

Member Spotlight

August 2024



watford
community
housing





Member Spotlight - Watford Community Housing

We asked Amy Willcox-Smith, Assistant Director of Customers and Communities at Watford Community Housing to share some of the projects and work they are currently doing.

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

Give us a little known fact about your organisation.

We are a Community Gateway! As a Community Gateway organisation, our tenants can get involved with how we're run and help us make key decisions about our future.

Fun fact - Anthony Joshua, the Olympic Gold medal-winning boxer, used to live in one of our homes on the Meriden Estate!

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

We are most proud of our recent scrutiny work. Over the past two years we have made numerous service changes and undertaken scrutiny on a range of topics from customer services, out of hours cover and damp and mould. We undertake two scrutiny events each year that our tenants can get involved in and see where we have improved based on their recommendations.

This year we also had tenants involved in our rent setting session which helped to influence the amount of money that went into our Welfare Fund. Tenants proposed that the money generated by a rent increase in our commercial garages was diverted to help people who need the most support with the cost of living. This impacted everyone living in our communities, as the fund is open to everyone.

We are pleased to see these results reflected in our Tenant Satisfaction Measures. We saw our measure for 'listening to views' increase by 6.8% last year.

Scrutiny exercise	Service changes made as a result
Customer Services	Updated IVR, updated messages and hold music at key customers touchpoints. Revised DTS process for online account messages and improved SLA response times following training for staff.
Out of Hours (OOH) service	New process, new triage and scripting and message for customers calling OOH lines. New Service retendered with Lemon at an improved specification – complaints on OOH reduced.



Damp and Mould	New damp and mould process and improved communications for residents in place. Videos created with staff for social media. Approximately 450 residents on Big Door Knock contacted to discuss and investigate damp and mould concerns or questions.
Allocations and Tenancy changes	TQT event raised awareness of housing process with over 40 tenants that attended the sessions. Succession process and procedure changed to include more empathy and information for families.
Rightsizing	Rightsizing surgeries now in place for customers. Updated and improved FAQs for Mutual Exchanges.
Repairs contractors	Action days completed for customers living in Radlett Rd in May to tackle contractor jobs for communal guttering and wider works which have been identified as service failures in 2023/24.

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

We are currently working on engaging our members with our new Business Plan and our membership offering. We have segmented the customers into different groups and are going to host targeted focus groups and sessions to really focus on our priorities for the next five years.

We have also just completed our annual Big Door Knock. ([See link to video Celebrating the Big Door Knock 2024!](#)) The Big Door Knock is an annual event where all of our staff, including some of our Board members and Gateway Membership Team – a group of our residents who represent the views of all our residents – get out into the community to visit our residents in person. It's a great way for our residents to give us feedback, raise any concerns and learn more about the services we offer.

This year, we managed to visit 4,720 homes, carry out 1,248 resident surveys and we are happy to say that 76.4% of those residents are happy with our services!

Over the summer, we are also going to be focussed on finding quieter voices who are currently underrepresented in our engagement, particularly customers aged 30-39.

Why did you decide to join Tpas?

We have been members of Tpas since our inception as a Community Gateway. We get value from the resources they provide. Our Gateway Membership Team love the annual conference, briefings and training sessions. We have also used them in the past to assess the impact of our work.



What is your top engagement tip?

Tailor your engagement messages to block level and street level and make them as personal as possible. Most tenants are more engaged with the things that are local and important to them, their friends and neighbours.

Once you build trust like this, some individuals will become more confident and want to see the wider picture and want to do more like join a board or procure a service!

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

We are pleased to confirm that we have been awarded the highest ratings following our recent inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing. As well as retaining our G1 rating for governance and our V1 rating for viability, we have earned a C1 rating under the new consumer standards.

The regulatory judgement puts us in the first batch of housing providers to be awarded the C1 rating following the introduction of the new approach to consumer regulation, which took effect on 1 April 2024.

The new consumer standards aim to strengthen the accountability of social landlords for providing safe homes with quality services, and treating residents with respect, so the top-grade C1 assessment puts us amongst the best in the sector for the services we deliver to our customers.

During the inspection, the regulator considered all four of its consumer standards: Neighbourhood and Community Standard, Safety and Quality Standard, Tenancy Standard, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. The regulator gathered information by observing a board meeting and a tenant scrutiny panel, speaking with tenants, meeting with members of our team and non-executive directors, and reviewing a wide range of documents.

In its judgement, the regulator recognised that we:

- are delivering the outcomes of the consumer standard
- have appropriate systems for ensuring the health and safety of tenants in their homes
- provide an effective repairs service and continue to implement actions to improve the service
- monitor complaints and use performance data to improve our services
- have the skills and capacity to deliver our strategic objectives
- have effective risk management and performance and reporting frameworks
- have a strong financial profile

You can find out more about Watford Community Housing by visiting their website [here](#)



