

HOMES FIRST

**Impact
Assessment**
2022/23



Impact Assessment

This assessment shows how Homes First tenants have been involved in helping to shape our services, both strategically and in our communities, between April 2022 and March 2023.

To ensure we provide value for money across Homes First, in the context of fewer resources and higher costs, it has been more important than ever to try to involve our tenants in key service decisions this year.

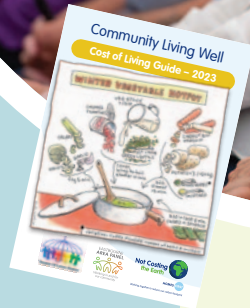
Due to the lessening impact of Covid-19, we were able to return to more face-to-face meetings and events, which was welcomed by tenants and officers alike. We now deliver a hybrid approach, with the option of joining a session online, to provide equality of access to those who might be unable to attend our sessions for a variety of reasons.



Tenant Conference

The Tenant Conference held on 14 June 2022 was a great success. As well as some great speakers, the event engaged attendees in a variety of workshops:

- **Budgeting** - tenants identified best practice, tips, and ideas to help others make the best use of their income and access help with the cost-of-living crisis. Following the conference, a 16-page **Community Living Well** booklet based on workshop ideas was produced and circulated to all tenants across Homes First.
- **Health and wellbeing** - an article in **Tenants' Open Voice** was produced which highlighted some of the innovative ideas which tenants found had helped them to sustain and improve their mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- **Community Initiatives** - ideas were discussed and shared to encourage more tenants to link with others in their community to run events and activities. Attendees were given information packs, access to funding guidance and were asked to complete pledge cards.



Tenant Training

In 2022/2023, we delivered two bespoke training events and offered individual training activities that had been identified from individual training needs assessments.

Conference Outcomes

85 tenants attended the conference on 14 June 2022.

Tenant Training Outcomes

Digital Champions

Effective Challenge



Financial Outlay

£7,016.70

This includes venue hire, food and transportation



£1364.70

Trainer costs

£37.90

Refreshments

£44.90

Travel



Staff Time

108 hours
on the event day

92 hours
on planning



5 hours

5 hours



Tenant Time

510 hours



18 hours

24 hours

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Panel (TIE)

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Panel (TIE) is a strategic group which includes tenant representatives from Eastbourne Homes Limited and Lewes District Council. TIE meets with Homes First Senior lead officers on a quarterly basis to review issues and policies that affect tenants across both landlords. It also monitors the Homes First Tenants' Scrutiny team and works collaboratively with Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD) and Residents Voice in Eastbourne.

In September 2022 we reviewed how TIE operates and agreed a change in approach with tenants to avoid work duplication and help manage member commitments more efficiently.

The consensus was to hold meetings as and when required and allow TIE panel members to focus on working with Service Leads on six service objectives, to ensure that appropriate, timely and effective consultation is undertaken with tenants on each objective.

Service objectives

Value for Money

Asset Management

Estate Services

Financial Inclusion

Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation

TIE Outcomes



£64.00



40 hours



34 hours

Strategic Panel

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Panel Outcomes

Influenced service delivery:

- TIE ensured that Homes First delivered on its commitments to tenants outlined in the Tenant Involvement strategy (2019-2022).
- TIE supported the delivery of Tenant Conference held on the 14 June 22.
- TIE influenced Service Delivery.
- TIE maintained a focus on the Value for money agenda.
- TIE oversaw delivery of a Rent Arrears review as a result of resident feedback.

Tenant Scrutiny Team

The Tenant Scrutiny Team is a strategic group, made up of tenants from Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Homes Limited which carries out in-depth scrutiny reviews of Homes First Services, on areas chosen by TIE. Each review concludes with a report showing the strengths and weaknesses of a service area, together with recommendations for service improvements. The team completed a review of rent arrears policy and procedures in 2022/2023.

The recommendations implemented are:

Active promotion of the Income Maximisation team's key aim to assist tenants in accessing benefits to enable them to pay their rent

Production of a leaflet with advice and support on coping with the cost-of-living crisis, which is updated regularly and included in sign up packs.

A new 'enforcement' approach to enable rent to be collected from tenants who have left a property owing money.

A review and changes to rent arrears letters, as a result of comments made by the Tenant Scrutiny Team.

The use of 'Housemark' to compare the rent arrears service with other housing providers.

Tenant Scrutiny Outcomes

Influenced service delivery:

The scrutiny team were very impressed with Homes First's proactive approach to minimizing rent arrears. The group made 18 recommendations to improve the service which have been included in a service improvement plan. To date, five of these recommendations have been implemented, with many others in the pipeline.

Tenant Scrutiny Outcomes



Financial Outlay

£879.70

Transport

£32.48

Refreshments



Staff Time

93 hours



Tenant Time

104 hours

Tenants Organisation of Lewes District

The Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD) holds three open events per year which all tenants of Lewes District are invited to. These sessions have guest speakers on topical housing issues or operate as social networking events.

TOLD has a working committee, which is made up of 12 tenants elected at an AGM. The committee meets quarterly with Service Leads to discuss on-going housing service issues and agrees any required consultation with other tenants. It also monitors Lewes District Council performance and works closely with the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Panel on Homes First policies. Lastly, the committee also oversees an annual Community Improvements budget, which is open to bids from tenants and officers.



Pictured, left to right:

- TOLD AGM October 2022.
- Community Garden shed.
- Foodbank thank you.
- Community bench and plaque.

TOLD Outcomes



Financial Outlay
£1011.86
 Transport
£113.72
 Refreshments



Staff Time
120 hours



Tenant Time
184 hours

TOLD influenced service delivery by:

- Raising concerns about the 2022/23 Housing Revenue budget with the Council Cabinet and the Council's finance team. This led to a Council commitment to only use the major repairs reserve to fund major housing stock improvements, and not new homes.
- Providing input on plans to help tenants affected by the cost-of-living crisis, which influenced outcomes, especially in relation to digitally disadvantaged tenants.
- Agreeing social value projects funded by Mears to benefit tenants.

TOLD increased tenant understanding and knowledge of services and considered tenant feedback by

- Being involved in workshops and presentations at the Tenant Conference.

- Liaising with tenants to help review new policies, such as the Mutual Exchange Policy.
- Agreeing content and contributing articles to Tenants' Open Voice magazine - distributed to tenants three times a year.
- Approving cost-of-living leaflets sent to all tenants.
- Holding two open meetings for tenants to give their views on repair priorities for a new day to day repairs contract.
- Launching a new website and coordinating training for committee members.

TOLD improved local communities by:

- Approving spending of £20,000 on a range of community improvement projects which included donations to foodbanks, supporting community garden projects, bin area improvements, communal benches, youth project funding and several other projects

Tenants and Residents Associations (TRA's)

(Lewes District Council tenants only)

There are a small number of Tenant and Resident Associations established in the Lewes District. In 2022/2023, only the Landport Residents Association (LRA), which serves around 800 households in Lewes, was active. The LRA works on behalf of their community to make improvements in the area and liaises with Homes First on housing issues that affect local residents.

Tenants do not need to set up a formal TRA to improve their communities.

Residents in the Brickyard and Cinque Foil in Peacehaven hold regular community events, such as barbecues, garden competitions and a Christmas light up. These have been locally organised on an ad hoc basis, with support from the Community Improvement Budget and grants from the "Making it Happen" project. We support any tenants who want to do things in their neighbourhood, even if they do not want to set up a TRA.



Landport Residents Association (TRA) - Outcomes



Financial Outlay
£1076 grant
 to group
 for running costs



Staff Time
65 hours



Tenant Time
82 hours



Supporting the local community:

- A weekly foodbank collection service supporting on average 45 families and 43 single clients per week.
- Organised monthly litter picks.
- A monthly book club group.
- An Easter event for children.
- Summer barbecue attended by around 250 tenants.
- Support for Library of Things, School Uniform bank, Community Café, and the Community Fridge project.
- Liaison with the police and community to deal with antisocial behaviour issues.
- Liaison on improvements to road safety with East Sussex County Council and the community.
- Community Improvements Budget applications for a community garden shed and a memorial bench.
- Organised cost-of-living crisis meetings to help the local community.
- Local newsletters delivered four times a year.

Residents Voice

Residents Voice continue to hold 'open meetings' with a consistent core of members and committee. Over the last 12 months regular quarterly meetings have been held, and in April 2022 a joint 'meet the Eastbourne Homes Board' session was organised and attended by over 60 residents and Homes First staff. Leah of Cumbria Court who attended the session said:

"It's amazing how hard people work, and how things are created and managed. This event made me see the whole thing differently. I can see how much you care."

Residents Voice members:

- Were actively involved in Council-wide initiatives such as the Black Robin Farm visitor attraction proposals.
- Requested a specific session with officers to discuss how Anti-Social Behaviour is managed
- Attended a session on Homes First damp and mould management
- Have been actively involved in the Four Million Homes initiative and training

In addition, Residents Voice members attended a session with the Housing Regulator as part of a pilot to help develop the new Consumer Standards for housing.

Residents Voice Outcomes



Financial Outlay
£2,400



Staff Time
90 hours



Tenant Time
128 hours

Residents Voice influenced service delivery by

- Reviewing and sharing EHL service performance information.

- Contributing to a Mutual exchange policy consultation

- Commenting on the repair service.

Residents Voice increased tenant understanding and knowledge of services and considered tenant feedback by:

- Being involved in workshops and presentations at the Tenant Conference

- Agreeing content and contributing articles to Tenants' Open Voice magazine, which is distributed to tenants three times a year.

- Improving engagement and communication with the Eastbourne Homes Board.

- Reviewing the Housing Revenue Account for Eastbourne

Residents Voice improved local communities by:

- Overseeing community improvement spending of £40,000 for the Area Panels and the Retirement Housing Forum. Projects include: supporting the Warm Hub / walking routes for disabled ramblers / recycling bags for those in flats / litter picking equipment / children's parties / walking cricket / art groups / gardening club and items for those in retirement housing – patio sets / gardening equipment.

Area Panels

Eastbourne has two operational Area Panels – the Hampden Park & Willingdon Trees Area Panel (HPWT) and the Eastbourne Area Panel (EAP). The HPWT Area Panel continues to administer and approve spending from the £10,000 Community Improvement Budget in their area. The Eastbourne Area Panel works in conjunction with Residents Voice to allocate the remaining £30,000 of funding for all other areas. It should be noted that the amount allocated in Eastbourne is double that for the Lewes District.

The **Eastbourne Area Panel** spent **£25,279**
- **99%** of their allocation

The **Hampden Park & Willingdon Trees Area Panel** spent **£7,175.10**
- **84%** of their allocation

The **Eastbourne Retirement Housing Forum Eastbourne** spent **£5,257.48**
- **88%** of their allocation

Area Panel - Outcomes



Financial Outlay
£2,000
HPWT - £1,000
EAP - £1,000



Staff Time
104 hours
HPWT - 62 hours
EAP - 42 hours



Tenant Time
264 hours
HPWT - 151 hours
EAP - 113 hours



Supporting the local community

Eastbourne Area Panel

- Kildare Court litter pick
- Funding of the Community Living Well guide
- Community picnic

Hampden Park & Willingdon Trees Area Panel

- Christmas party
- Seniors tea party

The Virtual

300

We encourage tenants to share their views and engage in discussion forums through incentives like prize draws, and to date we have recruited 146 members. RJ who joined from the start said: **“I like the group because it’s quick and easy, and I can have a say without leaving home.”**



**Financial
Outlay**
£200

on shopping vouchers
and prizes



**Staff
Time**
15 hours



**Tenant
Time**
75 hours

Virtual 300 – Outcomes

V300 members:

- Gave their views on a Mutual Exchange Policy
- Chose a logo for the Estate Services Project
- Provided ideas for a rewards and incentives policy.
- Gave feedback on Tenants’ Open Voice and other publications.

Retirement Housing Forum



**Financial
Outlay**
£436
Travel £50
Refreshments



**Staff
Time**
123 hours



**Tenant
Time**
150 hours

The Retirement Housing Forum meet four times a year, and for this period we had tenant representation in 8 out of 12 schemes in Lewes, and 8 out of 11 schemes in Eastbourne.

As a group, the forum have:

- Influenced cleaning and ground’s maintenance contracts and held regular contractor meetings.
- Helped with the production of easier to read documents and newsletters.
- Been consulted on an updated Retirement Housing service offer.
- Supported the implementation of the new ‘I’m ok’ function at all schemes.
- Influenced the asset management review by having discussions on car parking at schemes.
- Been involved in the installation of Wi-Fi in communal lounges and IT training.
- Supported an automated weekend call pilot allowing increased flexibility around welfare checks.
- Been involved in focus groups to update social club constitutions, agree changes to pet agreements, and provide clarity on the Mobility Vehicle Policy.

Retirement Housing Forum have improved local communities by:

Overseeing the spending of the £10,000 community improvement budget in Eastbourne and Lewes to benefit schemes.

Community Pop-Ups

We held eight community “pop-up” events, to enable Homes First staff to bring a visible presence to our estates.

Before each event, we advertised locally to let people know what was happening, and where and when. We used a Homes First branded gazebo at these events as a base to consult tenants on issues such as planned major works or environmental improvements; to address local areas of concern, or simply to touch base with our tenants and say “hello”.



Events



Financial Outlay



Staff Time



Number of Tenants Attending

Landport Community BBQ – Lewes	0	12	200
Kildare Court, Eastbourne	0	8	10
Eastside Recreation Ground – Newhaven	0	8	2
DeMontfort Estate – Lewes	0	8	3
Shinewater community litter pick and picnic	£50	10	3
Walmer Road – Seaford		8	12
Port Road land consultation – Eastbourne	0	6	7
Rockhurst Drive Waste and Recycling pop-up – Eastbourne	0	21	10

Outcomes...

Raising the profile of Homes First within our communities

Allowed tenants to sign up for Fire safety visits

Consultating on Community bins

Community garden planting

Increasing the membership of the V300

Other tenant involvement activities

The Tenant involvement Team have been involved in several other activities which have helped us to provide information to or consult with our tenants. These have not been accounted for in this Impact Assessment, but they merit mentioning and include:

- **Annual Reports to our tenants**

Separate annual reports were produced by the team for Eastbourne Homes Limited and Lewes District Council tenants. The reports provided performance information on all aspects of Homes First services for the year 2020-2021.



- **Tenants' Open Voice newsletter**

Three editions of our joint newsletter Tenants' Open Voice were produced by the team in 2022/2023. The newsletter is reviewed by the Communications Panel prior to completion and posted to all our tenants. It has been well received as shown by this feedback from a Virtual 300 member: **"I love it!**



It keeps you informed and up to date. I do not think you could improve on the content as its very comprehensive. So well done to all who contribute."

- **The Communications Panel**

The Communication Panel is made up of 13 tenants from the Lewes District and Eastbourne Homes Limited. The panel review all our publications to make sure they are readable, useful, and free of jargon and typing errors.

- **Retirement Housing Forums (RHF)**

The Retirement Housing Team manage the administration of the Retirement Housing Forums, but the Tenant Involvement team continue to be involved by helping to align social club constitutions, administering the Community Improvement Budgets, and attending meetings.

- **Transactional Surveys**

We continue to use transactional surveys to provide real time feedback on our services using dedicated satisfaction survey software provided by Acuity.



- **Focus Groups**

We sometimes run focus groups with tenants, and in 2022/2023 we used this approach to discuss our annual STAR survey results concerning the day-to-day repairs service. This led to a review of housing communications and service improvement plans.