



Community Engagement Strategy

2018 - 19

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Community Engagement Strategy 2018/19

Introduction

Sutton Housing Society (SHS) is an independent, charitable organisation working across the London Borough of Sutton. Established in 1964 with the aim of providing supported housing to local people in need, our focus remains primarily on older people, enabling and promoting independence within their homes.

During 2017, the staff team, with approval of the Board, reviewed and refreshed our vision and values.



Our Vision is:

- Investing our resources we are proud to provide affordable, well maintained quality homes.
- With charitable status and as a specialist provider of homes for the independent over 55s, we continue to invest for the changing needs of Sutton.
- Our highly professional staff team are dedicated to responding to the needs of our tenants and developing a sense of community.



Our Values are:

- Passionate about doing what's right
- Professional & Effective
- People focussed & Stronger together
- Caring, Responsive & Flexible

In order to meet our vision and values effectively, we are committed to pro-actively engaging with our tenants to ensure that our services are valued and meet our tenants' expectations and that tenants are empowered to share their views and have their voices heard to shape and improve services across SHS.

Background

During the financial year 2017/18, SHS rolled out its first full year of community engagement activities. An annual, costed engagement plan was introduced which covered three key themes:

- Financial Inclusion
- Health and Wellbeing
- Service Standards

In addition, we wished to increase our community engagement work, increase our work with external partners and generally raise awareness of the SHS brand locally. The majority of our work in community engagement has been around health and wellbeing, with many activities and events, encouraging people to come together, thereby easing isolation and loneliness and sharing new experiences.

We have developed stronger partnerships locally, working much more closely with Age UK Sutton to encourage more digital inclusion and with Citizens Advice around raising awareness of welfare benefits, debt advice and support, together with training staff.

We have established new relationships with Pre Vista, Christians against Poverty (CAP) and with other organisations such as the Workers Education Authority, to provide advice, assistance and support relating to employment skills, financial resilience and family support.

In relation to service standards, during 2017/18, we introduced mystery shopping and carried out reviews with tenants relating to guest room standards and window cleaning. During 2018/19, we will look to increase involvement as we procure new contracts for gardening and cleaning.

Whilst there has been a considerable increase in our engagement activities, we have been more reticent about formally evidencing the social value of this work. Social value will feature more highly during 2018/19 to ensure that we capture and evidence the difference we are making with our tenants.

Key Aims of this Strategy

This is SHS' first formal Community Engagement Strategy and has been prepared off the back of our first year of providing a full community engagement programme.

The Strategy has been developed to enable SHS to be clear about its desired outcomes and about why we provide community engagement across our schemes; this will give a clearer focus to our staff and assist in developing services/enabling initiatives and events.

This Strategy helps in identifying the range of ways that SHS tenants can be involved with the organisation and how they can influence our services and help improve these to more effectively meet their current and/or future needs. The Strategy provides a framework for monitoring our engagement with tenants which assists with our compliance with regulatory requirements.

In delivering our Community Engagement Strategy, we will ensure that we:

- Meet regulatory requirements relating to tenant involvement and empowerment
- Increase tenant involvement in SHS services
- Encourage tenant involvement in our formal governance arrangements via the Housing Operations Committee
- Promote our community engagement initiatives across our schemes, enabling greater access to events and activities
- Review the value of our work in terms of social value and meeting our key aims.

The key aims of this Community Engagement Strategy are:

- to encourage more tenant involvement in our services
- to assist tenants with social engagement, reducing isolation and loneliness
- to procure social value through new contracts with key partners
- to measure the social value of our engagement work.

Our key outcomes are:

- to evidence more tenant involvement in SHS services
- to evidence an increase in wellbeing and a reducing in isolation and loneliness
- to increase value from our contracts
- to deliver our community engagement work within our £25,000 budget.

We are developing new and measurable targets to assist with monitoring and improving our community engagement work to reflect year on year learning and experience.

Engagement Activity

Tenants can be involved in both a formal and informal way with SHS services.

Formal tenant engagement activities:

➤ Surveys:

The STAR survey is run every 3 years and we encourage tenants to participate by incentivising the STAR survey returns. The survey is managed by an independent company and tenants are requested to share their views of the Society and to provide their satisfaction ratings across a wide range of services.

Other surveys are less formal such as repairs feedback surveys, which tell us how satisfied tenants are with the repair work carried out.

➤ Review/Focus Groups:

We carried out a Guest Room Standards review in 2017, with tenants participating from two of our schemes. We reviewed and agreed a new standard, together with new procedures for SHS staff to follow in respect of managing this service and the window cleaning service. The outcome of any review/focus group is reported to our Housing Operations Committee to our tenants via our newsletter and it is also on our website.

➤ Clear Voice:

SHS works with a translation company called “Clear Voice” to ensure that any tenant that wants to access our services but that may have trouble doing so in English, can access translation services. Our staff are aware of the service and will assist in accessing this if needed.

➤ Newsletters:

SHS newsletters are issued to all tenants at least twice a year. The newsletter provides updates and information relating to the Society’s activities, performance and services. Many articles provide opportunities to be involved in the work of SHS.

➤ Digital Champions:

In 2017, SHS joined Digital Unite to assist with our move to a more digital service. 32% of SHS tenants have advised that they have access to the internet; conversely, 68% of tenants do not access information and services on line, leaving them “digitally excluded”. SHS recruits tenant Digital Champions, promoting the digital agenda generally amongst our tenants.

➤ Annual General Meeting:

SHS holds its AGM in September each year, inviting all shareholders to attend. SHS tenants are free to join the society and to become a shareholder for £1.00. As a shareholder, tenants can raise questions formally at the meeting. In addition shareholders receive a copy of the Annual Report; this contains summaries of the Society’s activities, performance and its financial statements (income and expenditure and balance sheet). Shareholders are also able to receive full copies of the Society’s accounts on request.

➤ [Housing Operations Committee \(HOC\):](#)

The HOC is a sub-committee of our Board and tenants are in the majority. During 2017, we reviewed the Terms of Reference and the HOC now focusses on performance and review of key areas of operational work impacting directly on tenants and our services. Regular HOC updates appear in our newsletters, on the website and minutes are openly available (with any highly confidential matters removed).

Informal tenant engagement activities:

At SHS the informal tenant engagement activities largely relate to health and wellbeing, a key issue for our tenant group, particularly amongst older, more vulnerable people. Our informal activities include:

- Primary school naming of new development
- Easter events
- Home sight eye tests
- Police fraud talks
- Mobile Farm visit
- Therapy dog visits
- Afternoon teas
- Participation in national events such as McMillan coffee morning, time for a cuppa, the Big Brew, health & wellbeing week, IT awareness week etc.
- Garden competition
- Chair based exercises
- Age UK IT classes
- Tai Chi
- Making a Difference Day
- Christmas related activities.

(This list is not exhaustive.)



Partnership Working

SHS has strengthened its partnership with key stakeholders during 2017 and this remains a focus for us going forward.

Not only will we continue to strengthen and maintain our partnerships with Age UK Sutton, Citizens Advice, CAP, the Council and other statutory partners, we will look to establish new partnerships with the local community to encourage engagement in our schemes through new work with schools, the health authority and voluntary organisations.

We will focus on our contractors that provide services for the benefit of our tenants and help to maintain standards at our homes. When reviewing contracts such as window cleaning, gardening and general cleaning, we will ensure that the evaluation exercise for the new contractor includes “added social value” and that we explore this with contractors to maximise engagement opportunities for SHS.



Measuring Social Value

The term “social value” is used by SHS in the context of establishing the financial value of activity related to non-financial based topics such as wellbeing, emotions and health. Evidencing social value relating to the success of our community engagement activity is a challenge for us – and one that we will proactively tackle during 2018/19.

We will review how we evidence and measure success to enable us to evaluate in financial terms, the social value generated through our community engagement work, looking at how our work meets our key aims and outcomes.



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SHS Community Engagement Plan 2018 - 2019

The Community Engagement Plan will continue with its three key themes outlined above (see Background) and the Plan will continue to be monitored by the Housing Operations Committee.

Financial Inclusion:

Carrying on from 2017/18, SHS will continue to provide services, either direct or through partners, that support tenants to increase their financial resilience. Work relating to budget management, debt advice and money management, delivered via referrals to Citizens Advice, CAP and Age UK Sutton will continue.

During 2018/19, we will consider raising awareness around loan sharks and pay day loans and continue to promote the rollout and delivery of digital awareness.

With the increased rollout of Universal Credit, the emphasis on enabling greater financial resilience amongst SHS tenants continues and assists towards ensuring that rent arrears owed to SHS are kept to a minimum.

Being digitally enabled is a key challenge for us as only 32% of SHS tenants have access to digital platforms. Working with our Digital Champions we will look to improve awareness and use of the internet and all that it offers. We will complete the rollout of Wi-Fi at our schemes and offer individual, 121 support sessions to tenants to increase their confidence and knowledge.

SHS staff will receive relevant training to ensure they continue to have a high level of awareness and understanding relating to welfare benefits generally and of those that specifically impact on our tenants.

Health and Wellbeing:

Following our tenant profiling update during 2017, we now have a greater awareness of our tenant group and can direct our services accordingly.

We know that we have 41% of our tenants living with disabilities and/or long term conditions that impact on their daily lives. In order to raise awareness and to ensure our staff have increased understanding, we will tailor part of our Training Programme 2018/19 to providing training relating to hearing impairments, living with limited mobility/in a wheelchair and sight issues. We will also continue to ensure staff feel able to address issues relating to mental health and dementia.

The SHS Community Engagement Officer will continue to ensure that we provide a wide range of activities and events, across our schemes, encouraging tenants to participate. This will include health related visits such as wellbeing sessions, sight tests etc. together with chair based exercise and opportunities to sample other forms of gentle exercise such as Tai chi. We will also continue to run the annual gardening competition, encouraging tenants to be outside, looking after a patch of their communal gardens.

We will encourage across scheme interaction, widening tenants' ability to attend events at different schemes. We will explore some digital initiatives such as "skype

bingo” and reminiscing sessions using the internet as a tool to explore where people lived and how places have changed.

The Community Engagement Officer will explore external funding opportunities to enhance our engagement programme with additional events/activities that assist with health and wellbeing.

All of these activities/events enable us to assist tenants with social engagement in order to reduce isolation and loneliness. In 2018, we will run the Good Neighbour Scheme ahead of the AGM, making the “Pat Shaw Award” to the person nominated and selected as the “SHS Good Neighbour” at the AGM.

Monitoring & Improving Service Standards:

In 2017, SHS introduced review groups to work with us. The review groups:

- agreed a new standard and procedure for our guest rooms
- considered the specification for the window cleaning contract and reviewing the contract to enable enhanced value for money.

During 2018/19, we will set up review groups to be involved with:

- setting the specification and choosing the contractor for our Grounds Maintenance work
- setting the specification and choosing the contractor for our Cleaning contract

The review groups enable tenants to share their views and directly influence the specification for works and subsequently the level of service tenants receive together with increased understanding/awareness of the costs involved.

Given our tenant profile, we will work with tenants to explore the need for a Disability Forum to assist in our work and to ensure that we are genuinely inclusive.

“Mystery Shopping” will continue with a focus initially on our repairs service, as chosen by the mystery shoppers. This will complement the work carried out in 2017 relating to the STAR survey outcomes and assist in highlighting gaps and areas for improvement.

We will look to introduce a “Menu of Engagement Opportunities”. This will show tenants the variety of ways to be involved and the time commitment against each of the different ways. This will include new ways to be involved such as via an e-mail group, participating in website surveys or becoming a SHS Volunteer.

Social media is an area for SHS to explore further with our tenants; we will explore the use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and other social media apps as a way of promoting SHS services to our tenants and increasing our tenants’ involvement with the digital programme.





2018/19 Action Plan

Below is a summary of our commitments within this Strategy, for 2018/19:

Task	Who's Involved	Timescale
Detailed Community Engagement Plan 2018/19 in place	Community Engagement Officer	Quarter 4 2017/18
Introduce & implement ways to measure SHS' social value of community engagement work	Operations Director Community Engagement Officer	Quarter 1
Review need for a Disability Forum	Operations Director	Quarter 1
Review & re-tender the Cleaning contract	Operations Director Property team Tenants (volunteers)	Quarter 1 - 3
Review & re-tender the Gardening contract	Operations Director Property team Tenants (volunteers)	Quarter 1 - 3
Advertise and host 121 IT support sessions	Digital Champions – staff & tenants	Quarter 1 - 4
Apply for appropriate external funding bids	Community Engagement Officer	Quarter 1 – 4
Investigate the use of Social Media @ SHS	Head of Finance & Resources Digital Champions	Quarter 1 - 3
Deliver a Mystery Shopping programme	Operations Director	Quarter 1 - 4
Produce a “Menu of Engagement” options for tenants	Community Engagement Officer	Quarter 2
Financial Resilience – arrange sessions to raise awareness of loan sharks/pay day loans amongst SHS tenants	Community Housing Services Manager Community Engagement Officer	Quarter 2 - 3

Community Engagement Targets 2018 – 2021

Task/Issue	Additional information	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
STAR survey	SHS committed to carrying out this survey every 3 years			
Increase tenant membership of HOC	1 new member each year for the next 3 years			
Implement system to measure the social return on investment for community engagement work.	Baseline for 2017/18 calculated in Q4 and as something to measure against going forward.	Q4 2019/20 	Q4 2020/21 	Q4 2021/22 
Measure social value of increased partnership working year on year		Baseline established in Q1		
Measure added social value of new gardening & cleaning contract	Contracts to be let for 2019 – 2024 in Q4 of 2018/19 financial year.			
Measure tenant satisfaction with gardening & cleaning contracts	Contracts to be let for 2019 – 2024 in Q4 of 2018/19 financial year.	Baseline to be established in Q 3 via Newsletter article		
Increase				

digital inclusion amongst tenants' year on year	68% of tenants are not digitally engaged (STAR survey Jan17)	Q4 measure	Q4 measure	Q4 measure
Measure inter-generational involvement with SHS (schools, volunteers)	Use 2017/18 as a baseline and increase inter-generational involvement with SHS year on year			
Increase external funding for community engagement activities year on year	Use 2017/18 as a baseline	Q4 report 	Q4 report 	Q4 report 
Increase number of tenants involved with SHS	Community Engagement Officer measures attendance at events/activities but all SHS staff should do this going forward	Measure attendance at every SHS event/activity during 2018/19 & use as a baseline going forward.		

To Find Out More



If you would like to discuss this Community Engagement Strategy, please contact Glynis Gatenby, Operations Director on 020 8642 1500 or email glynis.gatenby@shsoc.org.uk



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