



'Get Involved' Strategy

(2020 - 2024)

Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council is committed to listening to and working with its tenants and leaseholders, giving them a voice to influence the services and decisions made by the Housing service. By building strong working relationships with our involved Tenants and Leaseholders, we are able to deliver a sustainable service that meets local housing need.

This four-year strategy demonstrates our commitment to genuine partnerships with Tenants and Leaseholders to deliver a great housing service.

For the purposes of this strategy, the term ‘Tenant’ refers to all residents living in Dacorum Borough Council-owned properties or accessing the Council’s housing service. This includes; Tenants, Leaseholders, all family members of Tenants living in the property, homeless applicants and those living in Temporary Accommodation.

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In 2016, we were proud to become the first social landlord in the UK to achieve TPAS ‘Pro Landlord’ status for our approach to tenant engagement.

Over the following four years, we worked hard to increase the range of involvement opportunities and demonstrate to our service users how we listen to them and use their input to set budgets and plan our approach to service delivery.

I am now pleased to introduce our Get Involved Strategy 2020-2024, which builds on our previous achievements with the aim of giving everyone a voice to work towards improving housing services.

Whether you are a tenant, leaseholder, homeless person, housing register applicant or resident of our temporary accommodation, I hope you will read our strategy and take up an opportunity to ‘Get Involved’.

Councillor Margaret Griffiths

Our vision

To deliver a great housing service, our vision is for all our tenants to have the opportunity to engage with us and directly influence the delivery of services to them by the housing service.

We are committed to ensuring that our tenants feel listened to, so that they are empowered to influence decisions and services.

This strategy supports the Council's corporate vision of

'...working in partnership to create a borough that enables Dacorum's communities to thrive and prosper'.

Tenant involvement provides us with the tenant experience of our services and helps us to prioritise what is important to our tenants, ensuring value for money and excellence in services.

Following the publication of the 'New deal for social housing', we are intent on listening to our tenants and ensuring they have a real voice, tackling the stigma of social housing and making our communities safe and clean environments.



National and local considerations

Tenant Engagement and ensuring that tenants and leaseholders have a meaningful voice are high profile issues, being an important focus of ongoing inquiries into the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017. It is also an integral part of national and sector discussions on transparency.

The ongoing debate is complex, taking in everything from the broad principles of resident engagement to detailed questions about how residents should be included in fire safety and decision-making.

Despite this complex picture, there are clear common strands:

Tenant involvement should be central to how homes and tenancies are managed:

The 2018 Dame Judith Hackitt Review called on social landlords to 're assert the role of residents' in a way that sees housing managers working 'in partnership' with residents.

Tenants to have a genuine say in how their homes and services are managed:

Residents' organisations and sector reviews have argued that this will be central to building greater trust. This was a key recommendation of the recent 'Rethinking Social Housing Review', which argued that housing providers must ensure residents have a real voice and 'an opportunity to shape and inform services'. Politicians are acting too, with the Mayor of London introducing resident ballots on estates where regeneration is proposed.

Empower Tenants:

The August 2018 Green Paper: 'A New Deal for Social Housing' called for social housing providers to empower residents by providing a number of ways to ensure residents' voices are heard.



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Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities:

This was highlighted in the August 2018 Housing Green Paper. Shelter responded to the consultation in its November 2018 report, stating that National and local government should take the lead in acknowledging and affirming the positive attributes and value of social housing and challenging the stigmatisation and marginalisation of social housing and its residents.

Digital channel shift:

There is recognition throughout current government and the housing sector that tenant involvement needs to adapt to the rapidly changing ways that tenants access information. Digital channel shift is happening quickly, with previously digitally-excluded groups increasingly accessing services online.

Residents will increasingly expect their housing provider to offer convenient online involvement opportunities during the life of the strategy; we expect to continue to monitor and review current tenant involvement methods, both in line with tenants' needs and feedback and to implement any new legislation or regulatory requirements.

The Local Context

In Dacorum, there are approximately 60,000 properties housing over 154,000 people. Dacorum Borough Council owns and provides a social housing landlord service to more than 10,000 of these properties, as well as being responsible for 1,800 leasehold flats. Demand for housing in the Dacorum area is high and set to remain high. In April 2019, there were approximately 6,000 people on the Active housing register.

To ensure that the housing service is delivering the best services it can across all its areas of operation, tenant involvement is key, and is an integral part of service improvement and evidence-based decision making.



Delivering a great service

Equality and Diversity

As a housing service, we are committed to ensuring all council tenants have the opportunity to 'Get Involved' regardless of; age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation (Equality Act 2010).

We recognise that some people and groups within our tenant population may find it difficult to have their voice heard.

Our involvement opportunities are designed to be inclusive and break down any barriers people may face.

Value for Money

Value for money for our tenants is a central focus for the housing service. We ensure that all engagement activities deliver measurable outcomes and have a positive impact on both our tenants and the services they receive.

We proactively work in partnership with other services in Dacorum to maximise the impact of our engagement activities, and deliver excellent value for money.

We will work with our tenants to involve them in our internal audit process, where they can help us identify more efficient ways of working and improve value for money, which will enable us to maximise the resources we have.

Working in Partnership

Our strong relationships with our partners and many other public sector and voluntary organisations enables us to deliver an excellent level of service whilst maximising resources and avoiding duplication of effort.



The Commitments

To develop this strategy, the Council considered the views of a range of stakeholders, including a tenant-led focus group on barriers to engagement, and their thoughts on involvement.

Through our Tenants' and Leaseholders' Survey, we were able to shape this further by identifying trends within our tenants' satisfaction and experiences of the service.

From this, we have developed four outcome-based commitments:

Commitment 1: All Dacorum Tenants and Leaseholders have the opportunity to '*Get Involved*'.

Commitment 2: Dacorum Borough Council works in partnership to ensure the housing service is shaped by the needs of our tenants.

Commitment 3: Dacorum Borough Council will proactively celebrate and promote the positive attributes and value of our social housing and tenants to challenge any stigma.

Commitment 4: Dacorum Borough Council is accountable to its Tenants and Leaseholders.

These commitments will underpin this strategy and ultimately enable us to deliver our vision of tenants and leaseholder who feel listened to, and empowered to influence decisions and services delivered by the housing service.



The Commitments

Commitment 1: All Dacorum Tenants and Leaseholders have the opportunity to 'Get Involved'

Commitment 1 of 'Get Involved' aims to maximise the opportunities for tenants to have their say and have a real influence over the services and decisions made by the housing service.

Through capturing tenants' thoughts, experiences and expectations, we can ensure our service is tailored to tenants' needs.

To achieve this, we will:

- Creatively use a range of communication and engagement methods, including meetings, focus groups and digital channels to provide opportunities for tenants to have their say.
- Offer a variety of 'Get Involved' activities at varied times and levels of commitment.
- Ensure our 'Get Involved' opportunities are inclusive and allow tenants with specific needs to take part, and promote equality and diversity throughout the housing service.
- Continue to consider barriers to engagement and continually review our 'Get Involved' offer in line with Tenant feedback.
- Provide training opportunities for tenants to enable them to confidently and effectively 'Get Involved'.

Commitment 2: We work in partnership to ensure the housing service is shaped by the needs of our Tenants and Leaseholders

Commitment 2 of 'Get Involved' highlights the importance of knowing our tenants. By understanding their needs, expectations and aspirations, we can tailor our services accordingly.

To achieve this, we will:

- Make the most of all contact with our tenants to ensure we collect and update information that can help us provide better services to them.
- Provide opportunities for tenants to tell us what is important to them and as a service listen to this feedback and use it develop the housing service.
- Find out more about how tenants would like to communicate with us and ensure that we offer a variety of communication methods to ensure that tenants can have their voice heard.
- Work towards a housing service that can not only deliver to tenants' expectations, but also exceed this and deliver an aspirational service.
- Put tenants at the heart of service improvement and the development of improved ways of working and services.

The Commitments

Commitment 3: We will proactively celebrate and promote the positive attributes and value of our Social Housing and Tenants to challenge any stigma

Commitment 3 of *'Get Involved'* shows the importance of celebrating the value and positive attributes of our social housing.

By empowering our tenants to become actively involved in the housing service and promoting the positive impact they have, we will help to dispel myths and tackle the stigma of social housing.

To achieve this, we will:

- Celebrate our diverse tenant population and our thriving communities.
- Promote the positive impact of involved tenants on the housing service
- Involve tenants in estate improvements to ensure our estates are attractive and desirable.
- Provide opportunities for development and empower our tenants through the Tenant Academy.

Commitment 4: We are accountable to our Tenants and Leaseholders

Commitment 4 of *'Get Involved'* acknowledges our tenants' right to understand the decisions we make. It is important to us as a Landlord to give our tenants the best service experience possible.

With our commitment to continuously improving our service, we can use the knowledge, experience and skills of our tenant population to drive the service forward.

To achieve this, we will:

- Be proactive in sharing information about the housing service with our tenants to increase transparency
- Empower our Tenant and Leaseholder Committee to monitor performance and drive service improvement.
- Learn from our mistakes, identifying areas for service improvement by monitoring complaints data.
- Put tenants at the centre of service improvement by involving them in the internal audit process.
- Engage our tenants through a range of communication channels, to enable them to have their say about our services.

Conclusion

Within the *'Get Involved'* Strategy, Dacorum Borough Council commits to giving all its tenants a voice and listening to it. We pledge to put tenant involvement at the centre of how we deliver an excellent and aspirational housing service that provides value for money.

Using a range of activities, we aim to create a diverse involved tenant community who will help us to develop a better understanding of our tenants' needs, expectations and aspirations. This in turn will influence and shape the services provided by the housing service.

We are committed to ensuring that the range of involvement opportunities is inclusive and rewarding, providing a positive experience for both the involved tenant and the organisation. We will continue to actively identify and break down barriers that might prevent people becoming involved.

Finally, by embedding tenant involvement within the internal service improvement and audit programme, we will ensure that Dacorum Borough Council's housing service is accountable to our tenants and leaseholders.

This strategy will be monitored by the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee and Supported Housing Forum. The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive an annual update.

