

# Your Guide to Getting Involved

At Unity Housing Association we always aim to provide you with opportunities to have your say in matters that affect your homes, your communities and the future direction of the housing association itself. It's our responsibility to offer you chances to express your opinion.



# Your Guide to Getting Involved

## Benefits of getting involved:

- ✓ Have a say on issues affecting your home and neighbourhood
- ✓ Meet with like-minded people
- ✓ Support other tenants and residents
- ✓ Help us identify where we can save money
- ✓ Enhance your CV
- ✓ Free training, where required
- ✓ Develop your skills and interests
- ✓ Promote equal opportunities
- ✓ Shape the service you receive



# Ways of Getting Involved

## Tenant Panel

Medium

Our Tenant Panel is a fun, friendly group of Unity residents that meets up monthly to discuss issues affecting the business, our homes and our tenants. Joining the Tenant Panel is a great opportunity for you to put across your views, share your ideas and help us shape the service delivery that Unity tenants receive.

In addition to the monthly meetings, members can take part in:

- ✓ Practical on-site inspections
- ✓ Joint inspections with tenants from other housing associations
- ✓ Interviewing and assessing contractors
- ✓ Community consultations with staff and residents
- ✓ Editing the quarterly newsletter and annual report to tenants
- ✓ Influencing the planned maintenance programme

You do not need to have had experience to be on our Tenant Panel and you do not have to attend every meeting, or activity - you give as much of your time as you can afford.

We also hold Tenant Panel meetings in the evenings for those that are unavailable in the daytime, and if you have to pay for public transport so that you can attend the meetings we will reimburse the cost.

### Key

Low

These activities require a low level of time commitment. You can dip in and out as you please

Medium

These activities require a medium level of commitment from you. You may spend a few hours at a time on each of these activities

High

These activities require a regular commitment and/or regular attendance.

It gives you a voice - If you're in private rented accommodation you've got nothing.

We get to see what's happening and what we say matters

It's a good cultural mix. We're all from different backgrounds but with similar aims



# Surveys & Focus Groups

Low

For residents who take an interest in what's going on at Unity but are unable to attend regular meetings, we hold focus groups or consultations to find out what you think.

This could be about changes we are thinking about making from anything within the business including our service delivery, our policies and procedures, our homes and neighbourhoods and the way that we communicate with you.

If you would like to offer your opinion on such matters we will invite you to our focus groups as and when they occur. If you would prefer not to attend a focus group, we can send you surveys to find out what you think.

# Tenant E-Panel

Low

Through the Tenant E-Panel, we will send you interactive questionnaires via email to find out your opinions and hear your suggestions. We can also send you documents for you read and review and will take on board any feedback you have to offer.

We can also send you regular news bulletins about what is going on in Unity as well as details of any other opportunities that might be of interest to you, if you wish.

The Tenant E-Panel is perhaps the best of way of 'getting involved' from the comfort of your own home.



# Joint Estate Walkabouts

Medium

If we are thinking about making changes to your community or neighbourhood we will actively seek local residents' opinions.

However, if you would like to be involved in decision making processes that affect neighbourhoods and communities other than your own, you can join our officers on estate walkabouts.

You will help us decide what action to take, where improvements are required, and will help us to assess the work of our contractors.

## Mystery Shopping

Low

We constantly monitor the quality of our contractors work including the cleaning and gardening services provided to tenants. We want to make sure that you are receiving value for money when it comes to your service charge.

You can help us keep an eye on our contractor's performance by becoming a 'mystery shopper'. This involves giving the contractors work a performance rating each time that they visit and highlighting possible areas for improvement.

If you don't receive any services such as communal cleaning and gardening, you can still be involved with assessing our contractors' performance. Please talk to us if you are interested.



# Tenant Scrutiny Panel

High

If you want to challenge and influence how Unity's housing services are influenced then join our Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

Tenant scrutiny of services is a cornerstone of ensuring that Unity is properly run. Our Scrutiny Panel meets every three months to closely examine how Unity is performing. Because it is a more committed role that requires particular skills, you have to apply to join the Scrutiny Panel.

If you're involved, you don't feel that Unity is a faceless organisation

I got fed up of complaining about why things didn't happen so I wanted to push things forward.

## The purpose of the scrutiny panel is to:

- Scrutinise the services Unity Housing provide, while promoting 'Value for Money'
- Ensure our policies and procedures meet the diverse needs of our tenants
- Enable our tenants to challenge our performance and plans
- Provide the Board with a clearer understanding of tenants' priorities and views in order to inform our business planning
- Drive improvements from a tenants' perspective
- Be a 'Critical Friend' to Unity Housing Association
- Make recommendations for service improvements
- Scrutinise the performance of individual contractors

## The scrutiny panel will have the power to scrutinise:

- Unity's performance against the 'TESSA -Tenant Empowerment & Service Standards Agreement'
- The services Unity Housing provides to tenants
- How Unity deals with complaints
- Unity's policies and procedures
- Performance of Unity's contractors



## The principal duties and responsibilities of the panel will be to:

- Ensure Unity is adhering to the service standards agreement by reviewing performance/progress reports.
- Carry out audits of our services
- Review customer satisfaction information
- Review and approve draft policies and procedures
- Approve the annual report to tenants

## Panel Meetings

The panel will be expected to attend four meetings per year on a quarterly basis. Meetings will be minuted and all reports of the panel will be made available to the Unity Housing Tenant Panel, Board of Members and to any tenant/customer on request.

## Think you have what it takes?

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel is a great way to broaden your skills and interests and enhance your CV. If you are interested, please get in touch - we will tell you more about what it is involved and you can apply to be part of it.

## Training & Development

Training will be supplied to all Tenant Scrutiny Panel members and all members will have to complete an induction programme. The scrutiny training itself will run alongside the scrutiny process and additional training will be provided as and when identified.



# Board Membership

High



Unity is led by the voluntary Board Members who act in an unpaid capacity and are responsible for the governance of the organisation. The Association's rules state that up to one third of the Board may be made up of tenants. This means we currently have vacancies for tenants on our Board.

Being part of Unity's Board gives you the right to query our performance, challenge us if we are not meeting our targets and question the decisions we make.

If you have not yet had any experience in Resident Involvement activities, you may not be able to apply to become a Board Member right away. However, you can access the training, skills and expertise you need by joining one of Unity's other Tenant Panels first.



## Seen something you like the look of?

Now that you've seen all that we have to offer, please let us know which opportunities you might be interested in and we will contact you with details of when, where and how you can get involved. You can tick more than one box.

- Tenant Panel
- Surveys & Focus Groups
- Tenant E-Panel
- Joint Estate Walkabouts
- Mystery Shopping
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Your details:

Name.....

Address:.....

.....

Contact No:.....

Email address:.....

Now please return your form using the FREEPOST envelope enclosed, or hand to any member of Unity staff. Thanks for helping us to help you!

If you require any more information about any of the opportunities in the booklet, please contact our Resident Involvement Officer, Lewis on **0113 200 7751** or at **lewis.holloway@unityha.co.uk**.