

## Residents' Network advisory groups – September 2023

We want to find out what our members want from our networks – topics, briefings, toolkits, benchmarking etc – so we've set up advisory groups across our networks.

It's also a good opportunity for members to network informally with others, find out about positive practice and discuss any concerns or challenges.

For the Residents' Network, we hold a group for officers and a group for tenants. The virtual meetings take place quarterly. We'll send out reminders in advance.

Everyone's welcome – there's no need for a regular commitment.

### *Officer group – 13 September 2023*

The group discussed ideas to support them in their engagement work:

#### **Bite size guides (written and/or videos)**

One member produces bite size guides (approximately 1,000 words) for tenants about key areas of housing policy or other matters of interest. These are available via their website and include guides on the Social Housing White Paper and the Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The group thought it would be great if HQN could produce something along these lines, as the briefings and toolkits, while really useful, are not sometimes too detailed for busy people.

#### **Topic ideas to assist engagement included:**

- Looking to the future – what's coming down the line
- Understanding KPIs (key performance indicators) and data – how to get assurance; how to challenge effectively
- Understanding budgets – where the money comes from; where it is spent
- Supporting tenants in debt – including prioritisation of debt
- Building safety and what it means for tenants, including a summary of the relevant legislation.

The group also discussed **ways their tenants are able to influence at strategic levels**. Several housing association members said they had tenants in the boardroom or reporting directly into board. Examples:

- A resident services committee, which reports bi-monthly directly to the board
- Resident-led sessions for board members
- Tenant board members
- Tenant podcasts as agenda items at board meetings.

**HQN website** – There was a discussion around access to information on the HQN website and a feeling that people do not necessarily know what’s available and how to navigate the site.

The group suggested ways that HQN could improve this and engagement:

- Produce a video targeted at tenants. This could be promoted at sign-up/engagement with tenants
- Running sessions (best practice groups and advisory groups) late afternoon or early evening to enable working tenants to attend.

### ***Tenant group – 25 September 2023***

We began by talking about **HQN’s Residents’ Network annual conference, taking place on 5 December**. We were keen to understand:

- Preferences – whether in person (likely London) or virtual. There were a range of views with the majority favouring an in-person event, as it would be better for networking
- Topics and themes – communication came out as being an ongoing issue across the sector.

We’re also sending out a survey in our newsletter about this.

There was a lot of discussion about communication and engagement generally:

- Engagement is too often one-way
- With housing associations growing (eg, via mergers) so too is the lack of engagement, with landlords becoming more distant (in more ways than one).

There were many similar ideas to the officer group about how HQN could help (guides etc)

Other ideas for subjects that HQN could cover included:

- Tackling stigma in social housing (one attendee is on the committee of the Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign)

- More positive news stories – for instance one provider represented at the meeting mentioned that they have an initiative around employing ex-military personnel in their house building team
- Ways to engage with those not currently engaged.

A request was made for an “ask the member type facility”. HQN does provide this – anyone can post a question in our weekly newsletter and online by contacting [networks@hqnetwork.co.uk](mailto:networks@hqnetwork.co.uk).

We’ll make sure we promote this better.

### ***Actions for HQN***

We will start to produce:

- Bite-size briefings and guides across a range of subjects, but especially around the regulatory framework and engagement
- Content in other formats such as videos.

We’ll put together a video to show how to use the website and an introduction to the Residents’ Network.

We’ll schedule the timing of our future sessions for late afternoon/early evening – especially bite size events to enable working tenants to attend.

We’ll promote the ask the member facility in our newsletters.