



City of Westminster

Resident Engagement Consultation 2021

Findings Report

1 Introduction

As part of our City for All strategy, we are committed to ensuring that all of our communities' voices are heard and that their needs are recognised. Listening and acting on our residents' feedback, both tenants and leaseholders, is key for us to improve and tailor our housing services to meet residents' needs. Learning from the previous ways that we have engaged with residents we proposed a new resident engagement approach for 2022-25. The proposals set out different groups that would enable residents to provide feedback on housing services in a more flexible and inclusive way, targeted on areas of shared interest. Before making any changes, we wanted to hear what residents thought about the proposals.

Our consultation ran for 4 weeks. We wrote to every resident household and offered a range of opportunities to provide feedback. These included replying by post or online, attending webinars to find out more or calling for individual help over the phone. Our aim was to make it easy for residents to provide their feedback, to maximise participation, and ensure the views collected were representative of all Westminster housing residents.

This report summarises the feedback we received, our findings and our plan for implementation based on what we have learned.

2 Response Overview

2.1 Responses received

1,677 consultation responses were received which is huge compared to what we have seen in previous consultations. This shows that our efforts to reach as many residents as possible were effective and that residents are keen to engage with the housing service.

2.2 How residents responded

912 responses were received by post and 765 were submitted online. This shows that both methods were popular. We also provided individual help to a small number of residents that called in for help or to discuss the proposals in their own language. These totals show that sending out a hard copy of the consultation pack with a free post return envelope was effective in encouraging responses by post. We also saw that sending out text reminders to residents was highly effective in encouraging online responses.

3 Response Detail

3.1 Easier or harder

52% of respondents said the proposed changes would make it easier to get involved with the housing service. This is great news as easier access is a key part of what the proposed changes aim to

achieve. 11% said the changes would make it harder to get involved. The important concerns of this smaller group are considered in the free text (3.5) and conclusions (5) sections of this report and will influence our implementation plan.

Easier	No Change	Harder
52%	37%	11%

3.2 More or less likely

49% of respondents said that the proposed changes would make it more likely they would get involved with the housing service. Getting more residents involved is a key objective of the proposed changes so it is important so many say it would have that effect. 12% said the changes would make it less likely they would get involved. The important concerns of this smaller group are considered in the free text (3.5) and conclusions (5) sections of this report and will influence our implementation plan.

More Likely	No Change	Less Likely
49%	39%	12%

3.3 Previously involved or not

71% of respondents said that they had never previously engaged to help improve housing services. This shows that we have been successful in reaching a new audience of residents who have not previously got involved but who are interested enough to take part in the consultation.

Not Previously Involved	Previously Involved
71%	29%

The 29% of respondents with a history of getting involved were asked if they would do so more or less often if the proposed changes were made. 84% said that they would get involved more often or that there would be no change. 16% said that they would get involved less often. The important concerns of this smaller group are considered in the free text (3.5) and conclusions (5) sections of this report and will influence our implementation plan.

More often	No Change	Less often
44%	40%	16%

3.4 Interest in ways of getting involved

A significant number of respondents showed interest in each of the proposed groups and the existing forms of engagement mentioned in the consultation pack. The lower level on interest in youth engagement is to be expected given that most respondents were not within the target age range for that option.

Estate action plans	Local briefings	ASB case reviews	Working groups	Westminster housing online	Policy & performance	Youth engagement
68%	65%	59%	56%	54%	53%	36%

3.5 Free text Responses

Across the two free text questions in the consultation survey, we received a huge amount of varied and specific feedback. We have read every response and identified several common themes which reflect the views of respondents. Where the information included in a free text response required urgent action it has been taken on by the relevant colleague. For example, all complaints identified have been passed to the relevant department lead and tracked to ensure that the required action has been taken.

3.5.1 Engagement

Comments which related directly to resident engagement were overwhelmingly in support of the proposals, but a number were sceptical that the proposed changes would have the impact they aim to achieve in improving services. Some responses raised concerns that residents without online access might be excluded. Others said they did not want to get involved and just wanted to receive a good basic service from their landlord.

3.5.2 Areas to improve

Many responses mentioned other service areas where they would like to see improvements. The majority of these focused on maintenance and asset investment, communication and follow-up, or anti-social behaviour and security. Other responses mentioned a wide range of topics including wanting a stronger local connection with housing staff, environmental action from greening to decarbonisation, support for groups that may be excluded, the bidding & allocation process, cleaning, and parking.

4 Diversity and inclusion

Data collected from respondents during the consultation shows that, in addition to hearing from many more people than we dared to hope, we have also been successful in gathering feedback from a representative and diverse group of residents. The tenure, gender, ethnicity, and age profile of respondents aligned closely with the resident data we already hold. Support for the proposals was consistent across different demographic groups. During implementation we will work to ensure that this diversity is also reflected in the groups and forums we establish.

5 Conclusions

Residents tend to support the proposed change of engagement approach and believe the wider range of engagement options will make it easier to get involved more often, leading to wider participation. Most respondents had not previously been involved with the housing service, so we have been successful in collecting the views of residents we have not heard from in the past. Residents with a history of getting involved tend to believe the proposed changes will lead them to do so more often or that they will continue being involved as frequently as they have in the past.

There is substantial interest in all the existing or proposed groups and forums. Residents were most interested in estate-based or local engagement. ASB other themed groups and the policy and performance group also received interest from more than half of respondents. Due to its steering function, the policy and performance group will be key to ensuring residents continue to shape the new approach to engagement and housing services more widely.

A smaller group of respondents felt that the proposals would make it harder for them to get involved and they would do so less often. The main concerns raised by this group were that the proposals might exclude people that don't have online access. We will need to make clear that the online groups proposed are accessible by phone and are offered in addition to face-to-face engagement. Most of the new groups will be hybrid which means people will have the option to attend meetings in person when it is safe for them to do so. We will also need to track and communicate the impact of our engagement activities so that residents are reassured that it is effective in improving services.

6 Outline Implementation Plan

6.1 Our approach to implementation

We know that improving housing, the environment and services is what matters, and doing so together with residents. As promised during the consultation we will develop the new resident engagement approach in stages so that we can measure and achieve success in partnership with involved residents. Taking account of the range of views expressed through the consultation we will implement the new arrangements step by step, collaborating with involved residents to ensure the feedback received during consultation shapes the new approach.

6.2 Communicating the outcome of the consultation

Our priority will be to communicate the new ways to get involved and promote the options that are already available. We will ensure that those who took the time to share their thoughts during the consultation receive our thanks and understand that we have listened to their views.

6.3 Initial city-wide groups

The Policy and Performance group will be the first new city-wide engagement group to be established. We will invite interested residents to apply to join. The selection process will be open and overseen by Cllrs to ensure it is fair and inclusive. We will ensure that this group is tenure balanced and as representative as possible of all residents.

When the Policy and Performance group is established, we will work with resident representatives to prioritise topics for our first two working groups. We will then invite interested residents to apply to join those groups.

6.4 Other planned actions

In addition to the groups outlined above we will begin piloting Local Briefings with a view to rolling them out across the borough when we have developed a successful methodology. Estate Action Plans are already in place, we will use the launch of the new engagement groups to promote them again to residents. We will also create a 6-month plan to revitalise our existing online survey group, Westminster Housing Online ensuring that meaningful surveys are sent to participants regularly in future.