



# NED Network briefing

5 July 2021

Set up by [HACT](#) and [PlaceShapers](#), with the support of [Anthony Collins Solicitors](#) and [Badenoch + Clark](#)

## How can Board Members lead resident engagement?

### A discussion led by Yvonne Davies

(Board Member for Cobalt HA and Steve Biko HA)

#### 1. Share power and control

Housing association Boards have moved to an increasingly commercial and business focused agenda, this has sometimes been at the expense of consumer matters. Previous regulation by the Tenant Services Authority and Consumer Regulation Inspection by the Audit Commission encouraged tenant engagement, since their closure, scrutiny and a focus on service delivery has taken place in boards where there are less customers on those boards. Instead, Boards moved to a skill based to reflect the 2015 NHF Code of Governance. Customer Service from a service user perspective was a skill which was expendable. This reduced the numbers of residents as Board and Committee members.

Succession planning for Boards is key to ensure that there is continuity in direct lived experience. There are enthusiastic and highly qualified residents out there, more effort is required for us all to reach out to them for their direct lived experience, whether on a board or meaningful engagement before strategies and decisions are presented by officers to the Board. Tenant Board Members can be supported and mentored, as other board members, we shouldn't be looking seeking and setting a high bar, we can support and train tenants to engage strategically – many RPs already do this.

#### 2. Decision making

Our challenge is to understand where decisions are made, where power lies, who makes the decisions and how these can be shared or consulted upon.

Customers, whether on the board or in the involvement structure needs help from Boards to have their voice heard on services, organisational priorities and spending, The voices of residents and staff members are just as important as those on the Executives, the Committee and Board. With to delegates policies/policy review to Executives – how do we assured consultation with customers has been built into the processes? How do we hear at board, the record of the changes made as a result of consultation?



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### 3. What can we learn from other sectors?

NHS Boards are made up of practitioners and patients, with satisfaction benchmarking as a statutory requirement. Governance assurance encourages curiosity from board members, with reports not only from an Executive, but encouragement for boards consider other avenues of information, for example include the voices of staff members and customers. NHS Trust Board Members are encouraged to visit patients directly, which brings problems to life and allows the Board to ensure discussion at Board with lessons learnt and changes are made. As housing Board members, we have an opportunity to regularly engage with residents. when Covid 19 has cleared, we have opportunities for a new relationship, where we and not only hearing from residents already engaged, but to get out into communities to meet those those who are harder to reach. On stock visits, boards might consider not only be visiting new homes, or the 'nicer' properties but getting out there to the more difficult to manage or let areas.

Satisfaction surveys, complaints and compliments are generally measured at Board or Committee. Our challenge is one of ensuring discussion and not just noting of these reports. The drive of boards to consider the importance of customer service and residents will lead change from the top. No discussion means no improvement for residents.

At Board we expect assurance that regulatory standards are being met. We should not shy away from the bad experiences that make us 'squirm – learning from experience of resident voices will drive changes and improvement, as well as improvements in resident satisfaction, will soon to be measured and benchmarked by RSH.

### 4. What gets measured gets done

Often, customer satisfaction and performance reporting is pushed to the end of Board meetings. as board members, we can ask that discussions are had within the board agenda time set. Residents need to be more confident to share their views that changes, when they see changes made as result, they may come back and volunteer again. The board has the opportunity to shape resident involvement strategies and conversations, which they can champion and feed back to board that lived experience. If Performance and insight data is not discussed, improvement may not occur.

### 5. Shoplifting from other boards

Involvement volunteering has increased during the pandemic (40% more likely to volunteer according to You Gov). RP s are making better use of social media and the live streaming of meetings and Q&A sessions.



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Are Board receiving reports of what residents saying about us on social media? Yvonne shared ways other RPs were engaging with residents:

- Cobalt Housing - spotlight reports with a pool of resident task and finish scrutineers, reviewing existing services; a 6:3 resident majority on Homes and Communities Committee, along with a Tenant Consultative Panel, for new services and forward planning. Reporting on social media and customer contact centre reporting on key positive and negative commentary from customers is heard at Board.
- Salix Homes -12 resident only strong Customer Committee of the Board
- Hilldale Housing - setting up a Providers Forum which reports to the board.
- South Liverpool Homes – “Everyone Together” - all staff visits to homes and neighbourhoods
- Network HA – customers wanted ‘Ocado’ consistency of delivery to measure “respect”. Network developed a ‘trust’ score based on 1,200 resident annual survey plus key operational measures (e.g., right first time, calls answered & dealing with complaints)

## In breakout rooms, attendees discussed the following:

1. *How do we support a more powerful resident voice and reporting in the Board room, visioning and decision making?*
- Board Members shared their engagement with residents outside of the boardroom. There are barriers that many residents may face that would prevent them participating (e.g., technology, caring responsibilities, finances).
  - Tenant Board Members should be encouraged with investment and support to resources and their skills development
  - Eastlight CH pay Customer Insight Committee members the same as all committee members; an important cultural leveller to reflect increased influence and respect.
  - If tenants lose interest in participating in Board Meetings, there are ways to engage residents in non-formal environments EG a RP sponsored event, going to where resident meet (taking over a local attraction or facility for the benefit of residents was one example given), or hosting events within the community (fun days, coffee mornings, open mic events). In turn, residents will be talking to staff and Board Members about their experiences – invaluable customer intelligence.



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2. *How do we gain assurance of real transformation as a result of resident engagement and insight?*
  - By sharing real life resident stories at Board meetings, we can identify wider problems and highlight what is working well. Some Board Members have used the pandemic to telephone residents and hear from them directly.
3. *How do residents know their contribution and impact?*
  - Boards and residents can work together to establish what is good collaboratively. Both groups can learn and support each other. Co-production is not new, this is common at Mutual RPs.
  - Our promises and commitments must be followed up, Boards could admit when our services have fallen short and how we have responded to what they have told us.
4. *How do we maximise the diversity of voices we hear from?*
  - By diversifying the ways in which residents can engage. Some may prefer social media; other may want face to face interaction.
  - By giving residents the opportunity to participate in resident panels, become block and road representatives and relay complaints and comments to the officers and Board.
  - Consumer regulation changes under the Social Housing White Paper is driving board to ask and demonstrate that they are being heard.
  - Listening to customer facing members of staff who know what the issues are from customers, but may not have the power to change things.

**Peter Hubbard and Safra Murad**

*Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP*

## Next meeting

### How can Boards set and monitor culture?

John Giesen, chair of TPAS and Board Member at Providence Row Housing Association.

19 July 2021, 4.00-5.00 pm

**Book your place:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwptu2tpzkrHtbWruJHbYM6wuKgoviA6EbU>