

HOMES FIRST

Impact Assessment 2021/2022



Impact Assessment

This report aims to demonstrate the impact made by involved tenants in shaping **Homes First** services, both strategically and within our communities during 2021/2022. It proved to be a challenging year, because the Covid-19 pandemic continued to disrupt many of our usual face to face activities. To combat these difficulties, our focus, was enabling tenants to remain involved via online meetings and consultations during lockdowns; by taking part in face-to-face meetings or activities when Covid-19 allowed; and by developing a hybrid online / physical meeting option during periods of uncertainty.



New this year... Community Pop-Ups

We were aware that tenants had missed seeing Homes First staff out on estates during the pandemic, so during the summer of 2021 we held 'pop-up' events to provide a visible Homes First presence. Before each 'pop up' we advertised in advance to say where we would be and when. Then on the day, we set up a Homes First information base to consult with tenants on planned major works or environmental improvements, to address local issues of concern, or just to be in contact and say "hello".



Activities

Initial work to scope and agree the Pop-Up procedure, sourcing and purchasing equipment such as Homes First gazebos, tables, and chairs etc., plus free giveaway gifts for tenants.

De Montfort Estate (Lewes)

Landport Estate (Lewes)

Shinewater (Eastbourne)

Community improvement consultations

Totals



Cost

£2774



Staff Time

24 hours



Tenant Time

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6 hours

17 hours

18 hours

3 hours

12 hours

41 hours

16 hours

42 hours

76 hours

103 hours

Community pop up outcomes:

- A litter pick scheme was established on the De Montfort Estate, and litter picks have continued to be held on every school holiday. At the first event, 17 local adults and children attended.
- The Landport Community BBQ was attended by approximately 320 tenants, local dignitaries, and staff. Three new involved tenants were also recruited at the event.
- On the Shinewater estate, Homes First staff consulted with 41 tenants by knocking on doors to gain input into the Commonplace Project
- Seven community improvement consultations were carried out to determine and agree alternatives to existing communal bin chutes in blocks.

Virtual 300



We have been actively encouraging tenants with email accounts to join our online digital group we've called the Virtual 300. To date we have recruited 143 tenants and our aim is to increase the number to 300 tenants across Homes First.

How does it work?

When we have policies, issues, or topics that we'd like tenant views on, we use online methods to consult. These have included emailing short surveys, competition judging, policy review and online focus groups. Tenants can choose whether they want to take part, but we incentivise involvement with prize draws and end of year prizes for the most active participants.

Virtual 300 outcomes

Influencing service delivery



Cost

**£125
in prizes**



Staff Time

3 hours



Tenant Time

56 hours

24 tenants provided their view on which were the most important questions to use in our tenant satisfaction survey. The survey was changed as a result.

Eight tenants commented on a new "How to contact Homes First" leaflet and this was reviewed because of their feedback.

Feedback
The Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD) asked us to survey the Virtual 300 to see how they'd been affected by increases in energy charges. 14 tenants replied, and TOLD used this information to campaign for additional support to tenants.

The Virtual 300 chose Max from Newhaven's photo to be the winner of the Tenants' Open Voice 'Love where you live' competition.



Tenant Involvement and Empowerment panel (TIE)

The TIE panel are a strategic group made up of tenant representatives from Eastbourne Homes Limited and Lewes District Council. TIE meets with the Homes First senior leadership team on a quarterly basis to review any issues or policies that affect tenants across both areas and to oversee the tenant involvement strategy, and service procurement to ensure value for money.

The group also monitors the Homes First Tenants' Scrutiny team and works closely with Residents Voice and the Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD).



TIE outcomes

TIE ensured that Homes First delivered on its commitments to tenants outlined in the Tenant Involvement strategy (2019-2022)



Cost

**£64
(Transport)**



Staff Time

40 hours



Tenant Time

34 hours

- TIE maintained a focus on the Value for money agenda
- TIE oversaw delivery of a successful complaints scrutiny review and recommended a Rent Arrears review as a result of resident feedback
- TIE approved Housemark & Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) membership

TIE Influenced service delivery

- Reviewed the delivery of the cleaning service following RV and TOLD feedback
- Supported delivery of tenant's conference on 14 June 2022

Homes First Tenant Scrutiny Team

The Tenant Scrutiny team is a strategic group made up of tenants of Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Homes Limited. It carries out in depth reviews of Homes First Service areas which are chosen by the TIE panel. Each review generates a report which outlines the strengths and weaknesses of a service area, together with recommendations aimed at making improvements. This year the team have completed a review on complaints management and are currently midway through a review of rents arrears management.

TOLD outcomes

The scrutiny teams Complaints Management report made 24 recommendations, 22 of which were implemented.

Outcomes included:

- Two additional Customer Experience team members were recruited to manage housing complaints.

- Weekly meetings were established with relevant managers to ensure repairs related complaints were dealt with correctly and to target. This led to a reduced backlog of complaints and a reduction in the number of complaints coming in.

- The complaints handling team are now able to devote time to learning from complaints, spotting trends and as a result improving services.



Cost

£915
(Training)

£270
(Transport)

£70
(refreshments)



Staff Time

104 hours



Tenant Time

102 hours

- Tenants previously unable to use the online form to make an official complaint, can now do so over the telephone.



Tenants Organisation of Lewes District

The Tenants Organisation of Lewes District (**TOLD**) holds three open events per year, to which all tenants of Lewes District are invited. The events often include guest speakers on topical housing issues and sometimes social events.

TOLD has a working committee made up of 12 tenants who are elected at the Annual General Meeting. The committee meets quarterly with senior housing leads to discuss housing issues relevant to Lewes District Council (LDC) tenants and agrees how other tenants are consulted on these issues. The group also monitors LDC housing performance and works closely with TIE on Homes First policy.

Lastly, the TOLD committee oversees the spending of an annual community improvements budget which is open to bids from tenants across the district.

The living wall at Shelley Close, funded by the community improvement budget.



TOLD outcomes



Tenants Of Lewes District



Cost

£143
(Travel)

£96
(refreshments)



Staff Time

108 hours



Tenant Time

154 hours



Influenced service delivery

After identifying areas of concern in the 2022 HRA budget, TOLD raised these with the Council cabinet.

TOLD investigated the STAR survey results and agreed to hold tenant focus group meetings on repairs and communications to help develop service improvement plans.

TOLD agreed the 'Not Costing the Earth' priorities.

As a result of TOLD performance monitoring, actions were agreed by the by the Senior Leadership Team:

- The KPI's reported by Mears were viewed as unrealistic and taken back 'in house'
- TOLD's views on the day-to-day repairs service were used to design a new approach when existing contact ends.

TOLD increased resident understanding and knowledge of services and considered tenant feedback.

TOLD liaised with tenants to inform new policies:

- Pets in homes
- Tenancy policy
- Allocations policy

TOLD agreed topics for digital consultation with tenants using the Virtual 300.

TOLD agreed and contributed to articles appearing in the Tenants' Open Voice magazine which is delivered 3 times a year.

TOLD held two open meetings for tenants, with presentations on new builds, repairs, and energy saving initiatives.

Improved local communities

TOLD Approved spending of £20,000 on a range of community improvement projects which included a community start up garden, litter picks, garden furniture and storage.

Residents Voice

Over the past 12 months Residents Voice (RV) have moved to an open meeting format and set up a committee which includes three former chairs of the area panels. The terms of reference for the group has also been redrafted, and this new approach has attracted more people whilst retaining a core number of 'involved' residents.

Room hire and refreshment costs have been higher than in previous years due to additional interim meetings of RV representatives to consider the position of Area Panels.

Residents Voice outcomes



Cost

£182
(Travel)

£570
(refreshments)



Staff Time

55 hours



Tenant Time

182 hours

Improved local communities

Approved £20,000 of community improvement including:

- Pathway repairs
- Allotment and growing initiatives

Increased residents understanding and knowledge of services:

- Attended training and reviewed the Housing Revenue Account for Eastbourne

Considered tenant feedback and influenced:

- Information on solar panels and service charge presentation
- Greater engagement and communication with the EHL Board

Represented tenant views:

- RV agreed and contributed to articles appearing in the Tenants' Open Voice magazine, delivered three times a year.
- Created the Eastbourne Area Panel
- Monitored EHL service performance information
- Investigated issues in reaching the Contact Centre
- Discussed the future of the repair service
- Investigated the STAR survey results and helped develop service improvement plans
- Recommended the top slicing of the community improvement funding for retirement housing
- Conducted policy reviews:
 - Pet policy
 - Tenancy policy



Tenants and Residents Associations (TRA's)

(Lewes District Council tenants only)

There are a small number of TRA's established across the Lewes District. Only the Landport Residents Association (LRA) was active in 2021, serving almost 800 households in Lewes. It works on behalf of the community to make improvements in the area and liaises with Homes First on housing issues that affect local tenants.

Tenants don't need to set up a formal TRA to improve their communities. Residents from Bricky and Cinque Foil in Peacehaven held community events in 2021 which included a 'Christmas light up' and litter picking. These were organised locally on an adhoc basis, with support from the 'Making it Happen' project. The Tenant Involvement team are happy to support any tenants wanting to do things in their neighbourhoods, whether they want to set up a TRA or not.

TRA Landport Residents Association outcomes



Cost

£24
(Travel)



Staff Time

28 hours



Tenant Time

88 hours
(Meetings only)

Supporting the local community

- A weekly foodbank collection service supporting on average 27 families and 28 single clients every week
- Organised monthly litter picks
- A monthly book club
- Children's events at Christmas and Easter
- Supporting the Community Café to deliver meals.
- Campaigning for improvements to road safety
- Organising a summer barbecue attended by approximately 320 tenants
- Supporting a local Artwave exhibition, The Library of Things, The School Uniform bank, and Councillor drop-ins.



Area Panels

Following a consultation with residents, we formally closed and then merged three of the four original area panels into a new Eastbourne Panel which will focus on approving community improvement funding applications and promoting activities in the Langney, Old Town and Central & Archery areas.

The Hampden Park & Willingdon Trees (HP&WT) panel continues to operate as before.

Before the Eastbourne Panel was launched, Residents Voice took on the responsibility of approving the community improvement applications for the three closed panels, but the HP&WT panel were able to continue to consider and approve applications for their area. Two thirds (£20,000) of the allocation to the three closed area panels was spent.

The HP&WT panel spent £8,300, but one project did not happen, so some of the grant made will be returned.

New terms of reference have been approved for the Eastbourne and Hampden Park and Willingdon Trees Area Panels which came into effect in April 2022.

Area Panel outcomes



Cost

£2214

Nil



Staff Time

57 hours

12 hours



Tenant Time

234 hours

24 hours

New shed funded by the HP& WT Area Panel.



First meeting of the Eastbourne Area Panel.

Supporting the local community

- Hampden Park – meeting monthly
 - Christmas party
 - Seniors tea
 - Memorial seat
- Langney Area Panel – met three times before closing

Tenant Training

This year we completed group training events on Scrutiny (which has been accounted for in the Scrutiny assessment above) and on the Housing Revenue Account. Many tenants also took part in individual training activities, which had been identified through individual training needs assessments.

Tenant Training outcomes



Cost

£298
(Trainer)

£113
(Travel)



Staff Time

19 hours



Tenant Time

54 hours



The HRA finance training was delivered to 12 tenants. This empowered TOLD members to raise concerns about the 2022 HRA budget and gave Residents Voice members a basic knowledge of HRA finance.



IT training was delivered to 10 tenants. This improved their ability to be involved virtually and improved their IT admin skills.

Five tenants received training on report writing and on how to decipher tenant satisfaction surveys.



Other tenant involvement activities

Tenant involvement staff participated in several other activities to inform or consult with tenants, which have not been accounted for in this Impact Assessment. These include:

- **Annual satisfaction survey of tenants**

A satisfaction survey was sent out to a representative sample of tenants to determine satisfaction levels around key service areas. The results were analysed, and focus groups of tenants and service leads were set up in the Spring of 2022 to take an in depth look at areas where satisfaction levels had fallen, to see how improvements can be made.

- **Annual Reports to tenants**

Annual reports for EHL and LDC were produced by the team. The reports include performance information on all aspects of Homes First services for the year 2020-2021.

- **Tenants' Open Voice newsletter**

We produced three editions of the joint Tenants' Open Voice newsletter, which was sent to all Homes First residents. The communications panel were consulted on each of the editions.

- **Transactional Surveys**

We ran a number of complaints transactional surveys. The information was used to feedback to the complaint resolution team, and also used to inform the Tenant Scrutiny review and service changes. The methodology approach was reviewed and

a proposal to move to a dedicated satisfaction survey software survey company called Acuity was agreed.

- **Support to Retirement Housing Forums (RHF)**

The retirement housing team now manage the administration of the RHF, but the Tenant Involvement team have provided significant input and time by:

- Conducting a pet policy consultation
- Piloting the quality checking service
- Setting up new terms of reference and procedures for community initiatives and action planning

- **Commonplace project**

This project piloted software to support the development of a neighbourhood action plan through an online consultation platform. The project required team time to set up and promote the platform, alongside attendance at promotional events. The platform provided some good feedback but the lack of engagement (possibly due to Covid-19 and the overlap of other agencies) resulted in the benefits of the platform not being maximised.

- **Quality Checkers**

This pilot was delivered within retirement housing. The tenant involvement team developed procedures and training materials so that those involved could review the performance of the cleaning contract. The project highlighted the need for Homes First to improve contract monitoring and provide further clarity on the contract terms before considering a re-launch. In the interim, cleaning review meetings have replaced the approach.