

**Twynham Housing Association
Resident Involvement Impact Assessment 2008/9**

1. Scope of this report

Twynham is committed to involving our residents in the development and delivery of services and to engaging with the communities in which we own and manage properties.

Each year we review the projects and initiatives our residents' have been involved in to assess the impact of these activities and then publish our findings to:

- demonstrate the value their input has had to our residents and staff
- illustrate the benefits of partnership working and how we are seeking to continuously improve how we develop and deliver services to our partners and stakeholders
- evidence compliance to our regulator the Tenants Services Authority

The next section of this report, section 2 gives the background to the focus of resident involvement during 2008/09.

Section 3 gives information on how resident involvement has impacted on performance.

Sections 4 gives a brief description of each new initiative with inputs, outputs/impact and cost centres.

Section 5 gives an overview of ongoing initiatives throughout the year.

Section 6 covers costs and comparison with benchmarking peers through Housemark.

Finally section 7 concludes and summarises the overall impact of resident involvement activities in 2008/09 and considers the future of our approach to resident involvement.

2. Background

In February 2008 we were inspected by the Audit Commission. They told us:

“clear and effective communications and consultation structures in place, which have been developed with input from residents. This ranges from email lists, residents groups, and community and service surveys. This allows tenants to choose their level of commitment according to their personal circumstances”, but that

“overall meaningful customer involvement that has significant influence on the future direction of the organisation and the way it delivers services is underdeveloped” and that although Twynham *“invests considerable time and resources in resident involvement but the outcomes from this activity are limited. This limits the extent to which residents can influence the direction of the organisation”*.

In the conclusion of our 2007/08 Impact assessment we said:

“We will carry out a complete review of our approach to how we involve our residents in the decisions we make and what we do. We will be asking residents to get involved in helping to build our new approach through a series of consultation events. We will also be visiting other organisations who are delivering a 3 star resident involvement service to learn from best practice within the sector as well as working closely with the rest of the Group to agree a three star service standard and on joint resident involvement initiatives.”

In view of the above, whilst we continued with our established methods of involvement, the main focus of resident involvement for 2008/09 was to carry out a full review of current initiatives, good practice in the sector and how and when our residents want to be involved. A demographic profiling officer was employed on a fixed term contract with the aim of getting demographic information on 90% of our residents in order to ensure that no groups of residents were being excluded from participating if they want to.

Also during 2008/09 Sovereign Group embarked on the ‘Orion Project’ an initiative to set 3 star service standards across all subsidiaries, aiming to ensure that these standards are influenced by input that residents have had throughout the year.

The change to the Tenant Services Authority as the new sector regulator took place in December 2008 and the 'National Conversation' began. It was the responsibility of individual organisations to make sure that all residents had the opportunity to have their voices heard.

During 2008/09 a project and steering group comprising staff and residents was set up to transfer our responsive maintenance contract from Mears to Sovereign Services. This was successfully completed and Sovereign Response took over the contract on 1 April 2009.

At the end of 2008/9 a full Status survey was carried out by the group giving residents the opportunity to give us their views on our services to them.

3. Impact of Activities – Performance

The main outcome of resident involvement for 2008/09 was from the review carried out of the service. The impact of the outcomes of this review will not be measurable until all the new initiatives are complete and embedded across the organisation.

Overall our performance was encouraging with an increase in the number of residents involved in helping us to shape our services and a rise in resident satisfaction levels. Particular achievements for 2008/09 were:

- An increase on our involved residents' data base from 81 residents to 200.
- Including those who completed the status survey and demographic survey over 30% of our residents have been involved.
- As indicated by the 2008 status survey the combined figure for THA owned stock and SHA managed stock is 77%. For THA stock alone this figure has increased to 82% from 79% in 2006. Similarly with the Sovereign managed stock overall satisfaction has gone up from 64% in 2006 to 68% in 2008.
- Combined stock residents who are satisfied that their views are taken into account is indicated as 59% in 2008 status survey. For THA stock it is 61% a disappointing 8% drop from 2006 when 69% of residents were satisfied. However, Sovereign managed stock has risen from 44% in 2006 to 54%.

Residents indicating that THA is good at keeping them informed remained static at 83% for THA owned stock and 65.7% for SHA managed stock.

The correlation between more residents getting involved and the increase in resident satisfaction levels indicates that our that approach to resident involvement is having a positive impact.

During 2008/09 we started to populate the Housemark benchmarking RI fields. However, as the status survey was not completed until the end of the year comparison figures are not currently available. It is anticipated that this will be available for next year.

4. New Initiatives

4.1 Resident Involvement Review

To ensure that residents were involved from the beginning of the review a working party was set up comprising 5 members of staff and 5 residents. This group steered the review from inception to completion.

A full desk top review of good practice in the sector was carried out and visits were made to other organisations whose initiatives had been cited as good practice by the Audit Commission. From this review it was found that a better response was received when an initiative or campaign was given a memorable and innovative title. Therefore the steering group decided on 'Give us a Clue' as name for this campaign. Under the 'Give us a Clue' umbrella a number of initiatives were carried out to seek the views of if, how and when our residents want to be involved.

A full report on the outcomes of this review was compiled by the steering group and presented to our chief regulator in July. This report included the following recommendations that have now been taken up:

- All service areas to have RI targets
- Set up an RI monitoring system (as indicated by AC good practice)

- Set up a higher level residents' forum to scrutinize and drive services
- Set a yearly programme of resident training in line with the direction of THA business plan

The 'Give us a Clue' campaign is now cited on the QHS website as good practice.

Input	Output	Outcome/Impact	Cost Centres
Carry out a full review of resident involvement	'Give us Clue' campaign undertaken as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering group comprising staff and residents set up. • Desk top review of good practice and visits to other organisations undertaken • Campaign leaflet and postal survey sent to all residents as insert in Twynham News; • Internet campaign set up; • Programme of visits carried out to all geographical areas of operation by RI Team and TBM; • Resident involvement day • Campaign details published in Twynham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 200 residents responded to the survey but poor turn-out at area visits. • Over 70 residents contacted on RI day but very little response to internet campaign. • Whilst just over half of residents that responded said they did want to be involved, only a small minority indicated interest in attending meetings or wanting any strategic involvement. Majority only wanted to complete surveys or at the very most attend the occasional focus group. The impact of this is that we know that we have a limited amount of residents that we can use for higher RI initiatives and must make best use of those that we have but continue to look for ways to make higher RI more appealing to the wider majority. • Twynham Accountability panel set up comprising 6 residents. It is envisaged that this group will meet on a quarterly basis to scrutinise performance and make recommendations for service improvements. The first meeting is planned for June 09. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 560 hrs SRIO time • 280 months RIO time • Other staff time involved in steering group and RI Day • Residents Meetings

	News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An RI monitoring system has been set up adapted from a model indicated as good practice by the Audit Commission. The impact of this will be mainstreaming and easier monitoring of RI activity throughout the organisation. • The RI data base now comprises over 200 residents who have indicated their preference of method and area of interest in involvement. The impact of this is that we have a cross section of residents to use as a sounding board. • Full feedback of survey results given to residents in Spring 09 edition of Twynham News. 	
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4.2 Orion Project

The Orion Project was started in 2008/09 as a group initiative to work towards three star standards across all subsidiaries within the group. All service area leaders from each subsidiary have worked together to set and work towards these challenging standards. And input that residents have given throughout the year has influenced standards in most service areas apart from where standards are set by regulatory requirements.

During 2008/09 residents were invited to a number of initiatives including a 'challenge the managers' day and 'meet and greet' to ascertain their views on how they wanted to be involved in influencing the strategic direction of the group. This has culminated in a Group Forum being set up comprising 3 residents from each of the subsidiaries who will meet on a regular basis to scrutinise performance and make recommendations on service improvements. The first meeting of this group is planned for June 2009.

Also 3 residents from each subsidiary will be trained as resident inspectors to carry out peer reviews of service areas. The first review is due to take place in September 2009.

Input	Output	Outcome/Impact	Cost
Orion Project	<p>Carry out gap analysis of THA RI against KLOE</p> <p>Collate residents views throughout year to apply to service area standards; Inform and recruit residents for Group Forum; Inform and recruit residents for resident inspectors.</p>	<p>23 service standards set for RI across the group</p> <p>Residents' views influenced standards set across the group.</p> <p>Group forum set up comprising 3 residents from each subsidiary.</p> <p>Two residents being trained as resident inspectors.</p> <p>Residents views influencing and scrutinising service standards throughout group should lead to better satisfaction levels. Getting it right first time giving better value for money.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70hrs SRIO time • 30hrs RIO time • Service area manager time • (Costs for group residents forum and resident inspector training to be covered by group budget)

4.3 Tenant Services Authority – National Conversation

In December 2008 the Tenant Services Authority became the new regulator for the Sector. The intention of the TSA is to make sure that residents are at the heart of the business and are able to influence services at the highest level.

To understand what residents really want from their landlords phase 1 of the National Conversation took place between February and April 2009. Organisations were expected to make sure that all of their residents were given the opportunity to give their views to the TSA if they wanted to. Over 60 of our residents took up the opportunities we gave them to take part in this.

The results of the first phase are expected in June 2009 after which a second phase will take place to build on and consolidate the results of the first phase.

Input	Output	Outcome/Impact	Cost Centre
Tenant Services Authority – National Conversation Consultation	Provide opportunities for residents to give their views to the TSA as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Conversation • Local Conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of opportunities published in Twynham News • Website information and feedback page was set up • All residents on involved residents data base sent survey form • 4 residents from TRF attended a National Conversation at Gatwick. • 4 residents attended a local conversation with residents from 4 other local organisations run by NFDC • 23 residents attended local conversation facilitated by RI team at Somerford Community school • 59 residents completed survey form • The impact of this will be reflected in the standards set by the TSA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 hrs SRIO time • 12 hrs RIO time • Residents meetings

4.4 Demographic Profile

To ensure that we are not unintentionally excluding any groups of peoples from our services or from becoming involved in the business if they want to,

We aim to have 90% of our residents' demographic profile.

Input	Output	Outcome/Impact	Cost Centre
<p>Have demographic profile information on all our residents to ensure no groups of residents are excluded</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ Demographic Profiling Officer • Carry out postal demographic survey • Carry out follow up work to achieve 90% response 	<p>Demographic profiling officer employed on 6 month fixed contract in October 2009. Only 50% response rate achieved after postal survey and follow ups by end of March 09.</p> <p>Demographic officer's contract extended with a view to completion by end of qrt 2 2009/10.</p> <p>We are still cannot be certain that we are not excluding any groups, however the information gathered so far indicates the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our involved residents reflect the gender make up of our resident population. • Residents below the age of 50 are under-represented in our involved residents groups and those over 70 years of age are over-represented. The number of involved residents aged between 50 and 70 are however better representative of the wider resident population. • White British residents appear to be under-represented in our formal groups but this result 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% DPO time • Postal costs

		is skewed by the lack of information we hold on our involved residents (we do not know the ethnicity for 39 of our involved residents).	
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5. Other and Ongoing Activities

5.1 Resident Inspectors

2 residents from THA and 3 from the Vale along with the RI Officers, were trained by TPAS to carry out resident led inspections. In August these residents carried out a 2 day inspection of the repairs and maintenance services of their opposite organisations. With the assistance of the RI Officers a full written report was compiled by the residents outlining recommendations. These recommendations were used to inform the decision to change to Sovereign Response with an in house call centre. Feedback was given to the resident inspectors on how their recommendations were taken up.

This initiative will be enhanced and carried through to 2009/10 as part of the Orion Project. 3 further residents will be trained in July to carry out peer reviews of all service areas.

5.2 Sovereign Response

A steering group comprising staff and residents was set up to guide and oversee the transfer from Mears responsive maintenance contract to Sovereign Response. A communication plan was informed by this group to make sure all residents were kept up to date with progress and what to expect from the new contract. From this, residents were kept informed at every stage and because of this the transmission went very smoothly with least disruption to residents and no major complaints or problems.

5.3 High Level Estate Visits

We continued with our high level estate visits where over 450 residents had the opportunity to meet the MD and her team. The feedback from residents on these visits has informed changes to various areas of service including communal cleaning and grounds maintenance, responsive repairs, ASB and disabled adaptations.

5.4 Training

At the annual residents and leaseholders conference in October 15 residents were offered taster sessions on the following:

- Cooking on a shoe-string
- Basic computer skills
- Managing your money
- Negotiating skills

In January 5 residents attended Mears decorating workshop. A comprehensive skills day was undertaken by the residents including the following:

- Different types of equipment and their uses
- Using fillers Using Emulsion
- Types of paint and their finish
- Cutting in and masking tape
- Roller and brush technique

The skills learned will give residents the knowledge and confidence to help them keep their homes in good decorative order.

5.5 Partnership working with Adult Education

In March THA worked in partnership with Dorset Adult Education and 2 other local RSLs to provide 12 residents with training on 'Planning an Event' under the skills for life initiative. The residents trained are able to use the skills learned both in a community and personal capacity. This training was at no cost to the association as it was government funded for people under GCSE level. A similar course is booked for July to assist with financial inclusion called 'Managing Your Money'. These capacity building exercises will assist residents to work in their neighbourhoods and help to build sustainable communities.

5.6 Twynham Residents Forum

Whilst we still cannot confirm that this group is fully reflective of our resident profile, it continues to grow and remains an excellent sounding board for consultative purposes. It is also very useful for providing us with information on what is going on in the Somerford Community.

There are now representatives from Sovereign managed stock on this panel and other residents from outside the Christchurch area.

Initiatives that TRF has contributed to include:

- Feedback and up-dates on Inspection action plan
- Input and scrutiny of 2007/08 annual RI Impact Assessment
- Focus group for CBC Audit Commission Inspection
- National Tenants Voice Consultation
- Reviewing group complaints procedure
- NHF Housing Association Code of Service Delivery and Accountability
- Building a Value For Money Strategy
- Group Re-branding Project
- Reviewing Void standards

5.7 Void Standard Review

As a direct result of residents input to this review all voids now:

- Have a higher standard of cleaning
- New flooring is provided in kitchens and bathrooms
- All sinks and baths are given a new coat of sealant
- Decorating vouchers are offered as necessary
- There is a resident representative on the void panel
- 2 residents will be trained as void inspectors

The impact of this review should be a higher level of satisfaction when residents move into their new homes and better value for money as their should be less need for works to be carried out after moving in.

5.8 Community Initiatives and Donations

We have given donations to various community groups to the sum of £3750. These have included:

- £1000 to Christchurch extended schools programme to provide diversionary activities during the school holidays where over 1000 of our tenants children had the opportunity to benefit from this;
- £250 to a local children's after school activity club;
- £200 to Christchurch Youth outreach to help with the costs of a cooking project which benefited local young people aged between 16 and 18 who are not in education, training or employment (NEETS) and a summer music event;
- £2000 to Watermans Wheelpark to help with the up-keep of the park

We led on a multi-agency 'Community Unity' day in one of the ASB hot spots in Christchurch. Working closely with the Christchurch Youth Inclusion Support Project, children who would have otherwise been excluded were encouraged to take part in the event. Over 150 residents attended the event and £120 was raised and donated to a local multi agency youth outreach group to help to equip their mobile multi media facility used to attract local young people, where they can get advice and guidance on issues relating to them.

This event also acted as a bridge between older people and youth in the area and has led to a reduction in complaints of anti social behaviour.

Besides the above and events held for 'Give us a Clue' we have also been represented at the following events:

- Grafton Close Multi Agency Community Event (Bournemouth)
- Royal Visit at Watermans Park (Somerford)
- Party in the Park (Christchurch)
- CBC Good Citizens Award

These events have enabled us to raise our profile and build capacity in the community and in the case of Grafton Close help to bring together generations assisting in breaking down barriers that can lead to ASB.

5.9 Twynham News

Twynham news remains our main vehicle for informing and consulting all of our residents.

Information given to residents throughout the year included:

- Feedback and up-dates on Audit Commission Inspection
- Feedback on how acted on leaseholders suggested improvements to service
- Responsive repairs contractor performance
- Gas Servicing information
- Information on the TSA
- Outcomes of the Sovereign managed stock residents survey
- Group information
- Give us a Clue campaign and outcome
- Information on Disable Adaptations
- Information on residents meetings and training opportunities

6.0 Costs

6.1 RI Budget 2008/09

All of the above initiatives including the 'Give us a Clue' campaign were carried out within the yearly RI budget set for the year 2008/09 and excluding staff costs an overall **saving of 15%** was also achieved on the budget.

The table below shows how the money was spent in line with the cost centres above:

Cost Centre	2008/09 Budget	Spend	Saving/(overspend)
Tenant training	£1,703	£1,879	(£176)
Resident resource room	£729	£490	£239
Tenants Meetings	£2,300	£1,395	£905
Gardening Competition	£696	£600	(£96)
Over 55s Resource Room	0	£133	(133)
Prizes	£300	£258	£42
Community Initiatives	£4,000	£3,471	£529
Residents Fun Days	£1,200	£576	£624
Tenant Hospitality	£136	£118	£18
Postage (Twynham News)	£7,088	£6,157	£931
TOTALS	£18,056	£15,173	£2,883

6.2 Staff Costs

There are two dedicated members of staff in the RI team; a senior resident involvement officer and a resident involvement officer. Total staff costs for the team were £79,998 making a **total RI budget spend of £95,161**, this equates to around **£28 per property spend on resident involvement**.

6.3 Housemark Peer Benchmark

The Housemark definition of resident involvement is:

“Any activity of which the primary aim is to inform, consult, involve, empower or devolve power to residents’ living in landlords’ homes”.

The costs associated with the above are listed as:

- Salaries
- Communication (including postage)
- Resident Training
- Formal Groups
- Informal Groups
- Resident Board Members
- Grants to Groups

The Housemark RI benchmarking spend per property is:

- Upper Quartile - £35.26
- Median - £27.82
- Lower Quartile - £13.94

Therefore at £28 per property Twynham is sitting at the median.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 Summary of overall Outcome of Resident Involvement

Resident involvement received a very high profile during 2008/09 and actions indicated by the 2008 Audit Commission inspection action plan have been undertaken. The outcome of the RI review has led to a number of changes being implemented throughout the organisation, all reflecting good practice in the sector.

By completing these actions with no addition to the RI budget and still falling in the median of the Housemark benchmarking data shows excellent value for money.

The new resident involvement monitoring matrix and service area targets will give all members of staff throughout the organisation the opportunity to take responsibility for ensuring that residents are influencing the services they receive. And to evidence that residents are at the heart of everything we do.

The main impact of resident involvement 2008/09 will not be measurable until the initiatives put into place from the RI review and the Orion project have had time to embed. It is anticipated that we should be able to report some impact from this in the 2009/10 impact assessment.

7.2 The Future of Resident Involvement

The focus of resident involvement 2009/10 will be to embed the initiatives started in this year.

An annual plan of work for the higher residents' forum is being devised to align with the targets of the corporate plan. At the same time a training audit will be undertaken to ensure that the residents involved are equipped with the knowledge and skills to enable them to make a meaningful contribution.

Three residents are being trained to carry out peer reviews along with residents and staff from the other subsidiaries within the group. A plan is being devised to ensure that all service areas will be inspected by this peer review group.

It is anticipated that the information from the monitoring matrix will give us a broader picture of the outcomes, impact and costs of resident involvement in the future.