



# Resident Influence Policy

Updated: April 2024

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## Vision Aims:

*“To create a Service Model where our Coop Ethos allows residents to influence outcomes and take part in our decision-making processes”.*

## Background

Following high profile examples of landlords failing to listen to residents in social housing, the Regulator (RSH) has introduced a new set of consumer standards in 2024 all of which registered housing providers are required to meet.

As part of the standards, Coop Homes will be expected to be able to point to examples of residents directly influencing outcomes.

In the past we have had a resident panel (made up of Coops and our own residents) which came together to discuss various services and feed in their thoughts. This group has however not been operating since Covid and its impact was limited as it acted outside of any formal approach to end-to-end service improvement. There were also localised opportunities for residents to get involved in estate and property improvement works, but again this has fallen away over time.

By providing contracted Housing Services for our Housing Co-Ops and working closely with the management committees and their residents, we understand the benefits and the drawbacks of Co-ops being fully tenant led. Our aim is to take some of this learning to expand our ‘co-op ethos’ into resident influence in line with our vision and strategy. In doing so we hope that this will provide more autonomy and agency for residents.

## Where we are now:

Our residents don't currently have mechanisms they can use to influence how their services are delivered meaning that we are unlikely to be meeting all their needs. Currently not meet the proposed Consumer Standards around transparency, influence and Accountability.

## Where we want to be:

Our ambition is to give our own CHS residents meaningful opportunities to have a democratic influence in the way our decisions are reached and a say in decision making regarding how and where localised improvement budgets can be spent.

We want to undertake a detailed user research programme with our CHS residents that identifies user needs that we can form our service around, ensuring that our services are designed end to end and that our residents' needs are being fully met.

CHS want to be in a position where our plan fully meets and covers the Consumer Standards, specifically around the areas for transparency, accountability, and influence.

## Key principles

We have developed our Plan to ensure that it goes beyond the scope of more traditional Resident Engagement methods. It will directly influence our operating model whilst delegating decisions and localised budgets to residents.

Our processes will provide better transparency on our performance.

The principles of this approach are split into 3 key areas which are expanded on below:

1. **Influence through direction** - residents will have a say on where we focus our efforts to make improvements.
2. **Influence through delegation** - We will give residents voting rights which will allow them to vote for or against a range of proposals and policies.
3. **Influence through local control** - Local information and budgets will be subjected to local resident scrutiny regarding how they are spent in their own neighbourhood.

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## Influence through direction

- ▶ Our Services will be designed around the needs of residents derived from a user research programme where we will interview residents to gain insight into their needs.
- ▶ We will have a resident panel who receive the outcomes of all user research and this evidence base will be used by the panel to make decisions on which areas of improvement to focus on.
- ▶ When looking at a specific service improvement, we will form a small temporary group of residents or 'squad' to help us identify and test solutions. The squad will be disbanded once we have completed our user research and testing.
- ▶ We will share the decisions and outcomes from this programme with our resident panel and our wider resident base. We will present data to show what insights we have gained; the user needs we have identified and how we will design our service around these elements.
- ▶ Services will be designed end to end and bring together/align staff user needs in addition to those of our residents.
- ▶ The design of our services derived from user needs will influence aspects of our operating model (our culture / staff structures, our roles / technology).

In basing improvement on user research, we hope to overcome traditional problems of attracting the same group of residents to participate and the under representation of other specific customer groups as it is easier to engage representative customers in an hour-long user research interview.

The result of this intensive way of listening to customers is that over time the organisation becomes shaped around understanding and responding to what residents need.

## Influence through Delegation

CHS want to deploy a democratic voting system where we will ask our residents to vote on selected proposals that affect them.

Decisions put to a vote will be carefully considered and Board approval will be sought beforehand where we are asking for them to delegate a Board or Executive decision (this may include some policies). Other operational issues can be dealt with directly outside of this.

Each vote given to a resident will be a non-binding referendum vote. Each resident (named on the tenancy agreement) will be given 1 vote on each event to select their preferred option.

Any residents voting against a policy/proposal would have the opportunity to comment and give reasons as to why they feel it is not suitable or what changes they would like to see. This feedback would be considered and implemented so that adjustments to the proposal could be made. Votes would be counted and ended within a set time frame, the option with the most votes will be chosen and presented to the board with the board given the final say where this is a delegated Board decision.

Voting rights would be defined and fully explained, our temporary resident group will be used as a testing ground with the system being piloted and refined over time based on their feedback.

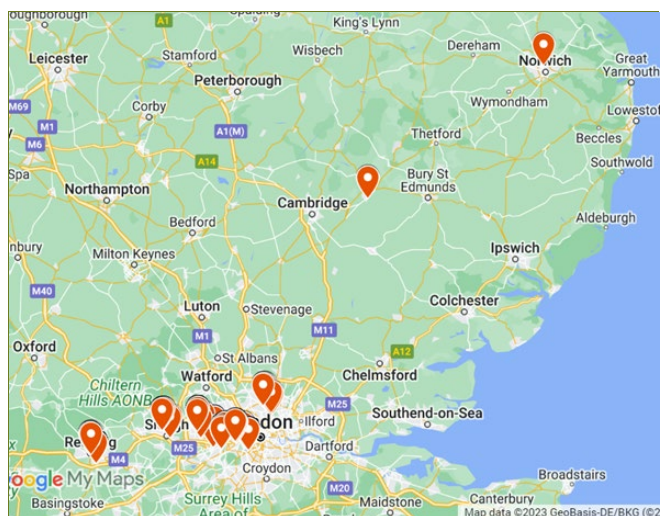
This approach would create a democratic process whereby each of our CHS residents can influence and take part in our decision making, our residents voice would be heard.

## Influence through local control

One of the main areas of influence required in the consumer standards is around how money is spent on stock investment both internally and externally.

Decisions centrally would be driven by stock condition information and decent homes plus any other government policy or legal and regulatory requirements.

Once budgets are agreed and allocated outcomes can have far greater influence at a local level.



The scattered distribution of our stock makes it challenging to have a regional or overarching scheme.

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To counter this we are proposing that we follow the pattern of our cyclical works scheme and target specific streets/areas of our own stock. We will use 3 tiered levels of consultation based on the budget allocated for the specific works as follows:

- ▶ Communal Cyclical works: for example, decorations or upgrading communal areas: residents to be given a choice of colours or cosmetic features.
- ▶ Communal Upgrade works: for example, landscaping, residents contacted and asked for views, results and decisions shared.
- ▶ Stock investment (planned works): For example, energy improvement works, Resident consultation and/or options workshop. We will publish the full results with decisions and reasons.

We will present options and choices with costings that can be worked through with residents in these localities so that they can see the trade-offs whilst working within budget limitations and regulatory and statutory requirements.

This budget allocation would not interfere with the Board's stock investment decision making. The Board will sign off investment decisions arising from stock condition surveys and the allocation of resources. Meeting all regulatory and statutory requirements would automatically take precedence within any consultation activity.

## Transparency

In addition to a commitment to properly consult, we will also trial making scheme-based information available to residents. Where we can break down information, whilst ensuring it is kept anonymous in line with GDPR we will look to let residents know about the work we are doing on their scheme in relation to areas like ASB, arrears and lettings. This will help residents see how management time is being spent and the impact of behaviours on costs.

We will test the levels of engagement with this type of information to see if it increases levels of involvement and drives the desire for more local control.

## Other considerations

### Tenancy satisfaction Measures

Our plan will feed directly into the TSM's scores, specifically around "Respectful and helpful engagement". Our scores for the current financial year were:

- ▶ TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them. Our score was 51% which is in the lower/median quartile.
- ▶ TP07: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them. Our score was 65% which is in the medium quartile

TP08: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect. Our score was 73% which is in the upper quartile. Our expectations are that the plan lifts our results for TP06 further into the median quartile of results which would equate to a 5% increase from our current position.

## Shareholders

Unlike many organisations, all our clients (coops) are also shareholders and are invited to the AGM where they can approve the accounts, appoint auditors and raise concerns.

## Measure and Evaluate

We will measure Resident influence successes in the following ways:

- ▶ Increase in CHS's 2023 TSM (Tenant Satisfaction Measure) scores for 2025 related to resident engagement (our current score was 51%).
- ▶ Recorded and publicised outcomes from resident voting decisions.
- ▶ Outcomes and stories feedback to the board through the completion of localised maintenance programmes where residents have had a say - feeding back our resident choices and voice.
- ▶ Outcomes and stories from our 3 main principles will be fed back through to the board.
- ▶ Increase in voting participation over the first 12 months of launch.