

Customer Involvement Impact Assessment Appendix 1

2008 – 2009



A Special “Thank you”

We would like to extend special thanks to those customers who have given their time and energy to getting involved and giving us valuable ideas and feedback so that together we can improve services for the wider benefit of all Places for People customers. We really do appreciate and value your input, in every part of our business.

Contents	Page(s)
What is an Impact Assessment?	3
Customer Involvement Standards	4
Customer Involvement Menu	5 - 6
Progress on 2008-2009 Customer Involvement Priorities	7 - 19
Key priorities for 2009 - 2010	20
So how much does it all cost?	21 - 22
Customers have the last word!	23

Customer Involvement Impact Assessment 2008-2009

What is an impact assessment?

At Places for People, we put customers at the heart of everything we do. Customers are the people using our products and services every day – so it makes sense that they should be the ones to tell us how they should be delivered and how we can improve them.

Customers have been instrumental in shaping our Customer Involvement Policy and standards, and are fundamental to their implementation at national and local levels.

We are passionate about making sure all customers have an equal chance to become involved, no matter how much or how little time and commitment they are able to give. To achieve this we have developed, with customers, what we call a “menu of involvement” – that is, a range of ways in which customers can have a say, from attending formal meetings to completing a short online survey from time to time.

The impact assessment demonstrates how we comply with the resident involvement requirements of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), as set out in the Housing Corporation report “People First” (May 2007). The TSA took over responsibility for Housing Association regulation from the Housing Corporation in December 2008, and its primary goal is very simple - to raise the standard of service for tenants.

From April 2009, we will update our assessment twice a year, and see this as an excellent opportunity to review, with our customers, the ways in which we have worked together over the past six months. In particular, we want to assess whether we are enabling customers to get involved in a way that suits them, and whether the outcomes of customer involvement have led to service improvements – such as improved equality of access to services and better value for money from services.

This document is our 2008-2009 over-arching Customer Involvement Impact Assessment. It summarises how, nationally, we engage with customers, how well we have met our agreed 2008-2009 key priorities and what impact customer involvement has had on service improvement and value for money at Places for People. It also sets out our key priorities for 2009-2010.

Customer Involvement Standards

We have made a commitment to our customers that we will:

- Offer Places for People Customers the opportunity to challenge and influence decisions and services at all levels, by providing a menu of involvement with a range of choices.
- Listen to customers' views and use their input to learn and help us make decisions about services and products now and into the future.
- Nurture an excellent partnering relationship with our customers, and support and develop them so they feel confident in their role.
- Communicate with, and feed back to, customers in a clear and appropriate way.
- Measure and evaluate the impact of customer involvement and customer satisfaction levels and increase on these.
- Devise creative ways of reaching under-represented groups.
- Always look for ways to improve our approach and set out in a service improvement plan how we will do this.
- Meet all statutory and regulatory requirements relating to customer involvement.
- Provide support and resources to make customer involvement real, and measure value for money.
- Demonstrate a commitment to equality and diversity and ensure that involvement is fair, inclusive and accessible to all customers.

Customer Involvement Menu

Formal Involvement

Assurance and Regulation Board

This Board is part of the Association's Governance Structure, overseeing performance and challenging staff to bring about service improvements and better value-for-money for customers. Four places on the ARB are permanently set aside for customers.

National Customer Liaison Panel

Representatives from every Area Customer Liaison Panel work in partnership with us to improve opportunities for customers to be involved, scrutinise our services and performance and support the Group with the delivery of its aims, values and Business Plan. The Panel meets formally each quarter, and also at more informal workshop events during the year.

The NCLP role and effectiveness is under review. It is likely that we will develop new arrangements which aim to separate performance and policy development from actual customer experience.

Futures Group

A group of customers who meet with us every 3 months to have their views and ideas heard. They travel to events all around the country, and take part in workshop and other interactive events.

National Homeowners' Forum

A fairly new group of customers who are meeting with us to give feedback, ideas and suggestions on issues which affect them as homeowners. We also consult with homeowners in a number of other ways – around service charges and general questionnaires.

Area Customer Liaison Panels

Groups of local customers who meet with us regularly to improve services to customers and make neighbourhoods better places to live.

National Editorial Panel

Customers work to ensure our communication is relevant, interesting and easy to understand. Most of what the panel does takes place on-line, so there is no need to leave home to get involved

Residents' Associations

Regular meetings run by local people who meet regularly to discuss local concerns, put forward ideas and organise local events

Informal Involvement & Consultation

Individual Support Focus Group

This group gives our sheltered and extra care customers the chance to meet with us and get involved in issues that directly affect them looking at both the present and the future. **Home Focus** is a virtual group feeding directly into the ISFG, which allows customers who are unable or do not wish to travel to meetings to contribute to the same topics from home.

Estate Walkabouts

Regular walks around neighbourhoods with estate management staff. All residents are invited and encouraged to point out any problems or concerns. There is no need to make a regular commitment to attend.

Surveys and Questionnaires

We regularly use these to help us get customers' views on specific issues or proposals, to help us improve services and neighbourhoods.

Let's Talk

Customers are instrumental in designing and contributing to our Let's Talk newsletters, which are area-based and go out to all customers twice a year.

"You Said, We did"

Customers have told us that communication is one of the most important things to them. We use this format often, to keep customers informed of how their input influences and shapes the way we do things

Focus Groups

One-off national and local groups where customers come together to discuss service improvements and developments. This included a successful focus group themed around Antisocial Behaviour and the new Community Safety team. We also consulted with a group of younger customers under the theme of **Young People Count**.

Voice Group

A "virtual" consultation group. There are no meetings to attend, Voice customers give us their views from the comfort of their own home by phone, email or post.

Mystery Shoppers

Customers who agree to help monitor the quality of our services by testing them out for us. We are currently in the process of recruiting and training a team of Mystery Shoppers.

Annual Review

We use the Association's Annual Review to share our local and national performance with all our customers.

Places for People Website

We actively encourage feedback and contact with the Customer Relations Team on our website, with a special section for customers to comment on any aspect of our services.

Progress on 2008-2009 Customer Involvement Priorities

In our last Customer Impact Assessment, we set out a number of key customer involvement priorities which we would work on during 2008-2009.

Key priorities for 2008 - 2009

- To ensure that we provide neighbourhoods of choice for people to want to live in, and which meet their needs and aspirations.
- To improve services, to ensure we provide a consistently good service to all our customers.
- To improve overall satisfaction with services.
- To increase customer satisfaction with their opportunity to get involved and influence the decision-making and services being provided by Places for People.

With over 60,000 homes and over 140,000 customers nationwide, there are hundreds of examples of customer engagement within Places for People, both formal and informal, leading to better service and better value for money for customers as a whole. For the

purpose of this overarching assessment, the following pages illustrate just some of the activities carried out by our involved customers and groups which have resulted in service improvements and significant progress on the key priorities.

National Customer Liaison Panel (NCLP)

The Panel aims to improve services and influence business decisions which affect customers. It has a comprehensive business plan, and held 4 formal meetings during 2008-2009, together with a number of more informal, workshop events. Details of some of the Panel's achievements are set out below.

Action	Service Improvements	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
<p>Tenancy and Estate Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified the need for, shaped and tested new guidance and procedures for estate walkabouts. • Identified the need for a review of the policy on empty properties. • Carried out a “My Camera Never Lies” exercise to capture snapshot neighbourhood conditions using photographs. 	<p>New guidance and procedures have been implemented.</p> <p>New empty property standard has replaced the previous “relet standard”.</p> <p>Photographs were presented in an overarching report to senior managers and Places for People Board.</p>	<p>Monitor the effectiveness and impact of estate walkabouts.</p> <p>Monitor the operation of the new standard and highlight areas for future improvement.</p> <p>Focus on improving standards in neighbourhoods.</p>

Action	Service Improvements	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
<p>Housing Income Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed a scrutiny exercise on the “Centre of Excellence”. 	<p>Customers’ service improvement suggestions have been implemented including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a customer profiling exercise revised arrears letters establishment of an income collection focus group 	<p>Revisit the income collection service to assess progress and carry out further scrutiny.</p>
<p>Stock Investment and Asset Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held a customers’ maintenance workshop to discuss the repairs policy. Considered regular Asset Management Programme updates and information. 	<p>Customers have set 10 priorities for the repairs service, which the business is now working towards.</p> <p>Customers have monitored the programme with an emphasis on value for money. A specialist sub-group has been set up to focus on aspects of the programme, including procurement, performance monitoring and customer satisfaction.</p>	<p>Assess progress and provide challenge on the agreed priorities.</p> <p>Continue to monitor delivery of the Asset Management Programme through the Asset Management Sub-group.</p>

Action	Service Improvements	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
<p>Access and Customer Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed a scrutiny exercise of reception areas and contributed to the design of the new reception area standard. Reviewed service improvement plans and commented on priorities Reviewed the “Easy Read” customer booklets. Monitored and guided our approach to engaging with young people. 	<p>The reception area standard is being rolled out across all Places for People offices. Feedback is invited from customers through a "reception standard card".</p> <p>Customer comments and priorities were included in developing the service improvement plans.</p> <p>Booklets were redesigned to take into account customer feedback.</p> <p>Two consultation events have been held with young people, with the results reported back to the NCLP.</p>	<p>Evaluate the success and effectiveness of the new standard using customer feedback and mystery shopping exercises.</p> <p>Monitor delivery of the service improvement plans and contribute to reviews.</p> <p>Establish a review mechanism for the booklets to ensure currency and fitness for purpose.</p> <p>Provide further challenge in relation to methods of engaging young people.</p>
<p>Continuous Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-assessed a number of the services we provide, including customer involvement. 	<p>Customer comments have been incorporated into the corporate self-assessment documents.</p>	<p>Enable further customer input into the service improvement agenda.</p>

Action	Service Improvements	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
<p>Customer Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fed into and monitored the customer involvement service improvement plan. • Carried out a review of the customer involvement structure and opportunities to participate. Evaluated the success of ACLP action planning exercise. • Reviewed and proposed revisions to the Customer Involvement Policy. • Two Panel members received Star Awards for the input they give to customer involvement. 	<p>A number of customers' suggested actions have been implemented during the year.</p> <p>A major review of customer involvement vehicles and opportunities is underway, in consultation with customers.</p> <p>The Policy is under review in conjunction with the wider review of customer involvement.</p> <p>Through these awards, Places for People is able to properly acknowledge and reward exceptional contributions from customers to service development and continuous improvement in the organisation.</p>	<p>Enable customers to have ownership of the service improvement plan and continue to monitor its progress.</p> <p>Complete the review, determine timetable for change and implement new arrangements in consultation with customers. Evaluate effectiveness as part of 2009-2010 Customer Involvement Impact Assessment.</p> <p>Places for People to update the Customer Involvement Policy incorporating any changes to the customer involvement structure.</p> <p>Places for People to continue to use Star Awards to express thanks and recognition to for customers' contributions and achievements.</p>

Action	Service Improvements	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designed the mystery shopping programme. 	<p>Mystery shoppers have been recruited and will carry out exercises from 2009/10.</p>	<p>Continue to use mystery shopping as a tool to measure the customer experience. Ensure feedback shapes future service improvements and quality assurance.</p>
<p>Customer Training and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighted the need for a customer training and development programme. 	<p>A number of training sessions have been delivered to customers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value for Money Dealing with change How to challenge effectively 	<p>Design a customer training programme for the year ahead, ensuring that new customer groups self-assess their requirements at a timely stage in their development.</p>
<p>Strategic Approach to Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received a briefing and made comments on Places for People's staff restructuring proposals. Panel members attended external consultation sessions of the National Tenant Voice (NTV). 	<p>Customers' views have been taken into consideration in finalising the new staffing structures.</p> <p>A report summarising the views of the Panel was submitted to the NTV project group, ensuring that their views were fed into the national process.</p>	<p>Contribute to assessing the effectiveness and impact of restructuring at the appropriate time.</p> <p>Participate in future NTV consultation sessions. Aim for a Places for People customer to be on the NTV.</p>

Action	Service Improvements	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members took part in a number of National Conversation events, and oversaw Places for People's approach to this national exercise. 	<p>Over 250 customers completed a questionnaire. Their feedback will inform the design of new national standards for housing providers.</p>	<p>Participate in the next phase of the National Conversation.</p>
<p>Value for Money</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel oversaw the customer involvement aspects of the "Green Spaces" programme. 	<p>NCLP members participated in the selection of landscape architects. The steering group has influenced a variety of issues and NCLP customers are directly involved in the projects and consultation.</p>	<p>Places for People to consider how best to ensure continued customer involvement and direct input to future projects.</p>
<p>Community Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed and monitored the success of "Community Involvement Week", and suggested improvements. 	<p>The suggested improvements were incorporated into the programme of events for 2009 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having themed events (improving neighbourhoods, engaging the unengaged and value for money) Focusing on the "outcome" and "impact" of "activities" 	<p>Panel to review events in 2009 and make further suggestions for improvement</p>

Futures Group

The Futures Group has held a number of events during 2008-2009, and helps us understand more about what customers will want and need from us in the future. The Group developed a number of recommendations for places for People to consider.

Action	Service Improvements	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participated in a “Creative Communication” Workshop.	<p>Several recommendations for improvement are currently being developed further, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• website improvements• centralised complaints staff• increasing the local content of newsletters• introducing a facility for customers to contact the organisation by text message	<p>Futures Group to monitor progress on the recommendations.</p>

Action	Service Improvements	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
<p>Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistive Technology Workshop held. Members considered short and longer-term improvements. 	<p>A number of recommendations are under consideration, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> advertising current technology more widely investigating the option of providing “touchscreen” facilities explore the longer-term option of putting specialised technology in every Places for People home 	<p>Futures Group to monitor progress on the recommendations.</p>
<p>Culture and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Changing the Way We Think” event held. Customer expectations and perceptions were considered in innovative ways in this joint training exercise for customers and staff. 	<p>A better understanding of these subject areas was achieved, and the event significantly assisted the Futures Group in developing its role.</p>	<p>Report to be written setting out “next steps”.</p>

Young People Count

This group met with us to tell us their views and give us a perspective on younger customers' priorities and perceptions.

Action	Service Improvement	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
Social Inclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none">Focus group held with young people to explore experiences and expectations relating to their neighbourhood and to Places for People. The group agreed on how they wish to meet in the future.	Outcomes from the focus group were considered by the NCLP and senior managers. This achieved a better understanding for NCLP and Places for People of the needs and expectations of young customers.	Develop the role of the group. Broaden the membership and establish Terms of Reference and aims and objectives.
Strategic Housing Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none">16 young people took part in innovative activities which fed into the National Conversation debate, for example producing collages of "excellent customer service".	Places for People young customers' views will inform the national housing policy agenda.	Ensure young customers are involved in the next stages of the National Conversation.

Homeowners

We carry out specific activities with our homeowners to make sure their views are listened to and used to improve the homeownership services.

Action	Service Improvement	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
<p>Customer Satisfaction and Value for Money</p> <p>Status survey of homeowners (720 interviews carried out).</p>	<p>The survey results were used to set priorities for service improvement including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• strengthening the role of the central homeownership unit to give more of an emphasis to homeowner customers• ensuring value for money for homeowners by amalgamating services into tender packages	<p>Continue to use the information from the status survey to influence decisions about homeownership products and services.</p>

Partnerships and External Opportunities

Many of our customers have taken part in training and activities outside of the Association, in ways that have empowered them to participate in policy-making at a national level and to benefit from wider networking and sharing of best practice.

Action	Service Improvement	Next Steps - Actions for 2009-2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two customers were selected to be judges for the National Housing Federation Awards. • 18 customers attended external National Conversation events. • Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) customers attended a specific National Conversation session. • 4 customers attended the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) “Setting up a Scrutiny Panel” event. 	<p>Customers received certificates and attended the ceremony.</p> <p>Customers contributed to the National Conversation debate whilst learning about the way other organisations involve customers in service delivery and management.</p> <p>BME customers had the opportunity to influence the National Conversation debate and national housing policy-making.</p> <p>Customers learned about structures and techniques which support customer scrutiny programmes. Their learning is providing valuable input to the Association’s review of customer involvement structures.</p>	<p>Places for People to continue to identify opportunities for customers to represent the organisation at external events.</p> <p>Ensure customers are involved in the next external National Conversation events.</p> <p>Places for People to actively seek further opportunities for BME customers to participate and influence.</p> <p>Encourage customers to attend further TPAS training events and provide feedback on the learning and skills acquired.</p>

Key priorities for 2009 - 2010

- To develop a new Customer Involvement Strategy that clearly sets out the organisation's aims for making customer involvement as effective as possible
- To improve the structure of formal involvement by giving customer groups clearer focus and better opportunities to influence decision making
- To create customer action groups with a focus on the core services affecting customers
- To improve the effectiveness and value for money of involvement activities, including introducing appropriate benchmarking and tracking tools
- To increase the capacity of customers to scrutinise and improve the organisation's performance

So how much does it all cost?






At Places for People we monitor costs carefully to make sure our customer involvement activities are good value for money, impact positively on service delivery and achieve the best possible customer engagement - both directly, and indirectly through representation.

Overall Customer Involvement Expenditure 2008 - 2009

Number of Properties ¹	Expenditure £000	Approximate Annual Cost per Places for People household £0
44,999	191.2	4.25

¹ Social rented properties as at end of 2008/09. Excludes market rent, shared ownership, owner occupied and staff properties.

Customer Involvement Cost / Benefit Assessment 2008 – 2009 Key Examples

Involvement Method	Cost £000	Approximate Annual Cost per Places for People household £0	Cost Level	Impact Level	Value for Money
National Customer Liaison Panel (NCLP)	41.7	0.93	Medium	High	
Area Customer Liaison Panels	71.7	1.59	High	Medium	
Voice	19.0	0.42	Low	Medium	
Support to local Residents Associations	9.3	0.21	Low	High	
Community Involvement Days / Week / Events	49.0	1.09	Medium	High	

Value for Money Key:  = High  = Average  = Low

And finally.....Customers have the last word!

In our latest STATUS satisfaction survey, conducted in November 2007, 53% of customers said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunities for participation in management and decision - making at Places for People, and 76% were either satisfied or very satisfied with our overall service.

We keep our customers regularly updated on how we have acted on their contributions, with our “You said, we did” format. Of the survey respondents who expressed satisfaction with customer involvement opportunities, 92% also said that Places for People takes account of their views when making decisions.

“How was it for you?”

In the coming year, we want to improve customer satisfaction even more, in partnership with our customers. We think we’re very fortunate to have so many customers willing to give up their time to help us improve services for all customers, and we value every contribution enormously.

So why do they do it? Well, we asked some of our involved customers this very question!

Their responses varied considerably, but we end this Impact Assessment with just a selection:

“I enjoy working in partnership to make a difference”

“To support customers that do not want to or can not get involved”

“Things needed to change, and speaking to other customers makes me feel that together we can make a difference”

“I enjoy meeting new people and contributing and sharing my skills”