



Policy Title

Resident Involvement Policy

Policy number

RIP2015-A

Effective Date:

1st June 2016

Review Date:

June 2017

Definitions or Terms used within this document	
Employee	The term employee is used throughout this policy to any person directly employed by Suffolk Housing, Volunteers and Board of Directors
Contractor	Any person appointed by Suffolk Housing to undertake work on their behalf.
RSC / Resident Scrutiny Committee	A group of residents meeting formally with Suffolk Housing to look at specific areas within the business and how it is performing.
Housing Ombudsman Service	Independent service to deal with disputes between landlords and tenants in England

<p>Purpose of policy</p>	<p>Our Resident Involvement Policy sets out the commitment of Suffolk Housing to residents as an essential aspect of its service delivery. We recognise our responsibility to involve local people in the issues that affect or interest them. We will undertake our work in a way that offers choice and flexibility for residents and the wider community to become involved by offering a number of different engagement opportunities.</p> <p>Resident Involvement is about partnership working between Suffolk Housing staff, our clients and residents. By involving our partners in decision making about the services Suffolk Housing will deliver particularly those that affect homes and neighbourhoods, we will work towards our mission of providing exceptional homes and services, with a local friendly focus.</p> <p>To achieve the purpose of the policy Suffolk Housing has developed the Suffolk Resident Participation Model, including all the various different styles of tenant participation. This model promotes the two way flow of information from the tenant through to Suffolk Housing; The Resident Participation Model encourages regular contact between tenants and staff allowing residents to bring issues to Suffolk Housing, also giving a more formal link from tenant to Management Board.</p> <p>Collectively tenants of Suffolk Housing, through the opportunities given to them in Tenant Participation, are empowered to shape the services provided to them and improve their homes and community.</p>
<p>Introduction/ background</p>	<p>The Department for Communities and Local Government and The Homes and Communities Agency funded and delivered a guide to Resident Involvement in March 2012. The expectations placed on Housing Associations were summed up by the Housing Minister at the time.</p> <p><i>‘Tenants know their housing better than anyone. They are best placed to know what’s working and what isn’t. That’s why our reforms are demolishing the ineffective apparatus of central regulation, and instead allowing a much stronger role for tenants. This includes making it much easier for tenants to form their own Tenant Panels, which they can use to challenge the performance of their landlords and hold them to account. They can also enable them to resolve complaints at the local level, and have a more powerful voice in their local community.’</i></p> <p>The Localism Act 2011, provided new powers for tenants to locally solve disputes and create a formal ‘Designated Panel’ which has a role within the complaints process linked into the over arching Housing Ombudsman Service.</p> <p>The above clearly shows Suffolk Housing have an obligation to create tenant panels.</p> <p>There is no one definition of Tenant Panel. Tenants Panels or Committees are involved in decision-making, monitoring and scrutiny, complaints, service review, policy consideration and various other functions.</p> <p>To reflect these views, Suffolk Housing have used the term “Resident Involvement” to encompass a non-prescriptive set of arrangements being used to ensure accountability to residents.</p> <p>Along with the steer from Government in 2012, Suffolk Housing undertook a review of its governance structure, part of this was defining a more empowered operational scrutiny arm led by residents. As such the Resident Participation Model is built around this independent panel to ensure it has the knowledge and information to hold Suffolk Housing accountable to residents as a whole. The Resident Scrutiny Committee now forms part of the formal governance structure and are accountable</p>

	<p>to the Board. The formation and operation of this committee is covered by the Governance Policy.</p>
<p>Policy Statement</p>	<p>We view Resident Involvement as any activity where residents are able to have their voice heard and are able to contribute to services and how they are delivered by Suffolk Housing. We are committed to involving our residents to help us shape and improve our services. We will, where appropriate to do so, support community activities and projects.</p> <p>Suffolk Housing know that people will want to get involved differently, and will be able to commit to different lengths of time. That is why a varied menu of involvement has been created to suit those individual circumstances.</p> <p>Suffolk Housing in line with its values commits itself to the following principles:</p> <p>Value our relationships: To develop a culture that recognises the significant role that residents play in helping shape and improve the services that are provided and to ensure that this is reflected in all areas of business.</p> <p>We will cover all reasonable expenses for travel, childcare or carer costs to enable a resident to take part in the various activities.</p> <p>Know our business: To continually work to identify areas where residents may be involved and to improve the level of involvement mindful of skills, abilities, interests, diverse backgrounds, locations and life styles. With this in mind, Suffolk Housing provides a full menu of involvement opportunities available to all residents.</p> <p>Work with efficiency and integrity: In order for residents to develop professional participation Suffolk Housing will provide relevant training and support. This training may be jointly conducted with staff. Support may include IT provision when required.</p> <p>Be approachable: Embrace partnership working between, staff, contractors and residents as this is important in delivering an exceptional service.</p> <p>The range of opportunities available together with and how they interact with Suffolk Housing can be seen in the Resident Participation Model (appendix 1).</p>
<p>Guidance section</p>	<p>Suffolk Housing recognise that people will want to get involved differently, and will be able to commit to different lengths of time. That is why a varied menu of involvement has been created to suit those individual circumstances. The intention is that there is a cascade of information from the ground up; Tenants Friends are able to report to Tenants Voice who in turn can report to Resident Scrutiny committee. Equally as important is the cascade of information back to residents from Resident Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Resident Scrutiny Committee(RSC)</p> <p>A group of residents meeting formally with Suffolk Housing on a quarterly basis to look at overall performance and more closely at specific areas of interest or concern, within the business and how it is performing. With information from these meetings and that obtained through other resident groups they are able to identify services where they think things might be improved or changed. The group also review areas of good practice and ensure these are shared. Their findings and recommendation are formally reported to the Management Board.</p>

Tenants Voice

This is a group of tenants who are the voice of local residents. They have formal links with both the RSC and Tenant Friends, allowing them to understand and help solve issues affecting residents in their local community. By working closely with the other tenant groups and Suffolk Housing they can deal with issues locally or pass them onto the RSC for a more formal intervention. Having a good understanding of the local community they are able to provide positive support to that community. The group meet every quarter in line with the Resident Involvement meeting structures.

Sheltered Scheme Panel

The same role as Tenants Voice but representing residents of Suffolk Housing Sheltered Schemes

Tenant Friends

A Tenant Friend is a point of contact in the local community. Acting in a purely voluntary capacity they can assist other residents on their scheme by reporting a repair, keeping an eye on the area generally and bringing any necessary matters to the attention of the Housing Officer. They also provide a link with Suffolk Housing's Grounds Maintenance Contractor, where relevant, ensuring work is carried out to the high standard expected.

Designated Complaints Panel (DCP)

Part of the nationally agreed process governing complaints is to include residents in the process. Members will be able to offer support to other residents in a conciliatory role, remain independent but giving advice on how a complaint should be resolved. On occasions the DCP will make up a formal panel as part of the final stage of the Suffolk Housing complaints process. Members will feedback to RSC to pass on any lesson they feel Suffolk Housing can learn from any complaint they are involved in.

Resident Inspectors

These are a team of residents who work with Suffolk Housing, Resident Scrutiny to Tenant Voice when a service is being reviewed. They visit estates, interview tenants and carry out surveys to find out what works well and what can be improved on.

Editorial & Readers Panel

A group of residents who volunteer to receive our updated or new policies, publications or printed information that Suffolk Housing provides. The documents are sent out so residents can review them in the comfort of their own homes.

Mystery Shopper

Volunteers who are trained to observe and record their experience of services provided by Suffolk Housing.

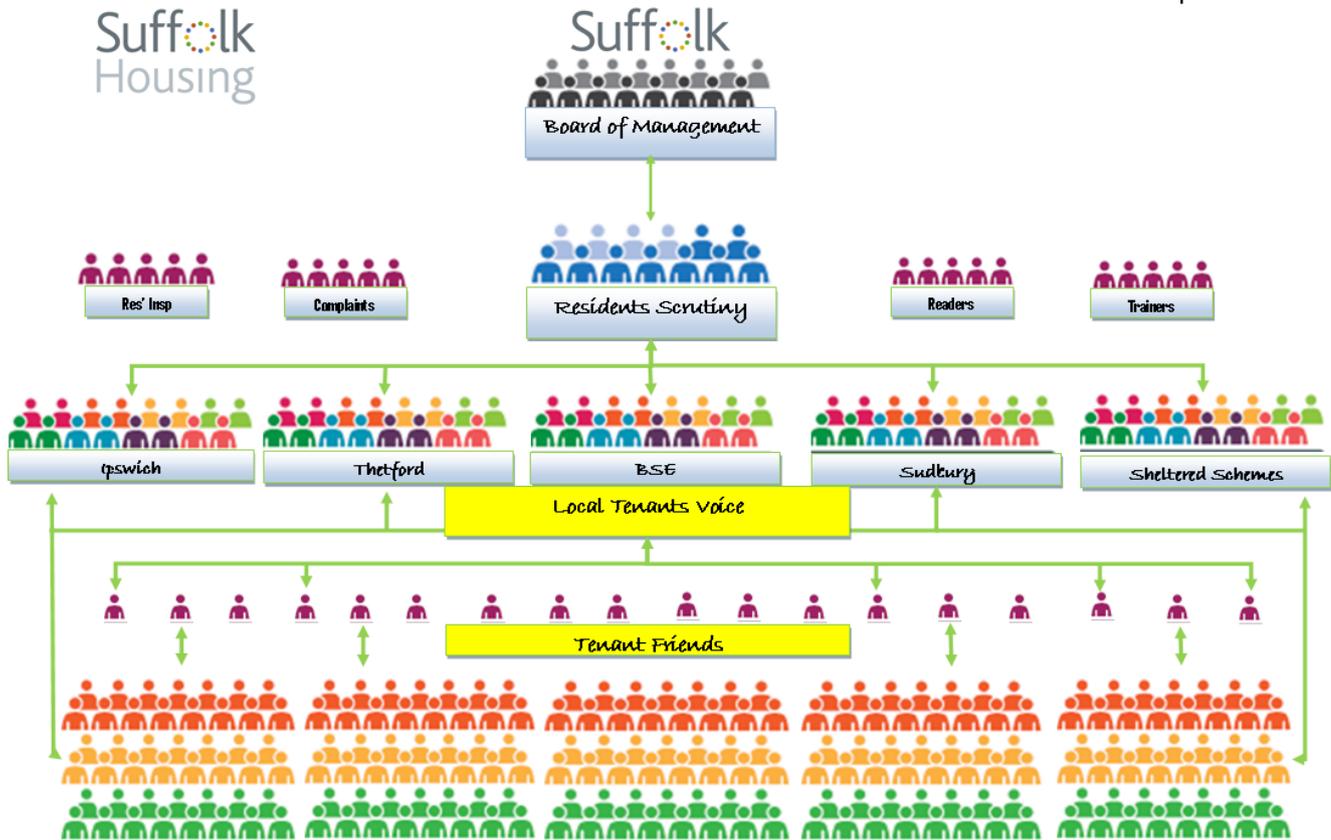
Focus Group

A group of residents who come together to help Suffolk Housing carry out a form of research. They are asked about their opinion, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes in respect of services being provided. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where residents are free to talk with other group members.

	<p>Youth Panel</p> <p>A panel of younger community members up to school leaver age, giving a voice to young people so they can let Suffolk Housing know what is important to them. In the same way as Tenants Voice they will link to the RSC, as our young people are our future and will be affected by the services Suffolk Housing provide.</p> <p>Tenant Trainers</p> <p>These are a group of trained residents who will deliver the training required to prepare residents for the roles they undertake, ensuring that all Suffolk Housing volunteers are given the best opportunity to develop and excel within those roles and as a person.</p>

This policy supersedes Policy number / name: Resident Involvement Policy 2010
Relevant Strategy (if directly linked):
Service Origin: Community Development
Policy Owner: Community Development Manager
Date Equality Impact Assessment carried out: 13 th January 2016
Reviewed by RSC at their meeting on: 4 th May 2016
Approved by Leadership Team on: 25 th May 2016

Resident Participation



*Tenant Voice – Each group has a lead representative for:-

- Tenant Friend
- Repairs
- ASB / Complaints
- Grounds Maintenance