

# Member Spotlight

**May 2024**





## Member Spotlight - Stonewater

We asked Danielle Bowater from Stonewater to share what they are up to.

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

### Give us a little known fact about your organisation.

As part of our commitment to sustainability, Stonewater plants at least one tree for every home built, and donates £50 to the Community Forest Trust for each one built too. This funding is used to help plant five trees and connect more people to nature. The partnership, started in 2019, means that we plant at least six trees for every home we build.

We're proud to be the first registered provider in the UK to demonstrate our environmental responsibilities in this way – So far we've planted over 26,826 trees.

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

We have 23 customer Community Champions who volunteer their time every 6 weeks to complete an area walkabout. They report cleaning and grounds maintenance issues as well as neighbourhood wide concerns such as parking, ASB and fly tipping. They have completed 112 walkabouts in the past 12 months which is a fantastic achievement. This has made a huge difference to our service as not only do our volunteers help to monitor our services, we have a better relationship with those 23 customers who really do care about where they live and improving service standards.

Since the re-launch of our Community Champions in 2021, we have received feedback on the difference it makes to those who volunteer. The programme has helped to build confidence within our customers as well as building relationships with their neighbours and Stonewater colleagues.

Here are some of the things our Community Champions have said since joining the programme:

"I enjoy keeping in touch with neighbours." - Michael

"After a recent community day our fly tipping incidents have significantly dropped. We are in the process of organising another community day so that this will continue to improve this matter." - Louise

"I feel that by doing the walkabout, I can highlight what needs doing as well as giving residents the assurance that things will get better." - Sam



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

Following a consultation with our customers to ask them what they want to see in our engagement offer, we've recently held an online launch event for our new engagement guide to encourage as many customers as we can to share their views on our services. Engagement is everyone's business, so we're also working with colleagues in every part of Stonewater, to make sure everyone has a detailed understanding of how and why we engage customers at every level.

It's a great tool that will be made available to all customers in a way that is accessible to them, whether online, in print, in translations and accessible formats. We're also keen to take our engagement guide into the heart of communities with our upcoming Neighbourhood events. Our Customer Partners will be equipped with our guide to showcase to customers all the opportunities we have for them to get involved.

We're also really excited about our newly created role on the Scrutiny Panel for one of our young customers living in a supported scheme. This role will create a whole new perspective for the panel as well as making a difference to a young person's life who wants to improve their skills.

## Why did you decide to join Tpas?

Tpas membership affords us so many benefits, we really value the expertise from Tpas colleagues, but we also appreciate being part of a wider community who are also passionate about customer engagement best practice. Our teams find the forum, training, events and advice invaluable. We really appreciate the resources available.

Not only is Tpas a valuable place for colleagues to learn and stay connected, it gives customers the support to help keep informed on things that matter to them. It also enhances our offer to customers by helping them to build a stronger network, having the ability to grow their confidence and knowledge within housing and to hold us to account.

## What is your top engagement tip?

Have a variety of ways for customers to get involved, from more formal ways like joining a Scrutiny Panel, to informal community-based options like becoming a community champion. In our recent survey, customers told us it was really important have a digital offer to give customers more flexibility. Having a mixture of opportunities will help to ensure more customers can be involved, whether they have five minutes to spare or they want to do something really in-depth and meaty. Regularly check the opportunities you offer don't just help improve services, but genuinely help customers to gain valuable skills and knowledge.

Build relationships with colleagues at all levels across the organisation and drive engagement through different teams. This helps to promote opportunities for customers and get colleagues to think about involving customers at the beginning of their projects.

## What is the one thing you are really proud of when it comes to engagement?

The positive relationship we've built with customers. We've worked really hard to create opportunities that matter to them, and let them know that their input really does help us to improve. Every conversation we have, whether it's complimenting progress or a really frank talk about improvements that should we make, is built on a foundation of mutual respect.



