



TAI CANOLBARTH CYMRU MID-WALES HOUSING

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Community and Tenant Engagement Policy

Strategic Aim:	Through openness and accountability we will ensure that all tenants have the opportunity to be involved in the decisions that affect their homes and are empowered to improve the communities in which they live.
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Departments Affected:	All Departments
Approved By/Date:	Board of Management January 2015.
Lead Officer:	Nia Boyd, Community Participation Officer.
Statutory Compliance:	Welsh Government Delivery Outcomes: Engaging with others to enhance and maximise outcomes for service users and the community. Placing the people who want to use our services at the heart of our work – putting the citizen first. Welsh Government National Tenant Participation Strategy for Wales.

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Contents:

1. Community and Tenant Engagement Policy

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Policy Statement
- 1.3 How will it be delivered?

2. Community and Tenant Engagement Strategy

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Definition of Community and Tenant Engagement
- 2.3 Our Current Position
- 2.4 Strategy Objectives
- 2.5 Scope of Community and Tenant Engagement
- 2.6 Delivery
- 2.7 Monitoring and Review

3. Community and Tenant Engagement Strategy Action Plan

- 3.1 Objective 1
- 3.2 Objective 2
- 3.3 Objective 3
- 3.4 Objective 4

4. Tenants' and Residents' Reward Scheme

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Reward Scheme Aim
- 4.3 Reward Scheme Outline

1.1 Introduction

Mid-Wales Housing Association believes that all its tenants and residents should have the opportunity to be involved in the decisions that affect their homes and should feel empowered to improve the communities in which they live. At Mid-Wales Housing Association we have made a commitment in our Business Plan (2014-19) to “provide an excellent customer experience” which can only be achieved by engaging with tenants and residents to deliver better housing services and excellent homes and communities in which people are proud of.

Whilst the Association is committed to ensuring its tenants and residents have opportunity to be consulted and involved in the decisions which affect them, it also recognises the importance of involving tenants in wider community issues and existing services in their area.

1.2. Policy Statement

“Through openness and accountability we will ensure that all tenants have the opportunity to be involved in the decisions that affect their homes and are empowered to improve the communities in which they live.”

1.3. How will it be delivered?

Mid-Wales Housing will deliver the Community and Tenant Engagement Policy in conjunction with:

- The Community and Tenant Engagement Strategy and Action Plan;
- Tenants’ and Residents’ Reward Scheme;
- Community Chest Fund.

We recognise that we can only improve the services that our tenants receive through greater involvement and feedback from our tenants and residents. Regardless of circumstances, geographical location and individual needs, tenants and residents will be given the opportunity to get involved in shaping the Association’s housing services and the communities to which they belong.

The core values of Mid-Wales Housing Association will be an integral part of delivering effective community and tenant engagement:

- Equality – aiming to involve all tenants regardless of location, age, disability, race or gender by providing methods best suited to their needs.
- Caring – ensure that all departments within the Association understand the importance of involving tenants to improve the service provided.
- Excellence – looking for continuous improvement of housing services and estate regeneration.
- Community – working to improve communities by working with local tenants, residents and other organisations in the local area.



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2. Community and Tenant Engagement Strategy

2.1. Introduction

All social landlords in Wales are required by Welsh Government to produce a strategy which encourages meaningful tenant participation under four key objectives:

- Improve services provided by the landlord, ensuring they meet the different needs and circumstances of all its tenants.
- Ensure that planning, decision making and review processes across all landlord services are open and accountable to tenants through mainstreaming tenant participation.
- Increase the skills and confidence of tenants to enable them to have greater influence in planning and decision making.
- Improve the quality of life and the environment in the communities in which they live.

Social landlords are expected to review their strategy annually, and every third year submit it to Welsh Government for review. To date there have been two submission rounds since the implementation of the National Strategy in 2007, with the second in 2012 and the third in 2015.

Mid-Wales Housing Association aims to meet these key objectives through its Community and Tenant Engagement Action Plan, a three-year plan setting out how the Association can involve its tenants and residents in improving its housing services and positively contribute to the communities in which we build houses. Whilst ensuring that all tenants who want to become actively involved have the necessary support, knowledge, skills and information available to them to be able to participate effectively and in a way that suits them.

The Community and Tenant Engagement Policy, Strategy & Action Plan has been developed in consultation with tenants, residents and staff to ensure it meets the needs of all and can be effectively implemented throughout the Association.

2.2 Definition of Community and Tenant Engagement

Community engagement can be defined as:

“A process whereby individuals and community organisations work together around a common issue, building ongoing, permanent relationships for the benefit of a community.”

Participation – the next Generation, TPAS Cymru (2012)

The Association recognises that it has a greater role than providing people in Mid-Wales with housing to live in, and has a wider role to play by engaging with the community in which it operates as well as the customers it serves.

Whereas tenant participation or tenant engagement can be defined as:

“A two-way process involving both tenants and their landlord in the sharing of ideas, enabling tenants to influence decisions regarding the management of their homes”.

Participation – the next Generation, TPAS Cymru (2012)

Tenant participation is about engaging with tenants and residents to enable them to participate in and have influence over the issues that affect them whilst community engagement seeks to link people with the wider community in which they live. We recognise at Mid-Wales Housing that our tenants should not live in isolation but are part of a wider community.

2.3. Our current position

Mid-Wales Housing Association recognises that not all tenants wish to take part in the same way and have therefore developed a range of methods that can be used depending on the issue being discussed and the circumstances of those involved.

We have developed a menu of participation options for tenants and residents ranging from activities which require little involvement on an ad-hoc basis, to higher levels, which require more commitment and time but provide mechanisms for greater influence. The different options are outlined in the Association's Participation Pyramid on the page overleaf.



In the past the number of tenants involved in tenant participation activities within Mid-Wales Housing Association has been relatively low. Feedback from tenants collected during a four-month survey period in 2014 revealed the main barriers to be:

- **Geography** - the vast geographical spread of our properties causes timing and travel issues for our tenants in outlying areas. The Association needs to improve on methods for engaging with larger groups of tenants across the geographical area it operates. More face-to-face contact and local interaction with the Association was commonly suggested by our tenants. Mid-Wales Housing recognises that it needs to have a greater presence in the community.
- **Time** - people lead busy lives and are happy not to participate in activities which are onerous. However a vast majority of tenants and residents feel it's important to be kept informed of issues which affect them and are given the opportunity to participate if they wish. The Association therefore recognises that it needs to improve methods in which tenants and residents can engage easily from the comfort of their own home through e-mail, website, text and Facebook.
- **What's the point?** The view that participation is not worthwhile as it does not deliver outcomes. The Association needs to be better at feeding back successes of tenant involvement and the positive impact that they can have on improving service standards.
- **Other problems** include lack of meeting places, childcare issues and working people unable to attend day-time activities.

2.4. Strategy Objectives

The four key objectives of Mid-Wales Housing's Community and Tenant Engagement Strategy are:

- To improve the services provided by MWAHA and ensure they meet the different needs and circumstances of all our tenants.
- To ensure that planning, decision-making and review processes across all landlord services are open and accountable to tenants through mainstreaming tenant participation.
- To increase the skills and confidence of tenants to enable them to have greater influence in planning and decision making.
- To improve the quality of life and the environment in the communities in which tenants live.

2.5 Scope of Tenant Participation

We recognise that we can only improve the services that our tenants receive through greater involvement and feedback through methods which are convenient. Regardless of circumstances, geographical location and individual needs, tenants and residents should be given the opportunity to get involved in shaping the Association's services and the communities to which they belong.

We intend to work towards achieving the objectives by:

- Promoting tenant engagement within the Association to enable a truly main-streamed approach, with tenant participation being a high priority to all staff. All staff members will be expected to engage with tenants and residents, seek their views and opinions to better understand the needs of our customers. Departments will be supported and encouraged by the Community Participation Officer and Staff Tenant Champions.
- Taking tenant participation out in to the community at a more local level to overcome our geographical barrier through Chips and Chat meetings, estate improvement projects, sheltered scheme drop-in surgeries and attending local community events.
- Providing a wider and more creative platform for tenants and residents to get involved by better use of e-mail, text, webinar and social media interaction. Ensuring that tenant profiling information is kept up-to-date and communication from the Association is through their preferred language and method of communication.
- Feeding back and advertising housing service and estate improvements made as a result of tenant involvement to ensure tenant volunteers think tenant participation is worthwhile and makes a difference.
- Providing training and development opportunities which builds on individual and community skills.
- Promoting the Tenants' and Residents' Reward Scheme and success stories to encourage more volunteers on all levels of the Participation Pyramid.
- Encourage tenants and residents to engage with each other and local organisations to help develop the communities in which we live.

2.6 Delivery

Through the LTPS Action Plan.

2.7 Monitoring and Review

The Community and Tenant Engagement Strategy will be subject to an annual review by staff and tenants. Individual projects will be to ascertain the effectiveness of the outcomes to ensure it is achieving what it set out to do, and to look at ways in which it can be improved.



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3. Community and Tenant Engagement Action Plan

2015-2018

Objective 1: To improve the services provided by MWA, ensuring they meet the needs and circumstance of all our tenants.

Outcome	Action	Action By	Measured	Target
1. Tenants are well informed and understand the services MWA provides.	1.1. Ensure that all new tenants are provided with a handbook at the point of tenancy handover and are well informed of MWA's services.	Community Housing Team & Customer Services Team.	Three- and 12-month tenancy feedback and checklist.	All new tenants to be made aware and understand the services MWA provides.
	1.2. Ensure that all new leaseholders are provided with a handbook at the start of the leasehold and are well informed of MWA's services.	Scheme Manager and Customer Services Team.	Property handover feedback and checklist.	All new leaseholders to be made aware and understand the services MWA provides.
	1.3. Update tenants' handbook with the help of existing tenants, to ensure the most relevant and helpful information is being given on MWA's services.	Customer Services Team.	New tenancy satisfaction survey to request feedback on the effectiveness of Tenants' Handbook.	Update Tenants' Handbook in 2015 and every three years thereafter unless substantial changes have occurred outdating the information prior to review date.
	1.4. Keeping tenants informed by providing regular feedback on the ways in which tenants have helped improve services by giving real examples and	Performance Information Officer and all teams requesting feedback from tenants to advertise the outcomes. 'You Said, We Did'.	Monitoring the quality and accessibility of performance and service standard results after every major consultation or feedback exercise.	All feedback or consultation results to be consistently advertised quarterly in tenants' newsletter, on Facebook, Twitter and the website.

	communicating it back to tenants.			
	1.5. Increase the ways in which MWA keeps tenants informed by utilising Facebook, Twitter, texting service, Interspire e-mail bulletins and continuing to use and develop MWHS Group, Tenants' Policy Review Group (TPRG) and Tenants' and Residents' Forum (TaRF).	All staff. Supported by Community Participation Officer and Tenant staff champions.	Tenant satisfaction survey on communication methods.	All staff to have social media and Interspire e-mail training in 2015 to maximise communication channels throughout the Association.
2. Every tenant is given the opportunity to help shape MWA's services regardless of their geographical location, age or personal circumstances.	2.1. Hold informal Chips & Chat meetings after normal working hours to make participation more accessible for those who are unable to travel, uncomfortable with formal meetings or can't attend daytime meetings.	Community Participation Officer lead officer. All staff to attend at least one tenant engagement activity or meeting a year.	Feedback and attendance levels at meetings to monitor outcomes. Staff attendance to be recorded in Covalent as personal targets.	One meeting a month in a different town or village each month.
	2.2. Hold activities or events to encourage involvement from young adults, children and families.	Community Participation Officer, Community Housing Officers and Communications Officer. All staff to attend at least one tenant engagement activity or meeting a	Feedback and attendance levels at events to monitor outcomes. Staff attendance to be recorded in Covalent as personal targets.	Deliver events which are fun and family focused such as <i>Love Where You Live</i> , summer fun days, youth camps, estate improvement projects and child friendly official openings for new

		year.		developments.
	2.3. Hold events at sheltered schemes which appeal to the older generation to help develop new skills, encourage good health and wellbeing.	Community Participation Officer, Community Housing Officers and Communications Officer.	Feedback and attendance levels at events to monitor outcomes.	Minimum of one event to be held at each sheltered scheme in 2015. To include activities such as gardening, workshops in genealogy, arts and crafts and presentations from the services in the community.
	2.4. Hold activities or events to encourage involvement from tenants and carers within MWA's supported housing schemes.	Community Participation Officer, Community Housing Officers and Communications Officer.	Feedback and attendance levels at events to monitor outcomes.	Minimum of one event to be held for each supported housing scheme in 2015.

Objective 2: To ensure that planning, decision-making and review processes across all landlord services are open and accountable to tenants through mainstreaming tenant participation.

Outcome	Action	Action By	Measured	Target
1. Tenants are able to contribute to planning and monitoring of services and policy.	1.1. Ensure tenants are consulted when MWA initiates changes in policy or procedure which could affect tenants or their homes.	Relevant staff member responsible for initiating changes. Assisted by Community Participation Officer.	Final page of Policy or Strategy template to outline how and when tenants were consulted and subsequent outcomes.	Consultation to take place with affected group(s) of tenants if possible or as a minimum passed to MWHSG, TaRF and TPRG for comment and feedback.
	1.2. Tenants are involved with policy review through	Relevant staff member responsible for the policy.	Final page of Policy or Strategy documents to	All policies to be reviewed by the TPRG

	TPRG which encourages members to feedback remotely or in a workshop setting.	Assisted by Community Participation Officer.	outline date of TPRG meeting and outcomes.	before going to Board of Management for approval.
	1.3. Audits on MWA's services to be carried out by Tenant Service Auditors who will then make recommendations to Board on changes which need to be made.	Community Participation Officer, Performance Officer and Relevant Team Leader.	Monitor the effectiveness of recommendations made by the Service Auditors in improving housing services.	Service Auditors to audit one service per year.
	1.4. Appoint a tenant representative onto MWA judging panel to be a part of the selection process for new contracts and frameworks.	Community Participation Officer, Planned and Responsive Maintenance Teams and Development Team.	Collate feedback from the contracts judging panel.	A tenant to be involved in the selection process for all new contracts and frameworks.
2. All staff and Board members understand the range of needs and circumstances of tenants and have a commitment to tenant participation.	2.1. Staff and Board members to receive Equality & Diversity training.	HR.	Training records.	All members to receive Equality & Diversity training in 2015.
	2.2. Staff tenant champions from each department to be an advocate for tenant participation within their department.	Community Participation Officer and staff tenant champions.	Personal objective for staff tenant champions to be measured on Covalent.	Quarterly meetings between Community Participation Officer and staff tenant champions to take place.

	2.3. Tenant participation given a high priority in the Business Plan of the Association ensuring meaningful engagement in shaping operation and services of the Association.	All staff.	Evidenced in the Business Plan and monitored through Covalent.	To provide “Excellent” Customer Experience and to meet Welsh Government Delivery Outcomes “engaging with others to enhance and maximise outcomes for our service users and the community” and “putting the citizen first”
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Objective 3: MWA tenants have the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to get involved in ways that suit them.

Outcome	Action	Action By	Measured	Target
1. Tenants are able to be involved according to their preference.	1.1. Providing a range of ways that tenants can get involved whether they have a lot, or a little time to give.	Community Participation Officer.	Monitor volume of tenants participating at all levels of the Participation Pyramid.	To maintain and expand the methods in which tenants can engage and participate in the Associations’ activities.
	1.2. Keep records of preferred methods of communication up to date.	All Staff to input. IT to monitor progress.	Increase in the number of tenants e-mail addresses and mobile phone numbers stored on Open Housing Database.	Continuous updates to tenant contact information on Open Housing database as standard practice when speaking with tenant.
2. Tenants have the skills and confidence to participate.	2.1. The Service Auditors to work closely with relevant Team Leaders to give them a greater knowledge and	Relevant Team Leader managing the Audit.	Monitor feedback from Tenant Service Auditors.	Ongoing in 2015/16.

	understanding of the area they are auditing.			
	2.2. Promote and provide free, Agored Cymru accredited courses to tenants in partnership with training providers. Wide selection of courses available through Welsh Education Authority e.g. First Aid, Home Budgeting, IT, languages and writing skills.	Community Participation Officer, Community Housing Team, Income Management Team and Maintenance Team (all tenant facing staff).	Monitor number of courses organised, attendance levels and learner feedback.	Ongoing in 2015/16.
	2.3. Tenant Board Members offered and encouraged to request training if necessary.	Community Participation Officer and HR.	Feedback from tenant board members following training.	Maximum number of tenant Board Members in place with expertise in finance, social housing sector and equality and diversity.

Objective 4: To improve the quality of life and the communities in which MWHHA tenants live.

Outcome	Action	Action By	Measured	Target
1. Working with other services and organisations in the community for more effective delivery.	1.1. Engage with other housing providers, local agencies and voluntary organisation to establish joint community projects and events for tenants.	Community Participation Officer and Community Housing Team.	Monitor success of project in terms of outcomes for tenants, partners and the Association.	All community events organised by MWHHA to invite other organisations and service providers from the local area.

	1.2. Engage and consult with the wider community in which MWAH intends to develop new homes.	Development Team.	Evidence consultation methods and subsequent outcomes.	All new housing development plans to show evidence of consultation with wider community.
2. Tenants interact more with each other, MWAH and the wider community.	2.1 Hold local community projects where tenants and their families are keen to be involved e.g. gardening and estate improvement projects.	Community Participation Officer and Community Housing Team.	Feedback from tenants, staff and service providers to measure outcomes.	Deliver events/projects which encourage community involvement and regeneration.
	2.2. Use the Community Chest Fund to encourage tenants to positively impact on the estates and communities where they live. Greater sense of pride and improved neighbour relationships.	Community Participation Officer and Community Housing Team.	Feedback from tenants and staff to measure outcomes.	Promote the Community Chest Fund to tenants and award funding to groups wishing to develop projects on their estate or in the community in which they live.
	2. Facilitate the setting up of local Community Groups by supporting tenant groups to form a constitution, apply for grant funding and develop their project.	Community Participation Officer, Community Housing Team and Grants and Funding Officer.	Success of projects in gaining grant funding and monitor tenant feedback in relation to project outcomes.	To encourage tenants to form community groups and support development of projects.

Abbreviation Key

TP	= Tenant Participation
MWHS	= Mid-Wales Housing Service Group
TaRF	= Tenants' & Residents' Forum
TPRG	= Tenants' Policy Review Group



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4. Tenants' & Residents' Reward Scheme

1. Introduction

The Association acknowledges the benefits that tenant and resident engagement can play in improving customer services and organisational effectiveness. The Association values tenant input and is committed to providing “excellent” customer experience which can only be achieved through effective tenant participation.

Tenants and residents are encouraged to work with Mid-Wales Housing to help shape the services we provide. There are numerous participation options for tenants and residents depending on how much time they are willing to commit. The outcome of each participation method however is invaluable to the Association when looking to improve the services affecting its customers.

2. Reward Scheme Aim

The scheme has two main aims:

- to encourage a greater level of participation by way of offering incentives; and
- to ensure participating tenants and residents are rewarded and feel valued.

3. Reward Scheme Outline

3.1. The Association’s Participation Pyramid (page 8) outlines the different ways in which tenants and residents can be involved depending on the amount of time they have available and the level of influence they would like to have. Activities listed in Level 1 require less time and commitment than those listed in Level 4, as you move up the Participation Pyramid so will the amount of time, commitment and responsibility needed from an individual. In recognition of this the Tenant and Resident Reward Scheme will offer greater incentives to tenants and residents that participate in the activities listed at the top of the pyramid. Whilst engagement at all levels is valued by the Association it is recognised that substantial involvement by individuals requires a great deal of time and commitment.

3.2. Tenant and resident Board Members are not eligible for reward under the Tenant and Resident reward scheme. In Wales Board Members of housing associations are volunteers and the Welsh Government has previously taken the position and issued instruction that it does not want Board Members to receive remuneration for this role. However, they are entitled to receive expenses. Due to this position, Board Members are not entitled to receive payment or reward for the work as Board Members. The Tenant Reward Scheme gives a reward to tenants to participate in activities organised by the association and generally these activities are for the wider benefit of the association. However, this cannot be offered to tenant board members because it would contradict the standing guidance from Welsh Government which regulates housing associations in Wales. The Welsh Government has issued a consultation document Draft Guidance on Housing Association Board Member Remuneration which requested responses by 8th December 2014. This is considering allowing housing associations in Wales to remunerate Board Members for the activities they undertake in their role. Therefore, it is possible that the Welsh

Government will change its position in the future and allow tenant board members to be entitled to participate in the Tenants' and Residents' Reward Scheme.

3.3. For tenants and residents participating in activities noted in level 4, rewards are earned by way of collecting stickers on a reward card in exchange for time given by tenants and residents who participate. A full reward card can then be exchanged for shopping vouchers. Once 10 stickers have been collected the full card can be exchanged for a £10 shopping voucher of choice:

- £10 Tesco gift card to be used at any Tesco and Tesco Direct store. It can be used online (over 18s only) and is valid for five years after purchase.
- £10 Asda gift card to be used at any Asda store. It can be used online (over 18s only) and is valid for five years after purchase.
- £10 Morrison's gift card to be used at any Morrison's store. It cannot be used online and does not have a used by date.

Two stickers will be awarded once four hours (approximately) have been volunteered so 20 hours equates to £10.

3.4. The Association will pay a mileage allowance or public transport fees to any person needing to travel in order to be involved in any participation activity outlined in Level 4 of the Participation Pyramid. Mid-Wales Housing will also pay for any childcare, care and training costs associated with involvement at this level.

3.5. To encourage good response rates for postal, telephone or online surveys it is recommended that all valid responses are entered into a prize draw, however this will be at the discretion of the team undertaking the survey.

3.6. To encourage more members as well as value the ongoing commitment from the Mid-Wales 50 Group all valid responses will be entered into a prize draw following a survey or consultation paper.

3.7. Tenants, residents and staff attending Chips and Chat meetings will be offered a portion of chips and one drink of choice. This encourages people to attend the meeting in a relaxed environment without the financial pressure of purchasing a drink or snack.

3.8. The reward offered should never be cash to avoid problems with benefits and Schedule 1 restrictions. The rewards made will be within the permitted activities of Schedule 1 and will not affect benefit entitlement as it is classed as a gift.

Strategic Risk Factors	<p>That the Association will fail to meet minimum regulatory requirements by not involving tenants in key service delivery areas.</p> <p>That tenant involvement increases so substantially that the Community Participation Officer is unable to manage demand.</p>	
Equality Impact Audit	<i>How does/will this policy ensure needs are met fairly, particularly with regard to race, gender, disability etc?</i>	It sets out the policy framework for the Association to ensure it treats all sectors of society fairly.
	<i>Is it felt that this Policy might affect different groups adversely. If so what is the justification for this, and is it legally permissible?</i>	Please see Equality and Diversity Full Equality Impact Assessment for this Policy.
	<i>Have any representative groups in the locality been asked for their opinion and if so what was the outcome?</i>	Please see Equality and Diversity Full Equality Impact Assessment for this Policy.
Tenant Engagement	<i>How does/will this policy ensure the needs of tenants are met?</i>	This strategy is solely concerned with tenant participation and ensuring that tenants needs are met. This strategy will not affect tenants' rights and obligations, though it will improve their involvement in the delivery of key service areas.
	<i>How is it felt this Policy will impact on the rights and obligations of tenants?</i>	
	<i>Have tenants been consulted and were the outcomes of that consultation taken into account when considering the introduction of this Policy?</i>	Yes. Tenants from T&RF, Mid-Wales 50, Policy Review Group, Chips & Chat, estate walkabouts and The Big Day Out have been consulted on ascertaining the effectiveness of the reward scheme.

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