



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

27 February 2014

Title: Customer Involvement Activity Update – April to December 2013

Report of: Managing Director

Purpose of Report

1. To provide committee with a summary of involvement activity across the company for the third quarter of 2013/14.

Background

2. All housing company customers are encouraged to get involved in ways that suit them, based on the time they have available and the level of commitment they wish to make. Customer involvement is central to the way we deliver our services.
3. The Involvement and Empowerment standard of the HCA's Regulatory Framework places a requirement on landlords to ensure that tenants are given a range of opportunities to influence and shape policies and scrutinise our services.
4. The Delivery Plan 2013-15 includes an objective to support and fully embed co-regulation. This is carried out through a range of ways including the TALISMAN, Complaints Scrutiny Panel, Service Improvement Groups and through the development of an annual report for tenants and leaseholders each year, which is designed, developed and written by our customers.

Summary

5. During the period, 1 October 2013 to 31 December 2013, 60 involvement activities took place. Customers were involved in various activities including; TALISMAN meetings, Service Improvement Groups, community events, drop ins, forums and customer training.
6. Customers have been involved in our activities on over 2,260 occasions, however some may have been involved in more than one event.

7. Appendix 1 to this report shows a summary of activities undertaken during this period and demonstrates the variety of ways customers have been involved. This information is broken down by the two broad service areas, Corporate Services and Customers and Communities, to highlight the different forms of activities that have taken place across the company.
8. Appendix 2 to this report shows the venues where activities have taken place during this period.

Key outcomes of involvement

9. There have been a number of outcomes from customer involvement during this period which are highlighted below; -
 - Customers attended dropins as part of the first phase of consultation of the Tenancy Agreement Review, highlighting key issues to consider.
 - The Complaints Scrutiny Panel met to discuss the review currently underway and agreed a workplan for them for the coming year.
 - Began 2013/14 Hoops for Health project with Newcastle Eagles with a new workshop focussing on educating around stereotyping, with the overall aim to minimise the potential of hate crime incidents in Gateshead.
 - A joint housing event organised by the LGBT Federation provided an opportunity to share updates with service users on actions taken to improve services for LGBT tenants and leaseholders following suggestions from the previous event. The event was also an opportunity to identify barriers that still exist when accessing housing services
 - Quarterly grounds maintenance meetings between Local Environmental Services, the housing company and tenant representatives provided an opportunity to discuss and agree issues including fly tipping, Neighbourhood Pride and future budgetary plans.
 - Choices events were held for customers to select the colour for internal decoration of blocks in Birtley Villas and Pleasant Place
 - Customers were involved in developing the content for Anti-Social Behaviour staff training on case handling following feedback from the first TALISMAN review of ASB.
 - Drop in held event provided an opportunity to update residents and ward members on the proposals for Keelman Homes new build scheme on the Lonnen, Ryton.
 - Litter pick event held with children from Larkspur school, Wrekenton improving their local estate.
 - Involved tenants and leaseholders attended a Christmas Party aimed at saying thankyou to them for their continued efforts and involvement to shaping services.

Performance against service standards

10. There are a number of service standards in place for involvement to help monitor performance and ensure that we continue to involve customers in the way services are delivered. They are as follows: -
 - Number of involved customers (previously titled Representation of involved customers)

- Annual training programme course attendance
- Satisfaction with feedback following involvement
- % of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account (annual figure reported to the last committee)
- Number of events attended.

11. At the end of the period 1 October 2013 – 31 December 2013, performance was as follows: -

- There were 880 involved customers on our database, exceeding the target of 840 for the year.
- There have been 146 attendees on customer training courses, on course to meet to the target of 180 by the end of the year. This also includes customers attending external training sessions.
- Satisfaction with feedback from involvement was 98% at 30 September 2013, exceeding the target set for the year of 97%. As this is reported six monthly, the next update will be at year end.
- We have attended 34 events, exceeding the target of 16.

Mears Community Initiatives

12. Mears have been working in the local community with residents and as a result of Community Fund applications, have delivered a number of valuable projects in Gateshead.
13. Appendix 3 to this report highlights the community activities Mears have been involved in during the previous quarter.

Involvement database

14. There has been an increase of 13 involved customers to the database since June 2013 totalling 880 members.
15. The number of white British involved customers has risen by 6 people while BME has remained the same although there is a significantly higher representation of involved BME customers (7.05%) compared to our overall profile (2.76%).
16. Both involved males and females has risen since June 2013 and our under 25s have also risen slightly to 21.
17. Appendix 4 to this report displays profile information of our involved tenants and leaseholders compared with our overall customer profile.

Summer of fun 2013 – update

18. The company offered another Summer of Fun competition in 2013, offering community organisations the opportunity to apply for a prize to help their group.
19. Prize options were a kitchen pack, sports pack, toys and games pack or a Sainsbury's voucher if the packs weren't suitable for the group applying. 31 community organisations across Gateshead won a prize and 22 were claimed.

20. In January 2014 all groups who claimed their prize were contacted and asked to update us on how it has helped their group and what difference it has made to them.
21. Appendix 5 shows the organisations who won a prize and an additional table displays feedback from the community groups who have responded about how it has helped them.
22. This feedback demonstrates that from a relatively minimal investment there has been a significant impact on a range of community organisations.

Future activity

23. The following activities are planned for 2013/14, although there will also be a range of additional activities likely to take place: -
 - Newcastle Eagles Hoops for Health programme for 2013/2014 will be concluded. This year's programme will have focussed on Hate Crime alongside the previous themes of the benefits of exercising, healthy eating and the dangers of passive smoking and alcohol
 - Phase two of the Tenancy Agreement consultation will be planned to feedback findings from the first phase and share proposed amendments to the agreement.
 - We will continue to roll out the Energy Best Deal sessions up to 31 March 2014 and promote Energy Angels. If customers change their energy supplier or tariff via their website we will also receive some funding
 - Carry out training around Mystery Shopping for customers to go on to conduct mystery shopping exercises for the company around our investment works
 - A recruitment exercise for TALISMAN will be held to generate new membership
 - The TALISMAN will conclude and present their findings on their review of Voids.
 - We will look to establish a customer led LGBT focus group to help determine the needs of this community group to help shape our services which will also help support our commitment to the Stonewall equality index programme.

Link to values

24. This report relates to the following company values: -
 - Being customer focused, innovative and professional
 - Being a listening and learning organisation
 - Embracing Equality.
 - Being open, honest and transparent

Impact on tenants

25. We continue to work extensively with tenants, leaseholders and the wider community, to get views and opinions to identify priorities and inform services.

26. The information gained from these involvement activities helps inform service improvement and delivery, to make sure that the services we are providing to our customers meet their needs.

Risk Management Implications

27. Failure to engage with customers was identified as a key strategic risk for the company.
28. The Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA's) Involvement and Empowerment standard requires us to demonstrate that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing and are provided with the support they need to take part in this. The activities outlined within this report demonstrate our compliance with this standard.

Financial Implications

29. The Head of Corporate Services confirms that a budget is available to support customer involvement, and resources have been made available to support the activities outlined in this report.
30. Individual service managers have the opportunity to request funding from this budget to support involvement activities where they can demonstrate the potential outcomes for housing company tenants and leaseholders.

Equality and Diversity Implications

31. TGHC is committed to involving people from diverse communities to ensure everyone's views, needs and aspirations are considered in the decision making process.
32. Support is available to assist people with additional needs to access involvement opportunities and this is regularly promoted.
33. Every effort is made to ensure we do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any individual or group and to provide equal access to this service and the representation of involved tenants is regularly monitored and acted upon.

Value for Money implications

34. The involvement of tenants and the wider community can result in value for money savings as service managers can gain an insight into what tenants want and need. This can result in resolving the issues first time and delivering something that works for all parties.
35. All Service Improvement Groups now have Value for Money as a regular agenda item in addition to the specific Value for Money group.

Environmental implications

36. The environmental impact of involvement is considered when conducting activities across the company and addressed wherever possible, for example, customers sharing taxis where possible when attending events.

Consultation carried out

37. Regular updates are shared with the Involvement Service Improvement Group to advise of progress of involvement across all services and the outcomes which result.
38. The Involvement Service Improvement Group are satisfied with the involvement activity and resulting outcomes that have taken place during the third quarter.

Health Implications

39. There are no direct health implications arising from this report although the successful implementation of the recommendations would have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Gateshead residents.

Recommendation

40. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the involvement activities undertaken during this quarter.

Appendix 1: Summary of involvement activities across the company

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Drop in sessions	18	325
Forum	2	16
Focus group	2	9
Service Improvement Group	9	71
Questionnaire/survey	2	818
Surgery	2	32
Training course	4	32
Event	8	685
Meeting	8	46
Workshop	4	200
Choices event	3	31
Total	62	2,265

Summary of involvement activity – Corporate services

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Forum	2	16
Focus group	1	5
Service Improvement Group	5	38
Surgery	2	32
Training course	4	32
Event	6	615
Meeting	4	33
Questionnaire/survey	2	818
Workshop	4	200
Drop In	2	17
Total	32	1,806

Summary of outcomes – Corporate Services

- Attended an event organised by the LGBT Federation where housing providers shared updates with service users following suggestions from the previous event and was an opportunity to identify other barriers that LGBT customers sometimes face when accessing housing services
- Training courses held through the Moving Forward customer training programme including scam awareness and decorating providing attendees with a range of skills and information.
- Began delivering Energy Best Deal sessions on behalf of FINCAN around community groups in Gateshead to help raise awareness of how to save energy and try to reduce their fuel bills
- The Complaints Scrutiny Panel met and agreed a future workplan for the group including reviewing case studies on case handling, developing investigation guidelines and monitoring trends.
- Began 2013/14 Hoops for Health project with Newcastle Eagles with a new workshop focussing on educating around stereotyping, with the overall aim to minimise the potential of hate crime incidents in Gateshead
- Held a Christmas party for involved tenants and leaseholders to recognise their continued involvement in shaping our services and used the opportunity to gather feedback on what they think the groups have achieved and should focus on for the coming year
- Attended a young person's event supported by Ground Work North East where we were able to promote various opportunities to get involved.

Summary of involvement activity - Customers and Communities

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Drop in	16	308
Meeting	4	13
Focus Group	1	4
Event	2	70
Service Improvement Group	4	33
Choices event	3	31
Total	30	459

Summary of involvement activity – Customers and Communities

- Quarterly grounds maintenance meeting held to discuss and agree issues including fly tipping, Neighbourhood Pride and future budgetary plans
- Choices events held for customers to select the colour for internal decoration for blocks in Birtley Villas and Pleasant Place
- Customers involved in developing content for Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) staff training through the ASB Service Improvement Group
- Drop in held to update residents and ward members on the proposals for Keelman Homes new build scheme on the Lonnen, Ryton
- Litter pick event held with children from Larkspur school, Wrekenton to help improve their estate
- Customers took part in the first phase of the consultation around the Tenancy Agreement Review providing their views and ideas of key issues to be considered as part of the review.
- Alcohol partnership meeting held with residents to raise awareness of joined up working between partners including the police, council and housing company, to educate around what effects alcohol can have on the environment as well as individuals.

Appendix 2: Location of involvement activities

Venue	Amount
Keelman House	18
Inner West	5
West	4
Central	12
South	14
East	5
External (Newcastle)	2
Other (survey)	2
Total	62

Appendix 3: Mears customer involvement activity 1 October – 31 December 2013

	Activity	Number attending
1	Twelve week work placement with a student from Percy Hedley College.	1
2	Attended LGBT event in partnership with The Gateshead Housing Company organised by the LGBT Federation.	40

Community Fund work	
1	Wrekenton Blue Star Football Club – refurbished four showers and improved electrical cables as a result of a Community Fund application.
2	Sheriff Hill Methodist Church – Carrying out work including shelving, painting and external fencing.

Appendix 4: Profile information of involved customers

Gender:

	Involvement Database December 2013		Involvement Database June 2013		Customer profile December 2013	
Female	555	63%	547	63.09%	11397	58.48%
Male	325	37%	316	36.45%	8090	41.51%
Blank	-	-	4	0.46%	3	0.02%
Total	880	100%	867	99.54%	19490	99.98%

Ethnicity:

	Involvement Database December 2013		Involvement Database June 2013		Customer profile December 2013	
Asian Or Asian British Bangladeshi	1	0.11%	1	0.12%	14	0.07%
Asian Or Asian British Indian	2	0.23%	2	0.23%	10	0.05%
Asian Or Asian British Other	11	1.25%	9	1.04%	105	0.54%
Asian Or Asian British Pakistan	13	1.48%	13	1.50%	13	0.07%
Black Or Black British African	28	3.18%	29	3.34%	199	1.02%
Black Or Black British Caribbean	-	-	0	0.00%	6	0.03%
Black Or Black British Other	1	0.11%	1	0.12%	28	0.14%
Chinese	1	0.11%	1	0.12%	20	0.10%
Mixed Other	3	0.34%	3	0.35%	25	0.13%
Mixed White & Asian	-	-	0	0.00%	16	0.08%
Mixed White & Black African	2	0.23%	1	0.12%	13	0.07%
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	-	-	1	0.12%	5	0.03%
Other	-	-	1	0.12%	83	0.43%
Total BME	62	7.05%	62	7.15%	537	2.76%
Refused	1	0.11%	1	0.12%	23	0.12%
White British	728	82.73%	722	83.28%	18538	95.12%
White Irish	-	-	-	-	33	0.17%
White Other	12	1.36%	12	1.38%	292	1.50%
(blank)	77	8.75%	70	8.07%	7	0.04%
Grand Total	880	100%	867	100.00%	19490	100.00%

Disability:

Does the tenant have a disability?	Involvement Database December 2013		Involvement Database June 2013		Customer Profile December 2013	
N	601	68.30%	597	68.86%	13770	70.65%
Y	277	31.48%	267	30.80%	5544	28.45%
Refused	-	-	-	-	23	0.12%
(blank)	2	0.22%	3	0.35%	70	0.36%
Total	880	100%	867	100.00%	19490	100.00%

Age:

	Involvement Database December 2013		Involvement Database June 2013		Customer Profile December 2013	
No date of birth	112	12.73%	123	14.19%	2	0.01%
Under 25	20	2.27%	19	2.19%	643	3.30%
25-39	116	13.18%	115	13.26%	4079	20.93%
40-49	111	12.61%	113	13.03%	3349	17.18%
50-59	114	12.95%	110	12.69%	3388	17.38%
60-74	265	30.11%	266	30.68%	4649	23.85%
75 and over	142	16.15%	121	13.96%	3380	17.34%
Total	880	100%	867	100.00%	19490	100.00%

Appendix 5: Summer of Fun community organisations and prizes

	Community group	Prize
1	9th Gateshead Rainbows	Voucher
2	Chopwell Community Centre	Voucher
3	Dance Club Lobley Hill Community Centre	Voucher
4	Diva Dance	Voucher
5	Girls Group - Gateshead Young Womens Outreach Project	Voucher
6	Leam Lane private dance class	Voucher
7	Mosspool/Lily Close Centre	Voucher
8	Save the children	Voucher
9	The Court Cafe - Warwick Court Residents Group	Voucher
10	Clara Vale Village Hall Association	Voucher
11	8th Gateshead Boys Brigade, Dunston	Toys & games pack
12	The Windmill Hills Centre	Toys & games pack
13	The Winlaton Centre Junior Club	Toys & games pack
14	Edberts House	Toys & games pack
15	Dunston Community Centre lunch club	Kitchen pack
16	The Avenues Community Education Project	Kitchen pack
17	The Winlaton Centre - Tuesday luncheon Club	Kitchen pack
18	Low Fell running club	Sports pack
19	Redheugh Whites under 11	Sports pack
20	Rutherford Football Club	Sports pack
21	Whickham Fellside Football Club	Sports pack
21	The 4Cs	Gardening pack

Appendix 5: Summer of Fun feedback

	Prize won	How did you find out about our Summer of fun project?	If you won a voucher, what have you spent it on or what are you planning on spending it on?	How has the prize benefitted the group?	Has there been any direct positive outcomes for the group receiving this prize? Eg, increased group membership
Dunston Community Centre	Kitchen pack	Dunston Gala Festival	n/a	Replaced chipped, cracked and worn out materials that are used by all members of the centre.	This gift is greatly appreciated particularly by Doreen Wilson and Betty Thompson who cook the lunch.
Angela Marie School of Theatre Dance	Voucher	Lobley Hill Primary School presentation	The head of dance school decided to put it in a raffle to raise funds for required apparel and equipment. The voucher was the prize in the raffle.	By generating extra funds it has gone a long way to safeguarding the future success of the school.	There is always a drive for new members and any positive contribution such as this can only help.
Chopwell Community Centre	Voucher	Leaflet advertisement sent to our centre	We used the voucher to buy chocolate, biscuits and bottles to raffle at our Christmas fayre.	The raffle prizes paid for a Christmas tree to be erected in the village. The local school children and families decorated it. It has been a huge success and people donated money to the community centre to have a tree permanently there for each Christmas.	We have had more people joining the centre and donations to keep the building sustainable for the future. This is at the hub of Chopwell community and it's quite isolated at Chopwell. We have many vulnerable users benefit from our services.
Rutherford AFC	Sports pack	Lobley Hill Primary School presentation	n/a	The pack benefitted and continues to benefit all age groups within Rutherford AFC. They are always in need of new equipment as it is a very popular club within and outside of the community. Any donations or help given is always greatly appreciated.	More sports equipment means that more members can benefit and for longer. Equipment always needs improving or replacing so it has undoubtedly been a positive outcome.

	Prize won	How did you find out about our Summer of fun project?	If you won a voucher, what have you spent it on or what are you planning on spending it on?	How has the prize benefitted the group?	Has there been any direct positive outcomes for the group receiving this prize? Eg, increased group membership
TLC Tuesday Lunch club	Kitchen pack	Word of mouth (colleague in the Winlaton centre)	n/a	Having new equipment in the kitchen has made the 'cook's' job easier. Nice to have matching cutlery, great having new tea towels.	New equipment 'looks' lovely. Makes a more pleasant environment for our group. Thank you.
Clara Vale Village Hall Association	Voucher	Chase Park Festival	We have used the vouchers to support our monthly lunch club.	The lunch club has run intermittently over the last year and has been funded only by food donations prepared by villagers. With the extra cash we have been able to broaden the menu and buy new equipment eg, soup bowls. Our Christmas lunch was 3 course and attracted 40 people.	More people attending has brought in more community involvement of all ages; some funds for village hall running costs and ideas for attracting visitors from outside the village.
Winlaton Centre Juniors	Toys and Games pack	Promotional email	n/a	Provided new games and toys to entertain the juniors group. The children were so excited to learn they had won a prize. We had great fun receiving new equipment. The group was so excited.	Happier children! Encouraged the children to play together, take turns and learn new skills. Gave the children a sense of achievement. Thank you.
Mosspool Centre	Voucher	Via Housing Estate Officer Julia Burn	We bought food and refreshments (non-alcoholic) for a Christmas tea party in the centre for all our residents	It brought the residents together to socialise and have fun, as well as enjoying a lovely buffet. Those who were able to help in anyway got involved in making it a success and embraced the opportunity to do something to help other residents.	Residents that do not normally get involved come to the centre, came and enjoyed themselves so much that they are now regulars at our activities. It was wonderful to see the smiles and hear the laughter and we are planning lots more similar events.