

Wates Living Space Resident Involvement Policy



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1. Policy Statement

As a specialist company within the Affordable housing market, our commitment is to 'changing lives' by making a difference within the communities in which we work. We recognise that our affordable housing clients are under guidance from the Housing Corporation and these are used as the basis of customer involvement strategies both in terms of performance and the actions that are needed to bring about further improvements.

We recognise that our clients' customers are also our customers and these include residents, tenants and other stakeholders on the estates where we are working. The aim of this policy is to ensure effective involvement with these groups is established and developed within the business activities of Wates Living Space. We are committed to working with our clients' resident involvement policies and will support them in their objectives.

By working in partnership with residents and clients, we aim to achieve greater openness and accountability. Increased resident involvement will assist in achieving a more cost effective and responsive service. This in turn this will help us to improve both the services we provide and resident satisfaction with those services.

2. Objectives

WATES AIMS TO:

- Work in partnership with the client and the clients tenant base as and when appropriate
- Have a code of conduct which will be communicated to our clients and residents
- Provide an effective complaints policy for those unhappy with the service provided by Wates Living Space
- Develop good working relations with a core group of residents in each of our areas of operation who will be given the opportunity to work closely with local managers on strategic resident involvement issues
- Provide consultation and participation methods that provide residents with information, advice and assistance on issues and changes that affect their home, environment or personal circumstances. This enables residents to have a greater say about the services they receive in conjunction with clients
- Provide opportunities for residents to learn more about us and explore how services are managed and provided and comment on our performance
- Ensure diversity and equality of opportunity within resident involvement, including providing resources where necessary to target those who may be under-represented

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- Promote and support community initiatives that provide benefits for the communities in which we work
- To effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of the Customer Involvement Policy upon the communities our service provision and individuals
- Ensure that resident profiling is completed (i.e. ethnicity, gender, special needs, age) in areas where we are working so that services can be tailored, planned and targeted accordingly
- Take customers views into account when developing and improving services
- To ensure that staff who are involved in resident involvement receive appropriate training
- To ensure that residents who are involved have the appropriate training and support
- Encourage our supply chain to adopt policies and working practices that reflect our values.

3. What is Resident Involvement?

Resident Involvement is about supporting our clients in providing all residents in the areas where we are working with an opportunity to have a say in the way that Wates delivers its services. It means that residents will be able to influence the decisions that affect them, their homes and their communities.

DEFINITION OF A RESIDENT

This includes:

- Tenants
- Leaseholders
- Residents of shared ownership properties.

4. Consultation and Participation Methods

WORKING WITHIN CLIENTS' RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRUCTURES

The main way that Wates Living Space will develop and support resident involvement will be by working in partnership with clients within their existing resident involvement structures including:

- Attending Resident Association meetings to develop links with key residents and where repair issues are to be discussed

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- Attending Resident Forums to develop links with key residents and where improvement issues are to be discussed
- Working jointly on other initiatives with landlords such as organising joint 'Resident Consultation Days', Focus Groups, etc
- Other ways that Wates Living Space may work with clients on offering resident involvement may include: Tenant Inspectors, Estate Champions, Estate Walkabouts, Surveys, Mystery Shopping.

WATES LIVING SPACE CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION METHODS

Resident involvement activities that Wates Living Space may carry out from local offices from time to time in conjunction with clients are as follows:

- A Day in the Life of Decent Homes/Planned Improvements: Residents are invited to a local office to see how we manage and deliver planned improvements. They are then taken out to see the improvements being delivered from survey stage through to manufacture and installation. They are taken back to the office to see how we report progress back to our clients. This is designed to be a fun way of providing practical information and training to customers and enables staff to build relations with key residents. The event can be tailored to suit overall objectives
- Where views from residents are sought, feedback will be given regarding the outcome of the research as soon as possible after the results are known.

5. Equality and Diversity

To ensure diversity and equality of opportunity within resident involvement Wates Living Space will encourage involvement from all sections of the community through the following:

- Providing resources where necessary to target those who are under-represented e.g. providing methods of communication such as translation, interpreting (for people who need assistance with language) and transport (for instance if this is required by people with disabilities)
- Where there is under-representation from certain sections of the community, taking active steps to remedy this
- Actively involving groups previously found 'harder-to-reach', by seeking their views in a number of different ways, e.g. holding focus groups, holding group specific activities on particular estates to target the under-represented
- Having a flexible 'menu' of strategies to maximise the possibility for involvement from all sections of diverse communities that we operate within.

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6. Community Initiatives

Wates Living Space is keen to support community initiatives which may include:

- Participating in fun days by contributing resources and actively participating in activities such as organising competitions, games for young people (i.e. 'get the ball past the goalie')
- Carrying out improvements to the environment and/or community facilities
- Carrying out health and safety initiatives
- Sponsoring of local youth sports teams and supporting them with attendance at organised events.

7. Implementing Resident Involvement

Resident involvement will be co-ordinated locally by our Customer Liaison teams. Local strategies will be adopted and overseen by local managers who will take responsibility for resident involvement and community initiatives in the areas they operate within.

8. Training and Information for Residents

Residents will be provided with appropriate training and information when their views are sought, for example by providing an overview of specialist areas of work like the Decent Homes programme. This will facilitate greater knowledge and understanding of Wates Living Space services among customers who can then more actively take part in meetings. Practical exercises, (such as "Tracking an Improvement") can be carried out in a fun way so that people can enjoy the experience. Wates Living Space will also provide information regarding resident services via newsletters and our website.

9. Staff Training and Information

Staff will be provided with appropriate training and information via internal staff magazines, e-communication and e-learning. External and or internal training courses are available as identified through individual Personal Development Reviews. Staff training is co-ordinated locally by our training department but is consistent in content and frequency nationwide. Training and information will ensure that our staff are knowledgeable and equipped to deal with the needs of customers in relation to resident involvement.

Wates Living Space has developed and delivered the first industry certified training course for Resident Liaison Officers. We are committed to ensuring all of our liaison staff undertake this course – we see this as fundamental to our aims and objectives in delivering exceptional resident care.

10. Monitoring and Evaluating Resident Involvement

The Resident Liaison Manager (locally) will monitor the results of research carried out with residents (such as consultation exercises, focus groups) to ensure they are followed up and that the results feed into operations and the policy making process in order to improve service delivery.

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Resident involvement activities will be monitored by the Resident Liaison Manager and reported to senior and local managers and central and local committees (where these exist) at least annually. Monitoring may include some or all of the following:

- Ability in attracting residents to take part
- Ability to attract residents from all sections of the community
- Types of resident involvement activities offered
- Training residents have received
- Whether (and how well) the findings from involvement activities have been implemented through the policy making process to improve service delivery
- Types of issues raised and general ways these have been resolved
- Impact assessment (looking at costs of resident involvement and benefits)
- Value for money that resident involvement may offer as an additional service
- Community initiatives supported.

11. Accessibility of Information

All of our policies are accessible in a variety of formats. This includes publication on our website, hard copies upon request and these can also be supplied in Braille and residents' chosen language.

DISCLOSURES OF INFORMATION

Resident information is frequently passed to us and used by our project teams in relation to carrying out work within occupied properties. We exchange this information with our clients and public agencies and only in relation to the work being undertaken to ensure the safety and welfare of residents. We do not sell or give personal information to any other organisations. We also will not disclose personal information unless we believe we are required to do so by law or act in good faith that disclosure is reasonably necessary to satisfy any legal process or is to ensure the safety and well being of individuals.

Individuals have the right of access to information about themselves under the Data Protection Act 1998 and where requested in writing, we will submit information held by Wates Living Space.

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- Value for money that resident involvement may offer as an additional service
- Community initiatives supported.