



STEVE BIKO HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Tenant Engagement Strategy

APPROVED BY : Steve Biko Housing Association Board

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

This Tenant Engagement Strategy sets out the commitment of Steve Biko Housing Association to Tenant/Customer Engagement as an essential aspect of its housing service. Tenant engagement is characterised by constant change. The regulatory framework governing tenant engagement, involvement and empowerment has changed significantly in the last few years. It places a greater emphasis on accountability and “co-regulation”. Enabling tenant engagement to be part of our core work will enable better decision-making and quality housing services.

This strategy demonstrates how Steve Biko Housing Association and tenants will work in partnership together to shape and deliver a high quality housing service. Steve Biko Housing Association has a long established commitment to engaging with its local communities, and recognises its responsibility to involve local people in the issues that affect or interest them. This will be undertaken in a way that offers choice and flexibility for people to become involved by offering a number of different engagement opportunities.

It is recognised that Steve Biko Housing Association has a continually evolving and diverse customer base and as such continued efforts are needed to promote equality and diversity and develop links with all underrepresented groups including black and minority and ethnic groups, young people and those with vulnerabilities or disabilities.

2. Why do we need a Tenant Engagement Strategy?

2.1. Principles of the Policy

Nationally tenant engagement strategies and agreements are part of the Governments' agenda to improve services for local people and place tenants at the heart of decision-making and service delivery on issues that relate to the management of housing stock.

We want to make sure that we are transparent in our plans and that our tenants and leaseholders can hold us to account for the actions we take. We feel this should be at the heart of our move towards co-regulation. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 has introduced a range of changes to the regulator's powers that have shaped the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standards as set out by the Homes and Communities Agency, this was agreed in response to the impact of the deregulatory measures on our Consumer Standards. Whilst deregulation provides greater operating freedoms for registered providers we will exercise those freedoms with regard to the impact of our decisions that affect tenants. We have an obligation to be accountable to our tenants to enable them to shape the decision making process that will assist in setting the strategic direction for the Association. The development of tenants in assisting in setting and measuring standards of our performance will enable services to be more accountable to tenants.

2.2. What is Tenant Engagement

Tenant Engagement is about Steve Biko Housing Association and its tenants working together in partnership by involving tenants at an early stage in the decision making about the services they receive or decisions that affect their homes and neighbourhoods, ensuring they are aligned to local expectations so as to achieve an improved housing service.

Key to effective engagement is listening to our tenants and using their views to help us develop and improve the housing service provided.

Effective tenant engagement is about understanding the needs, expectations, aspirations, achievements and experiences of Steve Biko Housing Association existing and prospective tenants as well as its leaseholders whilst continually improving its housing service as a result.

3.0 Promoting and Valuing Equality and Diversity

Steve Biko Housing Association recognises the importance of equality of opportunity for all our tenants. We aim to achieve equality of opportunity by ensuring commitment to the provision of readily accessible services and facilities and by encouraging engagement practices which take account of the diversity of Groups and individuals. We will strive to ensure that our engagement activities are inclusive to all in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and free from discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, and gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Steve Biko Housing Association monitors the profile of its tenants. This enables the Association to know the diversity of our tenant community.

Local evidence has shown that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) tenants as well as young tenants are significantly under-represented at most levels of general engagement practices. Steve Biko Housing ensure that resources are identified

and support provided which is aimed at encouraging active engagement across tenure in the communities we operate.

Steve Biko Housing Association continually review how we deliver services to our tenants and have introduced changes to locations for general meetings, approach to neighbourhood , Walk-about, Coffee mornings inviting various guest speakers /health professionals, summer events and activities, joint neighbourhood projects, focus groups, and sharing information digitally through our website, Facebook, newsletter and other publications. We have introduced a Tenant Improvement Group by way of a sounding board in 2016 following a review of our Tenant Satisfaction surveys.

New members are always warmly welcomed, meetings offer a chance for tenants to meet staff, share issues and comment on service delivery standards.

- We will provide information for tenants in other languages if English is a second language and formats in large print where tenants need it.
- We providing information in ways that are easy to understand for tenants with limited reading skills and /or learning difficulties where a need is identified
- We will work with local community groups and supporting agencies involved with our tenants to ensure clear communication.
- We have hearing loops and access to interpreters and signers where needed.
- Meetings are held at venues that have full disabled access facilities.
- We monitor and update the profile of information of tenants to enable us to deliver services that meet their needs.

4. Tenant Engagement Benefits

- Ensuring high levels of tenant satisfaction with their homes and neighbourhood
- Learning from our tenants experience as service users to inform the continuous improvement of housing services
- Increased number of tenants involved in engagement activities
- Development of our services so that they become more appropriate to tenants' individual and collective needs
- Ensuring that services are delivered in a more efficient and cost-effective way
- Tenants are able to scrutinise and challenge the way in which the Housing Service is delivered within Steve Biko Housing Association
- Ensuring that tenants are involved in making decisions that affect them and the community in which they live

- Enabling Steve Biko Housing Association staff and tenants to be more aware of each other's perspective and organisation/financial limitations
- Breaking down misunderstanding and barriers between Steve Biko Housing Association and tenants and building mutual respect and understanding
- Enhancing tenants skills, knowledge, confidence and quality of life

5. Strategic Objectives

Steve Biko Housing Association Business Plan sets out our strategic objective in regards to Community Empowerment with a commitment to empower tenants and residents so they can influence housing and associated quality of life services.

6. AIMS

The aim of the policy is:

- To set out our approach to tenant involvement including the reasons why we seek to involve tenants
- To set out ways in which we will enable and encourage tenants to be actively involved and demonstrate that tenants are part of the continuous service review and improvement process
- To be innovative in our approach to involvement to achieve equality and diversity in the services we provide and the opportunities we offer ensuring that all tenants, regardless of particular circumstances or difficulties, have access to the same rights of engagement and consultation
- To ensure that we meet all statutory requirements demonstrating best practice in accordance with government legislation and guidance
- Enhancing tenants skills, knowledge, confidence and quality of life
- To make tenant engagement an integral part of our business by involving and consulting tenants to shape services to meet their needs
- Ensure that we are fully inclusive and provide opportunities to widen engagement by offering a range of ways that tenants can get involved, at a level and pace that is accessible to all
- To provide and support training and development opportunities to enable tenants to make a difference
- To maximise accountability and value for money to ensure that tenants have confidence in our services

7.0 Tenant engagement and the bigger picture

Tenant engagement should not be seen in isolation, but as an integral part of the way we operate as a landlord.

This strategy links in with other relevant strategies and national priorities: -

Tenant engagement is regulated under the Consumer Standards specifically the Tenant Involvement and Engagement Standard 2012.

Regulatory Frameworks emphasise the roles of both the housing landlord and their tenants in working together to raise standards of housing services, with tenants having opportunities to hold the landlord to account.

In July 2016 Steve Biko Housing Association have welcomed the National Tenant Engagement Standards introduced by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). Which include the following;

- **Engagement Strategy** – linking this to the business plan
- **Resources for Engagement** – to ensure effective delivery of planned outcomes
- **Information and Insight** – Access to information at the right level, the right time, to the right people in the right way
- **Influence and Scrutiny** – Ensure tenants and leaseholders and communities an influence appropriately
- **Community Engagement** – Engage with communities and local stakeholders to develop projects and plans to meet jointly identified needs
- **Valuing engagement** – Ensure tenant engagement outcomes will benefit stakeholder organisations, tenants, Leaseholders, and communities

Steve Biko Housing Association are committed to ensuring that tenants are kept informed about future national changes that affect the management of their homes and are able to become involved and influence events and opportunities relating to the changing national agenda for tenant engagement.

We will take into account good practice models available and emerging to develop a structure that fits the requirements of Steve Biko Housing Association and best meets and serves the needs of its tenants.

13.0 Service Standards

Steve Biko Housing Customer Service Standards Policy set out how we plan to deliver services to our customers. The Standards set out how we work with our customers to understand their needs, offer help at the first point of contact by keeping them informed and providing a high quality standard of service.

13.1 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Steve Biko Housing Association team will show due regard to this policy when involving tenants through various engagement activities.

13.2. Compliments, complaints and Comments

Steve Biko Housing Association will ensure tenants are aware of and understand the difference between a dispute (defined as a difference in opinion about how a policy or standard is being implemented), and making an official complaint via the SBHA Complaints procedure. We also encourage feedback and evaluation on tenant engagement which gives tenants the opportunity to share compliments, suggestions and comments. Steve Biko Housing Association work to the National framework that recommends that complaints should be dealt with at the lowest possible level if possible encouraging tenants to speak about concerns with staff with a view to resolving issues as quickly as possible.

Copies of the above policies are available at www.stevebikoha.org

14.0 Tenant Legal Rights to involvement

Steve Biko Housing Association as the landlord has statutory duties, obligations and responsibilities that are detailed in every tenancy agreement. Tenants have both statutory rights in law as defined by legislation and guidelines as well as contractual rights outlined in tenancy agreements.

Tenants' rights and responsibilities are acknowledged and fully explained in the tenant's handbook.

There are a number of legal obligations in relation to tenant engagement.

Tenants both individually and

Collectively have a number of legal rights. These include;

- The Right to be consulted (individual) Tenants have the right to be consulted individually on housing Management changes likely to affect them substantially (Housing Act 1985)
- Right to Information (individual) Tenants have the right to information about the terms of their tenancy
- The repairing obligations of their landlord, the anti-social behaviour policy, and allocations policy amongst other items.
- Whilst some tenants may choose not to get involved, Steve Biko Housing Association have a legal duty to keep them informed.

14.1. Ways in which you get involved

The different ways of involvement that Steve Biko Housing Association use are based on the following Areas;

- Empowerment
- Engagement
- Involvement

We recognise that tenants want to give their views or be involved in different ways. We will provide Information that is reader friendly giving clear indication of meetings, activities event, opportunities for learning and consultation on housing service changes to provide a range of options for our tenants to have an input.

14.2. Tenants be involved with the following;

General Tenants Meetings

Coffee Mornings

Focus groups – tenants give views on specific topics

Tenant Improvement Group – providing views on housing services/performance; including Home (repairs and maintenance, quality of accommodation, estate and communal areas, Anti-social behaviour cleaning, gardening, windows neighbourhood/environment, customer services, regeneration projects, policy review, and value for money.

Estate Walkabouts – Meeting Staff team, getting local environmental issues resolved – tenants may influence improvements to local community

Tenant inspections – involving tenants in communal area/relet standards

Scheme meetings – consultation on refurbishment/tenants choice/services

Customer feedback – questionnaires, and satisfaction surveys

Internal/external Conferences and seminars – enabling tenants to meet wider audience and gain knowledge

Annual General Meetings

Community joint projects and events throughout the year.

Regular update of Tenant information

14.3. Information

14.4 Steve Biko Housing Association let tenants know what we are doing by providing;

- Information, Handbooks, leaflets
- Local information
- Newsletters
- Email
- Home visits – by arrangement
- letters
- Posters and flyers
- Briefing Topics on issues of interest: Refuge disposal, health and safety issues
- Tenant What's on Booklet
- Agenda and notices for meetings
- Door knocking to speak face to face with tenants on Walk abouts

- Website and Facebook articles
- Employment opportunities via Facebook and website
- Policies on website

14.5. Resources for tenant engagement

There is a specific annual budget identified for tenant engagement projects, which particularly aim to broaden Involvement by tenants. Steve Biko Housing Association employ a dedicated staff resource and wider team support delivering tenant engagement activities, the Association recognise that everyone has a role to play in tenant engagement. Examples of this including housing officers attending meetings, events, and supporting tenants and residents during local estate walkabouts.

Steve Biko Housing Association may re-reimburse tenants for out of pocket expenses, such as travel costs, childcare, lunch, refreshments, and from time to time provide rewards for involvement depending upon the activity.

14.6. Standard for meetings – What tenants can expect when attending engagement meetings

Meetings play an important part in the delivery of an effective engagement framework, but it is recognised that meetings are not always well attended and continued efforts are required to encourage turnout. It is important that when attending a meeting tenants feel that by attending they will not only be listened to but also there are be visible outcomes.

To be effective, Steve Biko Housing Association will ensure that meetings;

- Have an agenda supplied one week before the meeting
- Adhere to a code of conduct
- Have arrangements for report back outcomes and feedback to attendees
- Hold meetings at venues which are suitable for people with disabilities and are Held at convenient times
- Be chaired and conducted in a fair and democratic way so that everyone gets a chance to have their say
- Have arrangements to support attendees with for example out of pocket expenses, and support for tenants with special requirements e.g. interpreters
- Action points will be communicated when and where appropriate to all interested parties

Steve Biko Housing Association recognise that tenants may see things from a different perspective and not necessarily from the same viewpoint as staff and management. This should be seen as a positive function of scrutiny and staff will endeavour to resolve issues based on evidence and a fair approach rather than opinion or hearsay, having a firm commitment to considering information shared by tenants as part of decision making processes.

15.0 Standard of information

Steve Biko Housing Association aims to provide up-to-date, relevant information at the right time to ensure that tenant engagement is effective.

Information is given for a variety of reasons, to help develop ideas, keep tenants informed about decisions taken, advise people of meetings or to seek views on proposals.

Information is the first level of involvement. We want you to know what is going on, how to obtain further information and how to participate if you are interested.

We will share new publications with tenant focus groups and mail out to tenant armchair readers to ensure information is available that is tenant friendly, free from jargon and complex words, achieve their purpose, well organised and the layout is appropriate, tailored to a tenant audience.

16.0 Monitoring and review of this strategy

This strategy sets the framework for the Action Plan and quality of services offered in relation to engagement with tenants. It enables monitoring and review to ensure continued improvement.

The Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains current, relevant and achievable and continues to meet the broader aims and objectives of Steve Biko Housing Association its tenant and partners.

The Tenant Engagement Strategy will be monitored using the following methods;

- Quarterly review meetings with Tenant Improvement panel -
- Quarterly feedback on Tenant Engagement publicised in Newsletter
- Annual performance reported in the Tenants Annual Report
- An annual social value impact report
- Housing Services satisfaction survey
- TPAS health check assessment against Standards
- Staff Team annual away day review

All information will be used to make sure that the needs, views, opinions, and priorities of tenants are taken into account. Aligned to the achievement of Tenant Engagement Plan is the embedding of an engagement culture throughout Steve Biko Housing Association, whereby engagement is considered a key part of every officer's daily routine. This will ensure we are successful in delivering effective outcomes and enabling more opportunities and choice for tenants to participate in a meaningful way.

Put simply this is an approach where tenants priorities, views and engagement with relevant processes are at the heart of Steve Biko Housing Association that aim to support challenges of performance but also give our tenants the power to challenge and drive change for better quality housing services to customers.

