

# SIGNPOST'S ANNUAL RESIDENT'S CONFERENCE 2009 REPORT



**SIGNPOST**  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION  
Part of Spectrum Housing Group Ltd

## Introduction

This report has been produced as a summary of events from the day of the conference and as a means of feedback. We feel strongly that an important part of effective involvement is about demonstrating how residents can inform the organisation and influence services that they receive. This report aims to show how the Associations will use the feedback and comments received on the day.

## Background

On Tuesday 3 November 2009, residents from Devon and Dorset gathered at the Isca Centre in Exeter for the annual Signpost Resident's Conference. It was agreed by Forum members at their away day in Weston-Super-Mare in the summer that the event should be held in the West area and specifically in Exeter.

Three potential venues were identified and quotes were obtained. This was with thanks to Trixie Lye who obtained the information for us. It was clear after the evaluation that the Isca Centre would offer the best value for money. The table below shows the cost comparison of the venues based on an estimate of 50 delegates.

	<b>Buckerell Lodge Hotel</b>	<b>Isca Centre</b>	<b>Devon Hotel</b>
Room hire (including VAT)	250.00	172.50	Included in day delegate rate of £40
Tea/Coffee with biscuits twice	275.00	275.00	Included in day delegate rate of £40
2 course lunch	497.50	425.00	Included in day delegate rate of £40
<b>Total</b>	<b>1022.50</b>	<b>687.50</b>	<b>2000.00</b>

The Isca Centre was booked using the agreed pro-forma for venue booking within the organisation which ensures we consider such factors as on site parking, accessibility for the disabled, proximity to public transport, level access and hearing loop facilities.

## The theme

It was suggested to residents at Forum meetings that the theme of the day was 'setting standards'. This came from the mock inspection report which identified this to be an area of weakness. The objective was to work with residents on setting standards for service delivery in our main areas of work. Forum members agreed that this would provide productive discussion and the agenda for the day was agreed around that. A copy is appended to this report.

## The day's events

John Radford, Signpost Residents' Forum Chairman – East area, opened the day's proceedings with a welcome introduction. This was followed by a presentation from John Wright, Managing Director for Signpost Housing Association and Signpost Care Partnerships, about what is going on in the Associations and how the businesses are being affected by the operating environment.

### Setting service standards

After a short break for refreshments, everyone set to work looking at the issue of service standards. A draft set of standards, produced for consultation within Spectrum Group subsidiaries, was distributed in each delegate pack.

Residents and staff were seated at six tables. Each table had a designated facilitator to take notes of the group discussion and feed back any comments. The questions posed when looking at the draft standards were:

- Are the standards high enough?
- Are they covering the right areas?
- Is there anything missing?

All groups were asked to consider sections 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8 of the draft Customer Service Charter. The remaining sections were then divided among the groups by sub-heading; Access to services, Housing Management (x3 groups), Information & Complaining and Repairs & Maintenance. To assist with the process, examples from other organisations were provided to each table.

At the Independent Living Group meeting on 7th September 2009, it was agreed by residents that a separate set of standards specific to this service area be adopted and referred to in the main Charter. All the comments received have been appended to this report.



## **A Resident Statement and Budget setting**

After lunch, delegates were then asked to work at their tables in groups to look at 2 issues:

1. Writing a Resident Statement – Kate Weeks, Community and Resident Involvement Officer, gave a short presentation
2. Considering the Resident Involvement budget for 2010-2011 - Julie-Ann Foster, Divisional Director for Housing Services, gave a short presentation

Three tables were asked to consider what should go in a new Resident Statement for Signpost. The main headings they were asked to look at were:

- Our commitment to involvement and options for support
- Our menu of involvement and how we should provide feedback
- Resources for involvement and monitoring our performance

The comments from residents that will be used to formulate the draft are appended to this report.

The other three tables were asked to consider the Resident Involvement budget for 2010 – 2011. Some general information about the budget was distributed in delegate packs and also the expenditure for the year at that time.

The questions for discussion were:

- If we aim to manage resident involvement expenditure this year to within the budget provision, which areas of expenditure should have priority? Are there things that we should not do?
- What should be the priorities for next year's budget? What big events, if any, should we do?
- As we shall be looking towards devolving budgets to residents, how could we go about this? How do we devolve between east and west areas?
- Are there areas that we should be putting financial resources into in order to enable residents to participate that we have not thought of?

The feedback received will be used to inform the budget setting process and the priorities for the next financial year as residents see them. This will require further discussion between Resident Involvement staff and Managers and resident Forum members. It indicates to the organisation the necessity for more regular communication with residents about budgets and resources and has identified a potential training opportunity.

## Feedback

Of 49 people who indicated they would be going to the conference, 34 attended on the day. All delegates were asked to complete a feedback form before departing from the event although only 26 were received. The aim of the feedback is to inform the organisation of future events and make any identified improvements.

### Key results of the feedback

About the venue

- 96 % felt the facilities generally were good or excellent
- 96% also felt that the accessibility to the venue was good or excellent
- 92 % described the catering and refreshments as good or excellent

About other aspects of the event

- 92% felt the travel arrangements were good or excellent
- 92% also felt the information about joining the event was good or excellent
- 96% felt that the quality of the presentations and the speakers at the event were good or excellent
- 88% described the delegate packs as good or excellent

Overall, 100% of delegates who completed feedback forms felt the event was good or excellent.

### Comments

Some of the general comments made on the feedback forms were:

- "A worthwhile exercise"
- "Thank you for a good day and allowing us to meet residents and staff from the West. The Isca Centre knows how to look after their customers. Just getting the allotted time to each subject is only criticism"
- "We were not told about the hearing loop so hearing aids were not turned on"
- "Thank you for all your hard work"
- "First time attending and very impressed with professional approach and information"
- "Excellent!"
- "As a first-timer at an involvement event I feel I have taken away a lot of knowledge to help with our Residents Association meetings. Thank you"
- "First time attending one of these meetings – very enjoyable"
- "Same again next time"

## Costs

The table below shows a breakdown of the costs for the event. All costs include VAT.

Item	Amount
Hire of the venue	201.25
Catering and refreshments	643.40
Balloons as table decorations	44.99
Table covers	46.75
Transport	550.00
TOTAL	1486.39

## Outcomes

### Establishing relationships

A key outcome from the event is that residents from across the Associations' areas of operations met together and many, for the first time. This also assisted in creating better channels of communication between the East and West Forum members who do not get the opportunity to meet and discuss issues as frequently as they might if they were located nearer to each other. It was also noted in some of the feedback that the event provided staff and residents the chance to meet and build professional relationships that did not previously exist.

### Consultation

Residents at the conference were involved in 3 consultation exercises which will inform the development of a published set of service standards for our main areas of service delivery, a widely publicised Resident Statement outlining the organisation's commitment to improvement through involvement and will inform how the organisation allocates resources for Resident Involvement and the activities and initiatives we undertake in 2010-2011.

### Training

For many residents the conference was the first time they had learned about the budget setting process and some of the costs associated with facilitating the Resident Involvement function. The consultation exercise on establishing budget priorities identified a training opportunity which will assist in more effective involvement when the exercise is repeated again in 2010.

### Further involvement

The event was attended by 5 residents from the West who had not previously been involved in any activities or events with the Associations. As a result, 2

residents have indicated that they would like to join the West Area Resident's Forum and will be feeding information back to their respective local groups.

## **Actions**

From the conference, a number of actions have arisen. There are:

- To amend the Customer Service Charter to reflect the proposals made by residents at the event
- To draft a Resident Statement to outline the Associations' commitment to involvement which will be sent to residents for wider consultation
- To set the Resident Involvement budget for 2010-2011 taking account of residents priorities
- To discuss the issues of budgets and resources more regularly with resident forums
- To make training available to all residents to enable more effective involvement

## **Reviewing this report**

Residents and staff in attendance at the annual conference in 2010 will review this report. Staff will be required to demonstrate how feedback has been used to inform decision making and residents will reflect on how successful the process has been during this time.

## Appendix 1 - Feedback on Customer Service Charter

### Access to our services

#### 3.1 Office hours:

- The Plymouth office has been omitted from the document. Should the opening hours been included?
- Residents should be offered a free phone number to call rather than local rate
- It should be noted that we will not leave callers in a telephone queuing system

#### 3.2 When you send us a letter, fax or an email for any enquiry or request:

- It was noted that date stamping should be standard practice and that office procedures may have to be revisited to ensure this happens
- Extend date which we will acknowledge communication to 7 working days and that the reply should be dated within that time, not received
- We will not use jargon or acronyms

#### 3.3 When you visit us:

- When you visit us without an appointment, we will see you within 10 minutes depending on staff availability
- It should be noted that residents can visit the Plymouth office by prior appointment
- It should also be noted that the Plymouth office conditions mean that receiving visitors is not acceptable

#### 3.4 When we visit you:

- We will contact residents prior to the appointment and we will have familiarized ourselves with any household information gathered from the profiling exercise
- We will visit you in your home within 10 days or sooner if possible if you are requesting us to visit
- Need to include in this section about emergency and urgent appointments being given priority
- We will provide confirmation of the details of the discussion along with any actions and outcomes within 5 working days of the visit

#### 3.5 Moving into your new home

- We should mention in here about allowing people to view the property
- Discuss the nomination *and tenancy start date* with you
- Are we going to add anything about welcome packs?

- There is mixed terminology about the guide to your home and resident's handbook

### 3.11 When you report a repair

- We should consider the profiling information when agreeing what is or is not an emergency
- We should include that we will make the repair the first time we visit if possible
- Further explanation is required for 'urgent' and 'routine'
- We will also communicate with residents by text about their repairs
- On average we complete repairs in 10 days
- We should regularly publicise performance by area
- We should also provide more information and advice about what repairs residents can do themselves

### 3.12 Major repairs and improvements

- We should explain about decent homes and also about what validation means
- We will publish our 5 year programme
- We will agree standards and specifications of work
- We will explain about the life expectancy of kitchens and bathrooms in particular
- We will offer choice to residents in terms of colour schemes and units
- We will include a discussion about resident involvement in the post tenancy visit
- We will provide more information on grants and funding sources such as Affordable Warmth
- We will explain about processes and timescales

### 3.13 Gas servicing

- Explain what gas (and oil) servicing is and why it is important
- Mention in this section about external audit of gas servicing
- We should explain that residents' tenancies are at risk if they do not allow access

### 3.14 When you require aids and/or adaptations to your home

- No mention in this section of Trusted Assessor
- Not sufficient information supplied about aids and adaptations including performance information and funding sources
- We should explain more about when we and when our customers need to involve occupational therapists
- We should also explain about who maintains the adaptations and what happens during the void process
- Details of the aids and adaptations should be added to housing management system

#### 4.0 Keeping you informed

- We must clarify the commitment to providing information and feedback about the local area to be able to better manage expectations
- We will commit to keeping the website up to date
- Please include the word Forums as well as Panels

#### 4.1 If you live in sheltered accommodation

- It was noted here that the 2 points included in the draft be deleted as they are not representative of the service offered and provided
- The term Independent Living should be used instead of sheltered housing

We will:

- Provide access to an alarm monitoring Centre 24 hrs a day 365 days per year to assist you in an emergency or crisis
- Provide you with information about the support service and the choices available to you so you are able to decide what meets your needs most appropriately at any point in time
- Review your support needs with you or your advocate at least annually and at any other time that you request this
- Ensure that support is delivered consistently by trained staff that work effectively with other agencies to enable you to remain in your own home for as long as possible
- Assess the satisfaction levels of the support service annually by surveying our customers

#### 5.0 Complaining about our services

- We will contact you within 5 working days – this may not be in writing though based on residents' preferred method of communication

## **Appendix 2 - Feedback on Customer Service Charter from Independent Living Group**

2nd Revised Draft - Service Standards agreed at Resident Conference on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2009

As the Independent Living Support Service, we will:

- Provide access to an alarm monitoring Centre 24 hrs a day 365 days per year to assist you in an emergency or crisis.
- Give you information about the roles of our staff, their hours of work and how to contact them.
- Make all of our information available in alternative languages, in large font, pictorial, Braille, audio format on request.
- Consult with you on any future changes to the service and take your views into account.
- Provide you with information about the support service and the choices available to you so you are able to decide what meets your needs most appropriately at any point in time.
- Treat you as a, person, with dignity and be courteous and polite to you at all times.
- Review your support needs with you or your advocate at least annually and at any other time that you request this.
- Respect your privacy and promote your independence through all aspects of our service.
- Ensure that support is delivered consistently by trained staff that work effectively with other agencies to enable you to remain in your own home for as long as possible.
- Ensure that you know how to make a complaint about the service and how you can expect your complaint to be dealt with.
- Ensure that you know how to report any abuse that you have suffered or you believe another person to have suffered and what actions we will take.
- Ensure that you are able to access and view any information that we hold about you in connection with the support service.
- Provide you with opportunities to take part in service consultation and review groups so that you can participate in improving existing services and developing future ones.
- Assess the satisfaction levels of the support service annually by surveying our customers.
- Have effective policies and procedures for safeguarding and protecting residents from abuse.

We will not:

- Breach your confidentiality or disclose information about you to anyone else without your permission (subject to Legal requirements).
- Provide you with any hands-on care or administer any medication.
- Enter your home unless you ask us to or we have reason to believe there is an emergency.

We expect:

- You or a relative to inform us as soon as possible if your circumstances change.
- Where possible that you to tell us if you will not be available when we are due to call or visit you as part of your agreed support plan.
- You and your visitors to be polite and courteous towards our staff and treat them with respect.
- You to Inform us if you receive support from any outside agency
- You to provide us with up to date details of your preferred contact in the event of an emergency.
- You to tell us if you are not satisfied with our support service or if we fail to meet any of our Service Standards.

2nd Revised Draft Service Standards agreed at Resident Conference on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2009

At the Independent Living Schemes, we will:

- Ensure that you are able to view the property and meet with other residents before you decide whether to accept the offer of accommodation.
- Provide you with information about the scheme facilities and those within the local area.
- Where possible, make sure that our Independent Living schemes are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Help residents maintain their independence while providing them with safe and supported quality accommodation.
- Make sure that communal areas are cleaned to an acceptable health and safety standard.
- Carry out an annual Health and Safety risk assessment and 3 further Health and Safety Inspections each year(in schemes with communal areas) all of which you will be invited to take part.
- Test emergency alarm intercom equipment every three months.
- Test fire bells in communal areas every week.
- Report repairs to communal areas on the same working day that we become aware of them ( Mon-Fri).
- Provide an emergency alarm intercom system linked to an alarm monitoring centre which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and provide a secure door entry system for all of Independent Living Schemes”(blocks of flats with communal areas).
- Explain how emergency alarm and door entry equipment(where applicable) works when you move into your home.
- Consult with you about any proposed changes to your scheme and it's facilities.

We expect:

- You to maintain the conditions of your tenancy and for you and your visitors
- To be polite towards other residents and our staff
- You to report any repairs that are required to your home other than repairs to communal facilities.

We will monitor these service standards using satisfaction surveys and we hope to achieve a target of 95% satisfaction with the Independent Living service overall.

## **Appendix 3 - Feedback on Resident Statement content**

### Our commitment to involvement and options for support

- The group that was considering these topics did not provide any written feedback

### Our menu of involvement and how we should provide feedback

- To increase functionality of Associations' website to enable use from Resident Associations and Groups
- To increase functionality so that webcams can be used
- To dedicate a page of the Associations' website to young people
- Feedback from estate visits must detail the status of communal repairs
- Quarterly reports to residents stating how they have influenced services
- Feedback channels should be created to allow the residents Forum to feed back to local groups
- Jargon and acronyms should be avoided and plain English principles should be adopted

### Resources for involvement and monitoring our performance

- A minimum of £60,000 per annum for Resident Involvement should be maintained
- Housing Officers to be more actively involved in engaging with residents
- The Associations should benchmark against other organisations
- This should be reported to residents at Forum meetings

## **Appendix 4 - Feedback on Resident Involvement budget priorities**

Priority should be given to:

- Initiatives and work such as Your Voice resident's newsletter, the Community Champions award scheme, the annual garden competition and the Community Fund
- The issues of transportation of residents to and from events and the insufficient budgetary allocation
- Raising awareness of Value For Money principles to assist residents when making decisions
- Increasing delivery of in-house training
- Addressing the imbalance between Community Fund budgets in the East and West
- Addressing the imbalance between East and West when organising events with residents
- Holding estate open days to reach out to communities and provide a presence at grass roots level
- Addressing the issues of costs associated with the Spectrum Residents Group
- To agree how Resident Involvement expenses for SCP will be addressed.