

# Making a Difference Together



Our aim at Wales & West Housing (WWH) is **'strong, sustainable growth to make a difference to people's lives, homes and communities'** and we have a strong history of involving residents in how we shape and manage services to make that difference.

Enabling resident's voices to be heard and understanding their perspective is always our starting point. Our goal is to hear and understand what matters to residents in order to design our services to deliver exactly those things. This approach has served us well and resulted in a long track record of high satisfaction with how we tailor and deliver services that meet what really matters to customers.

As our last resident participation strategy was set out in 2012, we have recently carried out a review of how things are going, to make sure that we are still listening and engaging with residents successfully and developing the right services. This booklet sets out what we learned and the actions we plan to take based on what we learned.



During the review we engaged with over 300 residents, all with differing experiences of getting involved, in order to understand their views. We wanted to know if residents understand how they can get involved and if they are satisfied with the options available. We also wanted to know how satisfied residents are with how we listen and act on what they tell us, and how we keep them informed about things that might affect them.

The overall results are positive.

Residents told us that they wanted to be asked and to give their own views rather than have them represented by others, particularly in

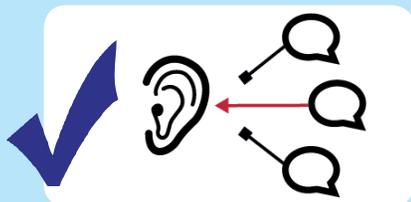
relation to issues relating to their scheme. Over time we have consistently heard that 'speaking for yourself' is something which matters to residents as a whole.

There are a number of things which residents said we are good at. Three quarters of people were satisfied that they are kept informed, that they can give their views in the ways they wanted and that we listen and act on those views.

There are also things that residents want us to get better at, such as supporting people to get involved in the ways that they want to and feeding back on what we have done as a result of their input.

Four key themes have emerged from the review about what matters to residents as a whole. It matters that:

1. **Residents' views are heard, welcomed, valued and considered.**



2. **Residents know how their views are used to shape service design and delivery.**



3. **Residents know how they can get involved and can give their views in a way that suits them.**



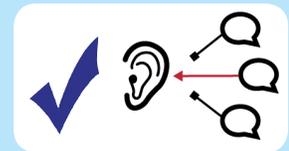
4. **Residents know that we offer practical and financial support to help them get involved.**



These four themes can be summarised in a single statement; a statement which sets out our purpose. Our purpose is:

***“to engage with residents in a way that suits them, in order to develop services that deliver what matters.”***

**1. Residents’ views are heard, welcomed, valued and considered**



At WWH we have made resident participation a central part of all staff roles instead of the preserve of a few specific individuals. We have done this by including resident engagement in our core principles for carrying out our work. We call these our **Operating Principles**.

They set out how we will listen to and understand what matters to residents, design services around what matters and measure our performance based on how well we deliver what matters. Involving residents is at the heart of these principles.

**Operating Principles**



## How we do it

As we don't want to simply tick boxes, we don't usually carry out traditional surveys. Instead we like to talk and place real value on open conversations with residents as this helps us to understand people and their views.

Ratings do matter, but the comments or story behind the score is often more important as this information can tell us what to improve and how to go about it. So when you have experienced any of our services you may receive a phonecall asking you what you thought of our performance. We try and have as many of these discussions as possible, so you may well have spoken to us about one of the following;

- Repairs – what you thought of the service and what would have made it better.
- Planned maintenance – your experience of a having a home improvement, like a new kitchen, bathroom or boiler.
- Moving into a new home – whether the home was suitable and if you had the help you needed at the right time.
- Building new homes – your experience of moving into a newly built property and setting up home.
- Anti-social behaviour – whether we provided the right support to help you to solve a problem in your neighbourhood.

As residents want to be involved in how things are done where they live, we have developed a resident engagement method which we call '**Have We Listened**'. This is where we proactively engage with residents where they live to understand what is important to them about their home and community and to agree joint actions together. Instead of being a one off exercise this is an on-going process, a conversation which continually develops. As each scheme is different, the format of the 'Have We Listened' process varies from area to area and time to time to suit the situation, from open days and fun days to discussions with individuals in their own homes.

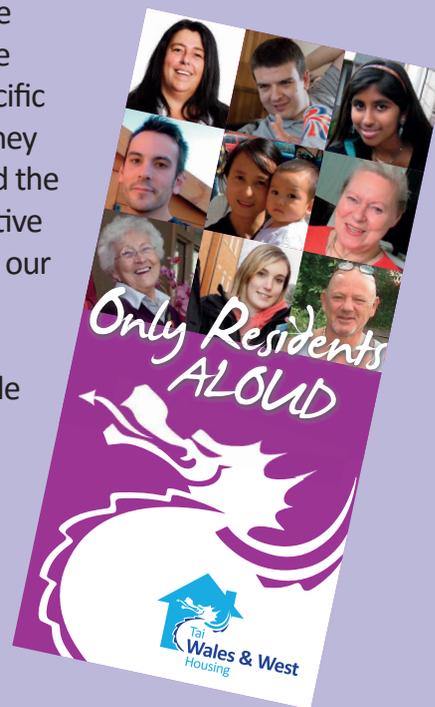


### Only Residents Aloud

(ORA) is a group of residents who have volunteered to give their views on specific or single issues. They help us understand the resident's perspective and to ensure that our communication is accessible and understandable to all.

This valuable help can make the difference in making our documents and information relevant and effective.

*Robin Alldred, Commercial Manager, consults with residents at Caerau Court, Cardiff*



Our **Resident Participation Steering Group (RPSG)** gives us a residents' perspective on a wide range of issues, services and information. The RPSG assist us by guiding us on how to best engage with as many residents as possible and how to understand and use the learning we gain. As part of this role they have overseen the design and delivery of this strategy.

Our **Board of Management** is the highest level of accountability and governance at WWH and our four Resident Board Members play a full and central role in the decision making which sets WWH's ethos and direction.



### What we are going to do

In the review residents told us that they prefer to communicate by speaking face to face about issues that concern them.

We will do more of this by developing 'Have We Listened' conversations throughout all our schemes and estates and by focussing on

delivering key services in residents homes where this is best for them.

We will engage with residents over digital communication to understand the right way to hear their views and develop services using the many options available.

## 2. Residents know how their views are used to shape service design and delivery



### How we do it

Guided by our Operating Principles we regularly review our services to make sure that what we deliver is what is most important to residents.

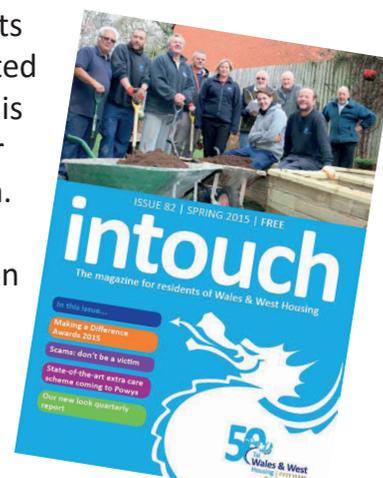
Listening to residents is always the first step we take in reviewing our services, to understand people's views and the outcomes that they are looking for. We then assess our service to see if we are meeting those outcomes and redesign things where outcomes have changed or where our approach or processes need improving. Details of the service reviews are shared with the RPSG to help guide our redesign work, which is tested and rolled out step by step to check that it is working as anticipated. In our review of this strategy three quarters of residents told us that they are satisfied with how we keep you informed.

### How we tell you what we do

In our regulatory assessment report the Welsh Government recommended that we continually share information with residents and seek their feedback on our service delivery outcomes, value for money and complaint outcomes. This information is now presented in each InTouch magazine with feedback and comments invited from residents.

Feedback from residents has consistently indicated that InTouch magazine is their preferred way for regular communication.

It is published for all residents quarterly in an accessible format, with each issue containing a 'keeping you in the picture' section, giving details on performance outcomes using easy to read infographics. The RPSG maintain a keen interest and have regular oversight of the magazine to guide design, format and content.



Our website is a second key method of communication, sharing information on all our services, quarterly performance data and future plans all in one place, accessed via the 'our performance' link on the home page.

'Have We Listened' conversations are unique to each scheme and the residents that live there. Feeding back locally is important to residents and the methods for doing this vary according to what is needed in each instance, from newsletters, one off communications or meetings to knocking on doors and meeting in homes, all as part of an on-going conversation.

### What we are going to do

We will produce reports in InTouch, guided by the RPSG, on how residents' views have shaped services and informed decisions.

We will regularly share what we have learned from our service reviews with the RPSG to help guide service improvement.

We will check that we have correctly understood the 'purpose' and 'what matters' of our service systems by speaking with lots of residents who have directly experienced the service.

We will continue to proactively use 'Have We Listened' conversations and feed back to residents in the ways they prefer.

### 3. Residents know how they can get involved and can give their views in a way that suits them



The options we offer are based on what residents have told us about how they want to give their views, with three quarters being satisfied that they could give their views in the ways they wanted to.

Our aim is to support residents to get involved in the ways that suit them and our staff are key to this. It is mainly through our on-going conversations with residents we learn who is keen to get involved and how they want to give their views. Front line staff have the support of a Resident Participation Strategy Officer to help them have the right conversation and to guide them in helping residents achieve what they would like to achieve.

#### How we do it

We're open to most communication methods and residents have a choice of how they contact us:

- Phone: 0800 052 2526 (free from all landlines and mobiles)
- Our Contact Us webpage: [www.wwha.co.uk/Pages/ContactUs](http://www.wwha.co.uk/Pages/ContactUs)
- Discussion with our staff, in your home, or at our scheme or office
- Text: 07788310420
- Email: [contactus@wwha.co.uk](mailto:contactus@wwha.co.uk)
- Post: addresses on the back page
- Twitter
- Facebook (some residents have been supported to create their own groups)

There are a number of options available for residents wanting to be involved with WWH and its work.

Some details of the main options are given on the following pages:

#### 'Have We Listened'

This is our name for the approach we use to hear your views about what matters to you. It happens where you live and can include anything you want to tell us. It is not a one-off exercise but rather an ongoing, two-way conversation with you and your neighbours, which continues as staff go about their daily work on schemes and estates.

Sometimes we will knock your door to have a chat with you if we know there is a particular issue at your scheme or maybe hold a meeting with you and your neighbours. When we understand what matters to you about where you live, we set about working with you to make things happen, keeping you involved and informed as we go.

So don't keep things to yourself. If you have something to tell us to improve our services or your community, please come and have a chat when you see any of our members of staff.



## Only Residents Aloud

Hi I'm Dee, from Ty Ddewi, Rhondda and I'm a member of **Only Residents Aloud** or **ORA** as we call it for short.

No it's not a choir! It's a way of sharing our ideas and feedback with WWH. It used to be called Group 500 but it's been given a new name, chosen by residents, that we think suits it better.

### What do I do?

I give my views on lots of things such as:

- How good I think WWH are at telling us what they're doing
- How good I think WWH are at asking and listening to our views and using them to improve services.
- New services and new ways of doing things that WWH are thinking of trying.
- Views on WWH's website:  
[www.wwha.co.uk](http://www.wwha.co.uk)
- Views on WWH's In Touch residents' magazine.
- What I think about new documents that will be sent to residents.

### Why do I do it?

I like it that WWH actually listen to what I have to say and use my views to make services better for all residents. It's a good way to find out more about what WWH do and every time I take part I get entered into an annual prize draw - just for taking part! It's so easy!

**If you are a WWH resident, aged over 16, you can join ORA by contacting WWH.**

## How do I give my views?

I prefer to use the website, but you can also give your views by post or over the phone. I receive an email and a text to let me know that there's a survey online. There are usually two weeks to respond so I can complete it when it suits me. I go onto WWH's website then I sit with a cup of coffee, read the information and fill in the survey on my computer. It usually takes me about 20 minutes.



## Resident Participation Steering Group

Hello! We're the **Resident Participation Steering Group** or RPSG for short. We are a group of committed, resident volunteers from across Wales, who act as a sounding board for WWH on resident engagement and participation matters. We give a resident's perspective on a range of topics and check that information that goes to all residents makes sense and is easy to read.

We meet every six weeks to help make sure that residents' views are always taken into account, whatever the service and to guide how this is done. As well as hearing about WWH's services from a variety of staff at our meetings, we meet with the Welsh Government Housing Regulator to tell them what we think of resident involvement and participation opportunities at WWH. We also monitor how WWH fund resident participation and support residents to be involved.

The work of our group was recognised at WWH's 2014 Making a Difference Awards with a Special Inspiration Award. Our group is also a great stepping stone to our Board of Management. Since the RPSG formed in 2008 we have consistently had at least three of the four Resident Board Members as RPSG members.



## Board of Management

Four members of our **Board of Management** must be WWH residents. They help give us a residents' perspective at the heart of our decision making and governance.

Any resident can apply to join our Board as long as your name is on the tenancy agreement and you are nominated by ten other eligible residents. Board members serve a three year term so opportunities to join the Board come up every year or so.

If you are interested in joining the Board you can attend an 'Information Day' to learn about our principles of governance, the way in which the Board works and the time commitment needed. Then you will meet with Anne Hinchey, our Chief Executive, who will discuss with you the role and responsibilities of being a WWH Board member.

If we have more nominees than places available we will need to hold an election. All residents are able to vote and the results are announced at WWH's annual general meeting.

## Residents' Associations

Where residents want us to, we support them to form **Residents' Associations**. There are around ten such formal groups currently in place, representing resident's interests at their scheme. They discuss local scheme or estate issues as well as organising social activities or events. All residents at the scheme or estate are automatically members so it's important that the majority agree to being represented in this way. WWH can help residents to consult neighbours where they live to find this out. Residents' Association have to be set up in a specific way for them to be recognised as a constituted group by us and other bodies, such as grants funders. You need a minimum of four residents who are prepared to be officers to oversee the running of the group, who are elected by residents at your scheme or estate. Residents also need to agree and sign three 'governing documents' - a Constitution which is a set of rules for your group, an Equal Opportunities Statement so that all members are treated fairly and a Code of Conduct so that everyone knows how they should behave so meetings run smoothly.

## Informal residents' groups

WWH supports many informal residents' groups and there are currently over a hundred groups across Wales doing a range of social activities such as gardening, social events or crafts. These are currently the most popular type of group, with most retirement schemes, and some estates, having at least one.

Although these aren't a formal way of giving your views WWH forms good relationships with these groups by supporting them to develop and to access grants or training. Whilst doing this we hear residents' views on a range of our services. Some residents groups have created their own facebook pages to communicate with each other and other groups.

We never cap residents' ambitions and support them to set up and run the types of groups and activities that they want to do. We have helped several social and gardening groups to constitute in order to access grant funding. Oak Court, Penarth; Western Court, Bridgend, St Mellons Community Garden, Cardiff, Gerddi'r Ffynnon, Aberystwyth and Barracksfield Tenants' Association, Wrexham have all accessed grants over £1,000 in the last few years.

Informal resident groups can access our WWH 'Making a Difference to your Community and Environment' grants without a committee or constitution and many groups do exactly that each year to help achieve their aims.



*Viv Evans, Jan Derrett and Glenys Vandervolk  
at the 2016 Tenant Participation Advisory  
Service (TPAS) Conference*

## How we tell you what we do

Our website and InTouch magazine provides information on all the options, case studies and details of how to get involved.

This booklet will be used by staff as a tool to support residents and to find out how residents want to get involved.

## What we're going to do

We heard you'd like to know more about 'Have We Listened', Only Residents Aloud, RPSG and feedback discussions.

We will do this using the ways you prefer, via InTouch magazine and by speaking with staff.

We will keep staff updated and informed about participation developments and resident feedback on getting involved using the staff intranet.

We will support involved residents to promote their groups to other residents.

## 4. Residents know that we offer practical and financial support to help them to get involved



We want residents to be able to take part in the way they choose regardless of their circumstances.

We have discussed this with our RPSG who have given us a residents' perspective of the type of things that stop people getting involved. From this we have developed support that we hope will remove barriers to residents getting involved whilst being easy to access.

### How we do it

We understand that it is important to residents that they can gain new skills and knowledge, both by speaking with other residents or staff and also by carrying out more structured learning. WWH supports a variety of training activities which are open to involved residents, including:

- Sustainable gardening
- Food Safety Level 2 (if you are handling food at your lunch club or coffee morning)
- Cooking on a Budget / Healthy Eating
- Applying for Grants / Getting Funding
- Running social events
- Writing a community newsletter
- Committee skills / effective meetings / teambuilding

- Confidence skills / dealing with difficult people
- Energy saving

WWH have installed free WiFi internet access at the majority of retirement properties alongside facilitating simple training to help residents get online, with over 1600 separate resident devices using the free internet every month. At the request of residents we have created three resident Facebook groups for residents with common interests to connect; Get Together, Get Crafty and Get Growing.



*Resident Mary Roake and Scheme Manager Amy Parry surf the internet using the wifi installed at her scheme*

Please contact us using any of the methods set out below if you would like some support to help you get involved. We can help you in a variety of ways:

 <p><b>We will provide transport (including accessible transport) or mileage at a rate including wear and tear</b></p>	 <p><b>We will pay for child care and carer costs</b></p>	 <p><b>We will provide information in the way you need it (eg. languages, audio, Braille etc. )</b></p>
 <p><b>We will make training and activities accessible, tailored to individual needs</b></p>	 <p><b>We will pay for training and conference fees</b></p>	 <p><b>We will pay for and arrange overnight accommodation</b></p>

**What we are going to do**

<p>We have heard that you want to feel more supported to get involved, so we will make sure you know what we can offer via our regular staff contact with you.</p>	<p>We will support residents who are happy to help others learn basic computer skills.</p>
<p>We will promote the support we offer via the InTouch magazine and on the WWH website.</p>	<p>We will continue to support residents groups who want to use digital technology to communicate with other groups.</p>

We all like to communicate in different ways, so you can choose the way that suits you best:

 <p>Have a chat with our staff when you see us</p>	 <p>wwhahomesforwales</p>
 <p>0800 052 2526 (free from landlines and mobiles)</p>	 <p>Head Office: Archway House, 77 Parc Tŷ Glas, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5DU</p>
 <p>contactus@wwha.co.uk</p>	<p>North Wales: Tŷ Draig, St. David’s Park Ewloe, Deeside CH5 3DT</p>
 <p>www.wwha.co.uk</p>	<p>West Wales: Cwrt y Llan, Church Lane, Newcastle Emlyn SA38 9AB</p>
 <p>@wwha - follow us</p>	

If you need to use another format such as a different language, large print, braille, audio cassette, dvd or any other way that suits you better – just let us know and we’ll do our best to provide this. Visit our ‘Getting Involved’ webpages to see more examples, including films of some of the residents’ groups and their stories.