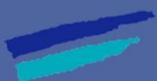




SOCIAL MEDIA for HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS



NORTHERN LIGHTS PR & MARKETING

Best practice in resident engagement

Introduction

It's an absolute given that engaging with and involving tenants and residents is good practice and makes sense. Very few organisations would want to cling onto the old patriarchal idea of "we know what's best for you".

From social media channels like Twitter and Facebook through to co-production and community based social marketing there are seemingly endless ways to engage with communities, residents and tenants. With so many channels available, how do housing associations, local authorities and other organisations decide which will be effective and truly engage residents?

The Government's welfare reforms and changes in housing policies mean that effective communication and engagement with residents and tenants has never been more critical. Northern Lights PR was asked by the CEOs of a number of social housing associations to look at best practice in resident engagement, including examples from other sectors.

A number of senior people from sectors including social housing, health, local government and the voluntary sector have contributed their insights.

This is very much a working paper, with case studies and links to organisations engaged in innovative resident and community engagement, particularly social media.

Key issues in tenant/ resident engagement

Northern Lights talked to some of its own contacts and posed questions to charity and third sector discussion groups on LinkedIn about current key issues around resident engagement.

- Some groups/audiences continue to be harder to reach than others despite a number of initiatives. These include people with health problems and disabilities, mental health issues, English as a second language and poor literacy skills, Muslim women, young people
- A danger of engaging but not allowing residents to influence
- Negative engagement creates apathy and suspicion with residents not feeling that their contributions are valued
- A danger that you are just engaging with the most vocal and that the majority don't/can't have a voice
- Engaging young people needs a special skills set
- Social media provides useful channels for engagement but seen as high maintenance. Organisations, including housing associations, not having the capacity or the expertise
- A lack of clear rules of engagement, plans, expectations, skills and roles in organisations
- Some housing associations and organisations using jargon, wrong tone, too much data and the wrong language so fail to engage effectively
- Many residents feel disenfranchised and see social housing and other organisations as 'authority' so don't respond
- A failure to communicate vital information to residents eg on welfare reforms and the bedroom tax
- On the plus side, positive engagement can give residents access to training - building confidence and skills

Several people we spoke to were concerned that, despite best efforts and an investment in funds, organisations are still not reaching the least vocal residents - these are often the ones who are most marginalised.

Particular barriers to engaging with the least vocal tenants are

- Literacy levels - poor reading skills
- English as a second language
- Ill health, including mental health issues
- Social isolation – whether geographical, cultural or through personal circumstances such as having a disability or being a carer

Paul Croston is service manager for [Leeds Mind Housing Support Service](#), an organization working with people with mental health problems living in Leeds.

“We are pretty fortunate that all our 90 clients know us, trust us (to a degree) and are engaged (to a degree) with our service.

“It’s worthwhile for larger housing associations to see what support services are going in to their properties and see if they can use their connections to engage and consult. For example, a housing association may have a large stock of housing in a certain area, so the likelihood is that one or two (max) Community Mental health Teams (CPNs, OTs etc) will be present in that area and providing a service to their tenants and the same with other support service providers.

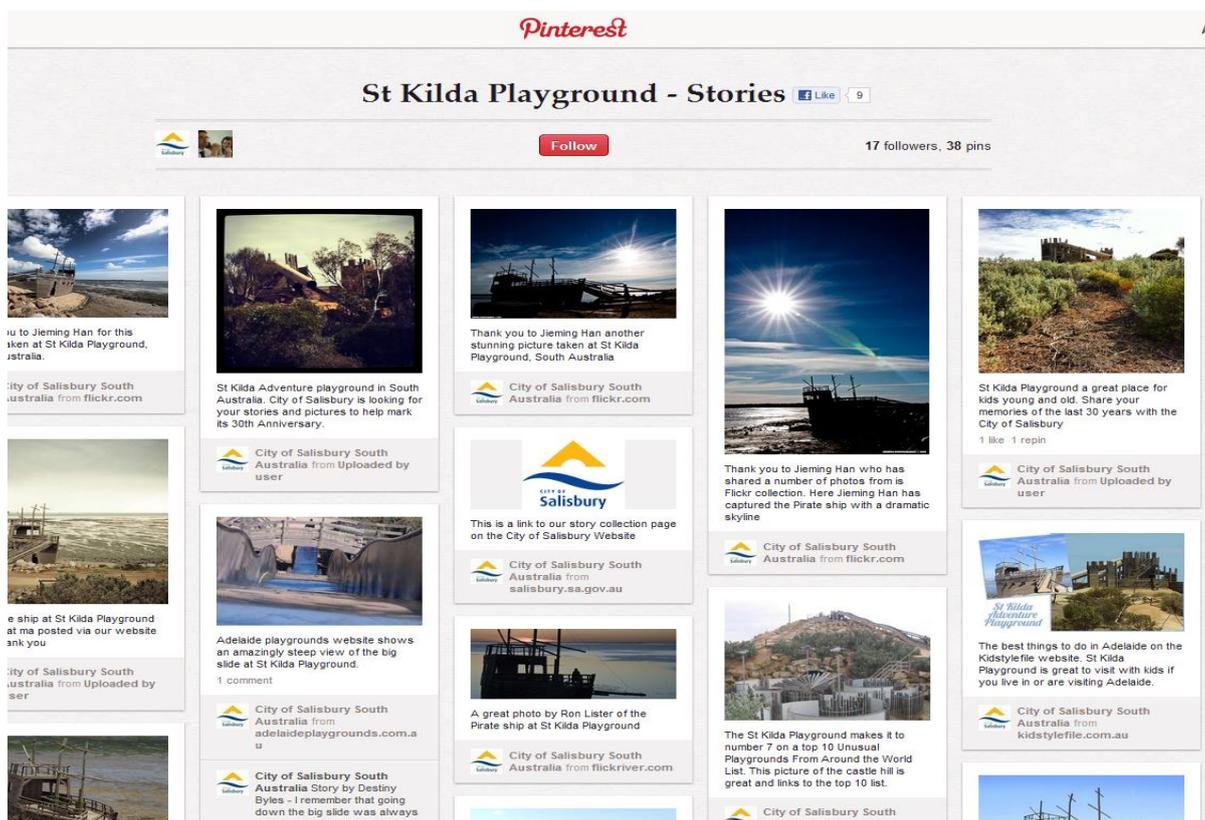
“I’d also say that you need clarity on what you’re consulting about, why someone’s views are important, how people’s views can influence decisions and examples of what that means. Why are you consulting, what’s happening to the information – for example, is it confidential or not.”

Social media as a tenant engagement channel

Many housing associations have started to use social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook, in order to engage with residents. Housing minister Grant Schapps set out the benefits social landlords of using social media to communicate with and get feedback from their tenants in a [video](#) made as an address to a conference on social media organised by the Northern Housing Consortium in March 2012.

Although a large percentage of social housing tenants do not have computers and are not online, those that are digitally savvy may well be regular users of social media and have considerable expertise. They may also be the most vocal and there is a danger that they may dominate in the same way as they do on other communication channels,

Some organisations are looking at newer social media to engage with residents in different ways. For example the City of Salisbury in South Australia, a local authority actively involved in using social media to engage with residents, uses virtual pin board [Pinterest](#) to communicate and engage in a very visual way. It shares photographs of playschemes, recreational activities, libraries etc. A particularly effective use was to create a memory board of St Kilda’s playground celebrating its 30th anniversary and invite residents to share their stories.



Andrew Coulson is a community engagement officer for the [City of Salisbury in South Australia](#). He used to work with social housing landlords in the UK.

“Social media is certainly slower in the UK compared with Australia and there is also a lack of joined up thinking. In Australia organisations are using social media not just for simple giving and sharing information but use hash tags on Twitter to encourage engagement and debate and Facebook for project awareness and interactivity.

“In the City of Salisbury we have started to use Pinterest to try and engage with residents about an old adventure playground that turns 30 this year.

“Companies like Bang on the Table offer off the shelf 'Engagement HQ' products which can be linked to your organisation's website and social media accounts. They allow you to develop ways of engaging with stakeholders and residents - whether that's an online community panel or asking for simple comments on change of policy.

“I think there is much more of a fear in the UK that by using social media to engage you could offend someone; alienate a person or a group; not get a response or be unable to manage the responses you get. This has led to a tendency to push out information, often regurgitating messages from elsewhere that won't offend or upset anyone. I've found some UK social housing Tweets to be very safe - just re-Tweets or telling about an event or special day eg Autism Awareness Week.

“I still see Social media and traditional engagement tools and methods as complimenting each other. That way local authorities and housing associations who use focus groups, project boards and paper based surveys in the UK can enhance what they are doing using platforms such as Facebook and Pinterest. There is a lot of potential to use the social networks to build up communities online and turn it in to physical face to face engagements (Think community gardens and growing ideas in an online forum then turning it into reality) and of course vice versa where the outcome of projects can be mapped using digital images, online sharing and discussions can be continued long after a meeting has finished (think recipes using the community garden veg, a time-lapse video of a gardens change or pictures of the volunteers with bio).”

[Monmouthshire County Council](#) in Wales has won national awards for its innovative use of social media, including blogs, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to engage with local residents. For example, they use Yammer, a social media platform designed for internal communications – a sort of Facebook for employees – to create a [network for foster carers](#). The Yammer network was set up by council workers but is very much ‘owned’ by the carers and allows them to have a private online group for conversations and support.

Its Twitter account has a considerable number of followers and engages directly with them, actively encouraging people to ‘talk to us’.



Monmouthshire
 @MonmouthshireCC
 News & info from Monmouthshire County Council. Talk to us about Monmouthshire issues! Tweets by @he Reynolds, @jburns82 & @valesais
 Monmouthshire, UK · <http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/110/>

Follow 

7,384 TWEETS
 4,393 FOLLOWING
 4,381 FOLLOWERS

Tweet to Monmouthshire

- Tweets >
 - Following >
 - Followers >
 - Favorites >
 - Lists >
 - Recent images >
- 

- Similar to Monmouthshire** >
-  **Chris Taylor BC** @vixtay
Follow
 -  **Magor Square** @MagorSquare
Follow
 -  **Abergavenny Museum** @AberMusei
Follow

© 2012 Twitter [About](#) [Help](#) [Terms](#) [Privacy](#)
[Blog](#) [Status](#) [Apps](#) [Resources](#) [Jobs](#)
[Advertisers](#) [Businesses](#) [Media](#) [Developers](#)

- Tweets**
-  **Monmouthshire** @MonmouthshireCC 5h
 @Nashy_Art about your market question: not a straight forward answer I'm afraid as it depends on size of your stall. Will DM you.
[View conversation](#)
 -  **Monmouthshire** @MonmouthshireCC 6h
 @soosieboo email recyclingandwaste@monmouthshire.gov.uk with name, address and request and they'll send you a blue bin :)
 @monccrecycling
[View conversation](#)
 -  **Monmouthshire** @MonmouthshireCC 18h
 @Nospin_43 thanks we're pretty chuffed. Loads of hard work by all involved.
[View conversation](#)
 -  **Monmouthshire** @MonmouthshireCC 24h
 News: Monmouthshire bucks national trend with record GCSE results monmouthshire.gov.uk/newsroom/news/... #GCSE
 Expand
 -  **Monmouthshire** @MonmouthshireCC 24h
 @Nashy_Art Cheers! Catch you tomorrow :)
[View conversation](#)
 -  **Monmouthshire** @MonmouthshireCC 24h
 @Nashy_Art I've just called the markets guy and left a message. He usually only works Fri and Sat. Is it ok if I get back to you tomorrow?
[View conversation](#)
 -  **Monmouthshire** @MonmouthshireCC 24h
 @Nashy_Art I'll just contact the person who deals with this and get back to you ASAP :)

Some UK social housing landlords such as the Bromford Group are embracing social media and using it effectively to engage with tenants. Their [website has a section](#) outlining their different social media channels and why residents might want to engage with them.

Their page about Twitter gives a short explanation about each of the accounts and even links through to some of the individuals from Bromford Group who are using Twitter in a personal capacity.

Bromford have created two live Twitter feeds to enable tenants to give feedback on their services.

Twitter



Here at Bromford, we love to tweet. We love to share things we find and keep the twittersphere up to date on all our latest news.

We've got a number of official profiles, as well as a few colleagues you can follow to get views on #ukhousing and the projects we're involved in.

If you want to chat to us, share or just comment on the services we offer, then click the most appropriate link below. We currently don't offer customer service via social media, but will try our best to help you as quickly as possible. Our contact centre monitor twitter 9am - 5pm Mondays to Fridays and aim to respond to any issues raised within 2 working days.

Who to follow...

Follow [@BromfordGroup](#) for the latest news from the whole of Bromford. This is the main profile for all the services we offer, and a great place to chat with us about #UKHousing.

Follow [@BromfordLiving](#) for information on our affordable housing and shared ownership properties. This is also the best place to let us know of any issues you have and to keep up to date on our service status.

Follow [@BromfordSupport](#) to learn about the fantastic work of our specialist support services provider. Hear some amazing case studies and keep in the know about our many lifechanging schemes and projects.

Follow [@BromfordJobs](#) for all the latest on what jobs are on offer here at Bromford. The team also have a fantastic facebook app where you can apply for positions directly through our Facebook pages.

Follow [@BromfordHomes](#) for all the news and availability info for Bromford's outright sales properties, like our first outright sales development 'PriorsLeap'.

Follow [@HomeRewardsClub](#) to get updates on our #tenantcashback pilot and learn how you can get involved.

Want to give some feedback? Tweet [@YVBromLiving](#) or [@YVBromSupport](#) to give feedback on any our services, as well as seeing live feedback from all our customers.

Some of our colleagues on twitter...

We actively encourage all our colleagues to get online and use social media, and some of them have taken to it like a duck to water. You can see a Twitter list of some of the most prolific Bromford tweeters [here](#).

Bromford Housing Association has been growing its social media activity over the last year and is regarded as one of the leading authorities on social media within the sector.

They use social media in a number of ways

- To engage with and do transactions with tenants
- For PR and influencing nationally
- Conversations with stakeholders
- Internal communications

Social media is embraced at board level with senior managers expected to be social media savvy.

Helena Moore, director of organisational development and communications:

"Social media helps us to engage with and listen to our tenants, providing improved customer service. We have separate Twitter accounts and Facebook forums for our tenants. Members of our customer

engagement team monitor these and spot any online complaints from customers. They are very quick at picking these up and responding.

“An example of where social media really worked for us was during the riots last summer. Wolverhampton and Birmingham are two of the areas we operate in. We started to follow two senior police officers from the area on Twitter. They were posting up to date information on what was happening. We were able to pass that information onto our teams in those local areas, put this out on tenant Facebook pages, re-Tweet on our Twitter streams and reassure customers and colleagues about the situation.”

Key issues and concerns about social media

- Social housing associations don't have the internal resources to manage and run social media
- The job of running social media accounts is given to someone junior without the authority to engage directly with residents, monitor feedback and answer questions/deal with complaints
- Social media channels are used as a promotional channel and not for real engagement
- Some housing associations are not engaging with right audiences. For example found posting information about tenant meetings etc and when they have very few followers and those they do have are not applicable as they are members of staff or non-tenants
- Too many different Twitter accounts for one organisation
- Residents setting up their own social media platforms to campaign against an organisation eg a Facebook page, blog or Twitter account eg Accent Residents on Facebook
- Housing associations and organisations afraid of encouraging negative feedback from residents via social media channels
- Not monitoring social media platforms so leaving tenants' queries unanswered

Examples of Twitter accounts

City of Salisbury, South Australia

This feels engaging and friendly with a reasonable number of followers – perhaps not as many as you would expect for a council. Whoever is Tweeting for the local authority is doing so regularly and is directly engaging with followers.

The screenshot shows the Twitter profile for the City of Salisbury SA (@CityOfSalisbury). The profile header includes the city's logo, name, and a bio: "Local Council located north of Adelaide, South Australia. Here you will find a vibrant community and innovative Council that is shaping a sustainable future." It also lists the location as Salisbury, SA, Australia and provides the website URL: http://www.salisbury.sa.gov.au. The profile statistics show 747 tweets, 354 following, and 898 followers. The main content area displays a list of tweets. The first tweet is from the City of Salisbury SA, announcing a special FREE writing development session for high school students. The second tweet is from Polly Pearson (@pollykate), who is looking forward to the Writer's Forum this weekend and has retweeted the City of Salisbury SA. The third tweet is from the City of Salisbury SA, replying to @pollykate and expressing gladness to hear about the sessions. The fourth tweet is from the City of Salisbury SA, sharing a meme about living up to expectations every time.

City of Salisbury SA @CityOfSalisbury
Local Council located north of Adelaide, South Australia. Here you will find a vibrant community and innovative Council that is shaping a sustainable future.
Salisbury, SA, Australia · <http://www.salisbury.sa.gov.au>

747 TWEETS
354 FOLLOWING
898 FOLLOWERS

Tweet to City of Salisbury SA
@CityOfSalisbury

Tweets

City of Salisbury SA @CityOfSalisbury 5h
What if you could write your own future? A special FREE writing development session for high school students. #SWF on.fb.me /MM7S3I
Expand

Polly Pearson @pollykate 21 Aug
Looking forward to the Writer's Forum this weekend in @CityofSalisbury #SWF.
Retweeted by City of Salisbury SA
Expand

City of Salisbury SA @CityOfSalisbury 7h
@pollykate So are we! Glad to hear that you will be attending, there are some great sessions being offered! #SWF
View conversation

City of Salisbury SA @CityOfSalisbury 7h
Found a Salisbury meme online today that gave us a chuckle. Not sure if we can live up to that every time, but we try!
pic.twitter.com/JKewU3wB
View photo

Similar to City of Salisbury SA

Jenny Cliff @jenseeya
Follow

Bromford Group

This is the corporate account of the Bromford Group mentioned above. It feels lively and engaging, but as this account is only monitored Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm it would be useful to mention the @YVBromLiving and @YVBromSupport Twitter accounts for residents' feedback in the bio.

Bromford Group
@BromfordGroup
We're a leading provider of affordable homes & specialist support services. Tweets by @jarrodwilliams Mon-Fri 9-5 (We may not be available to reply other times)
Central England · <http://www.bromford.co.uk>

Following
1,239 TWEETS
483 FOLLOWING
1,062 FOLLOWERS

Tweet to Bromford Group
@BromfordGroup

Tweets

- Bromford Group** @BromfordGroup 35m
Check out the first fab blog from our HR team - HR Stand and Deliver ow.ly/d9obE
View media
- Bromford Group** @BromfordGroup 3h
@symphonyhousing Good luck with reaching the 1,000!
View conversation
- Bromford Group** @BromfordGroup 5h
@Standard_ICraig We hope we're not one of the 0.1% :)
View conversation
- Sarah Terry** @SarahAtBromford 6h
Our customers just sparkle! buff.ly/MCTGvd Jealous? If you're a @bromfordgroup customer join us!
Retweeted by Bromford Group
View media
- Connect** @ConnectBromford 19 Aug
There's still time to join our social revolution! Check out our vacancy for Connect Community Developer here: buff.ly/N4R1ur
Retweeted by Bromford Group
Expand

Similar to Bromford Group

- Hyndburn Homes** @HyndburnHomes Follow
- Octavia Housing** @Octavia_Housing Follow
- Jon Land** @JonLand24

Accent Group Ltd

Accent Group Ltd has a number of different Twitter accounts for each division. They started to try out Twitter earlier in the year, but have yet to build up followers. The main account below has just 73 followers yet considerable effort goes into Tweeting to that small number of followers, many of whom appear not be tenants. Most Tweets are advertising events or jobs rather than engaging.

Accent Group Ltd
@AccentGroupLTD
Baildon, West Yorkshire · <http://www.accentgroup.org>

Following
411 TWEETS
30 FOLLOWING
73 FOLLOWERS

Tweet to Accent Group Ltd
@AccentGroupLTD

Tweets

- Accent Group Ltd** @AccentGroupLTD 20 Aug
More jobs! We're recruiting for an Application Delivery Manager based in Shipley, W Yorks. Apply via tinyurl.com/75p7od7 #jobs #vacancies
Expand
- Accent Group Ltd** @AccentGroupLTD 20 Aug
We're currently recruiting for a Part Tme Vocational Technician based in Burnley. Apply online at tinyurl.com/75p7od7 #jobs #vacancies
Expand

Accent Nene's Twitter account has even fewer followers and many of those appear to be staff, other housing associations or contacts rather than tenants. Again, Twitter is being used as a promotional platform - but is only reaching a handful of relevant people.

Accent Nene News
@accentnene_news
Accent Nene is a registered social landlord currently managing more than 4000 homes in the east midlands
East Midlands · <http://www.accentnene.org>

Follow
61 TWEETS
4 FOLLOWING
54 FOLLOWERS

Tweet to Accent Nene News
@accentnene_news

Tweets

- Accent Group Ltd** @AccentGroupLTD · 20 Aug
We're recruiting for a Temp Part Time Customer Services Officer in Peterborough. Apply online at tinyurl.com/75p7od7 #vacancies
Retweeted by Accent Nene News
- Accent Nene News** @accentnene_news · 7 Aug
Tomorrow's roadshows start at Keyworth Court, Huntingdon at 10am and Wolsey Gardens, Buckden at 1pm. Bring the kids for glitter tattoos!
- Accent Nene News** @accentnene_news · 6 Aug
Tomorrow afternoon our roadshow goes to Nottingham, based at Plackett Close, Stapleford. We hope to see a good turn out.
- Accent Nene News** @accentnene_news · 6 Aug
Tomorrow morning's roadshows are in Rutland. Northbrook Close, Greetham at 9:30am and Willoughby Gardens, Oakham at 11:30am. See you there!

© 2012 Twitter About Help Terms Privacy

Facebook

Facebook is often seen as a 'must have' by organisations because it is free and because someone young in the office has an account. However, even social media 'experts' can find it a challenge to build a substantial following ie people who 'like' your page.

It is not enough to post interesting content such as photographs, video and to start discussions – Facebook needs constant monitoring to spot any complaints that need addressing or questions that need answering.

Another major concern among senior managers we spoke to is that Facebook provides a free platform for disgruntled residents to start campaigns against a particular project or organisation. These groups will start up anyway, whether your organisation is on Facebook or not.

Accent Foundation Ltd has made considerable effort to post colourful photographs and post information on events and activities on a reasonably regular basis. However, only 74 people 'like' the page and there is very little engagement.

Making a
DIFFERENCE...
improving homes, communities and lives



Accent Foundation Ltd

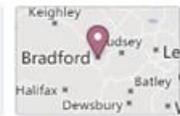
74 likes · 2 talking about this · 2 were here

Like Message

Housing assistance service
Jeremy Downs House, Senior Way, Bradford, BD5 0QB
01274 717500
Today 10:00 - 17:15



74



About

Photos

Likes

Map

Accent Foundation Ltd
8 August

Just one of the lovely gardens the judges had the hard task of picking winners from in our annual north east gardening competition.



Like · Comment · Share

Claire Stone likes this.

Write a comment...

Accent Foundation Ltd shared a link via Accent Communities.
6 August

Wanted - Accent Residents

Accent Group - Residents wanted for 10 week building course

Like · Comment · Share

Accent Foundation Ltd
7 August

A walk on the wild side! Residents at Bradford sheltered scheme Morrell Court enjoyed an afternoon getting to know some non, two, and eight legged animals! Bradford Birds of Prey brought in two owls, a python and a tarantula for residents and their families to get to know better. The event was supported by Creative Support.



Like · Comment · Share

A Facebook page **Accent Group Residents' Association** has 108 people liking it, but this is a Facebook page set up by residents who use it as a forum for issues relating to their Accent homes. Accent Foundation Ltd has banned this

residents' group from posting on its official page. These are pages for anyone to find on a Google search so this 'disengagement' with residents has become very public.



Accent Group Residents Association
108 likes

Like Message

Community Organization
Housing forum for all residents past and present of Accent Group properties.

About Photos Likes



Accent Group Residents Association

8 August



We still cannot post on Accent Foundation Ltd's official Facebook wall page!

We the residents, have been banned from landlords Official Facebook page!

They do have some interesting stories though, well worth a read!

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Accent-Foundation-Ltd/156215321107038?ref=stream>



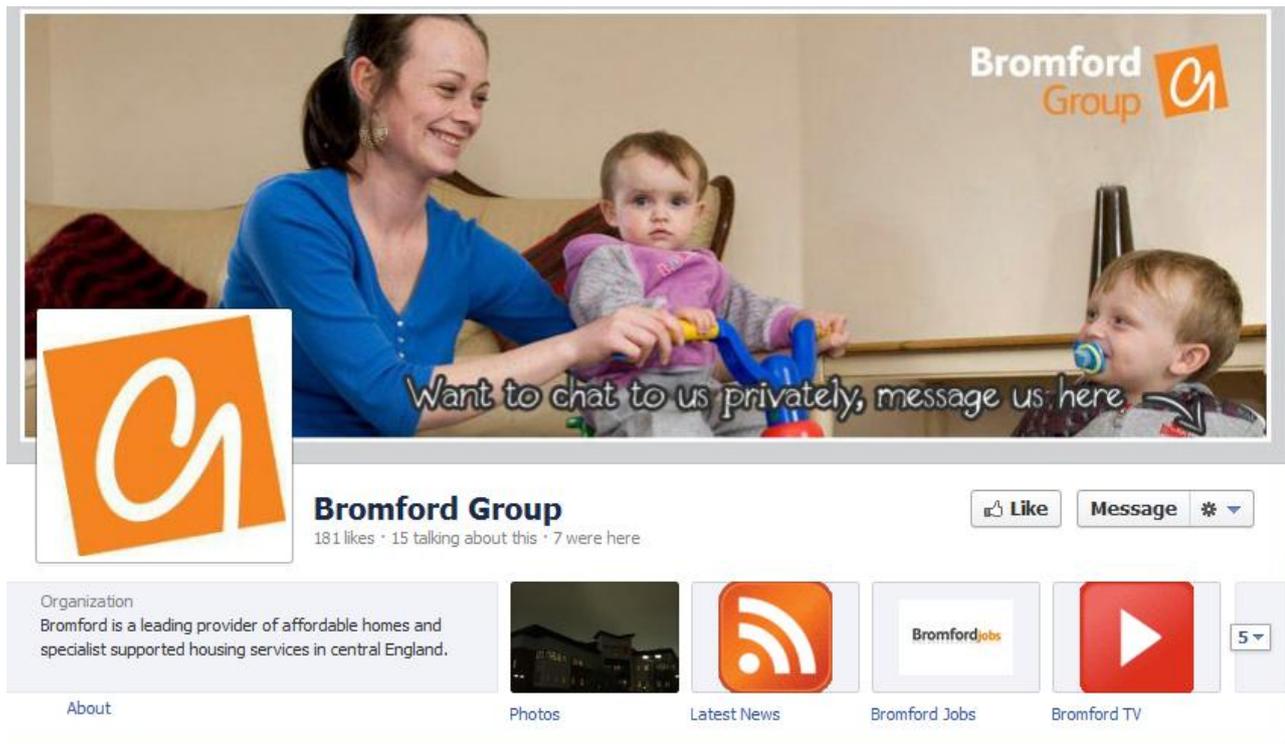
Accent Foundation Ltd

We have been providing homes and services to our residents for over 40 years.
Page: 74 like this.

Like Comment Share

Bromford Group

Bromford has several Facebook pages for different parts of their business. Their 'likes' are into double figures but not huge considering the amount of effort they clearly put into their social media activities. A nice touch to actively encourage tenants to message them privately if they want a confidential chat.



The image shows the Facebook profile for Bromford Group. The cover photo features a woman in a blue shirt smiling while interacting with two young children. The Bromford Group logo is in the top right corner. A text overlay on the photo says "Want to chat to us privately, message us here". The profile picture is the Bromford Group logo. The name "Bromford Group" is displayed, along with "181 likes · 15 talking about this · 7 were here". Navigation buttons for "Like" and "Message" are visible. The "About" section describes the organization as a leading provider of affordable homes and specialist supported housing services in central England. Below this are links for "Photos", "Latest News" (with an RSS icon), "Bromford Jobs", and "Bromford TV" (with a play button icon).

Bromford Group
181 likes · 15 talking about this · 7 were here

Organization
Bromford is a leading provider of affordable homes and specialist supported housing services in central England.

About Photos Latest News Bromford Jobs Bromford TV



The image shows the Facebook profile for Bromford Support. The cover photo features a woman in a white uniform sitting at a table, with another person's back to the camera. The Bromford Support logo is in the top right corner. A text overlay on the photo says "Want to chat to us privately, message us here" with an arrow pointing to the "Message" button. The profile picture is the Bromford Support logo. The name "Bromford Support" is displayed, along with "230 likes · 15 talking about this · 2 were here". Navigation buttons for "Like" and "Message" are visible. The "About" section lists the business as a local business at 1 Venture Court, Wolverhampton, GB, with phone number 01902 719504. Below this are links for "Photos", "Likes" (with a thumbs up icon and "230"), "Bromford Jobs", and "YouTube" (with a play button icon).

Bromford Support
230 likes · 15 talking about this · 2 were here

Local Business
1 Venture Court, Wolverhampton, GB.
01902 719504

Photos Likes 230 Bromford Jobs YouTube

Leeds Federated

The Leeds Federated Facebook is liked by just 51 people with one person dominating posts on their wall. However, someone is monitoring the page and responding effectively to queries.

Leeds Federated

Leeds Federated Housing Association
51 likes · 2 talking about this · 10 were here

Local Business
Arthington House, 30 Westfield Rd, Leeds, GB.
0113 386 1000
Today 08:45 - 17:00

About Photos Likes Map Twitter

Highlights

Post Photo / Video

Write something...

Leeds Federated Housing Association
6 hours ago

In memory of John Barbour, involved tenant and much missed friend. The photo shows John's son and daughter with his friends and involved tenants from the Disability Forum.

Recent Posts by Others See all

- Crystal clear window works**
@repair rather than replace save upto 50% compared to the r
Wednesday at 11:18
- Crystal clear window works**
Hi, we're looking to talk with more housing associations, An ave
9 August at 15:20
- Kingsley Iball**
Hey! LFHA has got another award, this time from Housing e-Ac
25 July at 16:05
- Kingsley Iball**
TPAS 2012 : Debate on Welfare Reform - all complicated, still n
19 July at 16:22
- Kingsley Iball**
TPAS conference 2012 : Great workshop with Twin Valley Home
19 July at 16:12

More Posts



Lyz Wild

hi Leeds Fed...ive been told that you have quite a few 1 BED flats about...i do hope this is correct, i am single and live in a 2 bedroom house in one of your properties and was told a while ago these are available to single people like myself,living in 2 BED properties...my house is fitted with a new shower and also a new kitchen...would anyone be interested in this.
please let me know by leaving a comment here or email me on facebook...thankyou

Like · Comment · 28 June at 18:40

 2 people like this.

 View all 5 comments



Sarah-Seirra Louise i want to move there plz cud u put me forward for that house

30 June at 19:09 · Like



Leeds Federated Housing Association Morning Liz, thank you for getting in touch. Brenda Orimilade from our Customer Service Team will be in touch with you today to see how we can help you further.

Case studies and supporting materials

Questions and answers with Emma Whitby, head of LINK services for Voluntary Action Islington.

LINK is a community engagement project set up by the Department of Health. Voluntary Action Islington is an umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector in Islington. A number of people Northern Lights contacted via LinkedIn discussion groups rated the organisation's engagement with local people, particularly with individuals and groups defined as 'hard to reach'.

What are the biggest opportunities for engaging effectively with tenants?

Direct feedback from tenants on their experiences which can drive improvements.
Opportunity (if done well) to hear from a range of tenants, not just the most articulate or the loudest.
To make tenants feel they do have a voice and can influence their area. This can be done through existing meetings, surveys, comment boxes (with responses via newsletters or direct) and so on.

What are the biggest challenges to engaging effectively with tenants?

Ensuring that a range of voices are heard and that you engage people where there is the opportunity for their views to influence (rather than engaging them and collecting their views in a way that ends up with their views not being heard).

In your view what are the top three points/issues to consider when engaging with tenants?

1. Using a range of methods to involve a broad range of people
2. Balancing views and developing consensus where appropriate
3. Skills and capacity of support staff

From your own experience where do organisations usually go wrong when engaging with tenants?

They lack clear frameworks or 'rules' of engagement, roles of individuals within the system and lack of clarity about expectations

How well do you feel your own organisation engages with tenants?

There is always more we could do to improve our engagement but we do reach out to people in a wide range of ways and receive positive feedback on what we have done so far.

Do you think that there are some audiences who are particularly hard to engage with? If yes, who are they and why are they hard to reach?

Our project focuses on health and social care service users. Social care service users can be 'hard to reach' because of the nature of the conditions that mean they need social care. We have also not engaged many young people. I feel that engaging young people needs a specialist skill set of its own. We do general out-reach activity and then map who is under-represented within that; we then seek out groups representing the individuals who fall in to these categories.

What are the risks of not engaging effectively with tenants – particularly thinking about specific audiences?

Broadly negative engagement can create apathy and suspicion and make participants feel that the contributions are not valued. I don't feel that this is very different from one audience to another.

Have you come across any particularly effective examples of tenant/resident engagement?

Not directly, though some of our LINK members are involved in their tenants associations and carry out visits and inspections to different parts of the maintenance teams for example.

LINK has to reach out to the whole borough but having a clear target audience does make it easier to tailor events and get more feedback.

A LINK event on a local strategy was effective because it gave a government view and then LINK was able to offer (through a third party) some counter arguments for people to consider. People felt that they were more informed by this event and able to put forward an opinion more easily. This event influenced our strategy.

Does your own organisation use social media to engage with tenants?

We have a Facebook page and Twitter account but at present we don't have the capacity (time) to use these resources effectively.

In your view are these effective or could is there room for improvement - if so, how?

I think they can be useful for some audiences, though I have no idea how many people actually DO use social media. I think it's probably most useful for reminding people about events and activities going on.

Any other comment on tenant engagement?

This kind of engagement can have really positive benefits for the people involved. Feelings of making a positive contribution and achieving results as well as access to training which builds confidence and skills of those taking part. It can also offer positive insight for service providers/ commissioners.

Questions and answers with **Pamela Welsh, media and communications specialist, Northwards Housing**

What are the biggest opportunities for engaging effectively with tenants?

The biggest opportunities are around welfare reform and rehousing

What are the biggest challenges to engaging effectively with tenants?

The biggest challenges are reading age and lack of engagement. Many people are simply not interested.

In your view what are the top three points/issues to consider when engaging with tenants?

A) Is it readable and understandable? B) Is it relevant? C) Is it timely?

From your own experience where do organisations usually go wrong when engaging with tenants?

They get the balance wrong on the tone. Either it's way too complicated and packed full of jargon, which automatically turns people off, or it's patronising. That's a difficult balance to strike. I'd err on the side of patronising though, because at least it's understandable. I've just seen a leaflet on welfare reform from a housing association and it was absolutely jam packed with data and littered with jargon. Even I couldn't understand it!

How well do you feel your own organisation engages with tenants?

Very well! I think we get that balance right. I would say that, of course. Where we could improve is making sure we have a better plan to communicate when it's relevant to tenants.

Do you think that there are some audiences who are particularly hard to engage with? If yes, who are they and why are they hard to reach?

I think we've got a problem because the reading age is low. Many people feel disenfranchised and see the 'housing' as just another arm of 'authority' and automatically rebel against that.

What are the risks of not engaging effectively with tenants – particularly thinking about specific audiences?

I think you can fail to pick up good news stories and appear out of touch. I also think you can fail to communicate vital changes eg welfare reform, pushing people further into debt and making them feel worse about their lives.

Have you come across any particularly effective examples of tenant/resident engagement?

Our community safety team are brilliant at informing residents about injunctions/fines they have managed to get on people who cause trouble. There is a delicate line to tread in terms of publicity for that. Eg if some kids are causing a nuisance on a Friday night and the community safety team deal with it, then you've got to deal someone that it was our organisation that sorted it out and not the anti-social behaviour fairy. At the same time, you don't want to risk inflaming the situation. We have a proforma leaflet that goes through doors in the immediate area with the details on so that people know what work we are doing.

Does your own organisation use social media to engage with tenants?

Yes. We have a Facebook feed, Twitter feed and a mobile phone app. The app is used by around 200 people, which is a good take-up for an early product. We are hoping to do more with that. The Facebook feed is very well used and looks great. Our Twitter feed is less good but we are working on ways to improve that eg a policy for engaging with difficult tenants.

Any other comment on tenant engagement?

It has to be understandable, digestible and informative.

Ken Taylor
Executive director
Groundwork Wakefield
(covers North Yorks, across to Hull)

Ken is also chair of Wakefield and District Housing Association

Groundwork employs community engagement and education youth partners in most deprived areas and estates to go in and

- Deliver one off projects
- Pull together key stakeholders and residents to develop masterplan/blueprint

The organisation acts as a catalyst or broker and its areas of work include safety, recreation, transport and access.

“Some estates have active community/resident groups and others have none. Our role is to bring together the relevant community people and stakeholders from different organisations to avoid duplication. A sustained impact on communities needs a strategic approach.

“Groundwork has good relationship with the National Housing Federation and in turn we helped to develop a regional framework with them. They want help to target housing associations who are not engaging effectively. You need to have organisations that will be in an area for some times, who can broker/mediate between residents and local authorities. Groundwork can do this as we are independent.

“We start with a scoping exercise to make sure we are co-ordinated and that we are not cutting across community groups and what is already being done. We will look at what level do we need to communicate and engage with residents and motivate them?

“Some of the ideas we might use to reach and engage with different audiences include

- Street football
- Ideas for specific areas and projects – these might be environmental, or we might build youth shelters
- Going to toddler groups to reach parents
Visiting working men’s clubs
- Door to door consultation
- Public meetings – although you tend to only get those who shout the loudest

“We start to develop the vision for an area/estate based on the scoping exercise. We will look at what are the key issues, aims and objectives? That’s when we go from a strategic level to the action plan. We see what residents consider to be the most important actions.

“ You can do this in several ways eg post it exercises or planning for real where we create a model of the estate and people put flags on the plan. These types of activities are held wherever residents might go – school, cafe etc or we put up a marquee in a popular location.

“Also, we get schools to come up with ideas – this type of activity is incorporated into the National Curriculum so there are tangible benefits to the school and pupils.

“The action plan we develop from this scoping and feedback informs the capital revenue spend of all the organisations around the table on a project. In the plans we aim to combine some quick wins to see fairly immediate success and have longer term projects,

“Another way of involving local people and residents is through a skills and training programme for the long term unemployed, working with individuals on improving the environment. We can help set up social enterprises so that they can run the business themselves - something we did in Scarborough with the local strategic partnership.

“Engaging young people can be particularly hard so you have to think creatively about how to pick them up and motivate them. We were working in an area in Portabello, Wakefield where residents wanted stone carving on the walls. While work was being done we were being watched by group of lads. They became really enthusiastic about the project and thought it was theirs – they had ownership of the carving that prevented it from being vandalised.”

The Barrowcliff Initiative

<http://www.yorkshire.groundwork.org.uk/north-yorkshire/what-we-do/case-studies/2010/my-barrowcliff-action-plan.aspx>

Barrowcliff was one of the worst estates in Scarborough with high levels of crime and deprivation.

Here people were asking what could they achieve if we all get round the table – how can we collectively make a difference? Groundwork brought partners together at CEO level – from housing associations, local authority, police, PCT etc to make sure we had an overview and a strategy and between us we could pull together all relevant organisations.

The structure below that involved subgroups of local residents so we fed information, ideas, feedback upwards from community level – rather than feeding information from the top down. We put up a marquee during the consultation period and encouraged young people to get involved through events.

Outcomes

- Everyone signed up to the action plan
- residents group grew from fewer than 6 people to 60 people
- crime reduced
- play areas – we involved 14-16 years in the design of them
- little picking – got loads of volunteers to do this and keep the area clean
- Really captured residents’ interest

Yorkshire Coast and Sanctuary Housing supported it and put staff time into the project.

Barrowcliff has given us a model to take elsewhere. At the Middle Deepdale project on the Eastfield Estate, Scarborough, new build and old homes are being integrated in a regeneration project. There is a dell cutting through the estate and we have two rangers for a wildlife development project.

There is a Facebook page for the project so that people can get involved, but we are just starting with social media – it’s a useful tool but high maintenance – in particular how to co-ordinate it between partners.

Consultation and Engagement

[Karen Walkden](#)

Flourishing Consulting Ltd

All the following points are drawn from my experience in delivering consultations and engagements for different clients over the years. Some will seem like common sense – but you would be surprised how often these things are overlooked.

Why are you consulting or engaging?

A good idea to take a long hard look at motivation here. There is a scale here – with tokenism at one end and genuine participation at the other. You are probably familiar with Hart's Ladder of Participation. But those who you are working with or for may not be. It does make a difference. People can detect when they are being asked to endorse a decision already made and when they are being approached with an open mind. So honestly placing yourself on the ladder is a good start. Consultation may not be the practical response, for example when legislation limits options or funding is very tight.

Who do you want to consult?

Are you seeking a cross-section of views from a representative sample of the general population. Perhaps there are specific groups who will be impacted. Equality Impact Assessment methodology might be the way to go.

How much time do you have?

There are guidelines in place as part of the Compact arrangements in some local authorities – and these define what good consultation is. Typically a timescale of six months is required for an effective consultation. This enables you to go through the stages of testing hypotheses, focus groups to explore the accessibility and relevance of questions and to employ a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods.

How much money do you have?

Budget will impact on your choice of consultation method. Telephone interviews can be expensive in high numbers, but provide a richness of data that questionnaires may not.

Common mistakes

- Relying on one consultation method eg an open meeting, an on-line survey. Best practice is to use at least two methods, so that there is a choice of ways to engage. Open meetings assume that people have transport and childcare and that caring, employment, education and training commitments can be overcome in order to attend.
- Assuming that trust exists between those asking the questions and those responding. A historical perception that consultations were just paying lipservice to opinion gathering will taint any future activities. For example, a consultation I was involved in with parents, on behalf of the local authority, where we had to get past feelings of anger over service cuts in another part of the council.
- A confusion between representing and being a representative. To genuinely represent the views of others an individual needs to have a means of gathering a range of opinions – and setting their own aside to voice those opinions. A representative is a sample of one – and may give a personal view that resonates with others in a similar position – but do you, and they know the difference? Beware of activists who claim to represent others.
- Cultural insensitivity in the choice of venue, or timing of consultations. Check your religious calendar first – or even better, speak to people locally. Your local Multi-Faith Forum should be a help in interpreting and advising.

- Boiling everything down to numbers on a scale – and losing the variety of responses and opinions!

Good practice

- Use of ambassadors or community representatives in peer led consultations. For example, a consultation with families with disabled children included training disabled young people to interview one another on film. Peer to peer, this generated really rich information. One borough recruited parents on short term contracts to go out to universal settings such as shopping centres, GP surgeries, libraries etc as well as toddler groups and schools to talk to other parents. Recruit and influence people in leadership positions – for example church leaders, imams, leaders of community groups, those providing voluntary services. This is all about social capital – and building strong networks before consulting. Some LINK organisations train people from different local communities so that they are skilled in gathering information and views.
- The best practice elements here include thinking carefully about where the target groups could be found – and going to them, rather than making them come to you. Drop-in events for disabled adults are a good example. And expect to spend a few sessions building relationships and trust – and providing people with sufficient time to reflect on their views before presenting them.
- Use of symbols and images to support consultations with people with low levels of literacy or with communication difficulties. So easy to put a confusing question, requiring a verbal response. Use image banks that are familiar – and test your questions with individuals so that your meaning is clear. Could the use of drama or art enable a different level of communication – with a more open question – what makes you happy? Be careful of asking people, especially those on the autistic spectrum, to conceptualize changes – in these instances experiential consultation works well. For example in the decisions around the design of a play space at a special school – visit other playgrounds, try things out, what works, and what doesn't. Be careful about asking people to imagine.
- Involve people who are independent, and very clearly have no stake in the outcomes or a preferred finding. This objectivity, especially if accompanied by anonymity, will lead to more open communication and honesty. For example the local authority who commissioned the CVS to undertake a resident consultation on library use.
- Consider the change equation and cover each element – to achieve change there will need to be an acknowledgement that the status quo is not working. Consultation falls down when there is no agreement on this point. There also needs to be a shared vision for the future, and confidence that the first step is a positive move towards that vision.
- Providing accessible feedback on the findings, in a form that can be understood by the target groups. Including specific versions for eg children, young people, in different languages.
- Invest in confidence building support for community representatives – for example a London borough that targeted Asian mothers as school governors found that they needed support to speak out in meetings run by professionals. The environment was alien and created a barrier to genuine consultation.
- Use of technology – flipcameras are a cheap way of capturing vox pops – as are many mobile phone. Surveymoney for on-line questionnaires is worthwhile if you are going to want to do this frequently, or if you have a small number of questions. LinkedIn and Facebook discussion threads can draw people in – but may need a moderator to avoid abuse. Eventbrite is a good tool for managing attendance at events. There are ipad apps – though I haven't used them. Also remember that some of your population will not have access to technology or will be uncomfortable with it.

Derbyshire County Council: Co-producing personalisation in social care

The Stakeholder Engagement Team at Derbyshire County Council helped co-produce their new personalisation programme.

Derbyshire County Council wanted to develop new ways of engaging with local communities. To support this, one thing the team did to co-produce their personalisation programme was create a Project Board.

Representatives were identified through Derbyshire County Council's Community Map, a resource the team had previously developed. They contacted local voluntary groups, user organisations and forums. They also invited service users, carers and external stakeholders who had shown an interest in personalisation.

The Board draws on members from a wide range of backgrounds and includes people with a broad range of communication and support needs. It uses a red and green card system, colour coded documents and a regular 'Jargon Buster' item to ensure all members can have their say.

The Project Board set its terms of reference and a statement of involvement at the beginning. This meant members had clear idea of what was required of them.

Projects working within the Derbyshire County Council's personalisation agenda came to the Board to gather their views, help shape the project and contribute to goals.

Achievements have included:

- the development of a promotional DVD about the council's first steps towards personalisation
- the redrafting of a leaflet on self directed support and personal budgets for service users
- securing stakeholder representation on all other project boards
- supporting three well-attended conferences on personalisation for BME communities, people with a dual sensory loss and mental health service users.

The Board is made up of individual service users, carers, service providers and representatives from local groups, including:

- Derbyshire Centre for Independent Living
- Derbyshire Voice (a mental health organisation)
- Derbyshire Friend (a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender support organisation)
- Learning Disability Partnerships
- Dual Sensory Loss Forum
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Forums
- 50+ Forums
- British Legion

The Board has a flexible membership and has grown from around 10 people to over 40 representatives who bring their own expertise by experience.

Spotlight on a board member

John Jennings is a service user who works with the Stakeholder Engagement Team. He has helped co-produce Self Directed Support, the council's promotional DVD, and is now helping to train ten more Derbyshire-based Citizen Leaders.

Find out more online: www.citizenleaders.org

Case study

Helena Moore, director of organisational development and communications, Bromford Group a Housing Association

Bromford has been growing its social media activity over the last 6 -12 months and is now regarded as one of the leading authorities on social media within the sector.

They use social media in a number of ways

- To engage with and do transactions with customers
- For PR and influencing nationally
- Conversations with stakeholders
- Internal communications

“Wearing my comms head I felt we needed to be using social media. I started off lurking and watching what other people were doing, particularly on Twitter and LinkedIn. I spoke to the executive team and they initially asked ‘what’s the value of it? And the feeling was that it was social not business communications’. One of the biggest challenges initially was getting the senior managers to ‘get it’ especially when you are still learning your self”

“We had to work to change that perception by showing them results and benefits. Now our CEO is suggesting for some colleagues has we should be building this into their job profiles – not using social media won’t be an option.

“Initially our CEO Mick Kent was trying blogging but he found it quite time consuming. However when we introduced Yammer (a sort of Facebook for internal communications) he was hooked! He now uses Yammer, Twitter, LinkedIn daily. This all coincided with him having an iPad which made a massive difference to how and when he posts.

“We find that we need different skills in the comms team now too. As well as social media we find that video and editing skills are particularly important. Video is increasingly forming part of our communications internally and externally including our new web site to be launched in May and also in training techniques too.

“Social media gives you the immediacy of knowing what’s going on both internally and externally. You don’t have to wait for Inside Housing on Friday to get the industry news and internally colleagues get to know immediately what the CEO is doing and about all sorts of things that are going on in our geographically dispersed areas.”

Internal communications and employee policies

“We set up the free version of Yammer for internal comms – it is a sort of private Facebook. With 1100 employees across different sites and a presence over 60 local authority districts our CEO can’t be everywhere. It’s not compulsory to join Yammer, but 850 people have done so far. Mick Kent has embraced it and really sees the value of being able to communicate directly with colleagues in quite an informal way. He posts several times a day. Colleagues love it as they can talk to him direct. We have interest groups; have added polls and people can leave comments.

“We offer bite size training to colleagues on Yammer, LinkedIn and Twitter. Now we are now scanning the horizon for what else will develop and are looking at other platforms eg Google + , Foursquare and Pinterest

“We have a trusting culture here and don’t over panic – our ethos is that we trust people to do the right thing and we’ll deal with issues if they occur and it’s up to managers – the heads of the team families - to do this. Guidelines for using social media really came after it was introduced. The guides we have are about encouraging colleagues to engage rather than restricting what people do. Colleagues can use social media at work. If we don’t allow that then how can we attract vibrant young people into our organisation?

“Our general rule is if you wouldn’t say something out loud in the cafe area or around the water cooler then don’t put it on Twitter, Facebook or Yammer. Think before you post.

“We’ve had very few issues of concern with postings on any of the social media we use. We just deal with it or respond appropriately. If someone is venting over these particular channels they would have found another outlet for their views, regardless of social media so it’s better that we are in the conversation”

External communications and PR

“We are finding that we get invited to speak at events, take part in panel discussions, face to face and on line because of social media activity eg recently Inside Housing on bedroom tax and The Guardian. We can pick up and respond quickly to journalists’ Tweeting requests for help with stories. For example The Guardian tweeted about recruitment and we picked it up and commented. We’re building our profile and influence.

“Social media helps us to engage with and listen to our customers, providing improved customer experience. We use Facebook communities to complement our real ones too. Members of our team that deal with customer engagement monitor these and spot any online complaints from customers. They are very quick at picking these up and responding.

“We used LinkedIn when we were looking for new board members and were able to maximise our network of contacts and attract some great candidates. LinkedIn also helps to make the offer of keeping in touch actually happen – for example following up from conferences is made easy.

“An example of where social media really worked for us was during the riots in the summer. Wolverhampton and Birmingham are two of the areas we operate in. We started to follow two senior police officers from the area on Twitter. They were posting up to date information on what was really happening on the ground. We were able to pass that information onto our teams in those local areas, put this out on tenant Facebook pages, re-Tweet on our Twitter streams to inform and reassure customers and colleagues about the situation.”

Useful resources

Northern Lights PR free e-book on social media

<http://www.northernlightspr.com/downloads/>

Northern Lights PR blog 'Why Housing Associations Need to Embrace Social Media'

<http://www.northernlightspr.com/why-housing-associations-need-to-embrace-social-media/>

Mosaic UK

<http://www.experian.co.uk/business-strategies/mosaic-uk-2009.html>

Governance International

Good source of detailed case studies

- Case study on good practice in neighbourhood association
<http://www.govint.org/good-practice/case-studies/ci287demim-neighbourhood-association-in-turkey-what-the-big-society-can-achieve-without-any-government-funding/>
- Upper Horfield's Pride of Place Initiative: Residents and Partners Working Together for Change
<http://www.govint.org/good-practice/case-studies/bristols-pride-of-place-partnership/>
- Adopt a Street – turning complainers into co-producers
<http://www.govint.org/good-practice/case-studies/adopt-a-street-in-offenbach-turning-complainers-into-co-producers/>

Groundwork

<http://www.groundwork.org.uk/>

Digital Housing Hub

<http://digitalhousinghub.ning.com/>

Derbyshire County Council

Derbyshire County Council: Co-producing personalisation in social care

<http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/docs/idp/derbyshire-case-study.pdf>

Monmouthshire County Council

Winner 2011 SomeComms Awards (national social media awards) in Innovation category -

Social media for social care: how Monmouthshire foster carers support each other with Yammer

<http://monmouthshirecc.wordpress.com/2012/03/12/rewind-story-fostering-communication-using-yammer/>

<http://helenreynolds.posterous.com/social-media-for-social-care-how-monmouthshir>

What's the Pont blog post 'Go where the People Are'

<http://whatsthepont.wordpress.com/2011/07/01/go-to-where-the-people-are>

Local Information Networks LNKs

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/links/Pages/findingyourlink.aspx>

Digital Housing Hub

<http://digitalhousinghub.ning.com/page/resident-buy-in>

Hart's Ladder of Participation

<http://blogs.cornell.edu/garden/grow-your-program/how-to-plan-and-organize-your-youth-gardening-program/hart%E2%80%99s-ladder-of-participation/>

Karen Walkden and Flourishing consultancy

<http://www.flourishing.me.uk/#/about/4539010044>

City of Salisbury, South Australia

Twitter <https://twitter.com/cityofsalisbury>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/cityofsalisbury>

St Kilda playground on pinterest -

<http://pinterest.com/cityofsalisbury/st-kilda-playground-stories/>

Northwards Housing

<http://www.northwardshousing.co.uk/>

Twitter @NorthwardsMCR

<http://monkeypigs.com/blog/thank-you-northwards/>