

Member Spotlight

March 2022

wdh – Wakefield & District Housing





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WDH (Wakefield and District Housing)

We asked John Scarr from WDH to share what they are up to. If you'd like to contact John about any of the below click [here](#)

Give us a little known fact about your organisation

WDH is based in Wakefield, West Yorkshire where most of our homes are located. However, we have tenancies across the north of England, in Selby, Leeds, Rotherham, Barnsley, Kirklees, East Riding, Hambleton, Craven, Harrogate and Bradford.

Tell us about a time that engagement has made a difference to your services or communities

Starting at the first lockdown we began to develop a virtual Customer Panel. The pandemic has driven our requirement for a digital relationship with residents and has accelerated the process significantly. We had already recognised a need to have a "bank" of informally involved residents to strengthen task and finish activity and the Customer Panel is our first step to achieving this.

A number of residents have supported us in the review of service delivery documentation. This has primarily covered policies, plans and procedures, but items like our Annual Report, newly developed Customer Excellence Plan and pictorial guides have been reviewed by Panel members. They have provided an incredibly varied and insightful range of responses.

There is a growing demand for the input of the Customer Panel from colleagues from across the business.

The key differences made are greater recognition of the value of resident involvement, and the growing number of residents who are influencing our service delivery.

What are you currently working on when it comes to engagement?

Comparing calendars with colleagues who are responsible for financial inclusion, social investment and sustainability among other teams. Resident Involvement has an expanding role in supporting the work of a number of our customer-facing service areas to ensure strong influence over service delivery, that every opportunity to listen is taken, and that the customer experience is excellent.

Comparing diaries helps maximise opportunities to support each other in accomplishing our aims. Although they are often different in nature, they all have positive resident impacts.

We are repeating the exercise with residents too. This week we met with Wakefield's Community Choir, who are now aware of our commitments for the year and will attend a selection of our events to really grab the attention of our communities. We held our first hybrid meeting with community groups last night and added several more commitments to support their events too.



Why did you decide to join Tpas?

Wakefield Council had a relationship with Tpas prior to the creation of WDH by stock transfer. But for me as a newcomer to resident involvement I would say, because Tpas does what it says on the tin. Who would not want to join the “Tenant engagement experts”?

In doing so I gain opportunities to network, access good practice, training and chances to learn from others. But ultimately, membership comes with an opportunity to play my part too. That means passing on what I’ve learned, sharing my time knowledge, to benefit others; collaborating in the interests of other social housing organisations.

What is your top engagement tip?

Willingness to collaborate creates opportunities to engage.

What’s the one thing you are really proud of when it comes to engagement?

I believe that when it comes to engagement, my place is in the background. The hard work is done by those who give up their time to represent their people and places and manage to bring about change through their enthusiasm and commitment to get things done.

So, I feel most pride on the occasions when colleagues and partners first participate in engagement and are surprised and impressed by what they see, hear or read.

Passion, insightfulness, humour, determination, and the occasional respectful challenge!



