

# Tenant engagement report 2023 / 2024

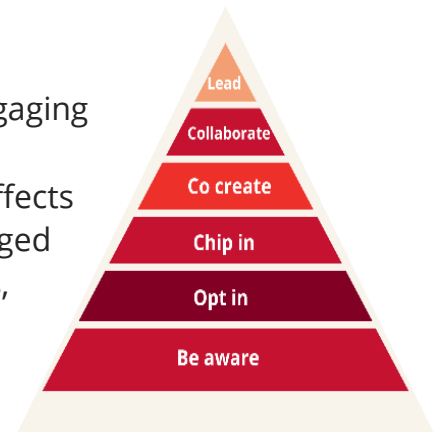
## Who are we?

The tenant engagement team are part of the housing service within Chesterfield Borough Council. The team which is made up of three tenant engagement officers, exist to give tenants and leaseholders an opportunity to be informed, involved and have a voice into decision making within the housing service.



Tenant engagement is a two-way process involving the sharing of information and ideas, where our tenants and leaseholders can inform and influence our policies and decisions and take part in consultation about the housing service.

We recognise that our housing service can be improved by engaging with the people who use our services, and our tenants and leaseholders are well placed to inform us of how the service affects them, what they like and dislike and how things could be changed or improved. By working together, we can come up with ideas, which can further improve the service.



Tenants and leaseholders have a range of opportunities to have a say about how their housing services are delivered. We recognise that people may wish to be involved in different ways and for this reason offer a menu of engagement opportunities ranging from being aware of what's happening to longer term strategic engagement.

## What we have been doing?

It has been a busy year for the newly relaunched tenant engagement team. We have had over **4,100** interactions with tenants and leaseholders and have increased the number of tenants on our Chesterfield active tenants (ChAT) database from 70 to over **170**.

During 2023 / 2024 the focus has been on reviewing the menu of engagement opportunities and looking at how and where this can be developed to engage with more tenants and leaseholders on a wider range of subjects.

We have established several new groups and focused on communication and accessibility which has been identified as one of the priorities for our tenants and leaseholders.

## What difference has tenant and leaseholder engagement made?

Key activities throughout 2023 / 2024 have focused on developing and building on projects so the voice and views of our tenants and leaseholders are at the heart of decision making. Below are details of some of the projects completed during 2023 / 2024.

### Community van visits



During 2023 /2024 we have undertaken a programme of community van visits across the Borough. These visits are completed with housing officers so tenants and leaseholders can come and speak to us directly about any matters of concern and increase our presence on estates. We receive a variety of queries during these visits and people have reported finding it beneficial that we are out in the community, taking our services to them.

### Community litter picks

In collaboration with tenants, housing officers and the wider community we have completed eleven litter picks in areas across the Borough. As well as contributing to a cleaner Borough, the litter picks present an opportunity to engage with our tenants

and leaseholders. We have received positive feedback about completing these. We will continue to work with the housing officers and others to look at how we can continue to support this through 2024.

### **Tenant Challenge Panel (TCP)**

The TCP is an established long running tenant group who scrutinise areas of the housing service. During 2023 they have worked alongside the housing service to



complete a fire safety scrutiny review. This review included completing different activities and culminated in the production of a report with recommendations which have informed an action plan which members of the TCP will monitor throughout 2024. The TCP will also be commencing their next scrutiny review looking at 30-day standard repairs.

### **Website review**

The housing section of the website is currently being reviewed and updated. The views of tenants into this was fundamental to ensure the website meets the needs of those who use this.

Feedback from tenants included more use of imagery and less jargon and acronyms. They also felt there needed to be some consistency within the section of the website so people could navigate using the website more easily.

The use of more videos and clearer information for tenants and others has been incorporated into the website development and tenants will continue to inform this work throughout 2024.

The new redesigned website will go live in the spring of 2024.

### **Tenant handbook**

In early 2023, the engagement team worked alongside the allocations team to review the tenant handbook and look at how useful this information was for tenants moving into one of our properties. This work included an in-depth consultation where tenants could share their views via a survey and focus groups. Through this work we learnt

that tenants in our independent living schemes required different information and as a result of this a new independent living scheme handbook is being developed.

### Tenant communication and accessibility group

In many interactions with tenants, the subject of accessibility and communication is raised. In January 2024 the engagement team held a tenant communication conference which focused on the barriers that exist for tenants within the housing



service and what could be undertaken to reduce these. As part of the conference tenants had lots of discussions and created six accessibility and communication standards which they would like to see implemented by the housing service.

A new communication and accessibility tenant group is being established and the aims of this group which meets both face to face and online to promote inclusion is under development with tenants.

### Estate inspections

2023 saw us setting up and running two training events with Keep Britain Tidy to develop and deliver a programme of estate inspections. Tenants train and work alongside the Housing Officers - environmental, which enables shared learning and



open dialogue regarding our estates.

Through this project our estate inspectors have an opportunity to develop local standards and monitor our performance regarding grounds maintenance in housing areas.

In 2024 this work will be developed so our estate inspectors report their findings to the tenant performance group.

## Tenant performance group

In March 2023 work commenced to develop a tenant performance group. The aim of this group is to enable tenants to monitor the performance of the housing service. Towards the end of 2023 this group elected a tenant chair and has created a set of performance indicators which the housing service will report on. This information will be presented to our wider tenant population through information within reports and on the website, ensuring we are more accountable and transparent with tenants about our performance and areas for development.



## Communal cleaning service review

Following an upheld complaint by the Housing Ombudsman a review of our communal cleaning service was implemented.

Over 1700 tenants, leaseholders and private residents were consulted with to inform the review and what the priorities were for those who receive and pay for the service.

The voice of tenants, leaseholders and private residents has informed a number of actions for the service which includes updated documentation, clearer information on tenant responsibilities and more frequent robust monitoring of the service.

A report was produced with the findings and actions, this has also been developed into a video which will feature on the website. The communication and accessibility group will be working with the engagement team and wider housing service to complete some of the identified actions.

## Family fun events



In half term of February 2024, the engagement team organised two family fun events. The aim of these events was to enable tenants and their families to come and speak with the housing services about any matters of importance but also to find out more about the housing services and what help, and support is available for our tenants.

These events were held at Queens Park and the Healthy Living Centre, and a variety of activities were available including soft play, a climbing wall and arts and crafts.

## Independent living schemes chair-based exercise programme with Spire Trust

In partnership with Spire Trust, we commenced a programme of chair-based exercise sessions in some of our independent living schemes. As well as promoting gentle exercise, the sessions have provided an opportunity for tenants to come together socially and learn how to exercise in a fun and safe way through the expertise of Spire Trust staff. This project was funded for one year and will end in April 2024 with a celebratory event at Chesterfield Football Ground for tenants from our independent living schemes.

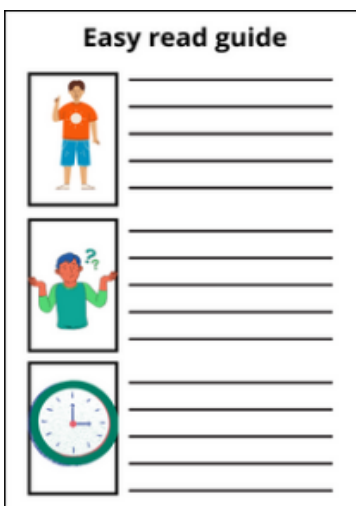


## Repairs out of hours consultation

In early 2023 we completed a consultation with tenants who had used the out of hours repairs service to look at the effectiveness of this service. Consultation was completed via returned surveys and where required telephone discussions with tenants to meet their needs.

The findings from the survey evidenced that overall tenants felt a level of satisfaction with the service they received.

## Accessible formats of information



We understand that not all tenants want to be involved on an ongoing basis and not all tenants will want to read reports for a variety of reasons which could include a tenants preferred communication method. As a result of this we are producing video content and social media content which meets wider communication needs and preferences of our tenants. We have also developed materials including an easy read guide to your tenancy agreement in collaboration with tenants, following feedback received from them.

## Active Derbyshire

Active Derbyshire exists to promote health and wellbeing through being active e.g. walking trails and walking groups.

The tenant engagement team support the activities of Active Derbyshire by consulting with residents and providing local knowledge. This includes working with local schools and Community hubs to develop walking projects throughout Holmehall and Holmebrook Park. At present this is a pilot project which could be expanded across the Borough.

## **Final word**

The introduction of the social housing regulation act 2023 will bring opportunities to continue to review and develop how we listen to, involve and act on the feedback we receive from our tenants and leaseholders, and this is something we welcome.

On behalf of the housing service, we would like to express our thanks to all our tenants and leaseholders who have taken the time to share their views and provide feedback throughout 2023 / 2024. We look forward to developing further opportunities to collaborate and share learning throughout the remainder of 2024.