

A Partnership of Equals

**Resident involvement for better
relationships, culture and services**

May 2023

L&Q

Contents

01	Foreword	04
02	Executive Summary	08
	Methodology	12
03	Part 1 – Where we are	14
	History	17
	Tipping the scales of power	18
	Refreshing resident involvement at L&Q	20
	- Civic engagement and the bigger picture	20
	- Strengths-based approach	21
	Principles	26
	Reframing resident involvement as volunteering	28
	Volunteer toolkit	30
04	Part 2 – The potential of resident involvement	34
	Outcomes framework	37
	- Pathways to change	37
	Outcomes framework - concept diagram	40
	Measuring outcomes	42
	The future vision	43
	Pushing the boundaries	43
05	Annexes	46
06	Acknowledgements	78

Foreword

Foreword



Steve Moseley, L&Q Group Executive Director, Governance and Transformation

What would it look like if residents had a say in decisions made at every level of a social landlord? If we saw their knowledge of the homes we manage and communities we are involved in as critical assets to the delivery of our mission? It might sound like common sense, but how many social landlords can say they are truly close to realising such a relationship of shared power?

At L&Q, we think resident involvement has huge potential. We believe that by involving the people who make their homes with us in a meaningful and impactful way, we can drive a significant cultural shift in our organisation, refresh our social purpose, and ultimately deliver better services.

That proposition might feel a long way away from where we are now. With this report, we want to explore why that is, and how we might make it a reality.

The sector is at a crucial juncture. Post-Grenfell, social landlords, accused of growing distant from the communities we serve, have been grappling with how to regain residents trust.

In the Social Housing Green Paper, Government set out how they had been told that ‘too many residents felt they were treated with contempt by their landlord – that they were spoken down to, or treated as a nuisance, and that this contributed to a sense of stigma.’¹ This speaks to the inherent power imbalance that can define our interactions with residents.

These relationships are unique and vitally important. For the most part residents stay with us for long periods of time, engaging with us on a highly emotive topic – their home. Above all, they are the very reason we exist. Yet, we can sometimes be wary about opening a dialogue with residents, or developing a deeper relationship that goes beyond the transactional. It is a regulatory requirement to involve residents, but honest self-reflection would reveal that we aren’t always clear about why we are doing it, what good practice looks like, or whether their involvement is making a difference.

Unfortunately, there is no simple metric for the value of resident involvement. There is an understanding that listening to residents is an inherent good, which could lead to service improvement, but we have a blind spot when it comes to measuring the impact or expected outcomes. On top of this, achieving meaningful change in residents’ perceptions of us requires sustained effort and resource over a long period.

“
Residents are
not backwards in
coming forwards.”

Nadya Enver, Resident Services Board

The idea that residents could be seen as equal and collaborative partners in tackling our problems therefore sounds challenging for several reasons. We know the sector is open and willing to change, but we are not always clear on what to change or how. And as we all know, now is a critical moment to act: in the wake of Grenfell, the death of Awaab Ishak and the conditions uncovered by multiple media investigations, confidence in the sector is at an all-time low.

The common thread linking these episodes has been the failure of landlords to listen to their residents, and the lack of power for residents to affect change. This is a cultural problem, and one that social landlords of all types and sizes should be concerned about.

The Government intends to address this with the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), alongside wider regulatory reform. While these upcoming changes are a step in the right direction, regulation alone cannot rebalance the relationship between landlords and residents: we have to go much further. Ultimately it is us, not Government, who make up one half of this emotive relationship.

At L&Q, we are on a journey to change the way we manage our programme of resident involvement. Our ambition is to embed resident involvement at every level of the organisation, putting residents in control of the decisions that affect their homes and neighbourhoods. Through collaborative, partnership working where both parties are equals, we want to harness both the insight, skills and local knowledge of residents, and the expertise of colleagues within L&Q, to be better and more dynamic in our decision making.

To put this paper together we have spoken to both colleagues and residents through focus groups, online surveys and interviews, and carried out extensive external engagement to look at other practice in the sector. Our aim is to kickstart a conversation about the value of resident involvement, and how we believe it can drive us to become the truly resident-centred landlords we aspire to be.

We do not claim to have all the answers: this is a long-term journey which we have only just begun. We want, instead, to prompt debate, to set our goals, to measure our success along the way, and to publish our results.

There is a long road back to rebuilding positive relationships with residents, and it must begin with giving them a meaningful say in how we operate.

We want to harness both the insight, skills and local knowledge of residents, and the expertise of colleagues within L&Q, to be better and more dynamic in our decision making.

Executive summary

Executive summary

1 Social landlords cannot rely on adherence to new regulatory requirements to rebalance their relationships with residents.

Government's regulatory reform agenda is well-intentioned and welcome, but the TSMs should be considered as absolute minimum requirements. We believe landlords must think and act beyond what the rules will require us to do if we are to genuinely rebuild trust.

2 We want to articulate what a resident-centred landlord of the future could look like.

Like the rest of the sector, we have been considering how we can rebuild trust with the communities we serve for some time, and we believe the key to this lies in overhauling our resident involvement practice. We do not have all the answers, but with this paper, we want to tell our story so far and where we believe this could take us.

3 We have produced an outcomes framework for our involvement activity that we hope will provide a blueprint for the sector.

There are four main outcomes we are seeking: better relationships with residents, operational excellence, improved colleague wellbeing & motivation, and improved resident experience. We are still working through exactly how we will measure these, but we know we are data rich and must be willing to look somewhere other than we usually would in order to do this.

4 L&Q have adopted a strengths-based approach to resident involvement.

Residents are not a problem to be solved: we believe they have a huge amount to offer the organisation and are a vital part of the solution to the challenges we face. They have the local knowledge, community connections and desire to improve things that we need to help us do our jobs better. Importantly, resident involvement is not about representation, and residents who get involved with us can never speak for the entire resident base or even segments of it. Our approach is inclusive, not exclusive for a chosen few: those who get involved do so because they have a commitment to improving our service for the benefit of all residents.

5 Our new resident involvement offer reframes involvement as volunteering.

Volunteering has prestige and purpose, and the expectations for volunteers are clear. We want residents who choose to get involved with us to have the same status and importance as in the voluntary sector. Equally, volunteering is not a free resource and volunteer management requires expertise – colleagues must be properly trained. In general, housing providers should do more to recognise resident involvement as a professional skill set and this should form a central part of the debate about professional standards in the sector.

6 We believe resident involvement has potential to drive a wide range of benefits - but it is vital to look to the long-term.

Social landlords adopt long-term planning horizons in areas like development and planned works, and there is no reason not to adopt a similar view with our involvement practice. If we are willing to do so, we believe there are major benefits to be realised.

7 This process is challenging, and landlords must not be afraid to fail.

In refreshing our involvement offer, we did not begin with a 10-year plan. Through experimentation we are beginning to find out what works and what doesn't, and have made mistakes along the way. Overhauling the way residents get involved with us is challenging, and landlords must be resilient, have senior level buy-in, and be willing to commit resources to try things.

8 We want to take participatory approaches as far as we can.

This means taking a significant step outside our comfort zone and ceding power over organisational decision-making to residents.

We don't yet know exactly where this will lead us, and we acknowledge that it will be challenging. We think participatory approaches which treat residents and colleagues as equals – such as residents' assemblies, or participatory budgeting exercises – will harness residents' strengths and give us a laser-focus on what they actually want. In the long run, if we do them well, they should lead us to greater efficiency.

9 Social landlords have a responsibility to reconsider their role in the communities they serve.

In an age of political apathy and disconnection, landlords should see themselves as more than just service providers. Often we may be one of the only recognisable organisations in a local area, and should consider the role we can play in fostering civic participation.

Methodology

This paper and our Theory of Change outcomes framework were developed by the Research and Accountability team at L&Q. We carried out qualitative interviews with senior L&Q colleagues and members of the Resident Services Board (RSB) to inform the narrative of how L&Q has re-shaped its resident involvement offer, from the perspective of both colleagues and involved residents.

Our Theory of Change was developed collaboratively with residents and NEF Consulting, a leading social value consultancy, provided guidance on the approach. A series of focus groups and workshops were held with locally and strategically involved residents, as well as senior leaders in the organisation, with participants invited to discuss the context, purpose and desired outcomes of resident involvement at L&Q.

We also used an online survey, via the L&Q & You! online community (around 3000 L&Q residents who volunteer to respond to ad hoc surveys), to gather views on the importance of resident involvement and accountability, which generated over 500 responses. Quotes from the responses, as well as from the interviews with RSB members, can be found throughout this paper.

Finally, we also carried out extensive desktop research to examine what our peer landlords' involvement offers looked like. We identified a number of interesting and innovative examples of involvement practice around the sector, and this led to a series of interviews with our peers to discuss these examples in more detail. Some of these case studies also appear in the report.

More information on these methodologies can be found in Annex A.



Part 1

Where we are

‘Growing up’, a 2006 commission led by the largest social landlords at the time, argued that landlords should ‘widen and deepen opportunities for customer views to be gathered and absorbed into policies and services’, rather than relying on a handful of residents nested within governance structures.

History

Resident involvement has been happening in the social housing sector for a long time and there has always been a diversity of views on what it should be. Over the years, it has been seen as a form of protest; part of local democracy; something akin to the trade union movement; a form of consultation; a communications activity; a governance requirement; community development; or market research.

All of these trends have left their mark on the involvement offers we see today, and we acknowledge the need to be respectful of this history and the people who have lived it. However, with such a range of views about what resident involvement should look like, it can be challenging for social landlords to be clear about its purpose.

In the early 21st century, the housing association sector has grown substantially and with this trend, sector voices have begun to explore how large social landlords could balance increased commercial and legal responsibilities, while remaining responsive to their residents. ‘Growing up’, a 2006 commission led by the largest social landlords at the time, argued that landlords should ‘widen and deepen opportunities for customer views to be gathered and absorbed into policies and services’, rather than relying on a handful of residents nested within governance structures².

The authors weren’t prescriptive about how to achieve this but suggested a ‘marketing-based analysis of services’ combined with a ‘menu of [involvement] options’ might be necessary.

This illustrates the drift towards a more consumer-informed view of resident involvement.

Policy and regulatory changes introduced from 2010 intensified the trend for growth. The need for cross-subsidy from commercial activities, regulatory emphasis on financial viability over consumer services and further consolidation of the sector meant increased influence for commercial ideas in housing associations.

The Grenfell Tower tragedy, and the exposure of further service failures in subsequent years, have triggered a re-evaluation of this direction of travel. Central Government is seeking to rebalance the relationship between residents and landlords through the Social Housing Regulation Bill, while the sector has also been soul-searching about what to do; the Together with Tenants initiative, for example, is all about strengthening relationships³.

The question is – what does the resident-centred landlord of the future look like?

“

I think the problem goes back further than Grenfell... that may be what shook everyone into changing, but it’s been going on a lot longer than that

Dave Bedford, RSB

² Future Shape of the Sector Commission, “Growing Up”, 2006

³ National Housing Federation, Together With Tenants, October 2020

Tipping the scales of power

A power imbalance is implicit in any resident/ landlord relationship and when we talk about how we can rebalance the relationship with residents, it is this imbalance we are talking about.

Regulatory changes from Government will go some way to addressing this. The TSMs are a welcome additional requirement that will allow for easier scrutiny and increased accountability to residents.

Government is also right to highlight ways for residents to complain to social landlords through its Make Things Right campaign⁴: residents have a right to hold us accountable for our performance, and to routes of redress when things go wrong.

These changes, alongside recent proposals to enhance professional standards⁵, are designed to enhance the individual rights of residents, and their personal experiences with landlords. They will mean there is greater public scrutiny on social landlords.

However, for all their benefits, these measures are unlikely to help us build the relationships we need to regain residents' trust.

The interactions we have through our complaints processes and performance scrutiny are transactional, leaving both parties feeling distant from one another. In practice, we need to understand the emotional aspect of peoples' feelings about their homes and bring this perspective into our governance and operations. This is something that requires a relationship and a personal connection.

For these reasons, social landlords will not be able to rely on adherence to new regulatory requirements to rebalance the relationship with residents. We must consider how we can go further, and look to build a culture of open dialogue, transparency and respect, even where there are service failures. We believe this starts with strengthening our resident involvement practice.

94% of residents said they think it's important that we share updates on what we're doing to improve service delivery.

L&Q and You! survey

92% think it's important that we share regular updates on how we're performing, and that we should tell residents what we do with their feedback.

L&Q and You! survey

“ So many meetings that are nothing about residents...where a resident hasn't been mentioned once... everyone has just talked about finance or processes or IT systems.

L&Q colleague, Aug 22 focus group

In December 2022, the Better Social Housing Review was published, making a number of recommendations to housing associations to improve the quality of social housing⁶.

The report is clear that expanding opportunities for residents to get involved is critical to improving quality.

We wholeheartedly support this aspiration, as well as the wider themes in the report about refocusing on our core purpose and increased community working, and want to articulate what this could practically mean for our resident involvement practice.

Most social landlords now offer a range of opportunities for residents to scrutinise performance – usually in the form of engagement groups, scrutiny panels, or other local forums.

Such groups are in place to improve resident and landlord relationships, but if not run well can exacerbate existing tensions. Working with very small groups of residents, whose membership often remain unchanged for many years, can call into question their legitimacy.

If the groups aren't connected to decision making structures, there may not be a clear pathway for the members to influence organisational decisions. This lack of ability to affect change can be a source of frustration. Where we have formal resident groups in place, they must have a clear purpose, be respected within the organisation, and have a pathway to genuinely influence decisions.

At L&Q, while we think these formal involvement structures are valuable, we want to broaden our offer. We believe all residents have the potential to add value and want to create as many opportunities as possible for them to get involved with us in a less formal way.

“ Housing associations should work with all tenants to ensure that they have a voice and influence at every level of decision making across the organisation, through both voluntary and paid roles.

Better Social Housing Review, recommendation 5

“ I would like to see that there wasn't that division – that 'them and us' – that there is now.

L&Q resident, Aug 22 focus groups

⁴ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Social Housing Complaints - Make Things Right

⁵ Gov.uk, New professional standards and stricter regulation to drive up social housing standards, October 2022

⁶ Better Social Housing Review, report & recommendations

Refreshing resident involvement at L&Q

When we decided to overhaul the way we do resident involvement, we had to make a choice about how to approach it. Historically, resident involvement has taken many forms, so the question we asked ourselves was: which one is appropriate in the modern context?

Civic engagement and the bigger picture

These are challenging times for social landlords. The sector is facing myriad financial pressures, as spiralling inflation drives up costs and the rent cap constrains income. Additionally, there is an ongoing expectation - rightly so - for us to invest large sums in the homes we manage to make them safer, greener and better quality. And when considering how we can rebuild the trust of the residents we serve, there is also a wider social context.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) runs the annual Community Life Survey⁷, which surveys citizens on questions of social cohesion and community engagement. The results consistently show a gulf between how much people would like to be able to affect things and how much they believe they actually can. In 2020/21, while 54% of people said it was important to feel like they can influence decisions in their local area, just 27% felt that they could⁸.

This sense of disenfranchisement and apathy has been a theme in public discourse for some time; the high turnout in the EU referendum vote, for example, was widely considered to have been driven by the rare opportunity it offered to genuinely influence an important decision⁹.

In 2019, the Local Trust published a report¹⁰ which identified 'left behind' communities in England.

The report found that in poorer areas, having an active and engaged community, places to meet and connectivity to the wider economy are vitally important: deprived areas which did not have these assets had worse social and economic outcomes than those which did.

The report also shows that the 'left behind' areas it identifies are frequently found in 'post-war social housing estates on the peripheries of cities and towns'. In such areas, social landlords may be one of the only recognisable institutions.

Clearly, social landlords cannot be expected to solve such complex and deep-rooted issues on their own. Nonetheless, we should acknowledge our place in this story: we are seen by many as establishment institutions to be viewed with scepticism or even distrust.

We believe it is vital for us to consider the role we can play in helping to reverse this trend.

“
The world is going through very difficult and trying times. My vision is for me to live in a world that honours and respects each other, our environment [where we can] feel that our homes are our sanctuary. L&Q can now be part of this huge change and transformation.

L&Q resident, Aug 22 focus groups

Strengths-based approach

In the 2019 report *The Community Paradigm*, *New Local* set out why they believe public services, too focused on reactive demand and treating symptoms rather than causes, need radical overhaul¹¹. They argue that for any public service to move towards a more preventative, efficient operating model, citizens and communities must be given power by those that hold it.

This means involving communities in the design and delivery of services to build egalitarian relationships, and empowering

citizens to take control of decisions that affect their lives. It requires a significant cultural shift in public organisations and a transformation of their governance arrangements.

Inspired by the *Community Paradigm*, we have chosen to pursue a strengths-based model of involvement. This means a shift away from the perception that residents are a uniform group; they possess strengths that they can deploy themselves to help us improve as an organisation. Residents are not a problem to be solved, they are a part of the solution to the challenges we face.

“
We've had so many issues in the building which resulted in a lot of anger towards L&Q – and at some point I realised there had to be a better way.

L&Q resident, Aug 22 focus groups

Procurement at Salix Homes

At Salix Homes, who own and manage around 8,000 homes in Salford, residents have a key role in the procurement process.

Salix's Procurement Panel, comprised of resident volunteers, is one of a number of customer groups that sits beneath their Customer Committee, which works closely with the board to hold them to account and shape their services. The Customer Committee picks up themes and concerns directly from the sub-groups to feed them into board discussions, and has a substantial level of influence.

All members of the Procurement Panel receive external training on the procurement process and are involved from the very beginning of any contract award. Residents have had a significant influence on the types of contract Salix are seeking – for example, the panel identified social value as a top priority in the awarding of a major works contract. Salix subsequently secured a £25,000 payment from the winning contractor to go towards energy vouchers for residents, and are also required to prioritise hiring operatives from the Salford area.

⁷ Cabinet Office, *Community Life Survey*

⁸ See Annex A

⁹ Jennings & Lodge, *Brexit, the tides and Canute: the fracturing politics of the British state*, May 2018

¹⁰ Local Trust, *Left Behind? Understanding communities on the edge*, September 2019

¹¹ *New Local*, *The Community Paradigm*, March 2021

In 2020, L&Q held a governance review, including a review of resident involvement structures, and identified an opportunity to reshape our involvement offer. At that time, we had a variety of long-standing committees and scrutiny groups focusing on customer experience, but the purpose of these groups had become unclear. They were heavily focused on individual residents' lived experience, rather than on working with wider evidence of resident experience. They were not connected to our formal governance structures, and had an undefined influence over decisions at senior level.

We knew that we wanted to restore a culture of accountability and transparency, and felt that residents' voices would only be taken seriously if they formed a part of our formal governance arrangements. We also knew that we wanted to connect residents directly with our senior leaders, something that the norms of social housing governance do not easily allow for. This led to the creation of our **Resident Services Board (RSB)**, a formal committee of Group Board and part of how we are governed.

The RSB - comprised almost entirely of L&Q residents, with one independent member

and chaired by a resident who is also a full board member - has three main objectives:

- Scrutiny of customer service
- Promoting and facilitating accountability of Group Board to the wider resident base
- Leading and overseeing development of L&Q's resident involvement offer.

The RSB oversee the delivery and quality of customer service and the impact of our wider resident involvement activity. They have the freedom to focus on topics of their own choosing, rather than having this dictated to them by senior leaders within L&Q. The group draw on our key performance data and resident feedback from complaints data and surveys.

They also get feedback from residents involved across the wider organisation and within our neighbourhoods, ensuring there is an ongoing feedback loop between how we are governed and the wider resident experience.

Crucially, the RSB are considered as equal peers of other board committees and group board members.

We held a competitive recruitment process before appointing members, because we want the group to be respected and viewed as legitimate within the organisation. In a nutshell, that is the shift we are hoping for in the way we perceive residents as an organisation – they are skilled partners with the authority to make an impact.

We have also expanded our regional residents' committees and given them a new strategic remit.

The intention is to build a shared understanding of what good service looks like and collaborate on how to make these plans successful.

These committees have a direct link to our RSB, which in turn has a direct influence on board-level decisions. This connects resident committees to the board, gives the committee meetings a sense of purpose and influence, and provides the groups with a clear pathway to senior leadership.

Bringing residents into the recruitment process

At **Home Group**, a large housing association with homes across England and Scotland, they have had residents on interview panels for resident-facing roles for over a decade. More recently they have extended this to include all vacancies, including back-office staff, and their target is to have a resident on the panel in 100% of interviews.

The initiative has been a big success. By making residents visible to staff from the outset, Home Group signal to anyone that wants to work for them that they are a resident-centred organisation. Sitting on the other side of the interview process is also helping residents with their own careers, by boosting their confidence and employability skills.

As part of **L&Q's** shift to a patch-based housing management model, we sought the help of over 100 resident volunteers in the recruitment of 180 Neighbourhood Housing Leads (NHLs). Our vision for the remodelled service is for NHLs to tap into the local expertise of resident volunteers on the ground, so it is vital to ensure that any candidates were able to work constructively with residents. We also know that residents are the best people to identify the elements of high-quality housing management.

During the application process, candidates prepared written responses to fictional complaints, which residents then rated based on empathy, tone of voice and communication skills, and alignment with L&Q values. The feedback provided by resident volunteers informed the final decisions and helped to shape the training that NHLs received.

“
L&Q put a lot of time and effort in to the appointment process and I think it paid off – we have excellent people on RSB. But the real works starts after that.

Raj Kumar, RSB

“
On the whole, RSB has been a very positive experience. We are treated like grown-ups and have the opportunity to influence things.

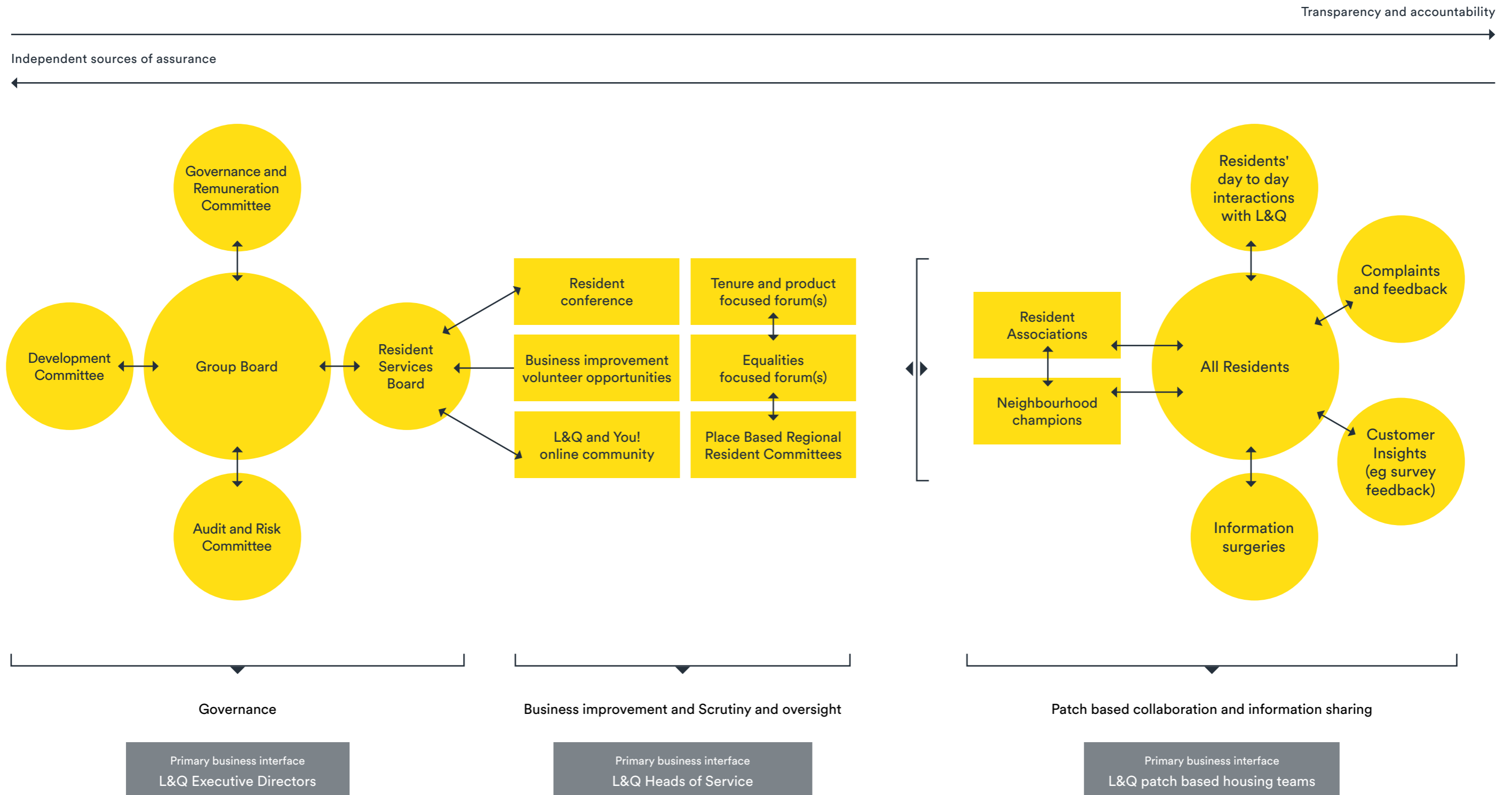
Carl Shillito, RSB

Our Resident Involvement and Accountability team sits within our Governance and Transformation Directorate. Placing them there was a deliberate choice: to act as a disruptor for the organisation, create a strong connection with the wider governance and accountability agenda and to create levers for the team to stretch its' influence across the whole organisation – weaving resident involvement into the strategic

change journey, rather than confining it to operational areas.

Once formed, one of our first projects with our RSB was the design of our new framework and service. Our Resident Involvement and Accountability Framework on pages 24-25 shows the ongoing feedback loop between all residents and our governance arrangements.

Resident Involvement Framework



Principles

The framework and all resident involvement activity is underpinned by a core set of principles which appear in all our volunteer agreements:



Taking an inclusive rather than exclusive approach to resident involvement. We want to provide a growing menu of meaningful, impactful and enjoyable opportunities for residents to get involved with us on a wide range of topics and issues. We do this by removing the barriers that they've told us can prevent them from getting more involved.



Reward and recognition. We want to make sure we value residents' time, experience and contribution, and that we adhere to best practice in volunteer management and investing in volunteers.



Clear business interfaces. We want to make sure that when residents get involved there is a clear and defined opportunity for them to influence something and that they meet with relevant parts of the organisation who can make those changes happen. All strategic forums and committees must have a clear pathway into the Resident Services Board and draw on feedback from the wider resident base to inform their work.



Equity and fairness. We want to ensure that the experience of one resident community is not amplified over others and that residents are working together for the benefit of all residents.



Collaboration and partnership working. Clear volunteer role profiles and agreements set out how we will agree to work together for the benefit of residents.



Empowering models of involvement. We want to support residents to self-organise into sustainable local groups and work with them in partnership.



As a social landlord we are accountable to our resident base for our performance and service offer, but residents are not just passive recipients of a service. They are active players in making their neighbourhoods better places to live.

They are also accountable to other residents, and we are clear in our agreements with them that they do not speak for others. This is an important part of the shift we are aiming for; traditionally, resident involvement has been seen as a way to

give the people who make their homes with us a representative voice. In practice, however, it is very difficult to involve residents in a way that truly represents the entire base – particularly for an organisation with over 100,000 homes.

We offer a wide variety of opportunities for members to become involved, and actively seek volunteers from a range of backgrounds. While diversity is important to us, we are driven by the idea of impact rather than representation.

Reframing resident involvement as volunteering

What were the issues with our previous resident involvement programme?

The traditional approaches lacked direction, value and prestige. We wanted to repair the disconnect between residents' expectations of what involvement should be and our own.

One of the first asks of the newly formed RSB was to carry out a 'Join the Dots' review, which looked at how we could connect disparate areas of resident involvement activity and refresh our offer.

The review identified several risks with our existing approach for colleagues and residents. We heard residents describe themselves as volunteers and say they would value being recognised as such.

To manage these risks and lay the groundwork for a consistent, quality experience, we decided to re-cast our involvement activity as a form of volunteering.

The Resident Involvement & Accountability team are expert internal consultants who work in a business-partnering system with the wider organisation.

When an opportunity to involve residents in a business improvement initiative is identified, the team work closely with the relevant department to design and deliver a meaningful and impactful opportunity for residents.

All volunteer positions have clearly defined role profiles and are based on a template which was co-created with residents.

Adopting a volunteer management model helped address a number of issues. By putting in place clear volunteer agreements and role profiles, we set out what our resident volunteers should expect, what we expect from them, and what they can and cannot influence.

Introducing an induction process helped give clarity and set expectations for residents from the outset.

It also provided an opportunity to build rapport with residents who were willing to give up their time to help us improve and understand their motivations, skills and interests.

This knowledge helped us to match residents to volunteer opportunities that met their interests and to put in place any additional support that would help them to fully participate in the activity with confidence.

Importantly, by framing our involved residents as volunteers we are offering them a clearly defined role that has prestige, purpose and legitimacy. The expectations of volunteers in the voluntary sector are clear - volunteer positions are viewed as skilled and prestigious, and many organisations could not function without them.

We want to recreate that sense of status and importance for resident volunteers.

Volunteering is not a free resource. Any organisation needs expertise and resource to ensure volunteers are managed properly, and it is important to treat volunteer management as a professional skill set.

Our Resident Involvement & Accountability team have all been through an accredited training programme with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). We aspire for our practice to meet the NCVO's Investing in Volunteers standard, a nationally recognised quality standard for volunteer-involving organisations.

“

Tenants are the one who live in these areas and may be able to give an insight into local activities. They may also be part of local forums, community groups, volunteer activities or may have lived there all of their lives so have local history and knowledge and can talk about changes they have seen.

L&Q Resident, L&Q and You! survey

“

L&Q encompasses a whole range of tenures. Hopefully through resident involvement we can blur the difference between them, and by working together we can hold L&Q to account, and promote improvement to the mutual benefit of all stakeholders.

Carl Shillito, RSB

Volunteer Toolkit: Investing in Volunteers Standard

We aspire for all our resident involvement activity to meet the NCVO's Investing in Volunteers Standard (IiV), the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. It provides a framework for organisations to assess and enhance the quality of their volunteer management work, based around six quality areas:

Quality area 1:

Vision for volunteering - Volunteering is embedded within the overall vision, values, culture and aims of the organisation and its impact is recognised and communicated. Organisations understand why they involve volunteers.

Quality area 2:

Planning for volunteers - People, policies and procedures have been put in place to ensure volunteering is well-managed.

Quality area 3:

Volunteer inclusion - There is a positive approach to inclusion, equity and diversity and a proactive approach to making volunteering accessible.

Quality area 4:

Recruiting and welcoming volunteers - It is easy for people to find out about opportunities, explore whether they are right for them, and get involved.

Quality area 5:

Supporting volunteers - Volunteers feel supported at all times, that they are a part of the organisation and that their contribution makes a difference.

Quality area 6:

Valuing and developing volunteers - Volunteers are valued and there are opportunities for volunteers to develop and grow through their experience.

We carry out regular health checks on our activity to look at whether we are meeting the standard. This is particularly important as we begin to roll out resident involvement to more diverse parts of the business that aren't as familiar with the approach.

One of our main challenges is quality control. As more teams start to appreciate the value of involving residents in their activities, their eagerness to create volunteer positions can lead to poor practice – not everyone is aware of the quality standard we work to.

This demonstrates the challenge of embedding resident involvement while maintaining best practice in a large, sprawling organisation like L&Q. It also underlines the value in having a central team with expertise that can work

with the organisation to ensure quality and consistency of practice.

We have also identified a small risk to those who wish to volunteer with us while in receipt of certain benefits. Volunteering work is notifiable to the DWP, and some may be put off from getting involved by having to inform them. We are keen that our approach does not preclude any resident from taking up a volunteer role with us, and highlight the requirements for notifying the DWP as part of the induction.

“

If you ask for involvement from the community, it enables them to feel they are being listened to, and their issues, thoughts and ideas are recognised and taken on board. In order to capitalise on that goodwill from the residents they need to see the outcomes cover some of what they have shared. Otherwise, residents will feel they were ignored and that there is no point being involved in these initiatives in future.

L&Q Resident, L&Q and You! survey



Ad-hoc volunteering opportunity – Service charge and income management

In September 2022, 16 residents volunteered to take part in a business improvement workshop on how to improve the customer experience when a resident makes a payment (or we request a payment from them).

Volunteers were provided with a role profile, with a clear remit and briefing on what was in and out of scope in all areas of discussion. This led to productive, solutions-focused sessions.

Over three collaborative workshops, delivered by our strategy and business improvement team with support from resident involvement business partners, residents outlined how we could improve the experience by:

- Providing clear statements breaking down costs so residents can see if their money is being well-spent and challenge if it is not
- Improving dialogue particularly between the estimates and the final bills. A lack of conversation and transparency were identified as key causes of cases progressing to legal action
- Tapping into local knowledge – working with the Neighbourhood Housing Lead and residents' associations to have local conversations with residents and build a shared understanding of – and confidence in – service charges
- Finding the right tone – residents were clear about how critical it is to interact sensitively and appropriately across the arrears life cycle, intervening as early as possible and encouraging residents to access support.

The workshop outcomes fed directly into changes to our process, helping us meet our goal of moving towards operational excellence. Following the success of the workshop, colleagues are actively seeking further ways to put the customer voice at the heart of the transformation programme.

Part 2

The potential of resident involvement

The economic challenges social landlords are currently facing may be new, but the balancing act they require is familiar.

For many years, we have had to prioritise efficiency and financial robustness, which has meant any activities that do not have a quantifiable impact are at risk. In this context, it is unsurprising that resident involvement in the sector has been under-appreciated; while it is understood that involving residents is an inherent good, we are not always clear on what the purpose is, what good practice looks like, or what the benefits are.

There have been some attempts to quantify the benefits of resident involvement work. In 2015, a report by AmicusHorizon (now part of Southern Housing) and the University of Westminster¹² showed the

value for money that could be generated by involving residents in service design.

The report makes a compelling business case for social landlords to invest in resident involvement.

Quantifying the value of our work in financial terms is something we are accustomed to, but we need to be willing to step outside our comfort zone.

We believe resident involvement has the potential to drive benefits beyond the financial and could yield a range of positive outcomes for residents, colleagues and the organisation as a whole.

To truly understand its value, we will need to look at resident involvement from a different angle.

Outcomes Framework

When L&Q began to look at refreshing our approach to resident involvement, we knew that we wanted a framework to support this work, so we could prioritise different activities by defining the impact they would have.

For an organisation of our scale, embedding resident involvement at every level of the organisation is a major undertaking.

As we continue to expand the programme and try new activities, we are continually learning through experimenting, iterating and building on our approaches using both resident and colleague feedback. This means we have done – and will do – things that do not work well which could risk damaging confidence in the programme. It is therefore essential to have a clear and long-term view of what we are trying to achieve to maintain focus.

Involvement is not generally thought of as a strategic activity. However, if it is reframed as something that can drive lasting cultural change, there is a case to adopt the kind of long-term planning horizon we would use in our development pipelines or major works programmes.

Extensive engagement with our stakeholders, including residents who get involved with us at a local or strategic level, led to the development of our outcomes framework. Using elements of a Theory of Change model¹³, the framework aims to map the pathways of change that could be brought about by resident involvement activity and define both the impact of these changes and how to measure them.

Annex E depicts a vision of the potential for resident involvement through fictitious resident stories. It shows how it can benefit housing associations, the impact it can have on residents who volunteer and the benefits that could ensue at the organisational level.

Pathways to change

At L&Q, we aspire for all our involvement activity to be impactful. Initially, the creation of RSB gave a small group of residents a direct influence over our services at strategic level. As the first step in our refreshed involvement offer, this has given us a high-level focus on what residents want and what is important to them.

As we begin to roll out ad-hoc volunteer opportunities for residents – such as on colleague recruitment and business improvement initiatives – we anticipate that this will drive further positive outcomes. We are beginning to bring residents closer to L&Q colleagues, which we hope will give us greater insight into the challenges residents face, start to foster pride amongst colleagues, and lead to some service improvements. It is vital for us to communicate clearly with colleagues about what residents are involved with and why; colleagues must be bought in to what we are doing.



To truly understand its value, we will need to look at resident involvement from a different angle.

Through this work, we are beginning to strengthen our relationships with relatively small numbers of residents. We are keen to extend our involvement offer further, and residents are eager to see service improvements quickly. We are conscious that if the pace of change is too slow, it may damage faith in the programme. Equally, there is a risk that if we try to do too much too soon it will lead to poor quality. We think it is vital that we expand our programme in a gradual and iterative way, learning as we go.

As we do move on to more ambitious involvement practice, we will start to connect residents directly with more and more areas of the organisation. As residents get more of a say over our day-to-day operations, as well as our larger organisational challenges, they will be collaborating with colleagues far more than ever before.

We want colleagues to start to view residents as partners and equals, residents to begin to feel like we are on their side, and ultimately **our relationships to be improved.**

We hope that through this increased interaction, our whole workforce will naturally begin to understand residents' service needs better, allowing us to streamline processes, reduce the number of incoming queries and lead us to **operational excellence.**

With more and more colleagues becoming involved in positive involvement opportunities, they will start to sell the benefits to their colleagues within the business, and residents will talk to their neighbours and circles of influence. Again, colleague buy-in is critical for us - ambitious, participatory resident involvement requires a significant up-front time investment.

“
86% of our survey respondents said they think it's important that we offer opportunities for L&Q colleagues and residents to collaborate on how we improve ways of working and service improvement.

L&Q and You! survey

If they are not bought in, or we do not implement our practice well, it could damage morale and our relationships with residents. Word of mouth spreading from a poor or unenjoyable experience could quickly destroy trust.

On the other hand, if we do implement our programme well and it makes us a more efficient organisation, we believe it could **positively impact on colleague wellbeing and motivation.**

Communications are critical to achieving these outcomes. We want to achieve a ripple effect and influence our wider resident base, not just those who choose to get involved with us.

Through disseminating information about what we are doing, we want residents to feel that people like them are listened to and are able to influence L&Q.

There is a risk that, if this is not supported by service improvement, we are seen as 'all talk and no action', which would fit the wider current narrative about housing associations.

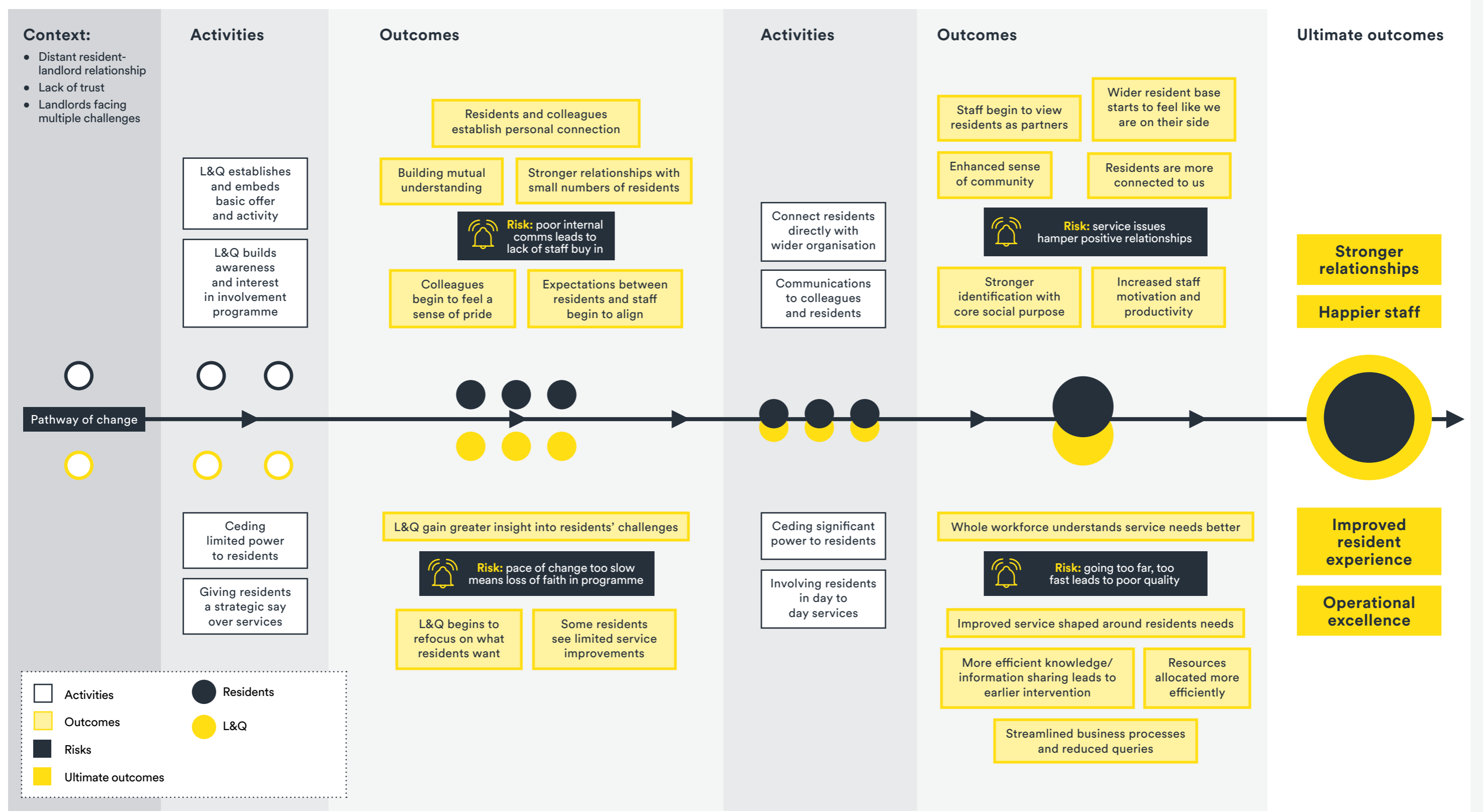
We want to overcome this with targeted, tangible communications about the real impact residents are having on services.

We also acknowledge that resident involvement alone, however effective it is, cannot drive all of these outcomes to where we would like them to be.

The majority of residents will not choose to volunteer with us, and will only interact with us when accessing services: their impression of those services shapes their feelings towards us. What we are aspiring to is a **culture where residents feel genuinely respected and listened to and get an improved experience when they speak to us**, even where there are service issues.

We hope that our whole workforce will naturally begin to understand residents' service needs better, allowing us to streamline processes, reduce the number of incoming queries and lead us to operational excellence.

Outcomes Framework – concept diagram



Measuring outcomes

How will we measure the effect of our resident involvement practice? Although wholesale cultural shift is not something that can be easily appraised, we do think it is measurable.

We are aiming to track the changes that the programme brings about for different stakeholders: involved residents, staff collaborating on resident involvement projects, and the wider resident and colleague base, who we hope will benefit from the ripple effect of more resident-centred ways of working.

There is a social value attached to volunteering that benefits wider communities and neighbourhoods. That value, however, is complex to quantify.

As we develop our outcomes framework further, we will capture outputs and outcomes from each Resident Involvement project in a regular and methodical way and analyse these against other organisational drivers and indicators.

We are already measuring some of the long-term outcomes we are seeking. One of the key outcomes we are aiming for is an impact on staff engagement, particularly how connected colleagues feel to our social purpose.

This is something that we already measure through surveys, as much of the sector does. We are data rich when it comes to measuring the perceptions of both our colleagues and residents and we want to think creatively about how we can capitalise on this to measure our activity.

Alongside this, we will also need to commission some new data. Feedback from colleagues and residents about any of our involvement activities is very important, particularly as we are at an early stage of our programme. Having a clear idea of what we want to measure gives us confidence to evaluate those activities to see what works well and what doesn't.

Whichever ways we choose to measure outcomes, we must be willing to look somewhere we would not normally, and step into an unfamiliar place.

The future vision

As an organisation, we do not have a separate action plan for resident involvement. It is a fundamental part of our strategic agenda, and is embedded in all our departmental plans as part of continuous organisational improvement.

Expanding our involvement activity is an iterative process, so we want to get the fundamentals right before extending our offer. This year, we reviewed progress and decided to focus on strengthening our foundations: engaging with the wider organisation, building capacity in the resident involvement team and stabilising the programme. More information about this can be found in Annex B.

Once we are happy that those fundamentals are right, we want to move on to more ambitious, participatory approaches to involvement.

Pushing the boundaries

How far could we go with our resident involvement practice? We believe it is possible to go a lot further than we have so far.

As with our volunteer management model, we are looking outside the housing sector for best practice in citizen engagement.

We want to push the boundaries beyond what we are currently offering. Ultimately, we want to embed resident involvement at all levels of our organisation: we believe resident involvement should be an activity we do as a matter of course, not something that happens in isolation by a specific team. This means we will have to extend our offer to areas that may make us feel uneasy.

Quality, impactful resident involvement requires a commitment from both landlord and resident to work together to generate ideas or come up with a design for a service. When we co-produce something with the people that make their homes with us, we are acknowledging that their knowledge and experience is equal to ours as housing professionals. Yet, as professionals, we ultimately hold the power over the final decision.

What if we were to push this even further?



We want to push the boundaries beyond what we are currently offering.

Co-creation at Southern Housing

Southern Housing (formed in December 2022 after a merger between Southern Housing Group and Optivo) have had a dedicated co-creation team in place since 2020, which sits alongside their resident involvement and resident governance functions. Their co-creation activities are embedded into their wider strategic priorities as an organisation and are intended to empower residents to shape services and drive service improvement.

The co-creation team work with departments across the organisation, and have a clear process for designing and running co-creation projects:

1. Establish the aims of the project
2. Conduct desk-based research on the topic area
3. Work with relevant staff to understand what the problem is and what the scope for change is
4. Conduct an initial survey with residents through an online survey panel
5. Invite residents and staff to interviews and/or workshops - different residents are selected for each project and they must have lived experience of the topic being analysed
6. Residents and staff work together through a series of activities together which discuss the topic
7. The co-creation team ensure that power imbalances are addressed as far as possible, including by avoiding the use of job titles
8. Each project is evaluated to understand how co-creation projects can be improved in future to improve resident engagement and increase impact on services.

One example illustrating the potential of co-creation to drive service improvement was Southern's work on their voids and lettings process. Following the process outlined above, they worked with the responsible teams to map the customer journey and created a complex service blueprint. Using this as a baseline, they worked with residents to understand how this compared to their experiences, asking residents what they had actually experienced, what they thought of it, and how it made them feel.

These findings were synthesised into a 'what's working well' and 'what could be better' summary, and ultimately led to changes in the voids and lettings processes. These changes drove tangible service improvements, with the organisation saving £200,000 on void loss and beating its target for number of vacant homes by 19% in the following year. In the long-term, measurable outcomes like these were vital for improving buy-in and commitment to the co-production program across the organisation.

At L&Q, we are interested in taking participatory approaches as far as we can. This approach may take many forms but fundamentally it means giving more power to residents than we are used to. When we talk about shifting the balance in the relationship, we believe this means residents should ultimately be in control.

We don't yet know where this will lead us. Our priority next step is to prepare for more ambitious, strategic involvement across L&Q and we are seeking senior level buy-in from teams around the organisation so we can begin to knit-in involvement activity at all levels.

To drive this forward, we have worked with Involve, a national public participation charity, on a workshop series to demonstrate the art of the possible to our senior leaders. The workshops considered three areas we would like to focus on: strategy setting, budget setting and climate change preparedness.

Involve's website¹⁴ showcases the range of ways to involve people in organisational decision making: among other things, they have previously facilitated climate juries, citizen's assemblies and participatory budgeting exercises. Our ambition is to use some of these approaches to involve residents in big decisions at L&Q. We could hold a resident's assembly to determine our approach to decarbonisation, for example. Or we could hold participatory workshops with residents to decide how to allocate our major works budget. However we do it, we would begin with the principle that nobody knows how to spend money better on the homes we manage than the people who live in them.

These approaches sound costly, time-consuming and perhaps challenging – they are well outside the realm of the way L&Q would usually operate as a regulated business. Acknowledging the power imbalance with residents, enabling them to have genuine agency and the ability to make an impact, is hard work. However, in the long-run this should also save us both time and money: if our processes and decisions are laser-focused on the things residents actually want, then we won't have to invest as much in putting things right later on.

We are not arguing for social landlords to jettison all financial power to residents. The sector is heavily regulated and largely reliant on borrowing; if we were to radically overhaul our governance structures overnight, we would risk damaging confidence in our ability to govern. That is why the process must be gradual, and we must learn as we go along.

For L&Q, this is the beginning of a long journey. We have only scratched the surface of what is possible. We believe that there is huge potential in resident involvement. But how can we harness this potential? What do we want to involve residents in, and why? Ultimately, these questions speak to the very heart of who we are as organisations, and who we want to be.

We think it's time for a new approach – one that is driven by purpose, value and impact – and we hope that by sharing our story, we will kickstart a conversation about what this should look like.

“ I would like to see that there wasn't that division that 'them and us' that there is now. Sometimes it feels like those who engage [with L&Q] more see the good intention and good will. I would like everyone to feel that L&Q is on their side and we are driving together to improve things.

L&Q Resident, 2022 focus groups

Annex A

Theory of Change approach and methodology

Project approach and methodology

The Theory of Change was developed by the Research and Accountability team at L&Q. It consisted of an evidence-gathering exercise and co-produced outputs based on a workshop with members of L&Q's Resident Services Board.

The project was split into the following phases:

Phase 1: Evidence gathering

A qualitative exercise to identify the existing and desired outcomes from L&Q's Resident Involvement activity consisting of:

- Focus group: a focus group was held with twelve participants including strategically and locally involved residents and L&Q Managers and Senior Leaders. Participants were invited to discuss the context, purpose and desired outcomes of Resident Involvement at L&Q.
- Survey: an online survey was sent to the L&Q and You! Online community (a community of L&Q residents who volunteer to give up their time to respond to ad hoc surveys that are of strategic and operational importance to L&Q). The survey yielded 500 responses.

Phase 2: Critical collaboration and co-production

Workshops with L&Q colleagues and involved residents to explore indicators, feasibility of gathering data and interaction with performance indicators and identify material outcomes that would guide the way we measure the success of the resident involvement programme.

- Internal workshop: attended by Resident Involvement practitioner leads and Heads of Business Planning and Quality Assurance to explore the business-wide impact of resident involvement and interaction with organisational performance indicators.
- Co-Production Theory of Change workshop with Involved Residents: a 2.5 hour long Theory of Change workshop jointly facilitated by L&Q's Research and Accountability team and NEF Consulting. Attended by L&Q's Resident Services Board's assurance sub-group. The output was a shared vision roadmap of how the group thought L&Q's resident involvement activity could get most effectively from "where we are now" to "where we want to be" exploring limitations of the programme and external enabling and preventative factors.

Phase 3: Validation

- Validation of L&Q's Theory of Change diagram and narrative by NEF Consulting and discussion of framework with L&Q's Resident Services Board and Executive Group.

Phase 4: Measurement plan

- Still under development.

Focus Group Topic Guide – discussion questions:

- Why do we think it's important to involve residents at L&Q?
- What do residents take away from being actively involved in work which influences their landlord (from personal level or practical perspective)? What changes within you when you become involved? What do L&Q employees take away from actively working with residents? What are the benefits of working together? (L&Q employees) how does resident involvement help us to do our job well?
- What type of organisation would L&Q be and stand for if we didn't have residents giving up their time to engage with us (outside of their direct service requirements)? If we didn't actively seek to engage and involve residents in the workings of the organisation? Do we do enough?
- What keeps you going when you get frustrated with our efforts to work collaboratively?
- What do you think would incentivise others to get involved? What do you think prevents others (your neighbours/your colleagues) from engaging more proactively with L&Q/residents?
- What are the changes (in short, medium and long term) we would like to see from working more collaboratively? How realistic are these in your view? What are the barriers to making them happen?
- Thinking about everything we could do, what should be our focus and priority?

L&Q and You! survey questionnaire

– top line results

Top line results L&Q and You! survey on desired impact of resident involvement

- 94% think it is important to involve residents in helping us get to know the area they live in and find out what issues or concerns that community has
 - Residents think the above has or will create impact by: giving people a voice (68%), improving the relationship with L&Q (65%), building trust (49%) and improving relationships and understanding (48%). Only 4% think it won't have any impact
- 92% think it is important that we share regular updates on how we are performing
 - Residents think the above has or will create impact by: encouraging L&Q to be more accountable for its performance (65%), improving the relationship with L&Q (53%) and getting L&Q to be more open about its challenges (50%). 3% think this would not have any impact
- 94% think it is important that we share updates on what we are doing to improve service delivery
 - Residents think this has or will create impact by: improving the relationship with L&Q (62%), providing reassurance (53%), building trust (49%) and managing expectations (47%). 4% think it will not have any impact
- 44% of residents told us they would prefer to receive information on how we are improving via Homelife articles (L&Q newsletter in email format). There is also appetite from nearly a quarter of residents for local, in person conversations
- 92% think it is important that we tell residents what we do with their feedback
- 86% think it is important that we create project workstreams so that L&Q staff and residents can collaborate on how we improve ways of working and service improvement
- Importance of collaborating with residents in the following areas:
 - 87% think it is important to collaborate on how we are governed and make decisions
 - 86% think it is important to collaborate on how we measure our success and performance
 - 86% think it is important to collaborate on how we design and procure services
 - 83% think it is important to collaborate on how we design services and processes
 - 76% think it is important to collaborate on how we train our L&Q employees
 - 77% think it is important to collaborate on how we recruit to resident facing roles
- Residents think this has or will create impact by: increasing understanding between residents and L&Q (68%), putting greater focus on resident experience (62%), improving the relationship with L&Q (59%) and giving more accountability to residents (57%)
- 91% think it is important to involve residents in scrutinising our performance
- 94% think it is important to look back at what we've done to see if it has had a positive impact
- Varying levels of awareness for the different resident involvement opportunities.

Resident involvement opportunity	Awareness level
Resident association	44%
Attending the annual resident conference	35%
Neighbourhood champion	29%
Resident Services Board	24%
Ongoing business improvement opportunities (e.g. involvement in things like service design, quality assurance, training, recruitment etc)	12%
Regional Resident Committees	11%
Tenure focused involvement (e.g. shared owner, leaseholder)	11%
Equalities focused involvement	10%

Annex B
Resident Involvement
and Accountability
Service Plan 23/24

Resident Involvement and Accountability Service Plan 23/24

WORKSTREAM 1	PATCH BASED COLLABORATION AND INFORMATION SHARING: <i>Supporting front line teams to get to know their patch by working in partnership with the people that live there</i>
Goal for 2023/4	Build an empowered, networked and informed community of locally involved residents who work positively and in partnership with their local teams to identify and as far as possible address local service issues
Deliverables	1.1. Support Housing Management leadership to deliver on their vision of a proactive, rather than reactive, service with the customer at its heart. 1.2. Support NHLs and TMOs to make good practice in patch-based resident involvement the norm. 1.3. Training and peer learning programme for residents to share good practice, connect residents and stimulate local resident involvement activity and accountability.
WORKSTREAM 2	IMPROVING OUR RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT PRACTICE: <i>Ensuring that resident involvement is meaningful, impactful and enjoyable</i>
Goal for 2023/4	Provide strategic leadership at L&Q on how and why we involve residents ensuring quality and consistency of practice
Deliverables	2.1. Strengthen volunteer management approach according to best practice to manage risk and provide for a consistent quality experience. 2.2. Monitor and evaluate impact of activity in pursuit of defined outcomes. 2.3. Hone our practice and build our resident involvement toolkit.
WORKSTREAM 3	BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT: <i>Bringing residents closer to business areas to help us continually improve and build more resident centred working cultures</i>
Goal for 2023/4	Move from a reactive to a more proactive programme of resident involvement through business partnering approach. This will support business areas to make good use of customer insights, prepare for transparency requirements and seek out meaningful opportunities to involve residents where there is a defined opportunity for residents to influence and make an impact
Deliverables	3.1. Business partnering approach to embed volunteer opportunities in business / service improvement and quality / policy assurance processes 3.2. Capacity building (residents, team, decision makers and wider business) for more ambitious participatory decision making 3.3. Contribute to the development of the wider Research and Accountability function
WORKSTREAM 4	SCRUTINY AND OVERSIGHT: <i>Working with residents to understand if we are doing what we say we will and whether we are making a positive difference for residents</i>
Goal for 2023/4	Build the influence, visibility and accountability of our strategic resident forums with them providing scrutiny and oversight of focused service areas and independent sources of assurance through to the Resident Services Board
Deliverables	4.1. Delivery of strategic committees and forums 4.2. Delivery of Resident Services Board 4.3. Continuous improvement of strategic committees and forums to increased effectiveness and impact
WORKSTREAM 5	TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: <i>Sharing how we are performing on the areas that concern residents most and speaking with one voice on what we are doing to improve your experience with us</i>
Goal for 2023/4	Support our organisational preparedness for new transparency requirements
Deliverables	5.1. Delivery of Resident Conference as a key accountability and transparency event 5.2. Ongoing communications & feedback loop on resident involvement activity and the impact it is having 5.3. Support our organisational preparedness for forthcoming new regulatory regime including new transparency requirements

Annex C
DCMS Community
Life Survey¹⁵

DCMS Community Life Survey¹⁵

Figure 1: How important ability to influence decisions in local area is¹⁵

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Important	62%	57%	58%	58%	57%	56%	57%	54%
Not important	38%	43%	42%	42%	43%	44%	43%	46%

Figure 1 - How important it is for adults in England to personally feel they can influence decisions in their local area - from Community Life Survey 20/21.

Figure 2: People agreeing they can influence decisions affecting local area

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total	26%	26%	28%	27%	26%	25%	27%	27%

Figure 2 - To what extent people in England agree that they personally can influence decisions affecting their local area - from Community Life Survey 20/21.

Annex D

Resident involvement
and accountability workstreams
and workstream-level
outcomes frameworks

Resident involvement and accountability workstreams and workstream-level outcomes frameworks

Business improvement

Bringing our residents closer to business areas, helping us to continually improve and build more resident-centred working cultures.

Through this approach, we want to move from a reactive to a more proactive approach to involvement that is meaningful and can directly impact on our business.

Patch-based collaboration and information sharing

Supporting front-line teams to get to know their patch by working in partnership with the people that live there.

Our Neighbourhood Housing Lead (NHL) role is a newly created role which signals a return for L&Q to a patch-based housing management service, and works closely with our Neighbourhood Champions (NC). We want to help NHLs by building a strong and empowered community of NCs who can help them identify and address local issues.

Scrutiny and oversight

Working with residents to understand if we are doing what we say we will, and whether we are making a positive difference.

We are working to build the impact and visibility of our strategic resident forums – such as our regional committees – and supporting them to feed a steady stream of information up to the RSB.

Improving our resident involvement practice

Ensuring that resident involvement is meaningful, impactful and enjoyable.

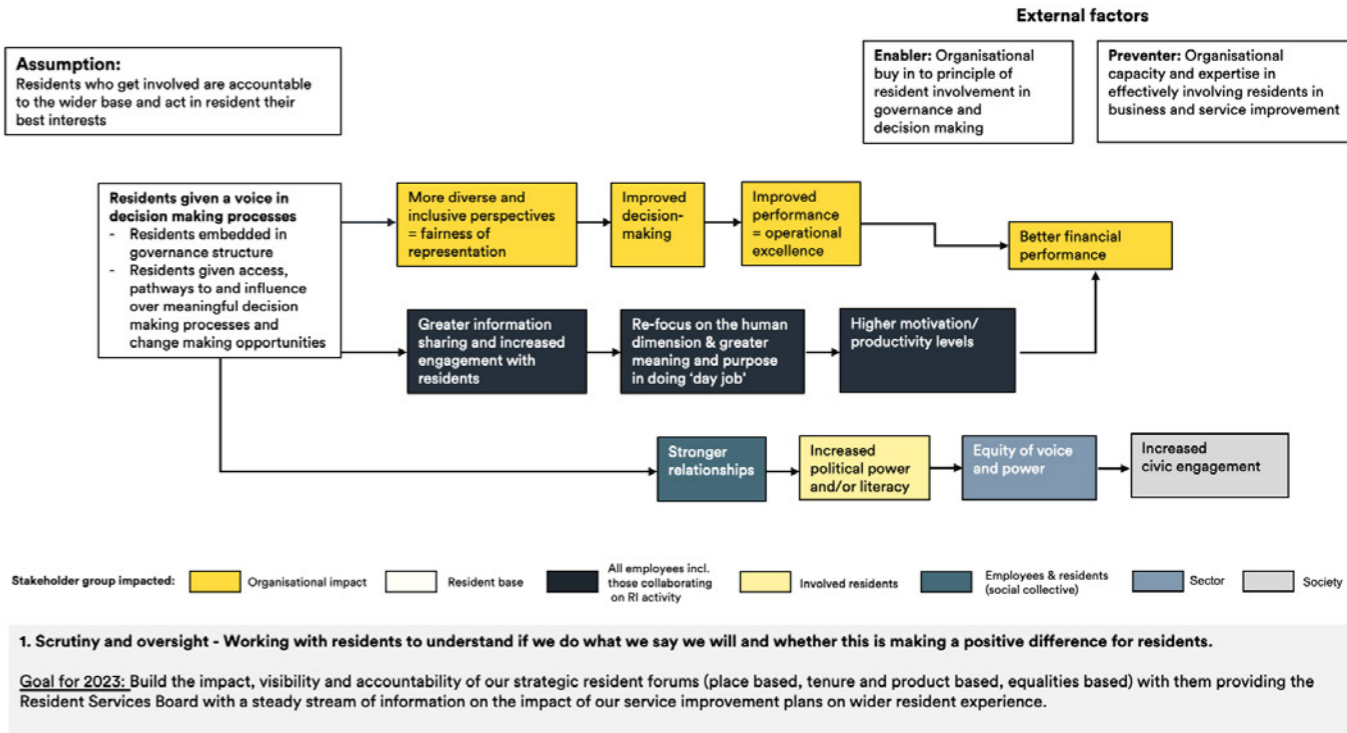
Our experiences so far have taught us the importance of learning through doing and we are continually reviewing what we do to inform best practice. Our Resident Involvement team are our experts in volunteer management and provide leadership to the business in how to do this.

Transparency and accountability

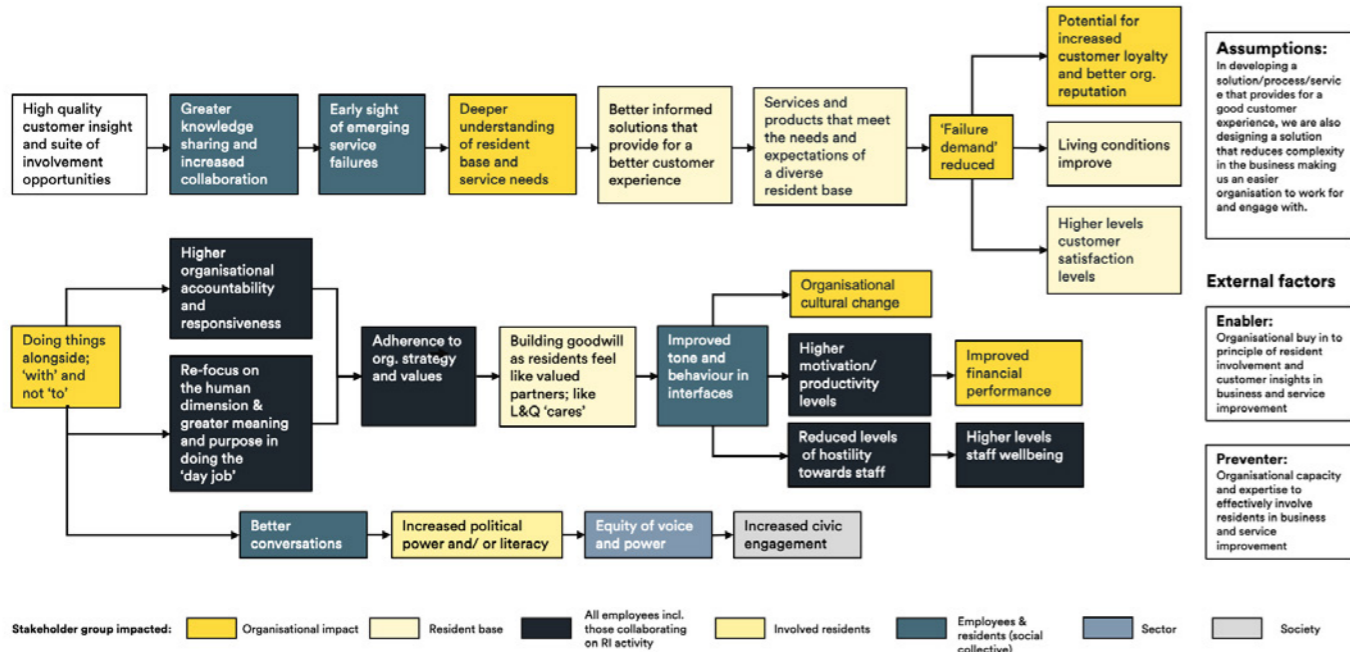
Sharing how we are performing on the areas that concern residents most and speaking with one voice on what we are doing to improve their experience with us.

We want to build a culture of accountability and transparency in the organisation through our regular reporting, co-creation of our annual resident conference with our residents, and preparing for our new regulatory requirements on transparency.

Scrutiny and oversight

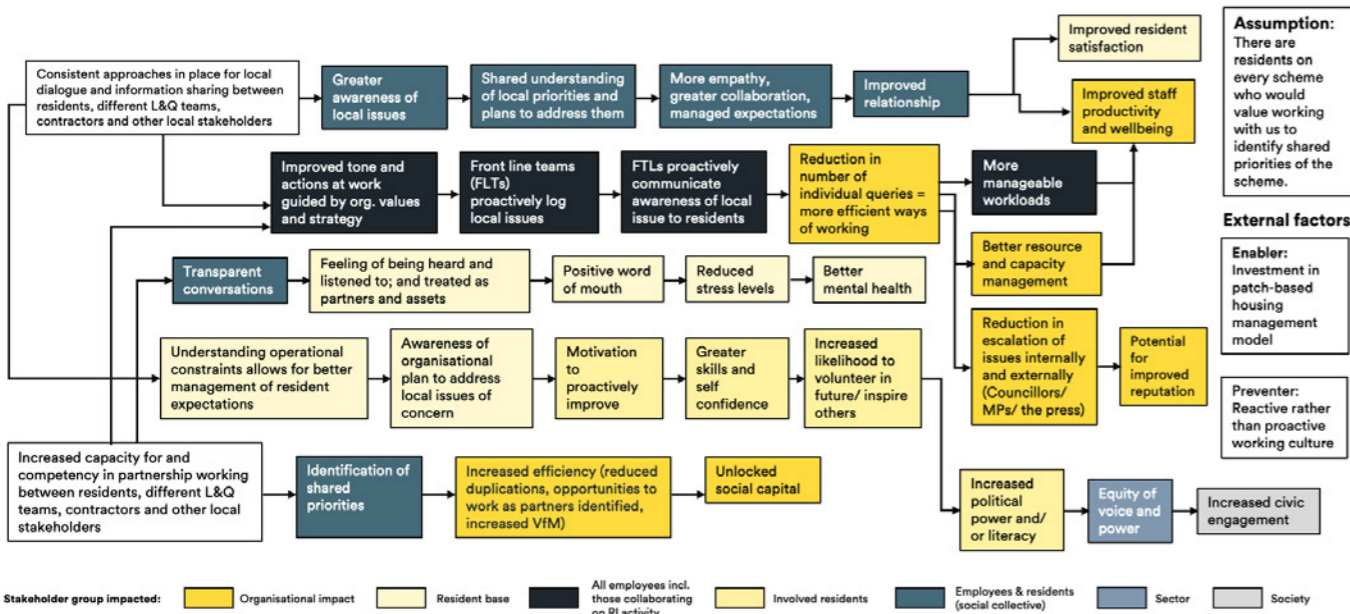


Business improvement



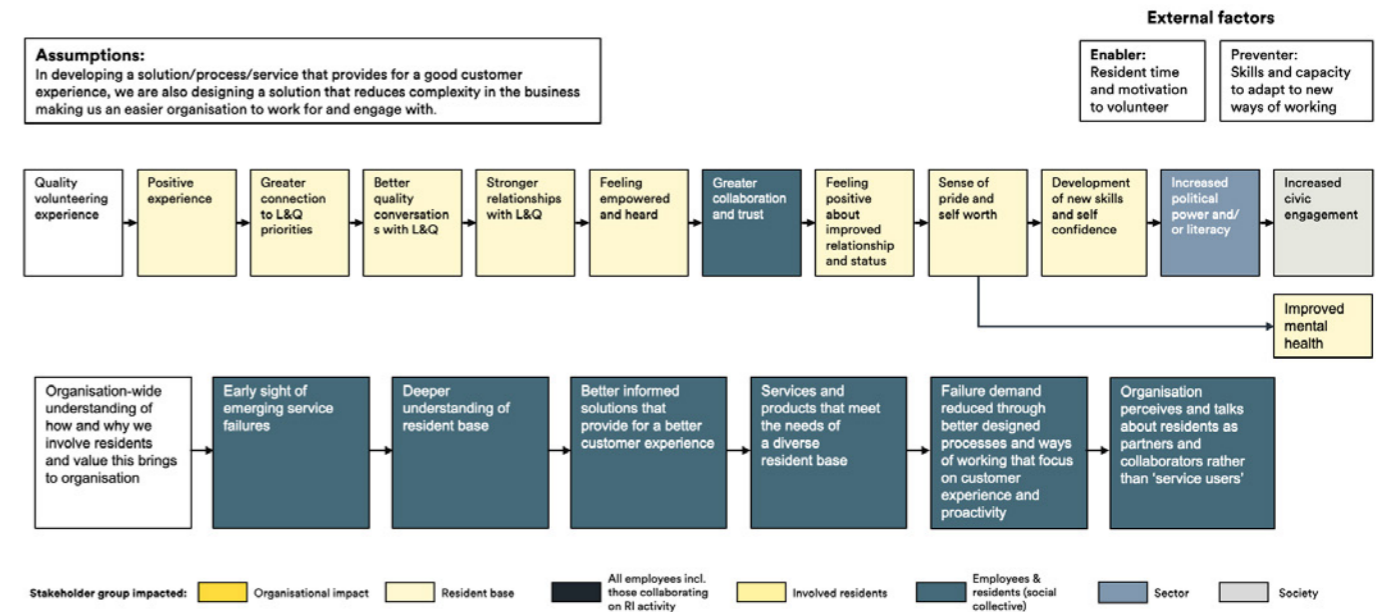
2. Business improvement: Bringing residents closer to business areas to help us continually improve and build more resident centred working cultures.
Goal for 2023: Move from reactive to a more proactive programme of impactful, meaningful resident involvement opportunities through business partnering approach.

Patch based collaboration and information sharing



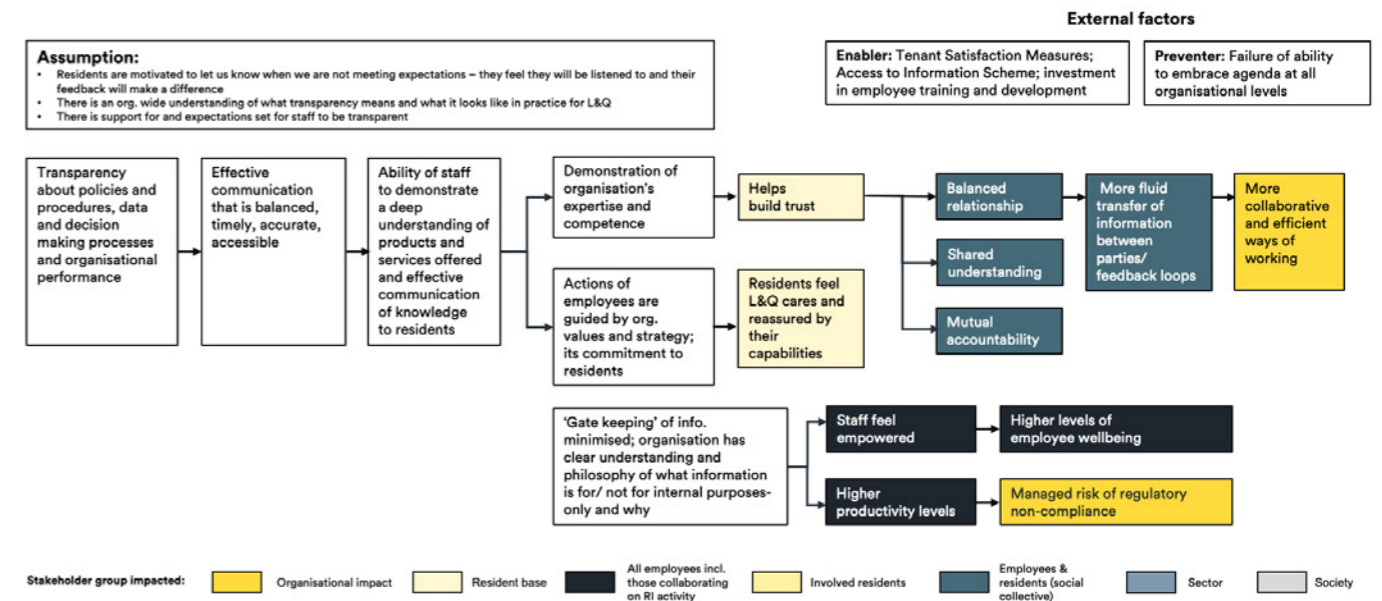
3. Patch based collaboration and information sharing Supporting front line teams to get to know their patch by working in partnership with the people that live there.
Goals for 2023: Build a strong, empowered and collaborative community of locally involved THT and L&Q residents who work in partnership with their local housing management teams to identify and as far as possible address local issues. Supporting our Neighbourhood Housing Leads and Trafford-based Tenancy Management Officers to see developing positive relationships with residents in their patch as part of the job, and something that helps them to be successful in and enjoy their role.

Improving resident involvement practice



4. Improving our resident involvement practice Ensuring that resident involvement is meaningful, impactful and enjoyable.
Provide strategic leadership to L&Q on how and why we involve residents to unlock its potential as a driver for organisational improvement.

Transparency and accountability



5. Transparency and accountability Sharing how we are performing on the areas that concern residents most and speaking with one voice on what we are doing to improve your experience with us
Goal for 2023: Explore how L&Q can upscale in building a culture of transparency and accountability across whole of L&Q to support information response teams

Annex E

Fictional resident stories

Maria

Maria had been living at an L&Q property for several years and was always vocal about how L&Q could improve services to provide for a better resident experience. She discussed this with her Neighbourhood Housing Lead and they suggested that she get in touch with the resident involvement team about getting more involved at L&Q. She discussed her particular skills, interests and expertise with the team, and said that she would be particularly interested in getting involved with her region's Regional Resident Committees which sees housing management staff and residents from the same region working together to monitor performance and resident satisfaction in the region and assessing how to improve resident experience in the region. She felt that this sounded really interesting and so she reviewed and returned her volunteer agreement and went along to the next committee to see if this was something she's like to be a part of.



Whilst in her role Maria had the opportunity to draw on feedback from residents in her region as well as her own lived experience to help housing management understand how well it was performing in the region and suggest ways L&Q could better support residents. Maria also had the opportunity to hear about the challenges that housing management face in delivering on the vision for the new patch-based model and appreciated the opportunity to explore together how these challenges could be overcome through increased partnership working with residents in a patch, improving both the resident and staff experience.

This collaborative, resident centred approach to performance management, helped housing management motivate its front-line teams by reassuring them that residents want to work with them to help them deliver a quality, resident centred service. The committees were also valued by housing management as a group with the shared objective to improve services in the region, supporting discussions and decision making on where to allocate resources and prioritise work that was most important to residents.

Maria's experience of working alongside employees on strategic and operational projects helped foster a deeper understanding of and empathy for the challenges that teams face and more collaborative and respectful relationship with those she met. L&Q employees with whom Maria worked said that they better understood the day-to-day challenges residents faced and the impact policies and decisions could have on their lives. It helped to 'humanise' their day-to-day jobs. The resulting effect was a greater sense of empathy and understanding between the employees and the resident.

Being involved in the oversight and scrutiny of performance in her region instilled a greater sense of trust in her landlord. L&Q was able to demonstrate its commitment to open communication and collaboration by involving her in decision-making and governance. Maria felt a sense of shared responsibility for the success of L&Q's Future Shape Strategy and the projects she was directly involved with.

Maria's experience as a resident allowed her to provide a valuable perspective on the needs of the community and how L&Q could continue to improve its services. Maria's journey to becoming more involved as an L&Q resident was a testament to the power of community engagement and the importance of involving residents in improving performance. Her story is a reminder that housing associations can benefit greatly from working in partnership with residents, and that involving them in governance can lead to better outcomes for everyone. For residents, by helping to create a more positive living environment. It also helped L&Q build trust with its residents, who felt their voices were being heard and valued.

Phoebe

Phoebe is a Senior Environmental Strategist who bought a L&Q property 7 years ago in Hackney. She came to hear of an opportunity to be involved in L&Q's resident-centred service design workshops working alongside L&Q's Business Improvement team. This was announced in L&Q's Homelife magazine. One of L&Q's Resident Involvement Business Partners briefed Phoebe on the project and coordinated the collaborative project between resident volunteers and business leads.



Through her volunteering, Phoebe was able to troubleshoot alongside L&Q employees the root causes of demand for services and contribute her views on design improvements for more effective and efficient services. Her involvement was crucial in the design and testing of services on L&Q's new online customer portal, in minimising errors and the need for follow up work (i.e., failure demand).

Business Improvement colleagues felt they better understood the user needs and preferences in the design of services, they felt it was an efficient way of working to identify areas for improvement, while minimising waste and inefficiencies. Employees felt optimistic about the prospects of designing effective services for customers and reducing 'failure demand' and this helped boost productivity levels.

In time, L&Q saw steadily higher levels of customer satisfaction as a result of more successful design of services which: met user needs, were easier to use, more effective and more enjoyable for service users. Her involvement in service design workshops led to a greater feeling of trust towards L&Q. By providing opportunities to be involved, L&Q was demonstrating its commitment to meeting the needs and preferences of residents. This not only led to increased trust but also loyalty. Phoebe recommended L&Q Sales properties to friends and left a positive TrustPilot review.

Abi

Abi is one of L&Q's new Neighbourhood Housing Leads working on L&Q's new patch-based housing management operations model. A year into the job she has become very familiar with her area by working closely with the residents who live and stakeholders who work there.

Working with locally involved residents, by attending Resident Association meetings, estate inspections with Neighbourhood Committees and holding regular information surgeries provides Abi with an opportunity to identify and discuss local issues with residents as well as share the plan and timelines to address these issues. Through her local resident networks, Abi feels confident on what is important to the local community and works effectively with different L&Q teams to advocate on the residents' behalf – for example, she knew that residents were concerned about the quality of their communal cleaning service and worked with the estates management team and the contractor to look at how the quality could be improved. Residents now provide feedback to Abi on the quality of the cleaning which she feeds back directly to the contract managers in the estate services team so that they can raise this directly with the provider.

Maintaining this ongoing dialogue with residents has also brought important issues to Abi's attention – for example, her champion alerted her to the fact that the fire door in a block was faulty. She raised this with the repairs and fire safety team and then communicated that this has been logged with local residents, giving them confidence that the issue is being addressed and that they do not need to individually log the service request. This proactive approach to communicating with residents has reduced the number of individual queries she receives from residents in her patch.

Abi feels the patch based working model has helped build a sense of ownership and responsibility for the local community. She has a better understanding of the local issues and priorities and, has worked more effectively with community groups and other local stakeholders. Having built a strong relationship with residents in her patch, her community group are working ever more closely together to identify and address local issues, to share information and resources and to support each other in achieving common goals.



Stephen

A busy family life and years of working full time on long hours had left Stephen feeling disconnected from his community. Wanting to improve the green spaces on his estate he decided to become a L&Q 'volunteer', a Neighbourhood Champion. Since going part-time at work and having more time on his hands, he wanted to 'give back' and connect with others who wanted to make neighbourhood improvements. Taking part on community inspections and organising planting days helped Stephen feel a sense of purpose and meaning. He began to know his neighbours through the volunteering opportunity and to feel more connected to his community.

He was grateful to L&Q for providing him with opportunities which helped develop his social connections, as he met neighbours with similar interests and values. It helped him become more involved in his community and opportunities to make a positive impact in the world around him.

Stephen felt the volunteering helped improve his self esteem, and mental health. He was excited to hear of other opportunities to get involved at L&Q through the Resident Involvement team; opportunities which he thought could help him develop new skills and gain new life experiences.



Annex F

Example resident
volunteer role profile

Role profile

Neighbourhood Housing Lead Recruitment

July 2022

Aims

Thank you for getting involved as an L&Q resident. By getting involved, you are supporting us to:

- Be more open, transparent, and directly accountable to residents
- Innovate and problem solve with residents in pursuit of delivering operationally excellent, repeatable services
- Build better relationships and shared understanding with residents
- Provide a continued focus on who and what we're here for – to provide homes and neighbourhoods everyone can be proud of.

Find out more about our approach to resident involvement [here](#).

This role profile and volunteer agreement outlines what is expected of you in your volunteer role and what support you can expect to receive from us to carry out your role effectively. It also provides some supportive information on how to resolve any challenges that you may encounter when carrying out your role. In so doing, it aims to ensure a consistently positive and rewarding experience for the L&Q residents and staff involved.

Role Profile

- Role: Neighbourhood Housing Lead recruitment – written test assessment
- Time commitment: 1 x 30 minute virtual briefing session on Tuesday 7th July at 12.30pm or 6pm. Reviewing up to 5 written tests and providing your feedback in a feedback form or over the phone by Monday 11th July
- Location: Virtual by Microsoft Teams
- Volunteer manager: [Name]
- In this volunteer role you will help us select the right candidate for this critical resident facing role
- You will be helping us identify candidates who have the right communication and problem-solving skills and an ability to build effective working partnerships with residents

- Candidates will be asked to write a written response to a resident who has emailed their Neighbourhood Housing Lead to report an issue. Posing as the resident who sent the email, you will have the chance to review the candidates written responses
- You will share your feedback in a feedback form that will capture your views on how effectively the email response demonstrated empathy and care for residents, good communications skills and tone of voice and L&Q values
- Your feedback will be collated with other residents' feedback and shared with the hiring managers who will be scoring the candidates on their empathy, tone of voice and demonstration of L&Q values. Your feedback will directly inform their assessment of how far the candidates met our expectations on these criteria
- Prior to the workshop, you will receive a full briefing to hear more about the Neighbourhood Housing Lead role itself and your role in the selection process
- This is a new volunteer opportunity that we are looking to improve based on your feedback
- We would love to hear your feedback on your experience of the process, and how it could be improved.

Volunteer agreement

We ask that you:

- Work together, respectfully and collaboratively, with L&Q residents and staff, according to our code of conduct for involved residents (attached), to improve things for the benefit of all residents
- Ensure that any information shared with you that is of a confidential nature is not disclosed to anyone outside of the volunteer role without prior agreement with L&Q
- Are not involved in the appointment of staff where you are related, or are closely connected, to an applicant. You must declare any such relationship to the hiring manager
- Inform your volunteer manager of any additional support needs so that we can make reasonable adjustments to support your involvement
- Acknowledge that your recommendations are advisory and not binding
- Acknowledge this is a one off, volunteer opportunity rather than a long-term agreement with L&Q
- Participate in any briefings and training that we think will help you in your role
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion
- Let us know how the process could be improved based on your experience.

L&Q will:

- Provide a role profile and a briefing to outline the role, time commitment and answer any questions you may have
- Discuss any support needs with you at the beginning of the role and any reasonable adjustments that might need to be made to support your participation
- Provide an introduction to the wider resident network and involvement framework and how you can stay involved by connecting with other opportunities, residents, support and development
- Ensure that you meet with the relevant parts of the business that you seek to influence through the role and with officers of relevant seniority to take forward agreed actions
- Communicate outcomes from the opportunity to the wider resident base to promote openness and transparency
- Provide a safe place for you to raise issues and themes that need to be reviewed and improved

- Reimburse all reasonable and properly documented expenses incurred performing the duties of the volunteer role
- Strive to resolve any concerns fairly and reasonably, applying our complaints procedure when it's needed
- Respect and listen to your feedback
- Ensure your health, safety and welfare including, when appropriate, providing adequate insurance cover for volunteers to carry out their voluntary role
- Ensure that involvement opportunities are open and accessible to all L&Q residents
- Encourage a positive, supportive and meaningful volunteering experience and listen to your feedback on how this could be improved.

Signed

This agreement is in honour only. It is not intended to be a legally binding contract and either L&Q or the volunteer can end the agreement at any time.

Signed

Print name Date.....

Signed on behalf of L&Q

Print name Date.....

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Lewis Kinch, Southern Housing

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Carl Shillito

Nadya Enver

Raj Kumar

Kristian Wilson

Dave Bedford

L&Q would also like to extend our thanks to all residents who have chosen to get involved with us in the last few years, who have all shaped and informed our approach. Our approach could not continue to grow without their support.



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