

Tenant and leaseholder involvement compact

July 2007 – March 2010 Summary

“To listen to our tenants and leaseholders, involve them in decision making and deliver improved housing services that are informed by the experiences of their lives, homes and environment.”



Supported by:



Introduction

What is the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Compact?

This compact is a binding agreement made between Newcastle City Council and council tenants and leaseholders. It sets out how tenants and leaseholders can get involved in housing services, work together with the council to improve services and how we will implement the compact and check to make sure it's working properly.

What does it mean for Newcastle's council tenants and leaseholders?

This compact sets out some clear commitments for involving you in the management of your homes and improving the housing services you receive.

This compact will mean that:

- you get clear information about housing services
- you can find out about the opportunities to get involved and influence decisions on housing services
- it is clear how getting involved can lead to improved housing services
- there is support and training available to help you take part

Who is responsible for making sure the compact works?

Newcastle City Council has lead responsibility for this summary. It will be delivered in partnership with Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) and Newcastle Tenants Federation. When the term 'we' is used in this summary, it refers to all three organisations in the partnership.

Because this is an agreement it is not just down to officers working for or on behalf of Newcastle City Council to make sure this compact works. Tenants, leaseholders and elected members have an important role too.

Full information about roles and responsibilities are outlined in the compact.

What happens next?

The commitments made in this compact will be supported at a local level through neighbourhood agreements. These can be developed by local communities in order to meet specific local needs. There are currently 3 neighbourhood agreements in Newcastle; they cover the Byker, West Denton and Throckley Central and Northside areas.

The actions outlined in this summary will be monitored and reviewed every three months against agreed targets set out in the compact action plan. Details of the monitoring process are on page 14 of this compact.

For further information about the compact please see the useful contacts section at the back of this summary.

Vision for the compact

The shared vision for tenant and leaseholder involvement in Newcastle is:

“To listen to our tenants and leaseholders, involve them in decision making and deliver improved housing services that are informed by the experiences of their lives, homes and environment.”

To achieve this vision, Newcastle City Council has agreed to adopt a set of principles to support our tenants and leaseholders in shaping our services. These principles are set out in the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy. All actions in the compact will follow these principles.

Getting Involved

This city-wide compact covers all Council tenants and leaseholders within Newcastle.

We want you to get involved in ways which suit you. There are lots of different ways that you can choose to get involved.

You, as council tenants and leaseholders, can get involved in a number of housing issues, if you want to. Housing services that you have an opportunity to influence include:

- Developing and changing housing policies and strategies
- Regeneration, improvements and repairs to council homes
- Tenancy related issues
- Finance, budgets and setting rents
- Leasehold issues
- Monitoring performance of housing services

This section gives you more information about the ways you can get involved in improving housing services and what you can expect from us if you choose to get involved.

Involvement can mean different things to different people, different communities and different services and situations.

The ways you can get involved are divided into five main areas to make sure that we provide ways for you to get involved at a level that suits you. The amount of time needed, level of responsibility and influence will vary depending on the level at which you choose to get involved.

“Take the initiative and join in.”

The five main areas are:

- providing you with information
- consulting you on issues and asking for your views
- deciding together the course of action to be taken
- in some instances by acting together with local people
- and supporting independent local initiatives led by local people

These 5 ways of getting involved are described in more detail in this section.

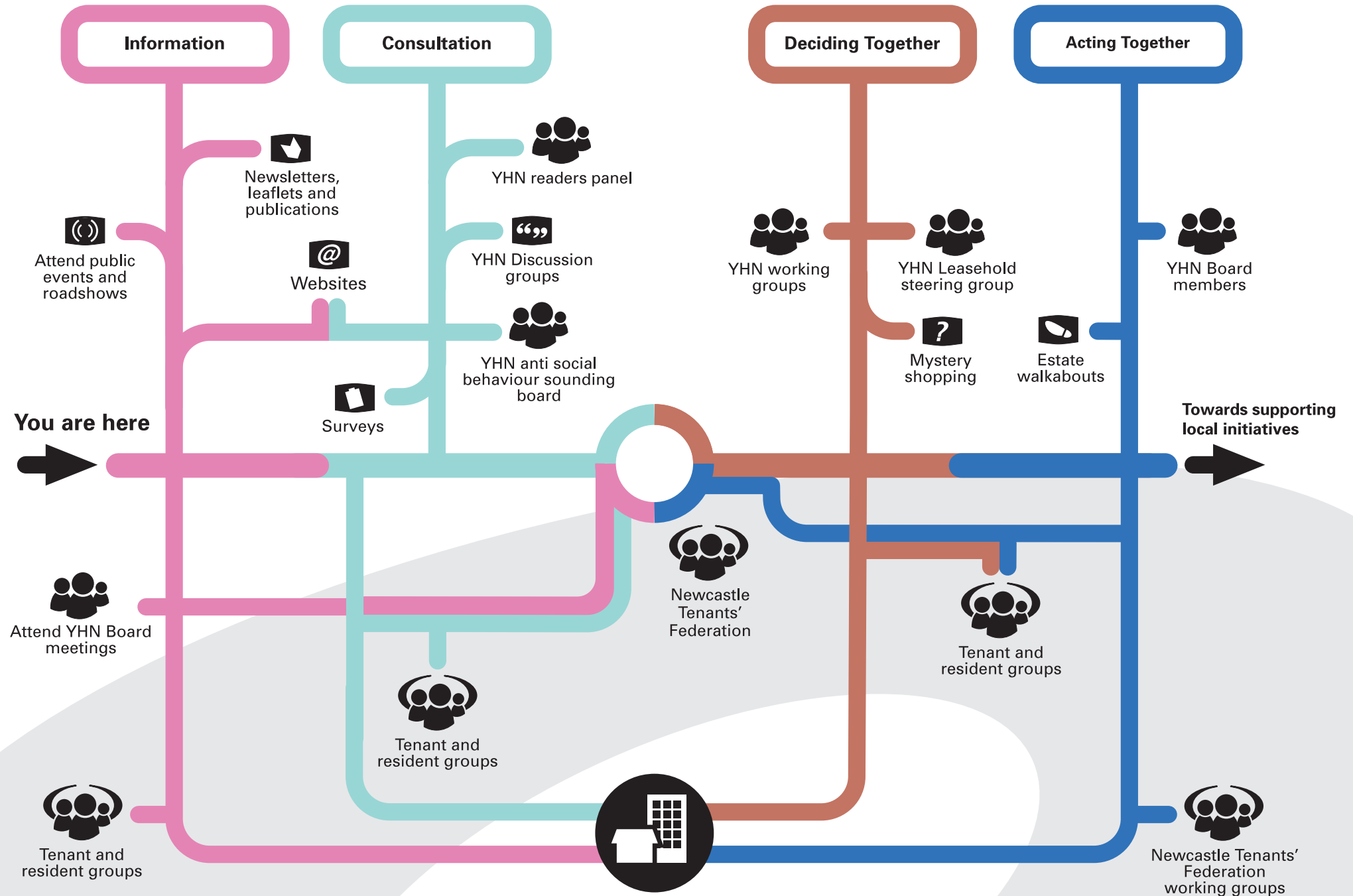
You can choose how, if at all, you want to be involved, and at what level. You can play a greater part in influencing decisions by becoming involved in collective forums and groups such as Tenants and Residents Groups or the area or main boards at YHN.

However, you may also choose to be involved as an individual to influence housing services. You can do this in a number of ways such as attending a focus group, filling in surveys or attending events and road shows.

The map overleaf shows some of the ways that you can be involved.

“Staff have made us feel our input is invaluable to improving housing services.”

Routes to involvement



Information

Information is very important as it supports all stages of involvement and lets you know about important things that affect you including decisions, services and local events.

All our tenants have the right to information about their tenancy, services they receive and who is responsible for it. Since January 2005, tenants and leaseholders also have additional rights to information under The Freedom of Information Act. You can use this legislation to ask for information that you feel you should have received. This could include information held about you in relation to your tenancy.

We will provide information about all aspects of housing services including policies, delivery of services and plans for housing investment.

Consultation

Consultation will be used when there is a decision to make about something or when there are a number of options for change to choose from and we want to know what you think.

All council tenants have a legal right to be consulted on changes in the way that we manage homes. This includes improvements to your home; work planned for estates and also changes in your tenancy agreement. All council leaseholders have a legal right to be consulted on any charges or work to your home which costs £250 or more. Leaseholders also have a right to be consulted before Newcastle City Council or Your

Homes Newcastle enters into any long term partnership with other organisations or companies.

Deciding together

This is where local people are involved in deciding which options to choose but it is the council, or YHN that will act on the decisions. Examples of this include Tenants and Residents Groups working with their local housing management team to suggest proposals on using Area Project Fund money to improve the local environment.

Acting together

This is when decisions are made by partnerships between local people or agencies and the council. The people involved in making the decisions also take part in carrying them out. Examples of this include estate walkabouts with residents and tenant representatives from boards and partnership groups.

Supporting local initiatives

This is when independent groups get help to develop and carry out their own plans. An example of this is supporting Newcastle Tenants Federation to support and develop representative and democratic tenants and residents groups.

Developing tenant and leaseholder involvement

Increasing involvement

Why is it important that everyone can get involved?

In the past the Council hasn't been very good at listening to and acting upon the views of some groups of people. Now we and our partners are particularly keen to encourage tenants and leaseholders from all communities to get involved and give us their views.

We know that involving people in managing their homes and estates is vital to delivering better housing services and improving quality of life for council tenants and leaseholders in Newcastle. We also recognise that people who live in Newcastle have diverse backgrounds, circumstances and needs. We will make sure that we provide ways to involve all our customers so that we deliver services that meet the different needs of the communities we work with.

This means we will use a wide range of approaches to involve you at different levels in ways that suit your different needs and circumstances.

"It's amazing what you can accomplish when you get involved."

What are we doing to increase involvement?

We are doing a lot of work to increase involvement from all parts of the community. Some of the work we are currently doing includes:

- Newcastle City Council are involving older tenants in the development of an older persons' housing strategy
- A group of tenants from BME communities are working with Newcastle Tenants' Federation to raise awareness of some of their housing related issues
- Your Homes Newcastle has added 130 young tenants and BME tenants to their list of 'make a difference' volunteers. These two parts of the community are now well represented in all of the involvement sessions organised by YHN

To continue to increase involvement from tenants and leaseholders from all communities we will:

- Regularly review which groups are underrepresented in involvement
- Take action to increase the involvement of these groups
- Develop new approaches to involving these groups
- Remove barriers that may prevent certain groups from getting involved
- Learn from good practice

The compact action plan which is produced each year will include targets to make sure we increase involvement from all parts of the community in Newcastle.

"I get involved so I can improve housing for everybody."

Resources and support for tenant and leaseholder involvement

This information is about the resources and support available for tenant and leaseholder involvement and who provides it.

Support from Newcastle City Council

While the Council as a whole has a responsibility to make sure that people are given the opportunity and support to be involved, there are particular parts of the Council that help this happen:

- Community Development, which gives help and support to communities and individuals to improve their skills, knowledge, experience and potential to get involved in activities, both locally and city-wide
- Ward Co-ordinators, who are responsible for helping to develop each Ward Committee's community groups and networks, and giving support to each Ward Committee. They also provide overall information on the city's wards, neighbourhoods and communities
- The council's Performance and Improvement Unit gives advice on and monitors consultation

Support from Your Homes Newcastle

Your Homes Newcastle has a dedicated Involvement Team which helps develop, support and promote tenant and leaseholder involvement.

In addition to this, tenant and leaseholder involvement is supported across the organisation from a range of officers in a

number of ways including attendance at tenant and resident meetings, arranging estate walkabouts and supporting local initiatives.

The compact includes full details of the support available from Your Homes Newcastle.

Support from Newcastle Tenants' Federation

Newcastle City Council will continue to support and assist in the development of the Newcastle Tenants' Federation as the independent umbrella organisation for tenants and residents groups in the city.

Newcastle Tenants' Federation helps set up and support representative and democratic tenants and residents groups so that they can play a full part in decisions about their housing and environment.

Another important part of the Federation's work is to bring tenants and residents groups together to discuss issues of common concern. The information the Federation gains from these discussions is used to develop its city-wide work.

Tenants' and residents groups may be able to access funding through the tenants fund. The tenants' federation can provide more information about how to access this funding.

The Tenants Federation runs a number of training courses for groups including basic skills sessions for new tenants and residents groups and sessions on topics such as treasurer's skills, representing your community, presentation skills and equality and diversity.

"I really enjoy getting involved and working as part of a group."

Monitoring this Compact

Keeping it real!

It is very important that this agreement is regularly monitored to make sure that we are meeting both the targets set in the compact action plan tenants' and leaseholders' needs and expectations.

The compact is monitored every three months by the Tenant Involvement Advisory Group (TIAG), which is a group of people who meet to consider proposals for changes in housing policy and service.

The group is made up of councillors and tenant representatives. It is supported by officers from Newcastle City Council and Newcastle Tenants' Federation.

Putting things right

We always aim to deliver high quality services to our tenants and leaseholders. However, if you feel that we are not delivering the promises made in the compact, you have a right to complain. We welcome your feedback and every complaint we receive is logged and the information is used to improve services. The compact contains details on how you can make a complaint if you are unhappy.

“Even if you have a disability, your view counts.”

Useful contacts

Your Homes Newcastle Involvement Team

YHN House, Benton Park Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE7 7LX
Tel: 0191 278 8723
www.yhn.org.uk

Newcastle Tenants Federation

1 Pink Lane
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 5DW
Tel: 0191 232 1371
www.newcastletenantsfed.org.uk

Newcastle City Council

Housing Policy and Strategy Team
Civic Centre
St Marys Place
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8PR
Tel: 0191 211 5863
www.newcastle.gov.uk

“Getting involved means you can help achieve things.”

This information is about how you can get involved and have your say about how our services are provided. If you need this information in your language we will arrange an interpreter for you.

This information is also available in large print, Braille and audio tape. We can also arrange for you to see a British Sign Language interpreter. Telephone: 0191 278 8633.

Bengali

এই তথ্য হল আমরা কিভাবে আমাদের সার্ভিস (সেবা) দিয়ে থাকি, তাতে আপনি কিভাবে অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারেন এবং আপনার মতামত ব্যক্ত করতে পারেন সে সম্পর্কে। এই তথ্য যদি <বাংলায়> অথবা অন্য কোন ভাষায় প্রয়োজন হয় তাহলে এই নাম্বারে ফোন করুন- ০১৯১ ২৭৮ ৮৬৩৩

Chinese (simplified)

这是有关您如何就我们提供的服务发表意见并参与改善的信息。如果您需要此信息的普通话版本或其它语言版本，请致电 0191 278 8633 索取。

Chinese (traditional)

這是關於您如何就我們提供的服務發表意見並參與改善的信息。如果您需要此信息的廣東話版本或其它語言版本，請致電 0191 278 8633 索取。

Farsi

این اطلاعات شما را راهنمایی می کند تا نظرات خود را درباره خدمات ما ابراز کنید. در صورت نیاز به این اطلاعات به زبان فارسی یا زبان های دیگر با شماره تلفن ۰۱۹۱۲۷۸۸۶۳۳ تماس بگیرید.

French

Ces informations concernent la manière dont vous pouvez vous engager et donner votre opinion sur la qualité de nos services. Si vous avez besoin de ces informations en français ou dans une autre langue, téléphonez au: 0191 278 8633.

Kurdish

ئەم زانیاریانە سەبارەت بە چۆنەتی بەشداری ئۆه و ڕادەرپریتان سەبارەت بە خزمەتگەلیگە کە ئێمە دەیدەین. ئەگەرچەزتان لە وەرگرتنی ئەم زانیاریانە بە زمانی کوردی یا هەر زمانیکی دیکە هەیه بە ژمارە تیلیفۆنی 0191 278 8633 پێوهندی بگرن.

Portuguese

Esta informação refere-se à forma como pode participar e dar a sua opinião sobre a maneira como fornecemos os nossos serviços. Se precisar desta informação em <português> ou noutra língua, queira ligar para o 0191 278 8633.

Russian

Информация о том, как Вы можете быть задействованы и высказать свое мнение по поводу предоставляемых нами услуг. Если Вы нуждаетесь в этой информации <на русском> или другом языке звоните по тел. 0191 278 8633.

Spanish

Ésta es información sobre cómo puede participar y dar su opinión de cómo proporcionamos nuestros servicios. Si necesita esta información en español o en otro idioma, llame al 0191 278 8633.