

Member Spotlight

January 2023

Platform Housing Group





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We asked Gem Murphy from Platform Housing Group to share what they are up to.

If you'd like to contact Gem about any of the below, click [here](#)

Give us a little known fact about your organisation

We are in our 26th iteration as Platform Housing Group, following a number of mergers. We're made up of a number of legacy LSVTs and Housing Associations, Trusts and Societies dating back to 1967 so we have a wealth of experience in social housing.

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

We are very proud of our Platform Community Chest programme, launched in 2020, that continues to support a number of communities across our operating areas every year.

Community Chest is an annual funding pot of £150k that we make available to groups of residents, charities and other community organisations for awards to support a range of projects that fulfil these priorities set out in our Customer and Community Engagement Strategy:

- Digital Inclusion
- Health and Wellbeing
- Community Cohesion
- Skills and Employability
- Community Safety

Applications are assessed and scored against a matrix by members of the Customer Experience Panel, all customers, who meet several times a year and ensure that funding gets awarded to a range of groups or organisations where it will have maximum positive impact in Platform Communities. To date, Community Chest has awarded over £360,000 to 218 recipients delivering a range of projects and initiatives.

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

As part of our Customer and Community Engagement Strategy we are working on a number of priorities to develop and expand the range of ways we can amplify the customer voice.

Following recent support from TPAS we are working closely with our Scrutiny Panel to support them to work in a more agile way. We currently have 12 customers on the Scrutiny Panel spanning Platform's communities across the Midlands area, from the Welsh border in the West to the Wash in the East.

The Panel are currently split into two groups, one investigating our Mutual Exchange process and the other investigating Grounds Maintenance. Both project groups within the Scrutiny



Panel are working well on the respective investigations and we're excited to see a higher turnover of reports and recommendations from them taking this flexible approach.



Another key priority for us is developing our approach to co-creation with customers. Right now we are working closely with trainers and colleagues across Platform to introduce and really understand the principles of co-creation so we can adopt this approach in giving our customers a stronger voice in reviewing and developing the services we provide.

We offer a wide range of approaches to engage our customers and communities, from localised engagement to more operational and strategic roles and panels, so developing approaches to customer co-creation will embed a more customer centric culture across the whole organisation and strengthen our understanding of our customer's needs and preferences.

Why did you decide to join Tpas?

We have worked with Tpas for many years, as part of our legacy organisations, and always found the advice, training and resources to be invaluable. Being an independent organisation we value the integrity of the best practise and advice provided.

Our membership give us a wealth of resources not only for colleagues but our customers too which supports us in keeping our customers informed of current industry matters and best practise. One element we particularly value is the way it connects us to peers whether that's regional meet-ups, conferences or Tpas Connect, all of which provide us with inspiration, ideas and peer-to-peer support.

What is your top engagement tip?

We have a diverse range of customers, not only by demographic but by location (urban, rural, etc.) with a diverse range of personal or professional commitments and different preferences to how they get involved so we are committed to offering a broad range of ways for customers to get involved and have their voice heard. We're proud of the range of ways we engage with customers and communities however we continuously review the approaches that we take and evaluate what's working well and where we can improve engagement levels. The catalyst that the pandemic provided, in encouraging more people to get involved virtually, has enabled us to



reach a wider range of customers and has informed many of the approaches that we now use but we also understand from feedback that this is not everybody's preference.

Over the past few months for example, we have conducted a roadshow to meet with some of our 60+ customer Community Champions to review their role and how we engage with them. We are currently developing plans based on this feedback to evolve the role so our Community Champions have more positive impact in their communities and greater satisfaction from the role.

In essence our top tip is to provide choice and flexibility, to enable every customer to have a voice, but most importantly to keep approaches under regular review by learning from the past and looking towards peers and outside of the sector for inspiration.



What's the one thing you are most proud of when it comes to engagement?

Since our formation as an organisation in 2018 our collective body of involved customers have gone from strength to strength, both in numbers and level of influence. Our approaches to community engagement such as our annual Communities Connected programme, provide the whole Platform workforce with a range of activities and projects to get out to our communities to work alongside customers and local stakeholders to really embed the importance of our diverse local communities.

Equally we have enhanced our Customer Engagement offering with the Customer Experience Panel (CEP) leading the customer voice at a strategic level. The CEP are part of our board and committee structure and include up to 12 customer members who meet regularly with senior colleagues and board members to oversee, review and discuss our performance. The panel recently took part in a board away day and played a significant role in discussions around the current cost-of-living crisis.

