



**Have  
your  
say!**

**RESIDENTS'**  
**MENU OF**  
**INVOLVEMENT**

# Have you ever thought about getting involved?

**Resident Involvement is now very much part of how Social Housing is regulated.**

No matter what kind of tenant you are, your views are important to us. If you are not happy with the service you have received or you have ideas of how it could be improved, we want to hear from you. After all, if we don't know what the problem is how can we fix it?

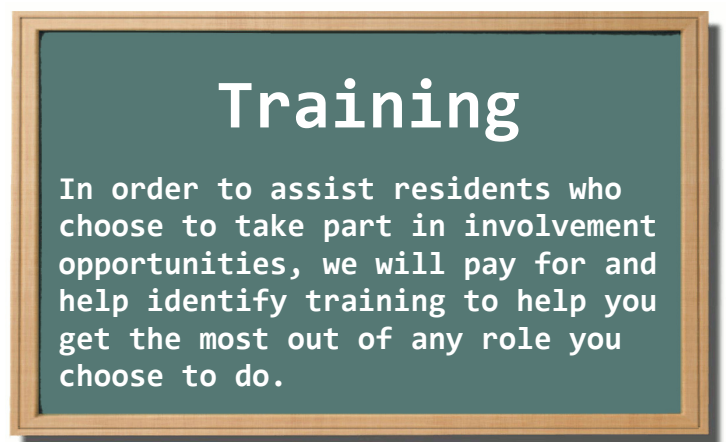
Some people choose not to be involved and leave it to others and this is fine, however are other people representing your views? Are their needs and opinions necessarily going to be the same as yours?.

We ask that all our residents try and do what they can to be involved, your views really do count and we will act on what you tell us. It doesn't matter if you haven't got time to attend regular meetings, just attending one focus group or completing a survey can help us get a better understanding of what our residents want. The chances are that at least one of the services you have received from us has been reviewed by our residents.

Some of our residents are happy to give a long term commitment, others want to dip in and out of involvement activities as it suits them. This is fine, all we ask is that you try and get involved in any way you can.

Over the following pages we hope to give you more of an idea of what 'Resident Involvement' is, how it can benefit you, and what opportunities there are for you to get involved at Suffolk Housing Society.

**Ways we can help to make it easier to join in.**



## Travel Expenses

We will cover all reasonable travel expenses to help you take part in Resident Involvement activities. This includes mileage, car parking charges and rail fares.

Childcare

&

Carer Costs



In order to help you take part in any involvement work, we will help cover the cost of your carer and childcare costs by a registered provider.

# How does it benefit you?

There are lots of good reasons to get involved - what you take from Resident Involvement will depend on your personal circumstances and what you're willing to contribute. It's all about challenging, influencing and shaping the service you receive.

## Case Study

Residents at Suffolk Housing have recently been involved in our first Mystery Shopping project. Residents received full training and carried out a range of scenarios where they tested the Society's services.

Afterwards they got together again to discuss their experience and how future Mystery Shops could be carried out. A report was produced by Suffolk Housing Society which outlined how we performed and what improvements we will make as a consequence of the Mystery Shop by residents.

### *Improve Services*

Secure the things you want from your housing service, now and into the future. As your circumstances change, so will your needs as a resident. Having your say can shape the way services are delivered to a wider range of residents.

### *Make sure we are accountable*

We want to perform well and meet customer expectations by keeping our promises. You can help us develop standards and set targets and make sure we report back on how we are performing.

### *Get value for money*

Help to decide how and where funds should be spent to make sure that money isn't being wasted on things that residents don't want.

### *Strengthen your community*

Getting involved is your chance to make decisions and choices that affect your neighbourhood. You can influence what happens in your community and help improve the quality of life in your area - for you, your family, and your neighbours.

### *Learn from the experience*

By participating in resident involvement activities, you can gain useful skills and experience that can help you get a job or improve your career prospects. Getting involved can improve your confidence and self-esteem, communication and negotiating skills, help you understand how meetings work and teach you about team work.



### *Make new friends*

Taking part in Resident Involvement can give you the opportunity to get to know other residents. You will also have the opportunity to meet the housing staff that manage your area.

### *Help us to succeed*

Build a positive relationship with us. Through our success, you as a resident will also benefit.

## Case Study

In November 2010 residents helped the Society choose whether to extend a contract with Countrywide Grounds Maintenance. Residents were invited to discuss their experiences both good and bad and whether they felt the company had performed well enough to be awarded a contract for a further 2 years. The residents' views were a major factor in whether to extend the contract. When we select a new contractor our residents will again be involved in the interview process.

# What's holding you back?

There are lots of reasons why residents may choose not to get involved. **Do any of these sound familiar to you?**

**"I'm happy with the service I receive. I'd consider going to a meeting about something that affected me or my home, but I won't waste time getting involved with things that don't concern me"**

Even when you are happy with the service you receive there is always room for improvement. By getting involved you can learn about new services and get the opportunity to influence how they are developed.

Its good to know when we are doing something right, so please tell us when you are particularly happy with us so we know where we are performing well and not so well.

**"I have a young family. I haven't got time to go to any events"**

It is easy to leave involvement to other people, but if you do that, how do you know your views are being represented? Resident Involvement is not necessarily always coming to meetings, we can sometimes fit in around you and some of the ways to be involved are as and when you are available. You can use our Facebook page to comment on areas of interest or have your say by completing a survey.

**"Getting involved won't make any difference"**

Unless you get involved you may never be able to influence what we do. If you don't take part how do you know for certain that things won't change. You can always come along to an event to see what happens and then decide whether you think it would be worth continuing.

**"The idea of making decisions scares me, it seems like a big responsibility?"**

It is completely up to you what level of involvement you wish to choose, some have more responsibility than others. Why not talk to the Tenant Liaison Officer who can help you choose a level you are comfortable with.

If you don't like reading lots of paperwork maybe consider joining a Focus Group. By being in a Focus Group you only have to give feedback verbally. Nobody likes lots of paperwork so we always try and keep things as straightforward as possible.

**“It would put me off if there was lots of paperwork”**

You can go along to an event and simply listen to what other people have to say. Afterwards you may feel more confident. Not all involvement means you have to speak in front of people. Only do what you feel most comfortable with.

**“I don't feel confident speaking out in front of people”**

We won't ever throw you in at the deep end. If you are unsure about anything you can always try one type of involvement and then try something else. Our Tenant Liaison Officer is available to talk to and answer any questions you might have about involvement.

**“I haven't done anything like Resident Involvement before, I'm not sure what to expect”**

Resident Involvement is a free service that we provide for our residents and for those taking part its completely voluntary. Any expenses you incur such as travel or child care we can reimburse. Sometimes we reward involvement through vouchers or days out.

**“How much does it cost to take part in resident involvement?”**

Anyone can take part in our resident involvement activities as long as they are a resident of Suffolk Housing Society. If you are under 18 you must get permission from your parents.

**“Who is eligible to be involved and will it affect my benefits?”**

Being involved would not affect your benefit entitlement as your role would be purely voluntary and non paid.

# 8 Ways to get involved

There are lots of different ways you can choose to be involved with Suffolk Housing Society. Some of them involve attending lots of meetings with other residents, some you may not even need to leave your home! To help you decide what might be best for you we have included a brief description of all the main ways you can currently be involved.

## Key

These activities happen on a regular basis, they may take a few hours or a day now and then and may require a greater level of commitment and/or additional training.

These activities take a little less commitment. Activities may take a couple of hours, but might not happen that often. Alternatively they could take a small amount of time on a regular basis.

These activities are the least time consuming and may not take place very often.



Which level of involvement is most suitable for you?

## Tenants' Voice

Tenants' Voice is a committee which represent all our residents. The group consist entirely of residents and have two representatives on our board. The Society's Operations Director and Tenant Liaison Officer both attend the meetings.

The group meet every 6 weeks and make important decisions about how we deliver housing, our services, and how the organisation is run.

By being a member of Tenants' Voice you can have a real influence on how Suffolk Housing is run and will gain an excellent insight into how we work.

As a Tenants' Voice member you would be a representative of your area and work with Tenant Friends to make sure our residents' views are heard.

## Surveys/Questionnaires

Occasionally we will send out a questionnaire or survey. It might be to all our residents to find out how we are doing, or it might be to find out what residents thought of a kitchen refurbishment in one of our schemes.

These might not seem important but they are to us. They can tell us a lot of information and we will try to use that information to improve for the next time.

It is an easy and straightforward way for you to make an impact on what we do.

## Readers & Editorial Panel

Our Readers & Editorial Panel is a group of residents who review our leaflets, policies, and procedures. Every now and then we will send a document via the post to the panel along with a form for them to write their comments. It doesn't take much time and it's a great way for us to make sure that literature we produce is easy to read and understand from a residents perspective. Being part of the panel also enables residents to comment on our new policies without attending our meetings.

Recently members helped contribute to a review of our Complaints and Anti-Social Behaviour policies. Comments from the panel have also helped with designing our new Tenants Handbook.

## Focus Groups

From time to time we hold informal focus groups to discuss a specific subject. This could be to decide on anything from how we make our homes more accessible for disabled people, to agreeing on how quickly we respond to repairs.

Focus groups can have a real influence about the way that services are provided. If you feel particularly strongly about a certain area, such as repairs or anti-social behaviour, then Focus Groups might be best for you. Focus Groups are also ideal for anyone who wants to be involved but doesn't want to meet on a regular basis.

## Mystery Shopping

Mystery Shopping is where our residents are trained to observe, record, and evaluate our customer service processes. You do this by posing as a resident and undertaking a series of agreed tasks which monitor the service delivery and effectiveness of staff training. Each shop is then followed up by an evaluation form. Through the evaluation form, the shoppers report on their experiences.

We present the findings of the mystery shopping in a report which outlines areas where improvement has been identified and how we will go about making positive changes.

## Tenant Friend

We would like people to join our Tenant Friend network if they are someone who wants to be involved in their local community. By being a Tenant Friend you would be a point of contact for us in your local community and welcome new residents to the area.

Tenant Friends can assist their neighbours by reporting repairs if they are unable to do so themselves, and keep an eye on their area generally, bringing any necessary matters to our attention.

## Resident Service Inspector

Resident Service Inspectors are a team of resident volunteers who work with the Society to identify services to be reviewed and find out what works well and what could work better.

All inspectors are trained for this role, once trained you would work in a team to review a service area. This is done by visiting our estates, interviewing other residents on their experience, and working with members of staff.

At the end of each review the inspectors produce a report with recommendations. Each report then receives feedback from the Society on our response to the reports and how we will make improvements from suggestions made.

## Resident Groups

Resident groups are volunteers who can get together for any number of reasons. These can include:

- Help to resolve issues between residents
- Promote and arrange local activities
- Work with the Housing Society to help improve service
- Campaign on local issues such as schools, new developments, road hazards
- Keep residents informed in their local area via meetings or Newsletters

We want to promote and encourage resident groups where possible and can offer guidance and help for you to start one up. We can arrange for staff to be present if necessary and can help with printing, stationery, and venue hire.

# Other ways to be involved

### Interlink

We need your help to make sure that our magazine contains information that is helpful and relevant to you. If you would like to submit an article or want to be involved in the planning of each issue, please give us a call, we would be pleased to hear from you .

### Community Events

Occasionally we might have a stall at a community event or arrange an event for our residents. If you like planning events or just want to lend a hand please let us know.

### Estate Inspections

Our housing officers carry out periodic estate inspections. Please use these occasions to come and speak to your housing officer about any issues with your tenancy or with your neighbourhood. Details of when your housing officer will be in the area are sent with your rent statements once a year.

If you are interested in any of the activities mentioned on the previous pages, or want to find out more about Resident Involvement, we would love to hear from you!

You can contact us via the details listed at the bottom of this page or by filling in the form below and returning it to us.

**Name:**

**Address:**

I am interested in the following:

**Tenants' Voice**

**Resident Service Inspector**

**Readers & Editorial Panel**

**Resident Groups**

**Focus Groups**

**Community Events**

**Mystery Shopping**

**Interlink**

**Tenant Friend**

I would like you to phone me or visit me to discuss Resident Involvement further

*Please return this form to the address below for the attention of the Tenant Liaison Officer*

# Contacting us

**Write to: Tenant Liaison Officer  
Suffolk Housing Society  
Old Mission House  
St Botolphs Lane  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP33 2AX**

**Tel: 01284 767224**

**Email: [jonathan@suffolkhousing.org](mailto:jonathan@suffolkhousing.org)**



**Find us on  
Facebook**

[www.facebook.com/suffolkhousingsociety](http://www.facebook.com/suffolkhousingsociety)



By being involved with Tenants Voice I've made a real difference to the services Suffolk Housing provide for its residents.

*I've got a family and work so I don't have much time. Being a Tenant Friend has been a great way for me to contribute something positive to my area without taking up too much time.*

I am new to my area so thought I would join in with some of the involvement opportunities. I've enjoyed it so far and it's a great way to make new friends.

I was involved in the Mystery Shopping project. I wanted to do something to help Suffolk Housing and other residents. I really enjoyed it and will definitely be taking part next year.

*I was a bit sceptical at first but found they really do take your comments on board. Since retiring it's given me something to put my skills and experience into.*

I was a bit shy at first but by being involved with Suffolk Housing I've found my confidence has improved and I have taken a more active role.

I enjoy what I've done so far and I'm using some of the experience to add to my CV and hopefully improve my job prospects.

*I didn't really know what Resident Involvement was but now I've got a bit more involved I am really enjoying it.*

I started taking part because of a particular issue but I'm now really into it and enjoy making a positive contribution to the work they do.

RESIDENT  
APPROVED



EDITORIAL &  
READERS PANEL

## Do you need our Menu of Involvement in another language?

If you would like this information in another language or format please phone or email us on 01284 767224 or email [customerservices@suffolkhousing.org](mailto:customerservices@suffolkhousing.org)

