



Community Engagement Strategy

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to inform the organisation, tenants and stakeholders of our approach to community engagement. The strategy will cover how Cossington Housing Co-operative (CHC) continues to intend to develop community engagement with tenants. The main purpose of community engagement is to involve tenants in social activities and workshops. Cossington Co-op is working hard to address the importance of the tenant voice and improve quality of customer care. To deliver engagement, the organisation will embed key skills and activities for tenants. This strategy will include all of these key points and will be shared with staff and residents so that everyone can understand the benefits of this project.

About Cossington

As a Registered Provider, since 1978, Cossington Housing Co-operative has been an innovative provider of good quality, affordable homes for rent for local people. We work in partnership with our residents, funding agencies and local people to create sustainable communities. Based in the Belgrave area of Leicester, we work in an ethnically diverse community and rent homes to people from a variety of cultures. Xx% of our homes are tenanted by members of the Gujarati community. We have a strong commitment to diversity and promoting equality of opportunity. We firmly believe in putting our families and their tenant members first.

Vision and values

Our vision is to have a positive impact on communities by providing opportunities to interact and engage with leisure activities and to learn new skills. Our aims are to:

- Support tenants with independence
- Develop a stronger sense of community
- Provide a space for learning and opportunities
- Develop a stronger organisation
- Working as one team

We will measure our success by incorporating tenants' voices and feedback. We will support these aims with our values of being [insert CHC values].

Aims

This strategy will help us to support CHC's business plans by allowing us to understand tenants needs, bringing together a wholesome community and helping tenants to feel part of a community and have a voice.

Engagement strategy

We will be following traditional forms of involvement and engagement such as focus groups and surveys designed to elicit views and ideas on service quality. However, our strategy will lean heavily toward a more inclusive and participative approach that also adds value to tenants' quality of life and wellbeing. We believe this not only goes to the heart of the White Paper requirements around better community engagement but surpasses these. To that end we aim to deliver workshops and social activities. Each form of activity would be face to face with a professional service provider who would provide the demonstrations, knowledge and delivery of workshop to tenants. The workshop activities and classes would range from social to learning new skills, education and exploring the arts. Here are some examples but not limited to:

Sewing class – These classes would allow tenants to learn sewing techniques and hand stitching to produce a hand-made piece that they could take home. The workshop would allow tenants to meet with other tenants in a relaxed environment. The benefits of this class would allow them to learn a new skill, reduce stress and anxiety, improved hand eye coordination, promote mental growth, produce their own work and feel more positive.

Computer class – Teaching tenants the basics of how to use a computer from setting up email accounts, using Word document, downloading files and online shopping. The objective of this training class is to take tenants from a level of no knowledge of the computer to self-sufficiency in its usage by providing demonstrations and troubleshooting. With tenant feedback and insight, we would also grasp a sense of what skills they would like to be taught.

Clay making/Etching/painting – Various arts activities teaching artful techniques to tenants to allow a form of relaxation and creation. These activities would require limited resources and use art to allow tenants participate in hands-on making and taking home something hand-made from creating flower vases, festive cards or printing on tote bags.

Yoga and meditation – Setting up yoga and meditation classes for tenants to be engaged in as a form of exercise. These classes would be a great health benefit in a relaxed environment.

English classes – Teaching tenants an introduction to speaking, writing and reading in English. This class would be for those who English is their second language where they can learn simple English words for everyday life, work and study.

The engagement activities would be delivered face to face in a room provided at the CHC building which would allow for real participation and wholesome experience. They would be advertised in advance to all the tenants through a poster and emails whereby tenants would be able to register their place. CHC would also use focus groups for feedback and to understand tenants needs.

What do we need?

From the Tenant's perspective better engagement matters for a lot of reasons such as; a better service, feeling empowered, feeling more engaged in the community which then helps with wellbeing, learning opportunities and educational and personal enrichment. In order to achieve our aims, we need to:

- Gather customer insight data to deliver targeted outcomes. This will be achieved through qualitative methods such as focus groups to gather data on what they would like to see, learn and get involved with in terms of opportunities and workshops.
- Ensure the opportunities are accessible to all. This will be achieved through measuring that each opportunity and workshop is accessible to all.
- Create more digital and online engagement opportunities. This will be done through the use of our new website, emailing tenants about updates and updating them through our newsletters.
- Develop ways to engage tenants with a learning disability through the use of creative arts. We aim to support everyone and we will ensure that our opportunities are accessible to all with fairness.
- Use creative arts to create practical workshops and activities to support mental health. We will achieve this by inviting specialised service providers to design and conduct workshops and activities with a focus on mental health wellbeing.
- Have participation as a key insight to bring together tenants. This will be achieved through making the opportunities a collaborative tool whereby we would listen to tenants' ideas and suggestions and work with them to provide these services.
- Embed learning skills and methods to support tenants and make a real difference in their lives. The expert workshop conductors would be asked to embed learning skills into the creative workshops and activities.

Equality and diversity

Cossington Housing Co-operative will continue to recognise and celebrate diversity and promote equal opportunities. We will continue to work towards the widest representation from all sections of the community to ensure the activities are accessible to all and promote mutual respect with an aim to try to remove barriers to involvement. We will treat everyone the same regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation

Conclusion

This Strategy has outlined how CHC will support our tenants to be involved with the community and through that provide real time feedback on service quality. We believe that listening to the views of our tenants and providing a range of opportunities for tenants to be involved will have a positive impact on all aspects of our service and help us to achieve the aims set out in our business plan.