TENANT ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS

tpas

Appendix E

South Holland District Council

Tenant engagement and influence.

Executive summary

November 2024

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1 Introduction

1.1 This summary report will demonstrate how SHDC can improve tenant influence in service design and delivery and the importance of tenant influence in this work. Tpas recognises that there is a strong commitment to improve SHDC's tenants' experiences and to improve the way services are delivered.

This report will highlight the evidence gathered in our work exploring current processes and service delivery, and show the correlation between tenants' perceptions, customer service experience and tenant influence or engagement.

2 Context

2.1 Tpas was commissioned by SHDC to work with staff and tenants to develop a way of ensuring that tenants influence service design and delivery within the landlord services as SHDC recognised this needed to be strengthened.

2.2 This project was delivered in between August and November 2024 and aimed to influence:

- Any strategic business plans that impact tenants' services
- The overall tenant experiences

Consideration was also given to the external influences such as the social housing regulatory expectations and requirements

2.3 The proposed new framework will underpin and support SHDC in responding to the challenges and requirements of the Social Housing White Paper (The Charter for Social Housing Residents) and current housing regulations as set out in the Social Housing Regulation Act (2024)

It will also support meeting the requirements of the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard (one of the Consumer Standards of the social housing regulatory framework).

The framework explicitly emphasises the value in listening and noticing what tenants say and do – including the non-vocalised or silent voice - in designing, delivering and measuring services.

3 Re-engineering Engagement and rationale for approach

3.1 The methodology for this project was based on some of the key principles of Appreciative Inquiry[1](AI). It enables:

- An evidence-based approach
- Motivation through its strengths-based focus
- Equality of contribution through use of co-creation techniques
- Options for checking back with participant

3.2 Engagement involves feelings and relationships, and AI is uniquely suited to address engagement challenges where more effective long-term outcomes can be created.

From the onset, we were clear that there needed to be an understanding of SHDC's tenants and staff "lived experience", strengths and aspirations. For this project we agreed to undertake a survey In order to capture and feed this into the project (469 respondents). 400 responses are a

[1] https://positivepsychology.com/appreciative-inquiry/

widely accepted standard in market research methodologies[2] to ensure a robust confidence level in the findings. In this way, we could begin to get an understanding of tenants' current thoughts and feelings, capture their lived experiences, and 'discover' the key ingredients for effective influence. We then built upon the survey insights with further 'qualitative' sessions in small groups, with tenants and staff. We were able to capture detailed narratives and SHDC tenants' personal experiences. In this way we could see what was meaningful to staff and tenants which is integral to AI's focus on strength, successes and co-creation elements.

4 Summary of outputs and outcomes

4.1 The following took place:

- Qualitative 'discovery' sessions with tenants and staff

The sessions identified personal experiences of tenants and staff drawing out examples of when it was clear that tenants had influenced services

4.2 Insight gathered from these key stakeholders identified some overarching issues that were distractions from enabling influence to happen:

4.3
- Lack of accountability and perception of apathy when tenants contact SHDC
- Dissatisfaction with repairs service
- Communicating with tenants – this includes taking ownership of tenants' queries, communicating effectively, and managing expectations
- Perception of stigma to tenants by staff in their behaviours
- Process and procedures not clear for tenants and staff
- Perception of silo working

4.4 Sessions identified the behaviours needed to create more opportunities for tenant influence and identified the factors that if delivered, could produce successful tenant influence. There was a consistent theme around Communication which was linked to Culture, Trust, Accountability/Consistency and Process when explored in further detail.

4.5 This was developed and considered via qualitative discussions with a small group, and utilising Tpas' knowledge of best practice in the sector, to provide direction for SHDC's future resident influence framework. However, wider resident input is recommended through 'delivery' phase, by testing the recommendations with all who took part in the project from 'discovery and design', communications to all residents about the recommendations and direct engagement directly with those involved in the project (and wider consultation as appropriate) in the implementation 'delivery' phase'.

5 Recommendations

5.1 The design team reviewed and approved the following recommendations.

5.2 **Develop an ownership and accountability framework to ensure that trust and respect is embedded within all areas of landlord services and the wider council**

[2] ESOMAR, Global Market Research Report, 2021

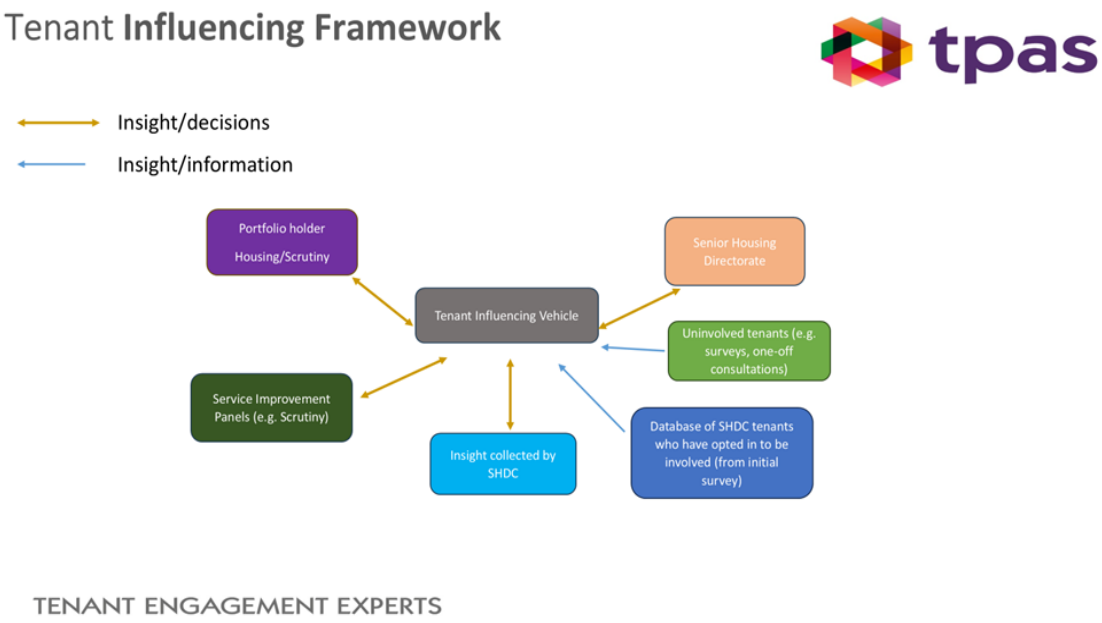
1.	Ensure that a positive tenant experience of a SHDC housing service is embedded in all service delivery and is captured in staff development and appraisals
2.	Produce clear and consistent communications using a range of channels that are aimed at tenants and staff, explaining landlord services plans and how tenants may influence them.
3.	Review current systems that capture data/insight to allow for improved communication to tenants and other staff; and to avoid tenants making repeated contact about the same issue.
4.	In all direct requests for service ensure a culture of: • Explaining to the tenant what will happen • Providing a timescale (and further updates if needed) • Closing the loop and reviewing the customer experience ('how was it for you?')
5.	In developing tenant processes and strategies, ensure that tenants are included. This will drive greater understanding and respect between staff and tenants– for e.g., service improvement groups, joint task and finish groups
6.	All outcomes from tenant influence should be consistently communicated to staff using appropriate communication channels.
Create a consistent approach to feeding back to tenants and the wider organisation the outcomes from tenant influence.	
7.	Embed strong two-way communication: • Review the website and other communication tools currently used to ensure that all the available routes for involvement and tenant influence are publicised widely • Ensure tenant influence is tracked and measured in all activities and results are included in reports to formal structures, and wider tenants. This should be a continuous process
8.	Carry out a review of systems for ensuring the customer journey is logged, tracked and acted on, are fit for purpose and identify improvements. Ensure tenants understand who is responsible for each part of the journey and what to do if there is a delay in the journey to ensure the customer experience does not suffer. Systems should ensure: • Tenants and staff are clear about timescales for response to interactions • Written communication is clear and consistent • Tenants' views/reactions are captured at every touchpoint • Individual and collective performance is tracked and analysed to support service improvement

9.	Utilise existing resources (or engage a partner) to review the effectiveness of the NEC system to build the knowledge, understanding, skills and capability around effective Customer Journey Mapping.
10.	A process should be put in place for leaders to consistently review the outputs from tenant influencing opportunities.
11.	Plan and deliver staff and tenant listening events to earn trust and confidence and develop behaviours that promote partnership. Some examples are Zoom/Facebook/YouTube lives, pop-up events. Monitoring the impact of these events is important to ensure they are effective and delivering tangible benefits.
12.	Tenants should feel like they are being listened to. Staff should be able to say in what ways tenants have 'influenced' .
13.	Review of the current Customer Service Centre processes. This could include setting out a robust customer journey mapping process and potentially creating internal consultancy service to provide support, advice and resources to staff, tenants and leaders. This would be a good source for insight relating to landlord services to support more proactive and customer focused responses.
Create a Tenant Influencing Strategy with a supporting plan to help demonstrate how tenants' experiences will be noticed and how their influence impact on the organisation.	
14.	Develop processes to ensure tenant influence is a key part of service design and delivery, building enough activities and time into processes to allow for customer experience of services. For e.g., customer journey mapping for reporting a repair, complaints handling).
15.	Ensure sufficient resources are in place to deliver the expectations of the Tenant Influencing Strategy. Consider: **Finance (funding), Time, staff development, Processes / equipment, Staff & Volunteers**
16.	The Tpas resident engagement pyramid provides a useful starting point in creating and determining levels of how to assess all 'levels' of involvement to ensure they are delivering on their intended outcomes.
17.	Ensure tenant influence is tracked and measured in all activities that impact tenants. Provide details in reports to formal structures (i.e. council scrutiny, council members), senior management, and wider tenants. This should be a continuous process.
18.	Work with tenants and staff that took part in this project to create and embed new influencing opportunities for tenants.
19.	Develop an annually reviewed Tenant Influence Action Plan, to be overseen by the Tenant Influence Vehicle and supported by the Resident Influence Working Group.

20.	The Tenant Influence Action Plan should contain clear actions and SMART targets relating to Tenant Influence, with owners of action plan items accountable to the Tenant Influence Vehicle.
21.	Progress on the Tenant Influence Action Plan should always be clearly communicated to tenants, staff and leaders.
22.	Where tenants' voices are unheard/silent, ensure methods are used consistently to capture and report on their experience (for e.g. the current Reading Pen pilot and analyse the impact). This would need to include tenants who have high support needs, at risk of isolation and under-represented. Accurate data and insight of current "silent voices" will be needed prior to any activity.
23.	Consider using landlord services staff 'one to ones/appraisals as a tool to embed the right behaviours that need to be demonstrated for tenants' experience to be a success.
Consider creating a Tenant Influencing Vehicle (TIV) with links into the Governance arrangements within the current housing services structure (see slide 54)	
24.	The Tenant Influencing Vehicle should not be a consultative body but should be embedded into the Governance Structure with direct links to elected Members and senior management to ensure its role in influencing is visible and respected. The TIV should also have oversight of scrutiny and commission scrutiny when there is a need.
25.	Create a Terms of Reference that outlines the remit for gathering formal, informal and 'noticed' tenant insight. It should also state how it will monitor and review any Tenant Influencing plans and hold SHDC Landlord services to account.
26.	Membership should be primarily tenants.
27.	Appointments to the Panel should be made by a skills and expertise-based recruitment process, open to all tenants. Some of the skills needed might include effective challenging, analysing and interpreting data, understanding tenant influence.
28.	Training and support should be provided to ensure it is effective at detecting and implementing influencing opportunities and able to proactively gather and act on insight from formal channels, other mechanisms and the wider resident base to help it provide more evidenced-based challenge.
29.	Utilise behavioural science techniques (see The Engagement Maximiser by Tpas) and develop an engaging communication and recruitment campaign to encourage tenants to be a part of this opportunity.
30.	Set up a Tenant Influence Working Group (TIWG) to support the TIV. This could evolve from those who took part in this project (including responding to survey). Tpas recommends that staff should be empowered to drive key actions on behalf of the TIV as well as provide robust challenge when needed, to ensure the TIV operates as intended.

	Considerations may be needed to determine whether the TIWG is timebound and in place in the initial set-up and implementation phase.
31.	Ensure the TIV members are confident and feel they are making a difference with overt support from senior leaders, council members through to operational teams.

6. The diagram below shows an example of the sources of tenants' experiences and the routes taken to be certain that influence happens.



7. Conclusion

7.1 The recommendations from this project will assist SHDC Landlord Services in developing a framework, strategy and underpinning processes to ensure effective resident influence. The additional insight of tenants' experiences shared throughout the project should be used to prioritise the areas of service development and improvement on key processes and service delivery procedures, as well as reviewing those areas which might be driving inconsistencies. These recommendations will support a sustainable engagement framework where tenants' experience and influence are aligned to truly influence service design and delivery. Implementing the recommendations in this report will leave SHDC in a stronger position to meet the needs of tenants and be in a better position for the emerging regulatory regime.