

Member Spotlight

June 2025





Member Spotlight - Colchester Borough Homes



We asked Julie Pearsall, Customer Involvement Officer at Colchester Borough Homes, to share some of the work they are currently doing.

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

Give us a little known fact about your organisation

At Colchester Borough Homes (CBH), tenant engagement is not just a box to tick—it is at the core of everything we do. Since being established in 2003 as an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) by Colchester City Council, we have consistently evolved our services in partnership with our residents. Today, we manage over 7,000 homes, delivering not just housing services, but a platform for people to thrive.

We have twenty-two sheltered schemes offering independence security and piece of mind with supplying homes for over sixty's as around 50% of our customers are over 60 years old. We have just completed a major project, a demolish and new build of Elfreda House over a four-year period now accommodating thirty-six self-contained flats.

One new tenant said, "It's the best thing I have done and should have moved years ago – I'm so pleased we were offered a property, and we are so grateful."

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

An excellent example of our meaningful engagement would be our Tenant led scrutiny Team who scrutinised our Lettings process from viewing to signing of a new Tenancy with CBH.

The scrutiny identified:

- A lack of completed satisfaction Surveys.
- Gaps in communication and accessibility during housing application stage
- No pre tenancy determinations or recharges

The outcomes from this tenant-led team resulted in

- Using an alternative platform for collecting Satisfaction Surveys using fewer manual resources, making this more value for money and increase returns for a better measure.
- Implementation of a new text messaging survey platform
- Fixed Term Tenancy Officer to complete pre tenancy determinations and recharges if property not to tenancy conditions
- Improve property listing on Gateway Homechoice better reflection on accessibility and other applicants' needs for suitable shortlisting on properties.
- Shadowing of Gateway Homechoice Teams and Lettings Team to improve communication and provide a better customer experience.



The recommendation and update are monitored through our CBH Board and our Operations and Performance Committee and reviewed every three months.

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

We have a lot on the go right now when it comes to Tenant Engagement, here are two examples.

Our new and exciting Recreation Activity Coordinator post funded by Sports England, to monitor programme outcomes and contribute towards continuous improvement and wellbeing for our tenants. Our customers will benefit from this recreation engagement to provide more opportunities and inclusive programmes for all age groups and abilities and resident will be empowered to lead healthy lifestyles, build strong community ties, and enjoy a greater sense of belonging and engagement across our neighbourhoods.

We have been proud to attend the Stop Social Housing Stigma parliament launch of a powerful report into Social Housing Stigma. As a committed Pioneer Traveller, we have been working with Stop Social Housing Stigma, Durham University, Sheffield Hallam University, and other partners including Tpas. We are proud to have been at the parliament launch of the report on the 19th May 2025, the framework offers practical steps for landlords to challenge stigma and strengthen engagement, aligning with new consumer regulations. We have an action Plan packed with workshop events with staff contractors and tenants, Raising awareness through E Learning Modules with staff, contractors, and councillors. We believe everyone deserves to feel safe, respected and valued and free from judgement labels or stereotyping and challenging stigma ongoing as part of our Customer Commitments.

Why did you decide to join Tpas?

At Colchester Borough Homes (CBH), we believe that the best services are shaped with our residents that is why, back in 2011, we made the decision to become a member of Tpas.

Our aim was simple but ambitious within our strategic plan consulted on with our customers of Colchester Borough Homes to deliver a positive customer experience across services. We plan to make residents voices heard and increase overall customer satisfaction by 5% by 2027, from our 2024 Tenant Satisfaction Measure this has now increased from 68% to 73%.

By joining Tpas, we became part of a national network of like-minded organisations which enhanced our tenant engagement opportunities, with support, training, and the excellent opportunity to obtain our Landlord Accreditation which helped us develop a strong culture of involvement across our organisation. I would highly recommend anyone thinking of the accreditation to take the leap, the support from Tpas is second to none.

The opportunity for free tenants' membership is also a great benefit with various webinars, training courses, and updated information from The Regulator of Social Housing and Housing Ombudsman. We are happy to be a part of the Tpas family support and inspiration.

What is your top engagement tip?

Building trust with our customers, we believe everything else will follow, we have also learnt that being open, transparent, and accountable is key when advising outcomes of what can and cannot be changed. Also providing lots of informal opportunities for active listening to their voices, from the whole organisation.



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

Cocreation with our customers, people feeling heard and respected from the beginning to the end, engaging more and bringing a fresh approach to drive lasting change.

Our Performance Dashboard –

We are proud of how we have turned resident feedback into real, lasting change when it comes to being open, honest, and accountable.

Cocreating, we identified the top ten performance matters that matter most to our residents.

This resulted in a live Performance Dashboard not only published on our website but also added as a standard agenda item at our bimonthly Resident Voice Meetings.

This journey has helped us build trust and have a culture where we are meeting the consumer standard Transparency, Influence and Accountability.



Customer Commitments

Our three-year customer commitments cocreated following a workshop facilitated by Tpas in January 2023

From this workshop our Tenants produced a new powerful Strapline for Resident Engagement of “together we are better” reminding us that when staff and tenants work closely together, we can also build and deliver a better service and trust building. This collaboration saw residents and CBH staff defining what our commitments should look like, giving the opportunity for open conversation, leading to a set of clear commitments that matter to our customers, communities, and Neighbourhoods.

