents Open Day	Jun 08
2.2	Consultation exercise with caretakers to see how they can take part in activities and initiatives to increase resident involvement	Oct 08
2.3	Provide ½ day workshop for Tenancy Support Team on how to increase involvement and access for vulnerable residents, and measure the impact	Jul 08
<b>3</b>	<b>Promote opportunities for residents to learn new skills that will improve their access to employment and contribute to the social and economic development of their communities</b>	
3.1	Develop a volunteer scheme in partnership with Ealing Volunteer Bureau, giving Ealing Homes' residents the opportunity to develop their experience in different aspects of the business and acquire new skills for employment.	Aug 08
3.2	Develop and recruit to Apprenticeship Scheme for young residents, in partnership with LBE and contractors	Oct 08
3.3	Review the Youth Involvement Strategy and Action Plan in partnership with Tenancy Support Team and Youth and Connexions	July 08
3.4	Review partnership agreements with TIDE and EASE to ensure maximum impact and value for money in resident training	Mar 09
3.5	Explore viability of partnerships with LBE departments, such as Adult Education, to develop residents skills and access employment and implement recommendations	Jun 08
3.6	Develop and implement partnership with housing associations in Ealing to deliver an accredited resident training programme focussing on Resident Involvement, Preparing for work, Youth work and volunteering.	Oct 08

3.7	Conduct a skills audit of staff interested in delivering training to residents on IT and housing matters. Based on response, integrate courses into the residents training programme	Nov 08
3.8	Publish all internal and external resident training opportunities on a live internet training calendar and raise awareness of this	Jun 08
<b>4</b>	<b>Measure the impact of resident involvement initiatives, ensuring that resources are managed strategically and maximum benefits are achieved</b>	
4.1	Introduce a consultation checklist in TEN to ensure that consultation takes place at the start of the planning process, and that managers are held accountable.	May 08
4.2	Publish and regularly update an impact assessment form on the intranet so that all staff can record and view outcomes and impact of resident involvement activities centrally	Jun 08
4.3	Heads of Service to involve team leaders in planning and setting budgets for Resident Involvement within their own areas of work, as part of the service planning process	Oct 08
4.4	Explore existing technical infrastructure such as OHMS (Open Housing Management System) and Agresso to record resident involvement information at an organisational level. This includes recording tenant profile information and monitoring the cost of resident involvement.	Mar 09
4.5	Develop PIs to monitor information on resident involvement against four target equality groups	Quarterly
4.6	Monitor impact of resources allocation and funding by four equality groups	Quarterly
<b>5</b>	<b>Develop stronger and sustainable neighbourhoods through the development of community hubs</b>	
5.1	Review all existing management agreements on an annual basis, with consideration of financial management, customer satisfaction and benefits to the local community	Annual
5.2	Hold quarterly user group meetings for community centres to discuss problems and repairs issues, and identify areas for improvement.	Annual
5.3	Use innovative ways to carry out community consultation to ask local residents what activities they would like at centres managed by EH, and report the results of these to residents in a timely and appropriate manner.	Aug 08
5.4	Develop a marketing strategy to increase usage of centres, encouraging a diverse range of educational, recreational and social activities.	Nov 08
5.5	Set up community associations on High Lane and Golflinks, including a constitution, relevant training and a management agreement	Mar 09
5.6	Send invoices to user groups on a monthly basis and introduce stricter penalties for groups who do not pay	Monthly
<b>6</b>	<b>Use tenant profile information and effective monitoring tools to identify gaps in resident involvement and inform planning of services</b>	
6.1	With the involvement of residents, carry out a strategic review of all community consultation, engagement and cohesion initiatives including forums, networks and compacts.	Annual

6.2	Develop performance indicators for resident involvement and set targets on the basis of equality strands. Monitor performance on a regular basis, using the information to inform service planning across the organisation.	July Oct Jan Apr
6.3	Develop a Resident Involvement Benchmarking club for West London to help raise standards and enable sharing of good practice.	May 08
6.4	Write clear procedures for staff on how to set up and facilitate sounding boards and focus groups, and publicise to all teams.	May 08
6.5	Set up a disability and access group to scrutinise performance against the Resident Involvement Strategy and Equality Scheme action plans and help inform planning of services.	Jan 08
6.6	Review all existing surgeries and estate interventions to see how effective they are, to improve take up of service or relocate resources where there is greater need, such as estates with more issues or no active resident association	Feb 09