

**PUBLIC  
HOUSING  
REVOLUTION**

**PARTICIPATORY  
PROPERTY  
MANAGEMENT**

**A TOOLKIT FROM  
THE UK**



**CHPC**  
NEW YORK CITY

CITIZENS  
HOUSING  
PLANNING  
COUNCIL

**APRIL 2022**

# HOW CAN PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT OF THEIR HOMES AFTER A RAD/PACT CONVERSION?

CHPC's *Public Housing Revolution* initiative is a best practice investigation to learn about how the UK's public housing conditions were radically improved, by pairing the expertise of residents with the resources of the affordable housing industry, and how these principles can be applied in New York City. Through the 1990s and early 2000s in the UK, more than 870,000 public housing units were transferred from public housing authorities to private affordable housing providers or to public/private partnerships<sup>1</sup>, with resident decision-making at the center of the planning processes and implementation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ABOUT CHPC

**CITIZENS HOUSING & PLANNING COUNCIL** (CHPC) is a non-profit research and education organization focused on housing policy and planning in New York City. Since our founding in 1937, CHPC's mission has been to develop and advance practical public policies to support the housing stock of the city by better understanding New York's most pressing housing and neighborhood needs.

For more than 80 years, CHPC's research and education work has helped to shape public policy to improve the City's housing stock and quality of life in NYC's neighborhoods. A team of expert research staff is led by a diverse board of practitioners in the fields of urban planning, architecture, zoning and land use law, housing finance and development, and community development.

Our work brings clarity to NYC's housing issues by presenting research in relatable and engaging ways. Our agenda is practical and always begins with questions, not answers. It is the data, our analysis, and its relevance to the real world that drive our conclusions.

## PARTICIPATORY PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

### A TOOLKIT OF OPTIONS FROM THE UK

Over the last two years, New York City has pioneered a new resident-centered approach to the PACT program (*Permanent Affordability Commitment Together*); NYC's version of the federal RAD (*Rental Assistance Demonstration*) program which converts public housing developments to Project-Based Section 8 and unlocks funding for affordable housing providers to complete comprehensive renovations.<sup>2</sup> For the first time, New York City public housing residents are being given an elevated role in the planning process when their homes enter the PACT program. Residents are working in direct partnership with NYCHA (New York City Housing Authority) and NYC HDC (NYC Housing Development Corporation) to evaluate proposals, interview, and select development teams from the affordable housing industry.

While discussions around PACT have primarily centered on its development and rehab components, the program also ushers in brand-new **property management staff, policies, and processes**.

The PACT program offers a unique opportunity to test new ways to elevate the role of residents in the ongoing property management of their homes. The operational changes that come with the program can be leveraged to find ways for residents to participate in the *strategy, scrutiny, and shaping* of property management so that it is tailored to their needs, providing a level of quality assurance and transparency that is rare even in the private rental market.

New York City public housing residents are uniquely positioned to be at the vanguard of this new approach to property management. Public housing residents have had to deal with inefficient and unresponsive property management and repair services for decades, as NYCHA has lacked the resources to respond to the capital repair needs across the public housing portfolio. Many public housing residents have been burdened with first-hand insight into the repair needs of their properties and the deficiencies of the management and maintenance processes at NYCHA. PACT provides an opportunity to use this knowledge and experience to create new property management systems that will ensure a better quality of life for public housing residents in the long term.

## WHAT IS PROPERTY MANAGEMENT?

Property management covers all of the day-to-day activities required to maintain a good quality of life across residential developments, including all aspects of the buildings and grounds. While property management can encompass asset management and regulatory compliance, this publication is focused on the resident services component of property management. Resident services include: being responsive to maintenance and repair requests, cleaning, management of disputes and nuisances, rent collection, and others.

## PROPERTY MANAGEMENT IN THE UK

Affordable housing providers in the UK have been executing resident-involved property management for over 30 years, following the first waves of programs to transfer public housing to private affordable housing providers and public/private partnerships in the 1990s. As CHPC describes in the *Public Housing Revolution report*, the elevated role of resident decision-making was one of the key reasons for the success of these programs. As well as selecting new development teams and playing a central role in the plans to rehabilitate their homes, UK public housing residents were provided with an array of options for participation in the ongoing management and operation of their developments, after the transfers and renovations occurred. Housing authorities prioritized the transfer of developments to teams with resident-centered property management plans. The English government even began prioritizing development subsidies for affordable housing providers who could evidence successful property management using metrics based on the resident experience.

## WHY SHOULD NYC EXPLORE PARTICIPATORY PROPERTY MANAGEMENT?

Finding ways for residents to actively participate in the property management of their homes can lead to a host of benefits for the residents, the PACT program, the housing authority, and the affordable housing providers/property managers themselves:

### RESIDENTS

- Participatory property management can be used to make sure that the needs of residents remain the central focus of PACT for years after renovations are complete.
- Residents can shape property management standards, processes, and staffing to make sure they are meeting their needs.
- Property managers are required to be transparent about property management metrics.
- Residents have clear routes for bringing up issues and concerns with the

implementation of property management.

- Residents can affect changes and improvements to property management processes.

### PACT PROGRAM

- The ultimate goal of the PACT program is to drastically improve the quality of life or public housing residents who have been living in untenable conditions for too long. Harnessing the experience and insight of residents about how their developments operate, and centering the resident experience in the day-to-day property management processes is a key strategy to advance this goal.

### HOUSING AUTHORITY

- NYCHA, who continues to oversee PACT developments after they are converted, can gain deeper insight into the performance of its housing provider partners by receiving property management reports from the residents' perspectives.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDERS/PROPERTY MANAGERS

- Affordable housing providers can reap cost and efficiency benefits of being able to prioritize property management services that residents need the most.
- They are able to easily identify and rectify issues with property management from the residents' perspective.
- Front-line management staff can benefit from transparent ways to assess the impacts of their work from the resident perspective, and avoid the burden of complaints from entrenched, long-term issues.
- Affordable housing providers/property managers can promote themselves by pointing to their examples of resident participation in property management, and successful management metrics from the residents' perspective.

## THE PARTICIPATORY PLANNING TOOLKIT

Although far from perfect, resident-oriented property management in the UK provides a useful example to learn from. All the potential benefits of resident participation in property management, as well as various systems, strategies, and practices to facilitate participation, are reflected in case studies from around the UK. Utilizing Seven National Tenant Engagement Standards from the UK, CHPC has developed a toolkit of options for how public housing residents could productively participate in property management after a PACT conversion. The toolkit sets out options under each of the seven themes and provides case study examples from the UK. The seven themes can be broadly categorized as ways for residents to participate in the strategy, scrutiny, and shaping of property management so that it is tailored to their needs.

# TOOLKIT FOR PARTICIPATORY PROPERTY MANAGEMENT



## #1 GOVERNANCE

RESIDENT BOARD MEMBERS

TENANT MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS



## #2 BUSINESS STRATEGY

STRATEGIC ADVISORY GROUPS

CONTRACTOR AND STAFF SELECTION PANELS



## #3 RESIDENT SCRUTINY

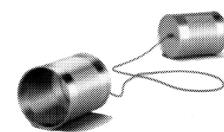
RESIDENT INSPECTORS

MYSTERY SHOPPERS



## #4 COMPLAINTS

INDEPENDENT COMPLAINT REVIEWER



## #5 INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY PANEL



## #6 RESOURCES

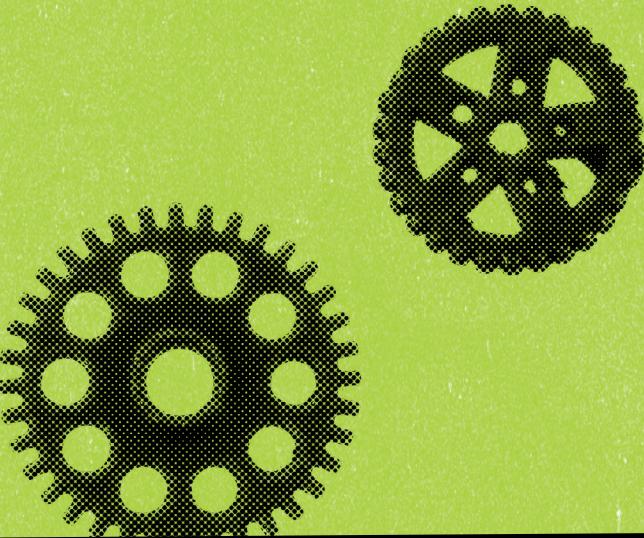
FINANCIAL COMPENSATION FOR RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION FOR COMPLAINTS



## #7 COMMUNITY & WIDER ENGAGEMENT

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT STAFF HOLD OPEN HOUSES FOR ALL RESIDENTS



#1

# GOVERNANCE

TO ENSURE THAT RESIDENTS CAN SHAPE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES, STANDARDS, AND IMPLEMENTATION IN THE UK, RESIDENTS ARE SOMETIMES MADE LEADERS OF THE ORGANIZATION RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR PROPERTY MANAGEMENT. SOME EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Many affordable housing providers provide slots on their boards for resident board members.
- Residents join together to form Tenant Management Organizations (TMOs).
- Residents select the new property management organization.

## RESIDENT BOARD MEMBERS

Many affordable housing providers in the UK reserve slots on the board of their organization specifically for residents. Residents who occupy these slots are equal members on the board, lending their lived experience to the provider's decision-making around management policies and practices, including the development of service standards, distribution of resources, and monitoring of management metrics.

**This provides former public housing residents access to all of the business metrics used by their property management provider, and the opportunity to become key decision-makers, working in partnership with management leadership to craft strategies that work for residents.**

### CASE STUDY: THE PEABODY GROUP RESIDENT BOARD MEMBERS

The Peabody Group is an affordable housing provider responsible for over 104,000 homes across Greater London, with over 220,000 customers and 20,000 care and support customers.<sup>3</sup>

The Peabody Group Board of Directors is made up of ten members, including two resident members. The board is the ultimate governing body of the Peabody Group and bears responsibility for the organization as a whole.<sup>4</sup> Individual board members may also serve on various board committees that oversee specific aspects of the organization's strategy.

 **PETER BAFFOE**

- Resident Board Member of Peabody Trust and Peabody South East
- Member of Communities Community
- Member of Customer Services Committee

Peter was appointed as a member of the Peabody Resident Board in May 2018. He has been a community development worker for eight years and is a Faith and Community Development officer for the Methodist South London Mission. He is also a member of the British Transport Police Advisory Group and a School Governor, acting as the Link Governor for disadvantaged pupils.

## TENANT / RESIDENT MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION (TMO/RMO)

Some conversions of public housing developments to public/private partnerships in the UK include the establishment of Tenant Management Organizations (TMOs) to take responsibility for property management. A TMO is set up as an independent legal body by a group of resident members, who elect a resident-led management board to run the organization. The board is usually comprised of a majority of residents, with some independent members and elected officials. The board hire professional property management staff and contractors, set up policies and standards, and oversee the staff. The TMO gets an annual management and maintenance budget to pay for the duties and repairs that it takes on, based on what the housing authority was previously spending on the same functions.<sup>5</sup> Services managed by each TMO vary, but may include day-to-day repairs, tenancy management, cleaning and caretaking, and rent collection. The contract for the TMO can be terminated by the landlord or housing authority if service standards are not being upheld.

### CASE STUDY: COWLEY RESIDENT MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION, LAMBETH, LONDON

Cowley RMO, located in the Lambeth area of London, was established in 1996 when the group entered into a management agreement with the local housing authority and took over management responsibility for 560 properties.

At the Cowley RMO, adult residents are entitled to become registered members of the organization and hold a share to the value of £1.<sup>6</sup> This entitles all members to participate in the decision-making processes of the management organization. Current membership totals 182 residents that represent all 560 households.<sup>7</sup> Members elect a management board that runs the organization, as well as several sub-committees that are accountable to the board, and hires their own property management staff and contractors. The RMO receives a Management and Maintenance Allowance from the housing authority to provide the services delegated to them, some of which include repairs, cleaning, rent collection, and management of parking lots. The housing authority periodically receives management metric reports from the RMO and can offer extra support or terminate the management agreement if standards are not met.

## RESIDENT SELECTION OF THE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

As is now the case with PACT projects in NYC, in the UK, public housing residents are given the responsibility of selecting a new property management organization when their developments are slated for conversion to a public/private partnership.

### CASE STUDY: GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY, RESIDENT BALLOT REQUIREMENT

Any conversion of public housing properties in London that is similar to PACT, and receives funding from the Greater London Authority (i.e., City subsidy), is required to win a resident ballot. This means that the majority of residents must vote in favor of the new developer and property management provider for their homes.

# #2

## BUSINESS STRATEGY

**THERE ARE MANY WAYS THAT RESIDENTS CAN PARTICIPATE** in the overall business planning and strategy of a property management organization, outside of being responsible for its governance. UK affordable housing providers commonly set up standing and issue-based resident committees that are given tasks such as: establishing management and repair standards; analyzing policy changes that a housing provider is considering; debating a property management issue that has come up; or participating in the hiring of management staff and contractors.

Some examples of how residents are involved in the overall strategies of their property management organizations include:



### RESIDENT SERVICES BOARD

Many affordable housing providers in the UK have a Resident Services Board, which works in tandem with the entity's main board of directors to inform and provide oversight specifically of property management. Members of Resident Services Boards develop and decide on property management standards and oversee issues relating to customer service and management practices.

#### CASE STUDY: **L&Q GROUP, “RESIDENT SERVICES BOARD”**

**L&Q Group is an affordable housing provider serving Greater London that houses 250,000 residents across more than 100,000 homes.**

The L&Q Group’s Resident Services Board is a client entity that works adjacent to L&Q’s own board, serving as a direct conduit between residents and company leadership. L&Q states that the goal of its Resident Services Board is to “make sure that the voice and experience of the wider resident base is being taken into consideration in decisions that affect them”<sup>8</sup> The board is made up of ten members, with nine residents whose tasks are described as:

- Contribute to decision-making on the issues that matter most to you
- Help to develop and improve our customer service
- Scrutinise our decision-making and performance, to make sure your views have been taken into consideration
- Connect with a wider network of residents through our Customer Panel, Neighbourhood Committees, Residents Associations, equalities groups and other more informal channels
- Bring attention to the impact our decisions and performance have on you
- Lead on revitalising our approach to resident involvement, including the development of a range of inclusive and accessible opportunities for you to have your voice heard
- Communicate quality of life concerns to the L&Q

## STRATEGIC ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Many affordable housing providers also work closely with resident advisory committees that give feedback to the organization's board and management teams on its resident-facing policies and practices.

### CASE STUDY: PEABODY GROUP, STRATEGY AND POLICY GROUP

**The Peabody Group is an affordable housing provider responsible for over 104,000 homes across Greater London, with over 220,000 customers and 20,000 care and support customers.<sup>9</sup>**

Peabody's Strategy and Policy Group is a resident committee that provides feedback to the Peabody board and staff about the operation and management of their developments. Comprised entirely of residents, the Strategy and Policy Group puts forward recommendations about how to solve operational issues and is consulted by Peabody when there are any changes in the company's client-facing operations.<sup>10</sup> As described by the Peabody Strategy and Policy Group, the aim is to "make sure that we are the genuine voice of residents and we are aware of all matters which could stop Peabody providing the best resident service possible,"<sup>11</sup>

#### Message from Lisa Rae,<sup>12</sup>

Resident Chair of Strategy and Policy Group in Peabody Group's Annual Report

*We have achieved a lot over the past year, not only through our continuous reviews of strategies and policies but also with our influencing Peabody. For example, our recommendation for residents to be included in the procurement process has been taken forward, and we were consulted on the corporate strategy priorities. Our feedback throughout the year as well as on the specific priorities has helped shape these. We will be reviewing the priorities regularly and holding Peabody to account when necessary. Peabody is looking at a more focused approach to resident engagement and we have noticed improvements in how it values and listens to residents. But there are still challenges and we intend on making sure that these improvements continue.*

## CONTRACTOR AND STAFF SELECTION

Choosing the right contractor is a vital part of property management. Involving residents in the selection process for a deck of vendors and contractors is a common practice among UK affordable housing providers. The level of resident participation in this process can range anywhere from filling out surveys about contractor preferences to participating in contractor interviews to scoring RFP submissions.<sup>13</sup>

**Some housing providers also include residents in the staff selection process, allowing tenants to participate in the hiring of property managers.**

### CASE STUDY: HYDE HOUSING ASSOCIATION, STAFF AND CONTRACTOR SELECTION

Hyde Housing Association operates 50,000 housing units across London and its surrounding area, managing the homes of 100,000 residents.

Hyde residents participate in both the contractor and property manager selection processes. During procurement, residents directly impacted by a particular service may provide feedback on the contractor through surveys, applicant scoring, and company "open days," which allow residents to meet and engage with prospective contractors.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to selecting contractors, Hyde residents play an active role in hiring property managers and other staff. In order to participate, residents are trained in Hyde's interview and selection process, come up with questions for and participate in interviews, score candidates, and have an equal say in final staff selection.<sup>15</sup>



#3

# RESIDENT SCRUTINY

**THE CONCEPT OF RESIDENT SCRUTINY IS WELL-ESTABLISHED IN THE UK** as a way for residents to participate in the continuous improvement of property management. As the name suggests, committees and programs are set up to allow residents to scrutinize management data and practices from the tenant perspective, examine the housing provider's decisions, policies, actions, and metrics, and report issues back to company leadership. Tpas, a national tenant engagement non-profit in the UK that CHPC partners with, even launched a "National Scrutiny Week;" a series of annual events designed for residents and landlords to "celebrate the impact of working in partnership to scrutinize services."<sup>16</sup>

Some examples of programs to facilitate resident scrutiny include:

## RESIDENT INSPECTORS

Many affordable housing providers recruit and select *Resident Inspectors* to conduct regular inspections of the day-to-day management of the common areas of developments and the grounds. Resident Inspectors are often compensated for their time and work with grocery vouchers, which ensures that residents are rewarded for their participation without threatening their financial eligibility for benefits.

### CASE STUDY: METROPOLITAN THAMES VALLEY, RESIDENT INSPECTORS

**Metropolitan Thames Valley (MTV) manages around 57,000 homes across London, the East Midlands, the East and South East regions of the UK.<sup>17</sup>**

Through the company's Resident Inspectors program, Metropolitan Thames Valley (MTV) residents conduct inspections to monitor cleaning and maintenance standards in communal spaces and grounds. Inspectors are trained to complete a scoring sheet every two weeks that marks the levels of cleanliness and maintenance upkeep. Currently, MTV has 130 Resident Inspectors of all ages and locations, living in all types of homes. The company hosts an online communications page for Resident Inspectors to chat and share information. An Inspection

Officer oversees the inspectors and acts as their first point of contact. The inspectors help the organization by providing on the ground input for quality of life issues to estate managers.<sup>18</sup> Their reports directly inform maintenance priorities and, as the Richmond Council put it, serves as "a rewarding method of engagement for residents who want to scrutinize standards."<sup>19</sup>

### RESIDENT INSPECTOR CASE STUDY<sup>20</sup>

"I became an inspector about a year after I moved in. I was phoning TVH and reporting repairs and jobs that were not finished frequently, so they suggested that I consider the role of resident inspector – since I was already doing it.

*That way I could get reimbursed for my work with vouchers. So I thought, I don't mind that – plus I can get a little treat every now and then!*

*The maintenance people come once a fortnight, and after they've been I walk around and check that they've done all their jobs – things like cleaning bin stores and trimming hedges. This site is only made up of 10 flats, so it only takes me 15 minutes to go around and do my inspection. I haven't had any cause for complaint; they are good at*

*what they do. When there's been graffiti on walls or any of the doors have been damaged, the estates people are out straight away and they do a great job. But they understand as well that we really care about it, because I'm here checking, so they will go the extra way to look after our estate and maintain it really well. If the residents don't care, then it is a lot easier for things to slip – for a hedge not to get trimmed or mulch not to be changed.*

*I've been doing this for over five years now. When I first took the role I went and knocked on everyone's door and explained what I'll be doing, so they wouldn't be alarmed when they see me in their corridor turning lights on and off and checking that the window frames have been cleaned! Everyone here knows me, and they are happy for me to do this work."*

– MANI, MTV RESIDENT

## RESIDENT QUALITY CHAMPION

### CASE STUDY: NETWORK HOMES, "RESIDENT QUALITY CHAMPION"

Network Homes is an affordable housing provider that operates 20,000 homes across the Greater London area.<sup>21</sup>

Network Homes' "Resident Quality Champion" program is designed to improve the quality of management and services through resident-led inspections. In this program, residents complete inspections of other properties managed by Network Homes (not the properties they live

**processes and metrics, and provide a clear avenue for harnessing resident feedback to improve services.**

An example of mystery shopping may begin with a resident calling or emailing management to request a particular piece of information, such as a rental account balance, how to apply for a transfer to a different apartment, or whether the company is responsible for a particular repair. The mystery shopper monitors how long it takes for their call or email to be answered, how they are greeted, and the speed and level of professionalism involved with the handling of their request. The mystery shopper notes down what took place during the interaction. Those results are then collated to form an overall picture of how the matter was handled, and passed along to inform the work of a Resident Services Board or scrutiny committee.<sup>22</sup>

## MYSTERY SHOPPER PROGRAM

The concept of *mystery shopping* is also common in UK affordable housing property management. Mystery shopping is used to check the quality of a housing provider's management services from the resident perspective, and to report back on those findings to the organization's board and management teams. Resident *mystery shoppers* approach management staff with a question or an issue and then fill out a detailed record of how they were treated, how their enquiry was dealt with, and the degree to which company management complied with its own standards.

**Mystery shopping is used to ensure that property management and repair services are oriented towards residents' needs, increase transparency around management**

### CASE STUDY: OPTIVO, MYSTERY SHOPPERS

Optivo is one of the largest affordable housing providers in the UK, servicing over 90,000 residents in 45,000 homes across the Greater London area.<sup>23</sup>

Optivo's Mystery Shoppers initiative pays residents up to 50 pounds every

CONTINUED →

six months to complete test customer service inquiries.<sup>24</sup> Clients submit their feedback via an online survey which is used to inform Optivo customer service practices moving forward. As of October 2021, Optivo has met its performance goals for the quality of repairs, with nearly 97 percent of surveyed residents satisfied with repairs.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, nearly 88 percent of surveyed clients reported a positive customer experience.<sup>26</sup> The Mystery Shoppers program is one element of Optivo's broader effort to develop

a "Co-Creation Framework," in which management solutions are developed in partnership with residents.<sup>27</sup>

In the words of the housing provider, "**Affordable housing residents aren't able to easily swap landlords if services aren't up to scratch... it's vital residents feel empowered to tell us where we're getting things wrong and can co-design solutions to put things right.**"<sup>28</sup>

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

### CASE STUDY: CLARION HOUSING, REGIONAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Clarion Housing Group, with developments located across the London region, provides homes for 350,000 residents.

Clarion Housing Group's Regional Scrutiny Committees are advisory committees made up of residents who are given an array of management metrics and asked to scrutinize resident services, identify issues, and make recommendations for improvement. Each year, the

committees publish their findings in a Resident Involvement Impact Assessment report, and the board and management of Clarion Housing publicly respond to the needs identified in it. For example, as highlighted in the 2020-2021 report, scrutiny committees have been evaluating Clarion's resident services to inform its "Lessons During Lockdown" program, and scrutinizing metrics from the group's support programs for residents who experienced financial loss during the pandemic and could not pay their rent.<sup>29</sup>

# #4

## COMPLAINTS

**RESIDENTS CAN SOMETIMES BE DISSATISFIED WITH PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND SERVICES,** which can be deeply frustrating to tenants and management staff alike. However, harnessed in the right way, a clearly designed and administered complaint procedure can be an invaluable tool for residents to participate in the improvement of services and management practices. This can help ensure that complaints are satisfied faster and alleviate pressure on management staff, for whom unresolved complaints can be a great burden.

## **A clear complaint procedure empowers residents to convey their concerns in a productive way, and sets out a path for how the provider will use the information to offer follow-up services.**

### **CASE STUDY: OPTIVO, COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Optivo is one of the largest affordable housing providers in the UK, servicing over 90,000 residents in 45,000 homes across the Greater London area.<sup>30</sup>

Optivo's resident complaint process stands out as one of the most advanced in the UK.<sup>31</sup> It includes clear levels of escalation and set times for complaint responses and offers compensation to residents for instances of service delivery failure. Optivo's customer complaint system follows the steps below:

#### **1. Informal process**

Residents who would like to submit a complaint informally first contact their property management team to seek resolution.

#### **2. Formal process**

- A. To make a formal complaint about a property management or service issue, residents must file a complaint with Optivo's distinct Customer Experience Team. The team has a maximum of two business days to contact the resident and gather all information related to their concern. An Experience Team member is responsible for charting the desired plan of action, working with management staff to ensure that the action is taken, and reporting back to the resident.**
- B. If the resident is still dissatisfied, Optivo assigns a "lead officer" to evaluate the validity of the complaint and relay a proposed plan of action to resolve it within ten business days.<sup>32</sup> At this stage, the resident can also request that another Optivo resident participate in the review process as a third party, including by visiting the resident who submitted the complaint.**

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C. If the resident is still not satisfied by the conclusion of the previous stage, they can request a second review of the complaint, which is performed by two other residents and a Director of the organization within ten business days.<sup>33</sup>

- D. If the resident is dissatisfied with the result of the second review, they can contact their Local Council member, Member of Parliament, and/or an independent Housing Ombudsman for further clarity and support. The resident may also request the assistance of an independent mediator, who will be brought in by the housing provider.**
- E. In select circumstances, if Optivo agrees with the client that the complaint was warranted, resident compensation may be offered. Compensation can take the form of a voucher, rental credit, formal apology, or "goodwill gesture."<sup>34</sup>**

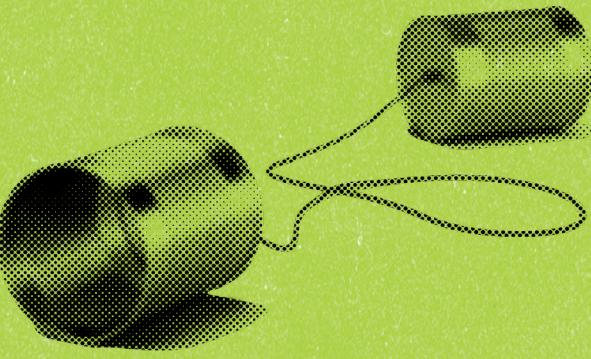
F. All residents who submit a complaint are asked to participate in a feedback survey to inform Optivo's future customer service practices. The results of these surveys are highlighted in the provider's Annual Report and passed along to the Resident Services Board to inform recommendations for improvement of the complaint process.<sup>35</sup>

## **INDEPENDENT COMPLAINT REVIEWER**

### **CASE STUDY: NOTTING HILL GENESIS, INDEPENDENT COMPLAINT REVIEWER**

Notting Hill Genesis owns and operates 66,000 housing units across the greater London area.<sup>36</sup>

One of the largest affordable housing providers in London, Notting Hill Genesis, employs independent complaint reviewers to oversee the complaint process. When a resident submits a complaint, they can elect for it to be reviewed a second time in "Stage 2," in which both an independent complaint reviewer and a staff member may provide input on the case.<sup>37</sup> Independent reviewers help maintain transparency throughout the process and provide objective insight into a complaint's validity.



#5

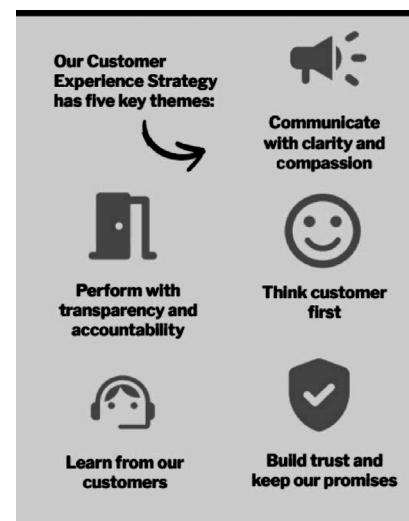
# INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

**CLEAR COMMUNICATION ABOUT SERVICES THAT IS ORIENTED TOWARDS RESIDENTS' NEEDS IS CRUCIAL** to successful and smooth property management. To ensure that information and communications are clear, transparent, and productive, many UK housing providers have residents participate in developing organizational practices for resident-facing communication.

Examples of resident participation in communication practices include:

## CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY PANEL

Effective communication between the provider and their residents is integral to successful property management, as it offers residents a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities, leads to fewer complaints, and allows for continuous improvement. To harness these benefits, many of the largest affordable housing providers in the UK have created resident-led panels to improve communication between staff and residents. These advisory groups provide feedback on how the property manager can better disseminate information to residents.



One Housing's Customer Experience Strategy developed in partnership with residents<sup>41</sup>

### CASE STUDY: ONE HOUSING, CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY PANEL

One Housing provides housing for over 35,000 residents across 17,000 units in the Greater London area.<sup>38</sup>

One Housing's Customer Communications Advisory Panel is made up of residents who give feedback on ways to improve the organization's digital and paper communications to residents, to ensure that "messages are clear, useful, helpful, friendly and easy to understand."<sup>39</sup>

**One Housing places a particularly strong emphasis on developing communication practices that respect clients and clearly convey information from the housing provider.**

One Housing recently worked with the Customer Communications Panel to develop the five main goals for their "Customer Experience Strategy." In their 2020-2021 residents annual report, One Housing reported reaching their goal of 80 percent satisfaction with customer service performance.<sup>40</sup>

**CASE STUDY: NOTTING HILL  
GENESIS, COMMUNICATION  
BASED ON RESIDENT FEEDBACK**

Notting Hill Genesis owns and operates 66,000 housing units across the greater London area.<sup>42</sup>

**After one large public housing development was transferred to Notting Hill Genesis, all of the communications around grounds maintenance and cleaning were changed to reflect resident feedback.**

The new property managers began promoting their maintenance and cleaning schedules on printed materials around the campus, which included direct contact information for maintenance staff.



**#6**

## **RESOURCES**

**UK AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDERS** commit resources to ensure that resident participation can happen in a productive way. They also involve residents in resource allocation planning for the organization.

## COMPENSATION FOR RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

Financial compensation for residents' participation in property management ranges anywhere from gift cards to yearly stipends. Varying levels of participation are matched with commensurate degrees of compensation, with more intensive activities garnering greater rewards for residents.

**This system creates an overall dynamic of respect and increases the pool of residents who can participate at many different levels.**

Providing reimbursement for childcare, transportation, and other costs associated with participation is also standard.

### CASE STUDY: NOTTING HILL GENESIS, RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT REWARD AND RECOGNITION POLICY

**Notting Hill Genesis owns and operates 66,000 housing units across the greater London area.**

Notting Hill Genesis has one of the most comprehensive resident compensation programs in the UK. Participating residents receive varying levels of compensation for contributing their time and expertise. The agency outlines these benefits in its Resident Involvement Reward and Recognition Policy.<sup>43</sup> The most common form of resident compensation is grocery vouchers, which ensure that residents are rewarded for their participation without threatening their financial eligibility for housing benefits.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to providing grocery vouchers, Notting Hill Genesis subsidizes childcare and transportation costs.<sup>45</sup> Participating residents are also made eligible for a biannual raffle and invited to attend resident appreciation and "thank you" events.<sup>46</sup>

Notting Hill Genesis also dedicates funding for residents to build their own capacity and leadership skills, along with stipends for attending conferences and tenant events - including those hosted by Tpas, a major tenant engagement organization in the UK.<sup>47</sup>

## FINANCIAL COMPENSATION FOR COMPLAINTS

As discussed above in **Complaints**, many housing providers offer compensation to residents if their complaint is found to be valid.

**After a complaint has been resolved, property management staff are empowered to offer apology compensation, which increases resident trust in the effectiveness of the complaint system.**



#7

# COMMUNITY

&

# WIDER ENGAGEMENT

**FINALLY, UK HOUSING PROVIDERS OFFER WAYS** for the overall resident body to engage with property management, even if individual residents do not wish to participate in more formal ways or through complaints. Many housing providers offer a menu of engagement opportunities that reflect different resident demographics, consultations with and surveys of all residents on policy changes, “open houses” with management staff, and other means of engaging with the wider resident body.

## FINAL WORDS

This toolkit contains a range of examples from the UK of ways for residents to participate in the management of their homes. NYC is well-positioned to implement some of these new strategies for property management through the PACT program. This new approach would reinforce that the primary focus of PACT is to center the voices of resident communities in the planning, rehabilitation, and operation of their homes. By leveraging the insight and experience of tenants, new property managers will be able to craft processes that more effectively respond to residents’ needs, increase operational efficiency, and avoid repetitive complaints. NYCHA will benefit from additional data about how the developments are operating post-conversion. Ultimately, participatory property management will help ensure that PACT conversions offer residents an improved quality of life in the long term, and potentially an even better experience than other parts of the rental market.

### IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- In the PACT RFEI, NYCHA could require prospective development and management teams to include a plan for resident participation in property management. NYCHA could share the examples in this toolkit as different options for teams to choose from and ask that prospective teams identify at least one of the strategies.
- The property management questionnaire in the PACT RFEI could ask prospective management teams to identify: 1) how they will include residents in the development of strategies for management; 2) how they will enable residents to access and scrutinize management metrics; and 3) how the resident experience will be leveraged to shape management processes and communications.
- As part of the resident planning and review process for PACT, residents could discuss their preferred means of participation in property management, and prospective teams could be asked to respond to those preferences in interviews and/or during pre-development.
- In addition to interviewing the prospective property management team, the resident review committees could interview current residents in homes managed by the prospective property manager to get a better understanding of their practices and property management successes and

weaknesses.

- New property management organizations selected by the resident review committees through the review process could be required to work directly with the residents and NYCHA to develop a participatory property management plan after they have been selected. Again, NYCHA could use this toolkit as a framework to develop those plans.
- NYCHA needs to ensure that this new property management approach is financially feasible for the new development/management teams, as property management is often very challenging with narrow profit margins. The compensation structure for PACT may need adjusting in order to allow new property management teams to embrace resident participation.

Finally, NYCHA must ensure that the right metrics and systems are in place to be able to evaluate the outcomes of any new participatory property management strategies implemented through PACT. The data and findings that emerge will be crucial to informing the modification and improvement of those tools, based on previous challenges and areas of success. Ultimately, this information could be used to help NYCHA play a stronger role in the ongoing oversight of operations and management at PACT developments. The findings would also arm NYCHA with the ability to identify and hone best practices for participatory property management, to ensure that PACT projects and the quality-of-life benefits they provide are continuously improving over time.

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