

Tenants Leading Change case study – Hull City Council

Key facts

- Hull City Council owns 25,300 homes in Kingston upon Hull in the Humberside area
- Hull's investment in tenant involvement has been a key element of it turning around what was considered a failing housing service in 2003
- tenants have particularly had significant impact on improving Hull's voids performance, the contact centre, anti-social behaviour handling and standards in multi-storey blocks
- Hull considers that its tenant inspection programme has had a significant impact on increasing tenant satisfaction from about 50% in 2003 to 80% in 2014
- Hull's tenant involvement has led to individuals improving their confidence, skills and employability, and to an improved staff culture

Hull City Council owns about 25,300 homes in the city of Kingston upon Hull. Hull operates its housing service under a set of eight involvement principles that include open information, tenants deciding their own depth and degree of involvement, everything in housing open to influence, involvement being everyone's business, early enough influence, getting everyone involved, demonstrating that everyone's views have been taken into account and providing feedback, and planning for successful involvement.

Background

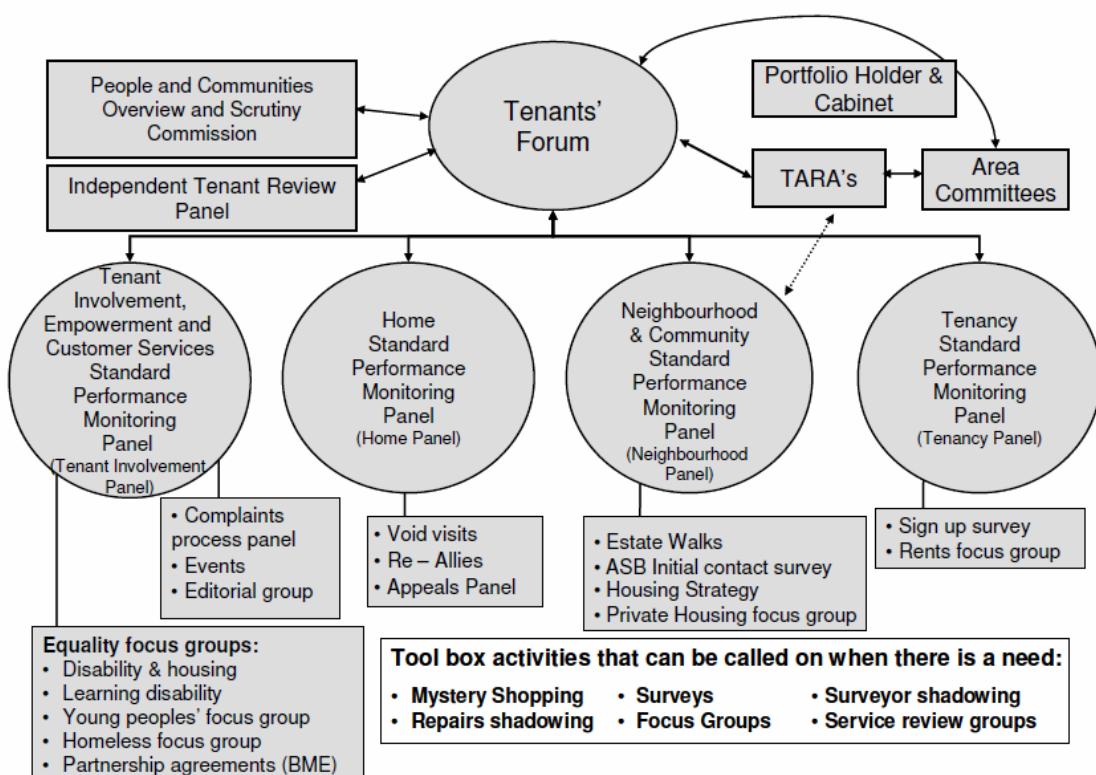
Hull has been on a journey to arrive at its current tenant involvement strategy. In 2003, Audit Commission inspections into Hull's housing service concluded that services were poor. Tenant involvement mechanisms were weak and overall tenant satisfaction and satisfaction with opportunities to influence the service were both about 50%. Significant changes needed to be made.

The introduction of a Tenants Forum in 2004 as a city wide hub for involvement with the housing service - linked directly to relevant Portfolio Holders and the Cabinet and to local tenants groups – was a key part of Hull's change process. However in 2009, the Audit Commission were still reporting key weaknesses with services including variable responses to customer queries, service standards not comprehensively measured, poor property conditions, slow delivery of the Decent Homes Standard, poor voids

performance and poor decision-making regarding difficult to let and non-traditional properties, and poor provision of aids and adaptations.

Further work was done with tenants to develop a structure for tenant involvement set out in a “key to our future” compact agreement in early 2011. This linked the Tenants Forum to an Independent Tenant Scrutiny Panel and four Performance Monitoring Panels, with the Tenant Involvement Panel being responsible for monitoring the “key to our future”.

The Tenants Forum meets monthly, is well attended by tenants and often attended by Portfolio Holders. It is in a position to delegate issues of concern to one of the Performance Monitoring Panels which in turn can address issues through standing groups (particularly a set of equality groups) or task and finish groups – all of which involve tenants.



Hull's developing tenant involvement structure has played a significant role in resolving Hull's earlier service problems and developing service performance.

Financial benefits

Specified financial benefits were not identified as part of the case study. However Hull considers that use of tenant inspectors saves on officer resources and consultant fees.

Service benefits

Hull reports a number of key service benefits that have developed in partnership with tenants:

- voids performance, a service area that the Audit Commission had particularly found weaknesses in, has been substantially turned around. Tenants directly input into the relet standard, leading to relet times falling since 2011 and new tenant satisfaction with their home increasing to 94%. Tenants set and monitor voids performance indicators and survey incoming tenants. In shaping relet arrangements, tenants have also played a major role in enabling 20 empty bedsits to be brought back into use and bungalows being remodelled to make them more desirable – again an area that the Audit Commission had identified weaknesses in.
- the Multi Storey Living Focus Group has developed monitoring standards for communal cleaning services based on the Great Britain Tidy Standard. This has led to a marked improvement in cleanliness. They are also producing a guide for residents on multi story living and are working with Hull to expand an initiative to assist first time and younger tenants do basic DIY.
- the Tenant Scrutiny Panel has assessed the contact centre, anti-social behaviour and recharges to the Housing Revenue Account during the past two years, leading to a range of service improvements.
- tenant identification of a mismatch between data on keeping appointments and fixing first time has led to a current focus on contractor repairs reporting which has led numbers of appointments kept increasing to 99.7%.



Tenant satisfaction

Tenant satisfaction has increased substantially since Hull's 50% low points in 2003. Overall tenant satisfaction is now at 80% and tenant satisfaction with repairs has increased over time to a current 98.1% - which Hull tenants and officers attribute particularly to the full and frank feedback that tenants give to Hull's tenant inspectors.

Other benefits

Hull tenants and staff also consider the following to be benefits of tenant involvement:

- direct tenant involvement in the development of communications materials (including posters and currently road testing new digital services) has resulted in time and resources not being wasted on communications that are not tenant focused or friendly
- staff sickness and longer term absence have reduced substantially – only 3 out of 447 employees have taken time off for stress related matters in the past year. This is partially attributed to the positive working relationship with tenants, where more tenants are participating in Hull than ever before with a strong collective desire for further progress, resulting in happier staff
- individually, tenants trained through Hull's training academy raises tenant expertise and provides them with back to work options (two of the current tenant involvement staff team began as tenant volunteers). Generally, Hull's growing tenant involvement culture has resulted in strengthening of confidence and skills – "it has made me realise I am far more capable than I first thought – I have a new level of confidence"

