

**Introduction**

This policy is complimentary to our legal obligations to consult customers regarding service charges as set out in the Landlord & Tenant Act 1985. Our internal procedure for dealing with Section 20 consultation is set out in a separate How We Work entry.

**1. Statement**

Springboard recognises that there are significant benefits to be gained from customers being involved in all areas of our work, including better decision-making and more responsive, higher quality housing and support services. We seek to be fully aware of customer views and priorities. We believe that customer involvement should be set widely in a firmer context, seeking to invite and to address the wider issues that exist within the local communities where we operate.

Springboard understands that customers will not always want to take part in formal types of involvement such as our Customer Association and that some people will only wish to be involved at a local level, therefore we wish to offer a choice of ways of becoming involved which will suit circumstances, needs and priorities. This could be at an informal level or in relation to a specific issue, however we will ensure the opportunity for wider involvement. We will therefore be inviting our customers to become involved in:

- Looking at customer needs within the context of the needs of the wider community
- Looking at how to address housing issues alongside other community-based issues e.g. crime, unemployment, training needs, local transport, play facilities, health needs etc.
- Ensuring high quality of service and effective delivery of service

Springboards Aims & Objectives in Customer Involvement will be developed, produced and agreed with our customers and will be reviewed on a yearly basis using an impact assessment which will continue to reflect our changing and expanding opportunities for customer involvement.

**2. Aims & Objectives**

In partnership with our customers we will aim in general terms to:

- Understand our customer profile and our customer expectations, including the ways in which they would like to be involved
- Develop challenging service standards that fully take into account customer expectations
- Improve the way in which Springboard delivers housing and support services, achieving agreed service standards within a reasonable timeframe
- Rigorously monitor service quality and performance, involving customers in this process
- Create opportunities for customers and communities to develop their capabilities (e.g. our Problem Solving Teams for community safety development projects). This means that relevant training and support must be given in accordance with needs
- Develop healthy, vibrant and self-supporting communities

- which are sustainable in the long-term
- Provide a range of opportunities for our customers to achieve greater influence and control over the way they live, such as our Digital Unite Project which introduces use of IT to our frail and elderly customers
  - Continuously review current ways of working and look at methods of improvement in consultation with customers
  - Gather customer views and take them into account before key decisions are made
  - Adequately support customers to enable active and meaningful involvement at their chosen level
  - Try new and innovative ways of involving customers e.g. utilising private sector marketing techniques to discover what our customers' expectations are of our services and products
  - Allocate sufficient funds to train and support customers who wish to become involved, at whatever level they wish
  - Undertake a cost/benefit analysis of the different forms of involvement to ensure we are achieving maximum impact (i.e. how much difference has it made to the Association, the customer, the community?)

Our specific aims and objectives are based on requirements of the Housing Corporation Regulatory Code as follows:

1. to involve our customers in planning, monitoring and reviewing how services are delivered and in setting and checking service standards
2. to take customers' views and requirements into account when making decisions and setting targets
3. to introduce a range of ways of consulting and involving residents locally
4. to give feedback to residents about what has happened as a result of their involvement
5. to deal with complaints and show customers how problems are tackled and lessons learned
6. to give funding and set up training programmes to support customer involvement
7. to encourage more customer involvement in any investment that we may make in social housing to promote the well-being of local communities
8. to record satisfaction levels from customers and make comparison to partner housing organisations
9. to give customers the greatest possible opportunity to take control of local services as and when desired
10. to make sure that all people receive equal opportunities to be involved

### **3. The Regulatory Guidance**

The Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code gives a clear indication of what is expected of us (minimum standards) as a Housing Association in relation to customer involvement:

<b>Code</b>	<b>Guidance</b>
2.5 Housing Associations must seek and be responsive to residents' views and priorities	2.5a The Association is effectively accountable to its stakeholders. Current information about its activities is widely available to residents and other interested

	parties
2.5.1 Reflecting these interests in their business strategy	2.5.1b Residents, housing applicants and others have ready access to an effective complaints and compensation policy, administered effectively. Independent Housing Ombudsman recommendations are actioned.
2.5.2 Giving residents and other stakeholders opportunities to comment on their performance	2.5.2c The Association considers a range of methods and opportunities to consult and obtain feedback from residents. It seeks to make an agreement, developed in partnership with residents, setting out how they will be involved, consulted and informed how this will be resourced, measured, monitored and reviewed.
2.5.3 Enabling residents to play their part in decision-making	2.5.3d Where they so wish, residents are supported, enabling them to obtain the knowledge and skills to play an effective part in investment in, and management of, their homes and neighbourhoods. They are encouraged and supported to explore options.
2.5.4 Providing opportunities for residents to explore, and play their part in how services are managed and provided	

#### 4. Involving Diverse Communities

Our involvement activities will be inclusive and representative. Springboard will consider, test and develop methods of involvement that work with diverse communities and with hard-to-reach/vulnerable customers. The Association will encourage and enable people with diverse needs and characteristics to take part in involvement activities. Operational staff will be trained in diversity with invitation to **all** customers to participate in a variety of training experiences in order to encourage wider involvement. Also, response to customer surveys will be analysed – where BME/hard to reach/vulnerable representation is low, we will conduct face-to-face interviews and/or offer translation. In supported housing there will often be the need for carers/relatives to be part of the involvement process where this is possible. House or scheme meetings may prove to be beneficial in encouraging participation, along with the creation of opportunities which facilitate easy participation for those customers with learning difficulties.

#### 5. The Customer Participation Compact

More detailed procedures which support our aims and objectives will be addressed in the Springboard Customer Participation Compact. This is being developed, and will be designed not only to meet, but to exceed the requirements of the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code. It will contain sections on customers' rights to information, how the information will be provided, the right to consultation and how this will be achieved, methods of feeding back to customers following consultation, and how we will facilitate customer involvement both in terms of consultation and active participation. There are a variety of ways to give our customers maximum choice in involvement, covering areas such as planning, monitoring & reviewing service delivery, or setting & checking service standards.

The Compact will also cover:

- The issues of wider community involvement
- Opportunities for involvement in decision-making, including the right to stand and vote in direct election of Customer Association representatives to our Board of Management, and access to the SCA (Springboard Customer Association) and SC (Springboard Customers)100 Group
- Springboard's commitment of resources (staff/financial)
- The possibilities for customers having free access to our training programmes, courses and meetings
- Details of resources to support promotional activities in the community, set up and support Customer Association groups,
- Our focus on diversity
- Involvement, information and consultation on the repairs and maintenance service
- Choice for customers on new developments and refurbishment of schemes
- The complaints procedure for customers

**6. Further Information and Advice**

**Good Practice**

The Housing Corporation [www.housingcorp.gov.uk](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk)  
The Bank of Good Practice [www.bankofgoodpractice.org](http://www.bankofgoodpractice.org)  
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)  
Chartered Institute of Housing [www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org)

**Funding**

Innovation and Good Practice <http://cig.bre.co/igp>  
Community Training and Enabling [www.ctegrants.org](http://www.ctegrants.org)  
Lotto Community Fund [www.community-fund.org.uk](http://www.community-fund.org.uk)

**Information & Support**

Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) [www.tpas.org.uk](http://www.tpas.org.uk)  
Quest Trust [www.quest-net.org](http://www.quest-net.org)  
National Tenant Resource Centre [www.traffordhall.com](http://www.traffordhall.com)  
Confederation of Cooperative Housing [www.cch.coop](http://www.cch.coop)  
Priority Estates Project (PEP) [www.pep.org.uk](http://www.pep.org.uk)  
Community Development Foundation [www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk)

**Complaints**

Housing Ombudsman Service [www.ihos.org.uk](http://www.ihos.org.uk)