



Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities  
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods



Providing choice



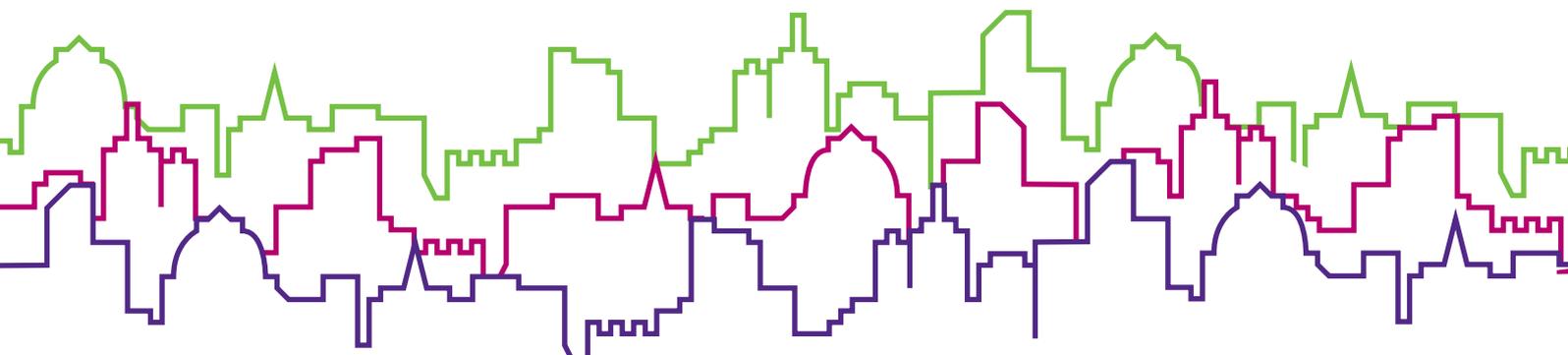
Improving life opportunities



Addressing inequalities

## Resident Involvement Strategy 2016-19

Unity is an organisation committed to building strong sustainable neighbourhoods through the provision of high quality housing and social and employment opportunities.



# Contents

- 3** Mission, Objectives & Values
- 4** Background & Rationale
- 5** Stock & Tenant Profile
- 8** Tenant Involvement Structure
- 9** Current Involvement Methods
- 11** Community Engagement
- 12** Calendar of Activities
- 13** Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2014
- 15** Aims & Objectives of the Strategy
- 16** Action Plan



# Mission, Objectives & Values

## Our Mission

Provide housing choice, improve life opportunities and address inequalities.

## Our Objectives

Provide and continue to develop good quality mixed tenure housing which reflects needs and aspirations.

Provide high quality affordable housing services.

Involve and work with our tenants and the communities we serve to inform and improve services.

Work with partners to encourage and support the regeneration of our target neighbourhoods.

Provide and facilitate business support services and encourage local enterprise.

Be a progressive and expanding business with a sound resource base

## Our Values

**Integrity** - being honest, transparent and sincere with strong principles

**Respect** - in the way we treat people, service users and each other

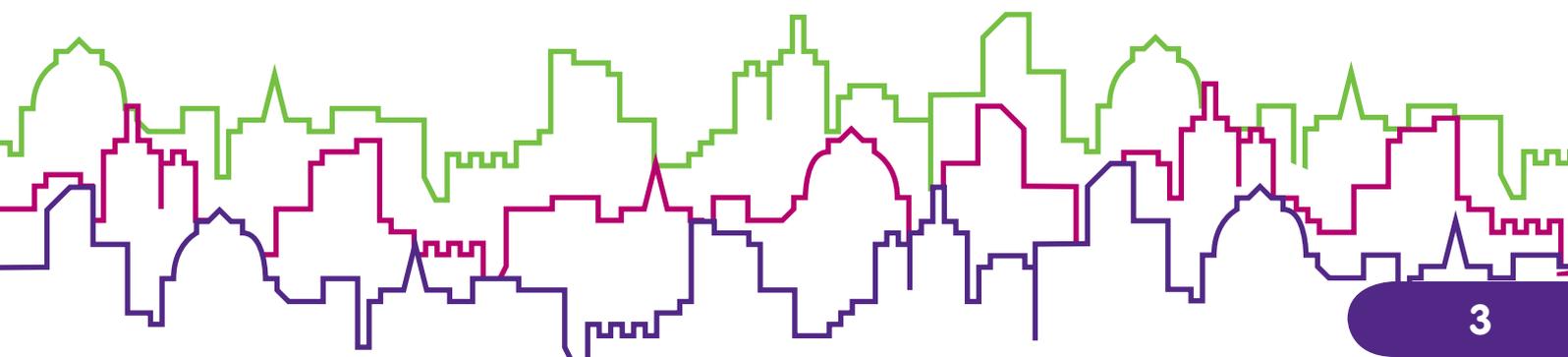


**Flexible** - in how we work for the benefit of our tenants, other people, the organisation and each other

**Commitment** - to provide services to meet the needs of our tenants, local people and local neighbourhoods

**Business focussed** - continually review and adopt best practice and ensure we operate efficiently and effectively in order to make best use of resources.

**Equality and fairness** - in the way we work and deliver services



# Background & Rationale

## Introduction

The 2016-19 Resident Involvement Strategy sets out how Unity intends to engage with and involve its residents and the people from the communities in which they live.

The previous Resident Involvement Strategy was written at around the same time as the Government's Welfare Reforms were implemented. Since the initial measures were introduced in 2012, we have seen further cuts to the benefits system which have presented a host of new challenges to our tenants and therefore our organisation.

Further changes will make it harder for tenants to maintain their tenancies – rendering it all the more critical to listen to what our tenants are saying.

We will endeavour to do this by employing a range of means for tenants to provide us with feedback – not just on Welfare Reform issues - but from across the spectrum of issues on the housing agenda. We will continue to encourage involvement from our tenants from the informal, such as completing a repairs satisfaction slip, to the more strategic, for example; being part of the Unite with Unity Panel.

Unity aims to celebrate our BME status and the unique demographic of our tenant profile by inviting tenants from a wide variety of backgrounds (ages, ethnicities and cultures) to influence service delivery. We will endeavour to ensure that no particular sector's views are under-represented.

We hope that by employing these measures and by exploiting every opportunity available to seek tenant feedback we will continue to improve service delivery, help tenants to maintain their tenancies and promote harmonious and prosperous neighbourhoods and communities.

## About Unity

Unity is a Leeds-based, black and minority ethnic housing association. As at July 2015, we manage 1179 properties, which include 1100 rented and 79 shared ownership.

Unity does not have large estates, or multi-rise flats. The majority of our properties are family homes on small housing estates. Around one fifth of Unity properties are miscellaneous rehabs, largely Victorian houses. The bulk of our stock is in the areas of Chapeltown, Harehills and Beeston, although we have properties in most areas of Leeds.



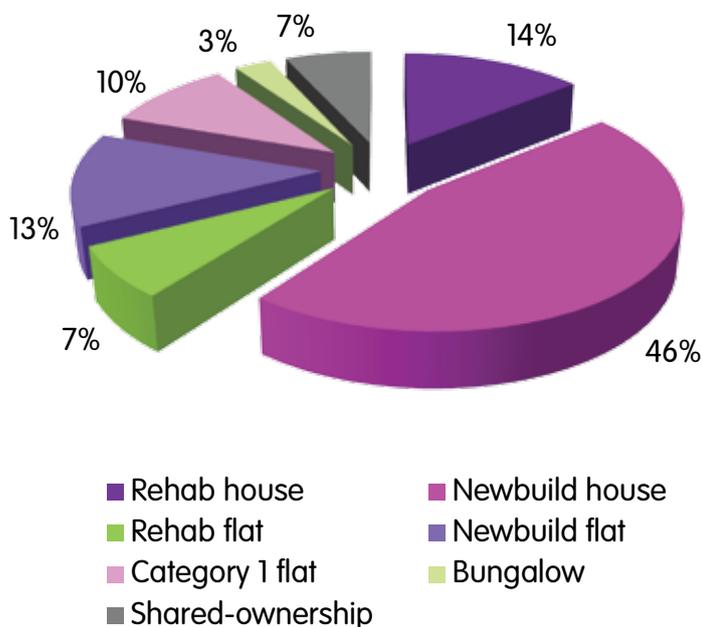
# Stock & Tenant Profile

## Breakdown of Unity properties (as at July 2015)

	Rehab house	Newbuild house	Rehab flat	Newbuild flat	Category 1 flat	Category 1 bungalow	Shared Ownership	Total
Armley	3	32						35
Beeston	12	56			10		8	86
Burley				18			5	23
Burmantofts	1	31						32
Chapeltown	88	40	71	44	31		5	279
Chapel Allerton					24	4		28
Crossgates		32		32		1		65
Gipton	1	39			12			52
Guiseley							2	2
Harehills	53	83	7		17			160
Holbeck	1	8		18			16	43
Huddersfield					10			10
Hunslet	1							1
Hyde Park	2			12	12			26
Little London	1	59	3	6				69
Meanwood	2	113					3	118
Moortown		4		10		7	9	30
Scott Halls		17				16	10	43
West Ardsley							8	8
Woodhouse		20	2	12				34
Wortley	1	12				6	12	31
Yeadon		3					1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>1179</b>

# Stock & Tenant Profile

## Stock Profile (as at July 2015)



However, it is very important that we capture the views of working age people as they best represent typical Unity tenants.

We will endeavour to do this by hosting meetings outside of office hours and providing opportunities for tenants to share their views without having to attend meetings (online).

We will employ a Social Media Strategy to facilitate engagement with tenants who are online. We are in the process of collecting this information by means of the tenant Census, which not only asks tenants if they have access to the Internet, but whether they are happy to be contacted by Facebook and Twitter.

Recently, we have distributed surveys and polls by means of email and text message. Tenants who have a SmartPhone have been able to complete feedback forms by accessing the link enclosed within the email/text message. We have found that this quick and convenient method of engagement is favoured by our younger tenants.

We continue to provide information about resident involvement opportunities to tenants at the sign-up, in order to spark their interest at the earliest stage of their tenancy.

## Tenant Profile

### Age

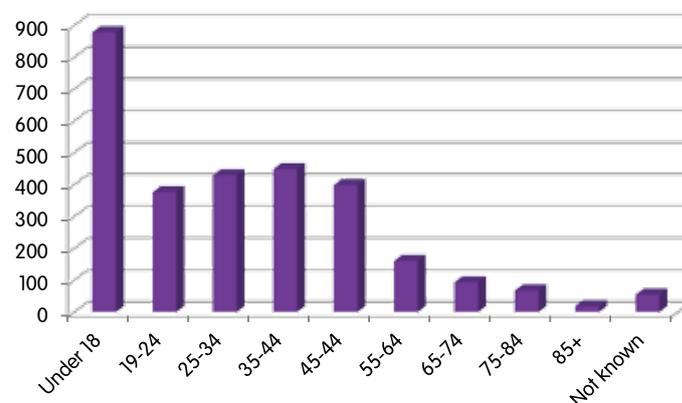
Of the 2941 people living in Unity households, (as at July 2015), nearly 900 of those are under 18. This is perhaps because the type of accommodation that Unity provides is largely family homes, suitable for families with children.

Taking the under 18s, out of consideration, Unity's tenant profile is still relatively young. The median age of those living in Unity's households (ignoring the under 18s) is 39 and the mean age is 41.

### How will Unity engage with younger residents?

It is recognised that due to work and childcare commitments, it can be more difficult to encourage younger tenants to 'get involved' than, for instance, retired tenants who have more time on their hands.

### Ages of people living in Unity's households



# Stock & Tenant Profile

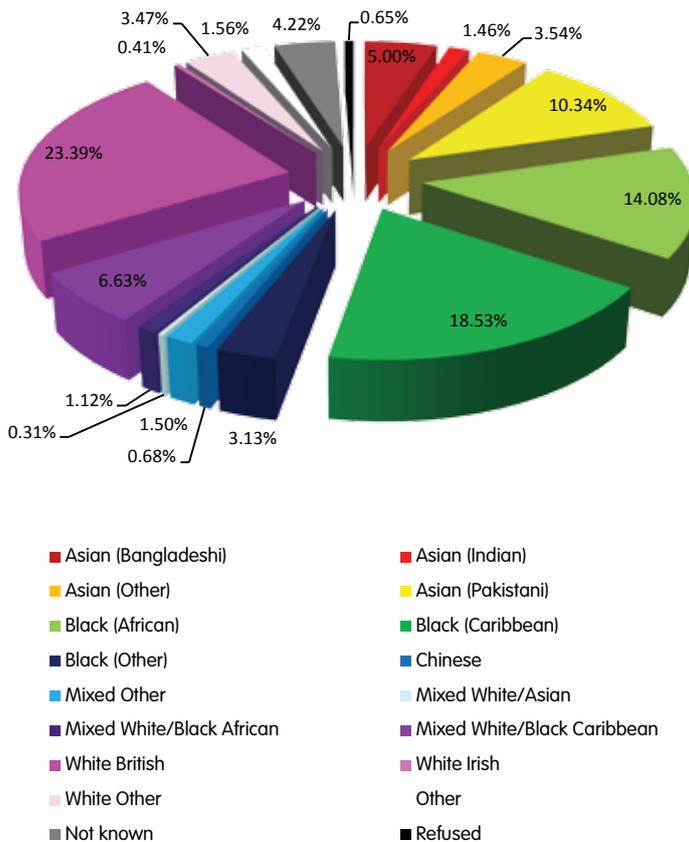
## Ethnicity

Unity's status as a BME organisation provides us with a unique opportunity to gain customer insight from a range of different cultural perspectives.

While our current Tenant Panel reflects the diverse nature of our tenant profile, there are still some ethnicities that are under-represented, for instance Black African.

Taking into consideration the influence of different cultures has already proved an effective tool for improving service delivery. For instance, when the

### Breakdown of ethnicities of people living in Unity's households



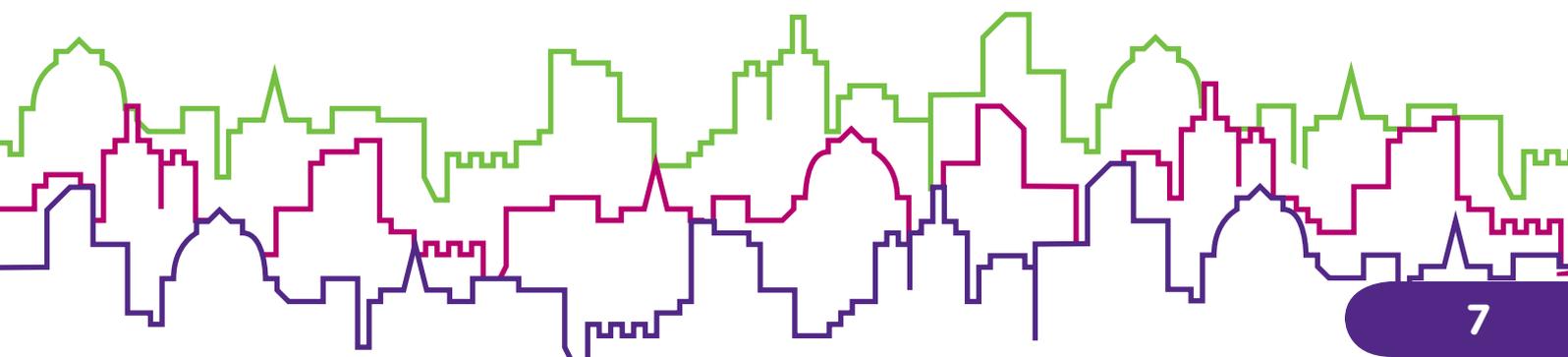
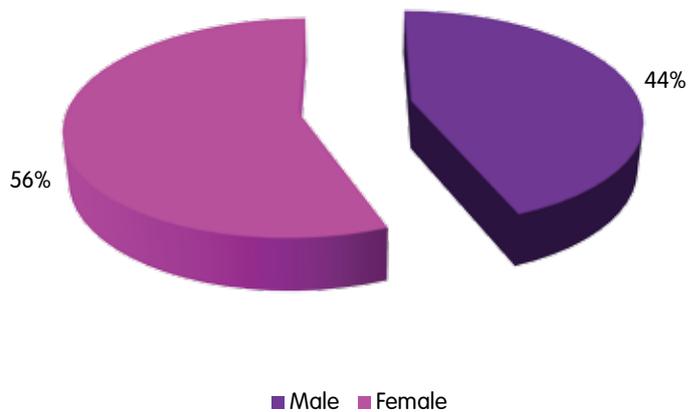
Tenant Panel were investigating Unity's approach to supporting victims of domestic violence, they were able to identify that this was of particular concern South East Asian women who may be at risk of 'honour-based violence' and were able to make recommendations accordingly.

On the other hand, language barriers may prevent tenants from other ethnicities from taking part in consultation exercises. We will continue to promote our accessibility information so that tenants who do not feel confident at reading, writing or speaking English can be involved in other ways.

## Gender

More females live in Unity households than males. As one might expect, it is also true that our Tenant Panel is made up of more women than men. While we would welcome anyone to join the Tenant Panel, we would be particularly keen to invite men to attend. It is hoped that by having a balanced Tenant Panel, it will be easier to attract new members.

### Sex of those living in Unity's households



# Tenant Involvement Structure



# Current Involvement Methods

This is a non-exhaustive list and explanation of the methods we currently use to ensure that tenants are able to influence service delivery.

## Satisfaction Surveys

Completing a satisfaction survey is perhaps one of the simplest ways in which we ask tenants for their feedback each time they access a service. Unity currently uses the following surveys to measure satisfaction:

- ✓ Repairs Satisfaction Slip
- ✓ Planned Maintenance Satisfaction Slip
- ✓ Gas Maintenance Satisfaction Slip
- ✓ Post-Complaint Satisfaction Slip
- ✓ 'Moving In' Satisfaction Survey
- ✓ 'End of Tenancy' Satisfaction Survey
- ✓ Tenant Satisfaction Survey
- ✓ Employment Services Satisfaction Survey
- ✓ Financial Inclusion Service Satisfaction Survey

Tenants are also invited to give their feedback through wider, general satisfaction surveys. Unity usually uses a format similar to STAR to ask tenants their view about Unity's landlord services, the repairs and maintenance service and their views on the community and neighbourhood. Surveys like this are carried out approximately once every four years.

In 2014, all tenants were invited to share their opinions about the range of services that Unity provides. For more information about the 2014

Tenant Satisfaction Survey and how we responded to the feedback, please see page 13.

## Ad-hoc Focus Groups

From time to time we may invite tenants with a particular interest to attend ad-hoc focus groups to gain their insight. An example of such as focus includes the January 2015 Social Media Focus Group which tenants who are particularly active on social media were invited to attend together with regular members of our Tenant Panel. The advantage of these is that participants do not need to commit to a programme of events.

## Tenant Panel

Unity's Tenant Panel has been established since 2010 and is open to all tenants. We endeavour to maintain a membership of between 15 - 20 with a demographic that represents Unity's tenant profile. However, there are still some areas which are not adequately represented by the Tenant Panel including Beeston, Burmantofts, Crossgates, Little London, Moortown and Wortley.

Unity holds a significant number of properties in these areas and it would be useful to hear from tenants first-hand what their experience of living in these areas is like.

The Tenant Panel meet approximately twice a month. There is usually one meeting in the daytime and one in the evening every month. Tenants can come to either of these meetings as their availability will allow, but as the agenda is usually the same there is no need for them to come to both.

As well as attending meetings, the Tenant Panel get involved with practical on-site inspections,

# Current Involvement Methods

assessing our contractors to help us monitor their performance.

Tenant Panel members gradually increase their knowledge and skills with high-quality information updates on issues such as welfare rights, repairs and maintenance, and anti-social behaviour amongst other topics on the housing agenda. Where required, Unity will consider funding for external training in order to empower tenants to take a more active or lead role on Panel activities.

Tenant Panel activities and minutes are shared with our Operations Committee on a quarterly basis.

## Unite with Unity

The Unite with Unity Panel (formerly 'Scrutiny Panel') was established in 2012 to create a more formal forum for the scrutiny of Unity's performance. It aims to make the scrutiny of Unity's key performance indicators at a more strategic level accessible to Unity's tenants.

While there are a number of facets to the role which can be learned 'on the job' certain key qualities are required of a Unite with Unity member and as such, tenants have to apply for a place on the Panel. The Panel is chaired by a tenant, and is regularly attended by our Operations Director.

In the past, attendance at meetings has fluctuated. We have introduced some new measures to create engaging content and increase turnout, such as providing performance information by means of a presentation rather than dense, text-heavy papers.

We also hope to run two meetings in parallel each quarter, so that those with work or childcare

commitments can attend a session in the daytime or in the evening to suit – as we have already done with the Tenant Panel.

In the interim period, scrutiny reviews have been taking place at our regular Tenant Panel meetings. It is hoped that by inciting their interest and simultaneously building on their knowledge and skills, they will feel less intimidated by some of the information they will be expected to scrutinise, if they choose to progress to Unite with Unity.

## Leeds Collaborative Group

Tenants from three housing associations attend this quarterly forum, supported by their respective involvement officers to compare approaches and share best-practice. It is currently attended by two Unity tenants, which according to the Group's terms of reference is the maximum allowed.

Key investigations the group have carried out in 2014/15 include:

- ✓ Tenants' use of pre-payment meters and whether or not landlords are doing enough to support tenants from migrating from expensive tariffs
- ✓ What happens to household items left behind by tenants when vacating their properties; whether it is recycled, gifted to another tenant or collected by a charity
- ✓ What strategies landlords have in place to support victims of domestic violence
- ✓ Landlords' communication with their tenants, including printed media, email bulletins and social media and whether their choices matches with tenants' preferences

## Community Activities

Tenant Involvement is not solely about encouraging tenants to share their views about Unity's housing services. It can also take place on a neighbourhood or community level.

In response to the 2014 Tenant Satisfaction we have hosted a number of events on our estates throughout the year and encouraged residents to partake. In some cases, turnout at these events has been very good.

By engaging with tenants on their own estates, we hope to promote harmonious neighbourhoods. Here are some examples of how we believe community activities will benefit our tenants:

### Gardening Workshops

- ✓ Encourage residents to take care of their homes and gardens by providing free plants
- ✓ Encourage neighbours to interact with one another by hosting simple gardening workshops (aimed at children) so as to improve relationships between them
- ✓ Encourage tenants to grow their own fruit and vegetables at home so as to promote the importance of healthy living

### Unity in Bloom Gardening Competition

- ✓ Encourage tenants to take pride in their gardens by providing an incentive for them to keep them well-maintained
- ✓ Include a 'fruit and vegetable' category to encourage residents to grow their own food at home

- ✓ The Tenant Panel serves as the judging Panel, encouraging them to take an active role in promoting prosperous communities.

### Community Fun Days

- ✓ To encourage neighbours to get to know one another and to alleviate tensions between households
- ✓ To promote Unity's presence in the neighbourhoods where we hold properties
- ✓ To promote social inclusion, and a free recreational facility for tenants who would not otherwise have access

### Estate Walkabout with Police

- ✓ To garner information about where crime is occurring with a view to working with the police to resolve issues
- ✓ To provide residents with free information about to make their homes secure and prevent crime
- ✓ To promote the safety and wellbeing of residents

### Community Action Days

- ✓ Encourage residents to take pride in their neighbourhoods and communities by hosting 'Action Days' to tackle problems such as weeds, overgrown foliage, flaking paint on fences and railings and moss on paving etc.
- ✓ Encourage resident to work in cohesion with one another to promote harmonious relationships between them.

# Community Engagement



The importance of staff getting to know the tenants and vice versa at such events should not be overlooked. There is a lot of value in understanding the diverse range of needs and preferences our tenants may have and often these are expressed in informal conversations.

## Community Consultation

Sometimes, further insight is needed to know whether running events or making improvements in a specific neighbourhood will represent Value for Money. We will endeavour to consult with tenants through simple door-knocking exercises to ask them their opinions whenever we are thinking

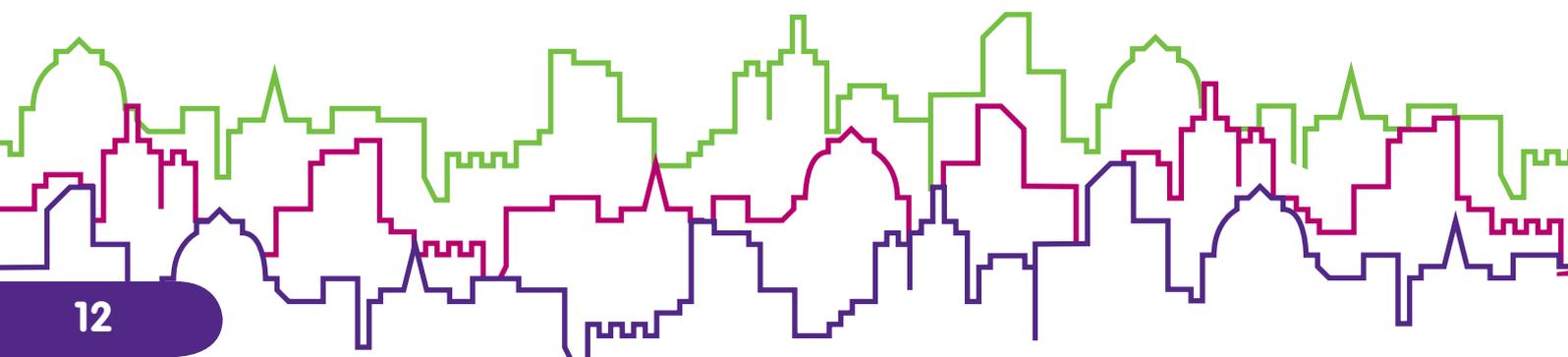
about making changes to something that will affect them directly.

## Sponsorship of and attendance at Community Galas and Festivals

From time to time, Unity will sponsor or have a presence at Community Festivals and Galas. The main purpose of this to raise awareness of the broad range of services we provide and offer local people free advice on housing, welfare and employment. We will seek to make sure that tenants are aware if we are attending a Festivals or Gala in their area and promote opportunities to be 'involved' at such events.

# Calendar of Events

	Apr 16	May 16	Jun 16	Jul 16	Aug 16	Sep 16	Oct 16	Nov b16	Dec 16	Jan 17	Feb 17	Mar 17
Tenant Panel												
Unite with Unity												
Leeds Collaborative Group												
Annual General Meeting												
Joint Estate Walkabouts												
Gardening Workshops												
Unity in Bloom												
Festivals and Galas												
Community Activities												
Unity News												
Annual Report to Tenants												



# Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2014

The survey was closed in September 2014. At this time 404 questionnaires had been received; a response rate of 40%.

While it is important to use the empirical evidence garnered by means of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey to inform and improve services, it is also worthwhile examining the anecdotal evidence provided by the tenants to highlight areas for improvement.

## Tenants mentioned:

Neighbours leaving their garden messy, bringing down the look of the neighbourhood.

It would be a good idea to inspect gardens and enforce tenants to keep them in better order

I have raised my concerns ... about the tenants' rubbish in their gardens

This estate has so many children who group together and run riot. No supervision from their parents and out until late. They play football outside my house and the ball is continuously hitting the garden railings, house and my car.

If signs can be put up saying 'do not play football in the street', and some kind of law to be enforced.

Having studied these comments, Unity drafted an action plan to respond to them. Any comments pertaining to tenancy issues, or repairs and maintenance issues were dealt with accordingly - but a number of comments could only be addressed through community consultation and engagement.

Here are a few examples of how Unity responded to such comments:

## We did:

We arranged the 'Unity in Bloom' gardening competition to encourage residents to take pride in their gardens and raise the appearance of their estates. We provided opportunities for tenants to be on the Judging Panel.

We also hosted 'Gardening Workshops' on several estates throughout the spring to encourage novices to take an interest in growing flowers, fruit, vegetables and herbs.

We hosted several Arts & Crafts workshops aimed at children on several estates. It was hoped that children and their parents would interact with one another and create friendships. The idea was to keep children occupied with activities that do not involve 'ball games'.

We also produced a handy guide of things to do in the summer holidays which we distributed on some estates. By encouraging families to have affordable days out, it is hoped that it will take pressure off the estates during the school holidays.

# Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2014

## Tenants mentioned:

Police presence is visible at times but we think there needs to be some improvement

The open dealing of drugs continues to be a problem.

Bad area, drugs, fighting, kids can't play outside due to cars

## We did:

We hosted some community action days in partnership with local police so as residents could raise any concerns they have about crime and anti-social behaviour.



Such was the success of these measures that Unity plans to do the same each time a Satisfaction Survey is carried out. The next full Tenant Satisfaction Survey will be around 2018, although it is possible that Unity will carry out an interim survey before this to deduce whether the measures have been as successful as we would like to think.

The Tenant Satisfaction survey also helped us to identify 89 tenants who said that they would be interested in sharing their views in other ways too. In the 2015 Census Survey we will be asking tenants about whether they would like to take advantage of their right to influence service delivery at Unity Housing, and will be using this as a starting point for expanding our Tenant Panel and such like.

Another of the aims of the 2015 Census Survey is to ensure that tenants' contact details are up to date and/or whether tenants would prefer to be communicated with in a different way. Unity largely relies on post and telephone contact to

communicate with tenants, however if Unity was able to make more efficient use of email it could not only save the organisation money but also provide tenants with a means of sharing their views (by completing online surveys, for instance) without having to leave their home. This form of involvement may be well-suited to someone who has limited time, work or childcare commitments or even a disability which makes attending meetings more difficult.



# Aims & Objectives of the Strategy

We have always aimed to have a varied menu of involvement that reflect Unity's special status as a BME organisation and that complements the size and the dispersed nature of our housing. We endeavour to maintain and improve this approach in the following ways:

- ✓ **Keep our tenant involvement structure simple.** Make it very clear what is expected of involved tenants and what outcomes they can expect from Unity as a consequence of their involvement.
- ✓ **Expand our Tenant Panel.** Our Tenant Panel is very loyal and well-attended, but we have had some difficulty attracting new members. This would be of great benefit to our Tenant Panel as it could shed some light new issues. as we are currently hosting two meetings a month, our capacity is around 30. We would particularly like to recruit more men, more young people, and people living in the areas of Beeston, Burmantofts, Crossgates, Little London, Moortown and Wortley.
- ✓ **Employ an effective marketing campaign.** We will continue to advertise opportunities to join our Tenant Panel in our quarterly newsletter, one our website, through our social media accounts and at community events.
- ✓ **Maintain a viable Unite with Unity Panel.** For the past few months, scrutiny reviews have been taking place at our regular Tenant Panel. We have been trying to instil the knowledge and skills required to play an active role on our Scrutiny Panel into our Tenant Panel in the hope that selected members will take sufficient interest to scrutinise our performance at a more strategic level.
- ✓ **Develop our Tenant Panel's skills and knowledge.** Encourage the Tenant Panel to become more independent for instance setting their own items on the agenda, taking their own minutes at meetings, chairing their own meetings. Consider funding external training opportunities to empower Tenant Panel members to do this.
- ✓ **Continue to seek feedback.** We will continue to monitor feedback slips, from repairs, planned maintenance and cleaning and gardening visits with a view to monitoring contractor performance. We will consider employing other methods for tenants to provide us with feedback, for instance through email or text messaging.
- ✓ **Maintain a visible presence in our communities.** Continue to run a programme aimed at promoting harmonious neighbourhoods. Seek insight into what type of activities are best-suited to particular neighbourhoods.
- ✓ **Increase our flexibility.** Continue to provide opportunities for the Tenant Panel to meet in the evenings so that those who work office hours can attend. Provide opportunities for tenants to 'get involved' through postal, email or text messaging surveys where possible. This will enable those who are not able to attend meetings due to disability, for instance, to share their opinions.

# Aims & Objectives of the Strategy

## Implementing the Strategy

We will invite our Tenant Panel and other active tenants to set an annual Involvement Plan. The actions required to implement this strategy will be coordinated by the Tenant Involvement & Communications Officer who reports to the Operations Committee.

We will communicate the service improvements that arise from this strategy by making sure that they are well-publicised to tenants and staff. Its success will be demonstrated by the satisfaction of our tenants (particularly with regard to how well

Unity listens and responds to their views) and the extent to which they choose to become involved in initiatives where they live.

We will review our involvement activities on an annual basis to assess whether they have been effective in producing beneficial outcomes for our residents at a reasonable cost in terms of time and other resources.

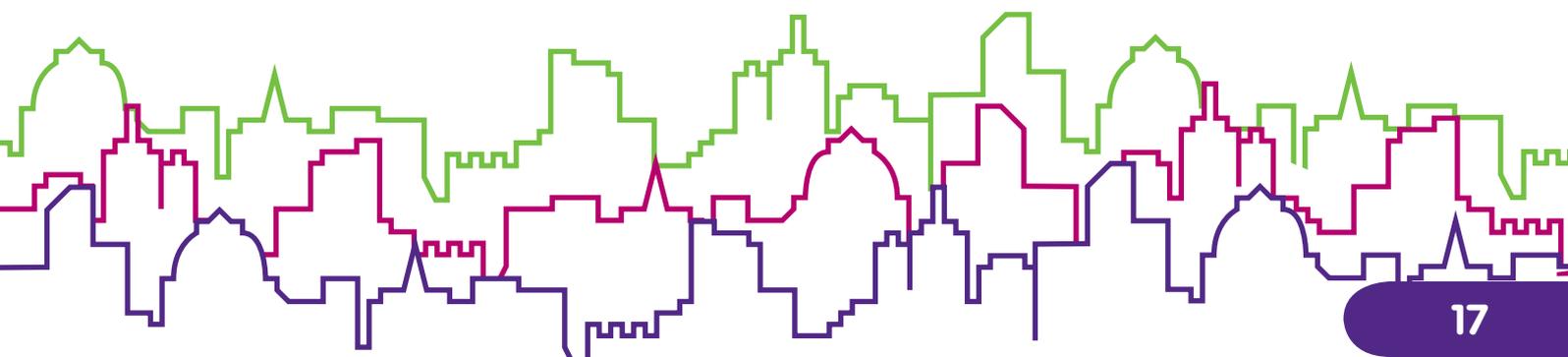
This strategy will be reviewed in 2019.

## Action Plan

Activity	Intended Outcomes	Target Date	Measure for success
Develop our current Tenant Panel's knowledge and skills base	Service problems are identified and resolved	Ongoing	Meetings and other activities are well-attended.
	Service delivery is improved as a result		Tenants undertake training to develop their knowledge and skills base
	Tenant Panel become more independent		Tenants satisfied that their views have been taken into consideration
	Stronger links are established with Unity's Operations Committee and Board		Tenant Panel progress is reported to other tenants and staff via the quarterly newsletters

# Action Plan

Activity	Intended Outcomes	Target Date	Measure for success
Maintain a viable Unite with Unity Panel	<p>Identify tenants who have sufficient skills and interest to join Unite with Unity</p> <p>Tenants develop improved confidence, knowledge and skills by participating in formal meetings</p> <p>Some tenants feel confident about progressing to Board level</p>	Ongoing	<p>Meetings are well attended</p> <p>Tenants feel satisfied that their views have been taken into consideration and that positive changes have been made based on their suggestions</p> <p>Tenants progress in terms of their level of involvement</p>
Employ an effective marketing campaign	<p>Continue to publish the work of our Tenant Panel(s) in the quarterly newsletter, on the website and through social media.</p> <p>Engage with tenants at community events to encourage them to take an interest</p> <p>Contact tenants who are interested in influencing service delivery as identified in the 2015 Census Survey</p>	Ongoing	More tenants join the Tenant Panel and/or take part in other activities aimed at influencing service delivery.
Ensure our Tenant Panel accurately represents Unity's tenant profile	Encourage tenants from under-represented areas to join the Tenant Panel and/or take part in other involvement activities	Ongoing	<p>Tenants from Beeston, Burmantofts, Crossgates, Little London, Moortown and Wortley join the Tenant Panel.</p> <p>Shared-owners are represented by the Tenant Panel.</p>



# Action Plan

Activity	Intended Outcomes	Target Date	Measure for success
Consider employing additional methods to encourage customer feedback	Make it more convenient for tenants to offer their feedback on our services by giving them opportunities to express their views by email and text message; for instance.	Ongoing	Response rates to satisfaction surveys increase.
Maintain a visible presence in our communities	<p>Carry out a programme of events aimed at engaging with the residents on our estates</p> <p>Events have clear aims and are linked to the feedback Unity received via the 2014 Tenant Satisfaction Survey</p> <p>More attractive and harmonious neighbourhoods</p>	Ongoing	Events are well-attended and success stories are published in our newsletter and on our website.
Increase our flexibility to accommodate the diverse range of needs of our tenants	Tenants who are prevented from being able to attend meetings at the usual times are still offered the opportunity to have their say	Ongoing	<p>Tenants are able to participate in involvement activities from home via a Tenant E-Panel; for instance.</p> <p>We continue to host meetings outside of office hours so that tenants who work office hours are able to attend.</p>