



Section

9

Getting involved



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Customer Involvement

Bracknell Forest Homes is committed to involving, consulting and informing its customers on a range of issues that affect them and the communities they live in.

Customer Involvement is about giving residents the opportunity to have a say in the way that we provide housing services. It means that customers will be able to influence the decisions that affect them, their homes and communities. Bracknell Forest Homes provides a wide range of involvement opportunities to enable residents of all backgrounds, ages and minority groups to participate if they choose.

It is easy to get involved and if you have never done anything like this before then the Customer Involvement Officer (who can be contacted on 01344 382912) will be able to help you to decide which option is best for you. We offer training and support where necessary and may provide additional help such as payment towards childcare or other care costs to enable you to attend meetings or events and payment to cover any travel costs incurred or assistance in arranging transport.

The amount of time and commitment is up to you; responding to a questionnaire twice a year can be as valuable as attending a meeting to give feedback. Involvement can be as convenient as you want it to be. To help you to decide the most appropriate level and method of involvement that suits your circumstances, we have graded the various involvement activities using a 'star' system. The number of stars shown next to the heading indicates the amount of time and commitment required.

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| ★ | Little time is required to participate, and consultation is on an infrequent basis (for example, an hour every few months) |
| ★★ | A medium amount of time and commitment is required (for example, two hours every quarter) |
| ★★★ | A higher commitment level and amount of time is required to become involved (for example, two hours per month) |
| ★★★★ | The highest level of involvement where in addition to attending meetings, residents are required to take part in regular training events and other meetings (for example, one to two hours per week) |



What are the involvement options?

The Tenants and Leaseholders Panel ★ ★ ★ ★

The Tenants and Leaseholders Panel is a group of customers who represent particular areas or groups in the borough – there are seats for each of the main housing areas as well as leaseholder and sheltered residents' places. The Panel meets monthly with Bracknell Forest Homes' officers to discuss housing issues. The meetings are chaired by a tenant or leaseholder and the group has its own funds. Observers can attend the meetings and ask questions, although they cannot vote.

Bracknell Forest Leaseholders Association ★ ★

The Leaseholders Association is open to all leaseholders of Bracknell Forest Homes and meets approximately every six to eight weeks along with Bracknell Forest Homes' officers to discuss housing and leaseholder issues. A leaseholder chairs this group. Leaseholders from BFLA also help us to write the handbooks and newsletters specifically for leaseholders.

Customer Inspectors ★ ★ ★ ★

Bracknell Forest Homes has set up a scheme for customers to undertake inspection exercises (e.g. mystery shopping) to look at the quality of services provided by Bracknell Forest Homes. Residents who take part in this scheme will receive training and gain useful skills. This programme will be undertaken with other local housing organisations and there will be the opportunity to meet customers of other organisations and learn about them as well as your own landlord.

Customer Involvement Group ★ ★ ★

The Customer Involvement Group is an open and flexible group that looks in detail at the way Bracknell Forest Homes operates. It helps to shape and influence things like policies and procedures. It is a way for customers' experiences to help Bracknell Forest Homes to provide the services that customers want. The group meets monthly and any tenant or leaseholder can attend any meeting if they are interested in the topic being discussed. You do not have to be a member of any other group to attend these meetings.

News Group ★ ★

The News Group and Editorial Board design the content and format of the Tenants and Leaseholders newsletter, which is called "Spotlight". The Editorial Board is a small group who meet weekly and then the larger News Group meet twice in the quarterly news gathering cycle. The News Group involves a small amount of reading to be done before each meeting. You do not need to be a member of any other group to join this one.



Residents Voice ★ ★

A Residents' Voice is someone who speaks on behalf of Bracknell Forest Homes Tenants and Leaseholders (and other residents) but only in their block or road rather than a whole estate. They act as a link between residents and Bracknell Forest Homes by asking their neighbours if they have any issues they would like raised, and feeding back to people what Bracknell Forest Homes have said or will do about these issues. A Residents Voice does not need to attend regular meetings.

Tenants & Leaseholders Area Meetings ★ ★

Bracknell Forest Homes holds quarterly meetings on the main estates in the borough (please note – these meetings may sometimes be replaced by an estate walkabout – see below). In areas where experience has shown that customers prefer other means of involvement to this, meetings are not scheduled but can be requested, or people can attend a meeting in another area. All tenants and leaseholders receive notification of these meetings in their quarterly newsletter and can also find out the dates on Bracknell Forest Homes' website at www.bracknellforesthomes.org.uk. Tenants and leaseholders can attend to discuss housing issues in their area and meet with Housing Officers. In partnership with the police, Bracknell Forest Borough Council also holds Neighbourhood Forums for all residents where environmental or crime issues can be raised.

Estate Walkabouts ★

Bracknell Forest Homes organises estate walkabouts in its main housing areas twice per year. These involve officers, residents and other organisations inspecting the estate and are open to any resident to come along and raise issues. An action plan is then produced detailing how issues raised will be tackled if this is possible. The action plan is sent to everyone who attended, and then monitored. The walkabouts are advertised to all tenants and leaseholders in the quarterly newsletter and on Bracknell Forest Homes' website at www.bracknellforesthomes.org.uk

Housing Sounding Board ★

The Housing Sounding Board is a number of tenants and leaseholders who are willing to be consulted by postal or telephone questionnaire, on a regular basis, in return for shopping vouchers. This group is also occasionally invited to attend one-off meetings or focus groups. You can join at www.bracknellforesthomes.org.uk or by telephoning the Customer Involvement Team on 01344 382912.

