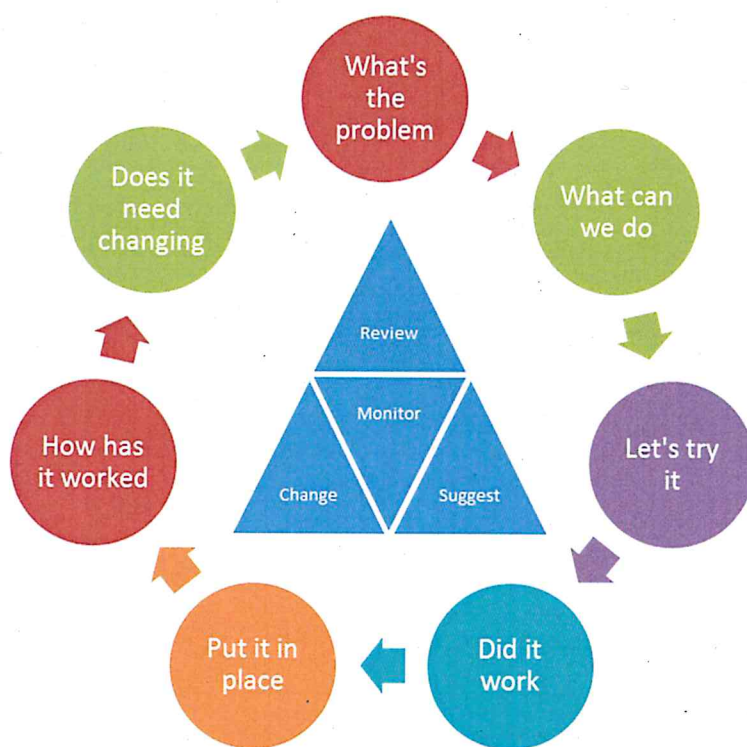




SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Tenant Involvement Strategy 2019 to 2024



"Tenants have a crucial role to play in shaping the way housing services are delivered and identifying where we can improve"
(Harry Rai – Assistant Director for Housing)

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"What matters is not only listening to the tenants, it's also about taking action on what matters to tenants, it's about communicating in a sensible way to tenants and being honest with them if things can't be done right away"

(Resident at London Assembly Report 'Hearing resident voices in social housing 2018)

In this strategy we refer to tenants as including the tenant and family members of their household who normally live with them in one of our social housing properties such as partner, daughter/son etc. It does not include lodgers or those who visit or stay on a short term basis.

We use the term residents to define those living within a neighbourhood regardless of their housing tenure. This includes council tenants, home owners, private tenants, housing association tenants and others.

Foreword

"We have lots of ways to measure our progress, but the most important one is what you think"

(Cllr Matthew Lee – Leader of South Kesteven District Council)

Social landlords recognise that understanding and knowing what their tenants think is good for business, allowing them to target their resources at those services and actions their tenants want and expect.

This strategy sets out how South Kesteven District Council will enable its tenants to monitor the housing service's performance, and identify and influence areas of improvement and change, through informed participation at the level of influence they choose.

Regulatory Framework

Since April 2012, and further revised in 2017, the regulation of social housing has been the responsibility of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Central to this are four 'Consumer Standards' that apply to all social landlords and list the minimal requirements when involving tenants. A further three 'Economic Standards' also apply to other registered providers of social housing.

The four consumer standards are:

STANDARD	THEMES
Standard One Tenant involvement and Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer service, choice and complaints• Involvement and empowerment• Understanding and responding to diverse needs of tenants
Standard Two Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of accommodation• Repairs and maintenance
Standard Three Tenancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allocations• Rents• Tenure
Standard Four Neighbourhood and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neighbourhood management• Local area co-operation• Anti-social behaviour

The standards were introduced to encourage a minimal level of engagement across all social landlords. Under the Localism Act 2011, the HCA was given regulatory powers which enables it to intervene if it finds these standards are not being met leading to a 'serious detrimental effect' on tenants.

Introduction

South Kesteven District Council is committed to providing opportunities for its tenants to be involved in all areas from developing policies and procedures, and monitoring and scrutinising the services we provide and you receive from us as a social housing provider.

This strategy sets out how we will provide the opportunities and support for tenants to influence the policies, procedures, decisions and performance of SKDC as their landlord. We will provide additional support and training to enable tenants to scrutinise and challenge us regarding our performance and delivery of services.

Underlying this is the recognition that tenants have the experience and knowledge of being a customer of the services we provide, and the aspirations and needs of a customer regarding the service they would like to receive. Their perception of the service and views on their experience of the service we provide will help us find ways to resolve issues and improve the service to meet and exceed their expectations.

This strategy also adheres to the statutory rights of tenants

- To be consulted on changes in how we manage their homes that will have a significant effect on them.
- To have information on the terms of tenancy, repair obligations of the landlord and key policies that relate to the housing management service.

What do we mean by involvement?

Good involvement occurs when tenants work in partnership with their landlord to challenge and influence the service they receive and provide.

We acknowledge that a tenant may not have the same choice of the service they receive as other service users/customers may, but we can give you the opportunity to influence the standard of service you do receive.

Underpinning this process is a culture of openness and transparency in the exchange of information and views, which represents the wider tenant population's expectation and aspirations.

“We will develop strong and vibrant communities through
partnership working and tenant engagement”

(Cllr Barry Dobson- Cabinet Member for Housing)

Effective involvement brings benefits to both tenant and landlord such as:

- Increasing the levels of satisfaction of tenants with their homes and neighbourhood
- Targeting resources to where they are most needed ensuring greater value for money
- Empowering tenants (and residents) to influence the decisions that affect their community and neighbourhood.
- Creating a culture of continuous improvement through challenge, change and monitoring.
- Developing closer understanding and awareness of tenant and landlord expectations and aspirations

However, involvement on its own will not bring about improvement or change, it requires the will and ability to accept compromise in order to achieve a consensus through which change can occur.

The key principles behind this approach

Involvement will adhere to five key principles to ensure it takes place in a consistent and transparent manner.

- First Principle:** Involvement will lead to real service improvement and be embedded within the housing and related services, based on mutual accountability and responsibility.
- Second Principle:** Involvement will not be fixed in how it is achieved. A range of opportunities will be provided to enable all tenants to choose how they wish to be involved and the issues they wish to be involved in.
- Third Principle:** Involvement will work through robust two way communication ensuring tenants have the information and knowledge they need to be able to have meaningful and informed involvement.
- Fourth Principle:** Involvement will have clear outcomes based on evidence and tenant input through which tenants can see how their involvement has led to change, how this was decided and what difference it has made.
- Fifth Principle:** Involvement will be inclusive and all needs will be recognised and barriers removed or addressed to ensure no tenant is unable to be involved. We will use customer insight to ensure involvement represents the wider tenant population, towards the development of an inclusive and adaptable housing management service.

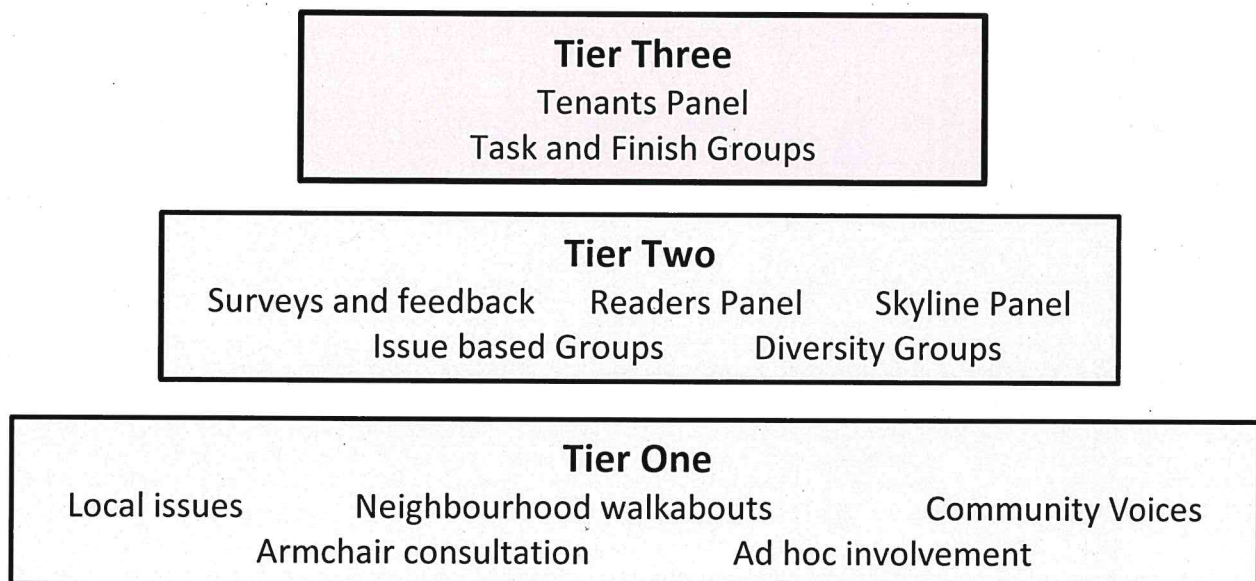
The Framework for Involvement

We know from the tenant consultation we carried out in 2017 that many tenants do not want to have to attend meetings or have long term fixed involvement, but would be willing to have informal and ad hoc involvement.

We also know that many tenants just want to be kept informed, but will get involved if there is an issue that affects them or is of particular interest to them.

To meet these needs we have devised a three tier framework that allows for involvement at different levels, to enable flexible participation.

These allow involvement at the level of choice, with each tier requiring different levels of commitment, but all feeding into the decision making process. There are also opportunities to move between levels or focus on a specific area of interest, such as repairs or sheltered housing.

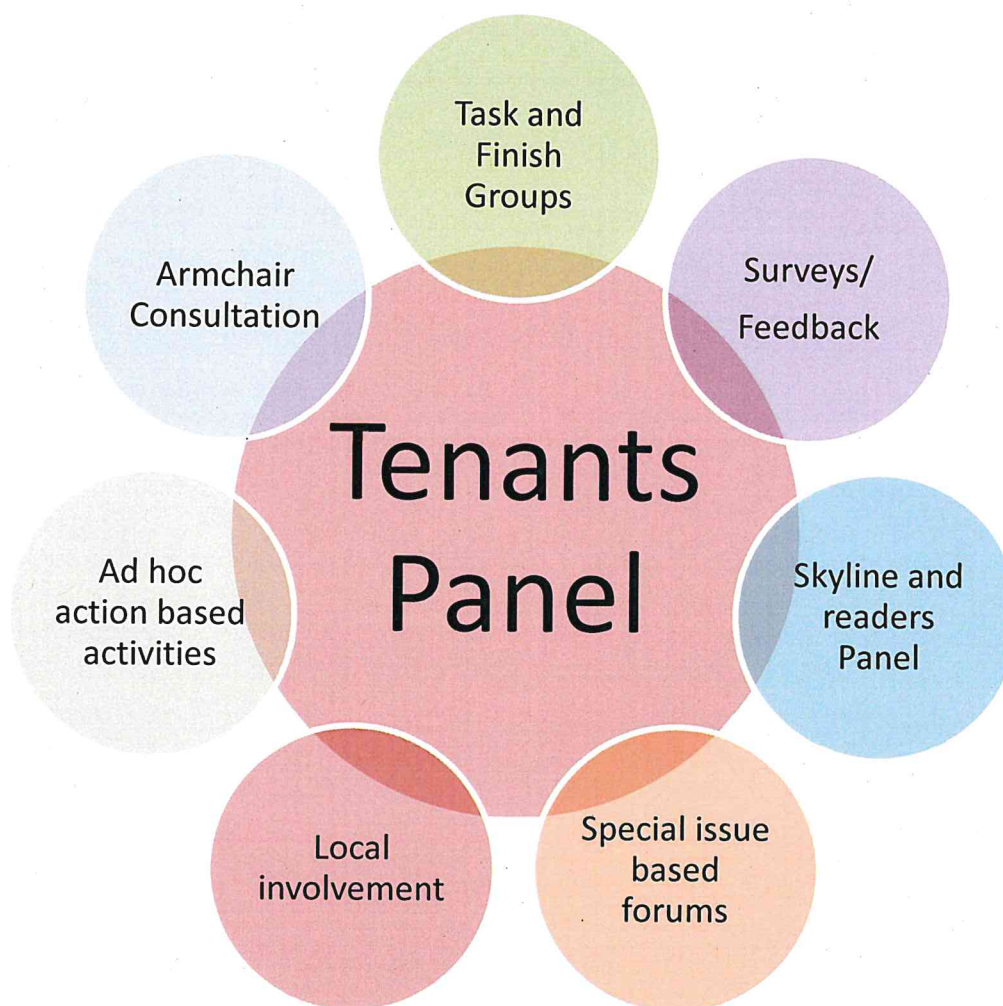


Tier Three is the highest level of commitment and is based on a tenant's panel. The panel will look at the service from a strategic approach and be able to carry out more detailed work through task and finish groups. Involvement at this level is formal and subject to selection as the panel will have a membership of a maximum of 20 tenants.

Tier Two is more informal and allows for a range of involvement from completing surveys to attending meetings based around specific issues. Some of this work can be done from home, on line or through face to face meetings.

Tier One is based around neighbourhood level involvement, identifying and resolving issues at the neighbourhood level. This level is about working in partnership with the community and other agencies to resolve local issues that effect the neighbourhood in which you live.

All three tiers work together to support the panel in its strategic role as seen below.



Wider Community involvement

We acknowledge our tenants no longer live exclusively on 'council estates', but within communities alongside residents who are effected by community wide issues as well. We want to encourage the whole community to work together to resolve issues that occur in their neighbourhood, regardless of housing status. Working alongside our Housing Officers, we will adopt a partnership approach that brings residents, interested agencies and partners such as the police, county council and others together to resolve community wide issues such as parking, anti social behaviour, that effects everyone and not just council tenants.

To do this we will arrange neighbourhood meetings when such issues arise to work together to come up with a solution that benefits all. We will also encourage all residents to join us on neighbourhood walks, looking for fly tipping, vandalism and issues that spoil where they live. If we are carrying out major works in the neighbourhood we will talk to residents about any disruption this may cause.

Inclusive and meaningful Involvement

We are committed to ensuring everyone can be involved at some level and that involvement is meaningful and leads to change. To ensure this we will ensure the following core principles will be followed in all involvement activities.

- All participants will be encouraged and supported to express their views clearly and to listen to others.
- All activities will have an outcome in mind so there is a purpose to involvement.
- Information will be timely, up to date, and easy to read.
- All opportunities will make it clear how much time and commitment will be required.
- All activities will be planned to enable those involved to understand their commitment and to avoid or minimise clashes and excessive meetings.
- Feedback will be given on actions and meetings in a timely manner to those involved.
- Support will be provided where required to overcome barriers and enable involvement to be effective and meaningful.
- Transport to and from meetings and events will not be a barrier, we will arrange transport or refund any approved transport costs.

How we will keep you informed

Good communication is essential for involvement to be effective, both in ensuring tenants have the information they need to be involved and that they receive feedback on what has happened because of their involvement. We will ensure tenants are kept informed by the following methods:

Annual Report

We will produce an annual report and distribute it via Skyline to all our tenants. This will tell you what we have done, how it was done, and how involvement has made a difference to how we do things.

Skyline

This is the tenants' newsletter, published twice a year and sent to all our tenants. The editorial panel will ensure tenants have more involvement in this.

Tenants Handbook

Our tenants' handbook contains all the information our tenants need regarding their

homes. Any changes will be carried out in partnership with tenants.

Website

A dedicated page will be developed on the council's website where information, all minutes and feedback from involvement activities can be posted. We will also look at how social media can help keep tenants informed and involved.

Documents, leaflets and reports

All documents, reports and other publications will use 'Plain English' and be approved by the new editorial panel. All publications can be made available in other formats as required by individual tenants to ensure everyone has access to the same information.

In person

Officers will attend meetings and other events by invitation or request to provide information, address issues that arise or to give feedback on actions.

Letters

We will write to tenants individually where required on issues and actions that affect them or in response to queries or comments they have made.

Conferences, fun days and other activities

Ad hoc events and activities will be used to ensure tenants who do not choose to be formally involved have the opportunity to take part in activities where they can meet officers and tenants.

How we will support your involvement

Tenants wishing to be involved will be supported in a variety of ways to ensure no individual tenant is unable to be involved because of barriers we can identify and address.

This support includes:

Funding

Involvement will be sufficiently funded to ensure it can provide appropriate support to tenants wishing to be involved.

Expenses

Travel expenses and other approved expenses will be paid, ensuring no tenant is out of pocket by being involved. This can include childcare and carer costs where approved, mileage costs or arranging transport and providing administrative and other support as required.

Training

A programme of training will be developed each year to ensure tenants have the capacity to be involved. This will also include arranging training with external providers for tenants to attend.

Staff

Involvement will be the role of every housing officer, supported by the Service Improvement Officer who will ensure the support is available to enable tenants and staff to work together.

All officers will be encouraged to promote and support involvement and work with tenants to ensure involvement is effective and benefits are promoted.

Standards for meetings and activities

All meetings and activities will be arranged and managed in accordance with a code of conduct developed in partnership with involved tenants.

This includes how we will inform you of the meeting or activity and how we conduct this. All activities will have clear objectives and feedback will be given to those attending on what was achieved.

Overcoming barriers to involvement

We will ensure no tenant is unable to be involved through barriers that can be removed. The key barriers that prevent tenants being involved are:

- Time of activities – we will arrange activities to suit the majority of those who wish to be involved. This may mean holding evening meetings or weekend activities, or holding meetings at different times.
- Family commitments – we will provide support for those wishing to be involved who have child or care commitments by paying a contribution towards care costs, or where possible or appropriate, accessing crèche facilities.
- Transport – we will pay mileage allowance or arrange transport for tenants who need to attend meetings or events.

- Access to venues – we only use venues for meetings and activities that are fully accessible and adapted to accommodate tenant needs.
- Support needed – we will provide tailored support as required or identified. This may include documents in large print, translation services etc.
- Other – we will look at how we can reduce or remove any other barriers that prevent tenants from being involved or will look at other ways in which tenants may be involved.

What are the benefits to being involved?

Whatever the preferred level of involvement, all our involved tenants will be offered opportunities to attend training and development workshops to ensure they have the skills and information to be effective.

Many of these skills will be transferable to other activities tenants participate in outside of tenant involvement. These will include working with others, presentation skills and understanding information in various formats.

The experience gained from being involved may also help in gaining or improving employment opportunities. A number of tenants previously involved have gone onto employment or college as a result of their experience.

Involvement will also develop your confidence and awareness of the needs of others, and the wider community in which our tenants live. This has a positive impact on neighbourhoods and communities, creating safer and cleaner environments.

Tenants' feedback and recommendations will help us to develop our housing management service to meet the needs and expectations of our tenants today and our future tenants.

A service tailored to meet the needs of our tenants is also one that provides the best value for money, ensuring our resources are used to provide the service we know our tenants want. Involvement will provide the information and awareness that helps us to achieve this, and that we continue to adapt our service as these expectations change.

How we will monitor the effect your involvement has

We believe it is important that tenants who choose to be involved are able to see the impact they have had on how we manage their homes. It is also important that we demonstrate that involvement is effective and able to change to reflect new priorities. We will monitor the effectiveness of involvement by the following:

Impact Assessments We will carry out an impact assessment on how we involve tenants once a year to show how effective this has been. All activities will be subject to ongoing monitoring to ensure involvement remains effective.

Annual Report We will tell our tenants how the housing management service has changed over a year as measured against tenants' expectations and aspirations.

Performance monitoring We will monitor key performance against targets set on a regular basis to identify and challenge areas for improvement.

Performance reporting We will report key performance information in the tenants' newsletter Skyline to all tenants to show how we are doing.

Satisfaction Surveys We will monitor the satisfaction levels of our tenants with our work and look at why these vary and explain how we will address such variations.

'Local Offers' We will develop a 'Local Offer' setting out the standards, based on the priorities our tenants have told us are important to them in our key services.

Future of Resident Involvement

Resident Involvement is always changing and it is important we are able to adapt to these changes. To enable this, we have adopted a flexible structure that we can review and build on to ensure meaningful involvement and outcomes as required.

South Kesteven District Council

Council Offices

St. Peter's Hill

Grantham

Lincolnshire

NG31 6PZ

www.southkesteven.gov.uk