

Review of Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement at Haringey Council A Resident Advisory Panel (RAP) Report

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Haringey's Resident Advisory Panel (RAP) as part of its resident-led scrutiny role. It reviews how tenants and leaseholders experience resident engagement in practice, using the Council's Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2025-2028 as the benchmark.
- 1.2 The review does not test whether the Strategy contains the right aspirations. The Strategy is clear about the need to build trust, listen better, share power, learn from mistakes, break down barriers and show the impact of resident involvement. The central issue identified by RAP is whether those commitments are being consistently experienced by residents in day-to-day housing services.
- 1.3 A key insight from the review is that residents do not separate 'engagement' from their wider experience as tenants, leaseholders or customers. They judge engagement through whether the Council listens, explains, follows up, takes responsibility and shows what changes as a result of feedback.
- 1.4 RAP recognises that the Council has put in place significant resident involvement structures, including the Resident Voice Board, Continuous Improvement Groups, Task and Finish Groups, Resident Associations, Resident Advisory Panel, estate drop-ins, surveys, focus groups, resident training and community-based projects. The review also found evidence of positive practice, particularly where staff work directly with residents, build relationships locally, provide clear explanations and create practical routes for residents to influence policy or service improvement.
- 1.5 However, the evidence reviewed by RAP also shows a gap between the Strategy principles and the experience of many residents. A survey of 831 residents carried out by the RAP found that 56.1% were dissatisfied with engagement overall, with 40.9% very dissatisfied. The weakest of the strategy's principles measured through the survey were *evidence-led*, *responsive* and *focused on impact*. This means many residents do not yet believe feedback is used consistently to improve services, that they receive clear outcomes or explanations, or that involvement leads to visible change.
- 1.6 The survey and follow-up evidence show that the strongest themes are trust, communication, ownership and follow-through. Residents repeatedly asked for timely replies, clear updates, named or traceable ownership, better explanations, and evidence that feedback has led to action or, where action is not possible, a clear and honest explanation.
- 1.7 Leaseholders appeared to experience a particularly large gap. Around three in four leaseholders who responded to the survey were dissatisfied with engagement overall, compared with around half of secure tenants. A leaseholder focus group held during the review and Leasehold/Major Works staff workshop both pointed to problems with early

involvement, service charge and major works communication, legal or technical information, fragmented ownership and delays in obtaining information from other teams.

- 1.8 Working-age tenants in low-rise homes also provided useful insight. The planned focus group for this group did not attract attendees, which itself suggests that traditional meeting formats may not work for some residents. A follow-up survey response from this group showed that residents wanted clear response times, progress updates, accountability and flexible ways to be heard. This supports a wider finding that disengagement is not necessarily a sign of apathy. Some residents may have stopped engaging because previous feedback, complaints or involvement did not lead to visible action.
- 1.9 The review also found that accessibility, disability, health, digital exclusion, language, caring responsibilities, meeting times and short notice are practical barriers to involvement. Feedback from Disability Action Haringey strengthened RAP's view that accessibility should not be treated as a separate engagement issue. It should be built into everyday housing contact, reporting routes, complaints handling, digital access, face-to-face support and the way staff understand and respond to individual needs.
- 1.10 The recommendations focus on practical changes that would help tenants and leaseholders see the Strategy reflected in everyday housing services. They cover earlier involvement, co-produced engagement plans, clearer ownership, tracking and closure, plain English communication, stronger feedback loops, accessibility, leaseholder communication, Customer Services access to information, use of resident insight, local communication and staff/resident learning.
- 1.11 RAP's overall judgement is that Haringey has a strong resident engagement framework, but residents do not yet experience it consistently across everyday housing services. Engagement works best where staff build relationships, explain decisions clearly and close the feedback loop. It works least well where residents are passed between teams, receive unclear updates, or cannot see what changed as a result of their feedback.

2. Background and Role of the Resident Advisory Panel (RAP)

- 2.1 RAP is an independent resident-led scrutiny panel made up of volunteer tenants and leaseholders. Its role is to hear directly from residents, review how housing services are working in practice and make practical recommendations to improve services.
- 2.2 RAP's Terms of Reference state that it provides independent resident-led scrutiny, with authority to request relevant data and information to support service improvement recommendations. Its objectives include resident-driven decision-making, implementation tracking and feedback, and measurable improvements in service performance and resident satisfaction.
- 2.3 RAP has previously completed reviews of estate services and the repairs customer journey. This review is RAP's third full review completed since its relaunch in January 2024 and focuses on resident engagement and communication across housing services.
- 2.4 RAP recognises the financial and operational pressures facing the Council. The purpose of this report is not to criticise individual officers or services, but to support continuous

improvement by offering a resident-led view of what would help the Strategy be experienced in practice.

3. Key Milestones in the Engagement Review

- 3.1 **Initial discussion on the next review topic – June 2025:** - At the RAP meeting on 17 June 2025, members began discussing possible topics for the next scrutiny review. Resident engagement was identified as a possible area because it was cross-cutting, different from the previous estate services and repairs reviews, and could help test how residents are involved in decisions and how feedback is used to drive change.
- 3.2 **Review topic agreed – July 2025** - At the RAP meeting on 15 July 2025, members considered a shortlist of possible review topics, including customer services, resident engagement, services for vulnerable tenants, and damp, mould and condensation. Following discussion, RAP unanimously agreed to review resident engagement as the next service area.

The review focused on the working question:

How do we make sure tenants and leaseholders experience engagement that matches the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy in their everyday contact with housing services?

- 3.3 **Review introduced and Review Chair appointed – September 2025:** - At the RAP meeting on 16 September 2025, the Council introduced the new Resident Engagement Strategy. The strategy was described as a three-year plan, co-produced with tenants and leaseholders, intended to formalise residents' role in designing and delivering housing services. The meeting also discussed the need to move from having a strategy on paper to embedding its principles in everyday housing practice. Valdet Palmer was appointed as Review Chair for the Resident Engagement review.
- 3.4 **Desktop review and scoping – autumn 2025** - During the scoping stage, RAP reviewed the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy, previous resident engagement review material, resident engagement annual review evidence, Resident Voice Board material, engagement route information, resident-facing leaflets, Tenant Satisfaction Measures, customer satisfaction information, housing performance data and relevant service review material.
- 3.5 This evidence helped RAP test the gap between the Council's stated engagement commitments and residents' day-to-day experience of housing services. The desktop review identified issues for further exploration, including transparency, communication, digital exclusion, customer satisfaction, complaints handling, service responsiveness, feedback loops and whether the principles of the Engagement Strategy were being applied consistently across housing services.

- 3.6 **Survey development and testing – November to December 2025:** - During November and December 2025, RAP worked with officers to develop and test a resident engagement survey. Draft questions were circulated to RAP members in late November, with feedback requested before the survey was finalised.
- 3.7 The survey was tested to check question flow, logic skips, multiple-choice responses and overall usability before launch.
- 3.8 **Survey launch and review priorities – January 2026:** - The resident engagement survey was issued in January 2026 and remained open until the end of the month. At the RAP meeting on 27 January 2026, members reviewed early headline findings while the survey was still live.
- 3.9 The early survey findings suggested that residents' experience of engagement varied across housing services. Some residents felt treated with respect, but weaker areas included listening, taking views seriously, involvement before decisions were made, sharing power, follow-up and visible outcomes.
- 3.10 **Inspection planning – February and March 2026** - The work programme set out that RAP would use the February and March meetings to review the survey analysis, agree the inspection plan, confirm priority themes, identify who needed to be involved, and agree the remaining evidence-gathering activity.
- 3.11 This included planning resident sessions, tenant and leaseholder discussions, staff workshops, and activity to reach less-heard residents and community organisations.
- 3.12 **Resident and leaseholder evidence – March to April 2026:** - RAP considered survey evidence and feedback from tenant and leaseholder sessions, including the leaseholder focus group, tenant focus group, working-age low-rise tenant feedback and wider survey responses.
- 3.13 This evidence helped test whether tenants and leaseholders experienced the principles of the Engagement Strategy in their everyday contact with housing services.
- 3.14 **Staff and service evidence – March to April 2026:** - RAP considered evidence from staff workshops and service responses, including Communications, Resident Involvement and Customer Services evidence, Leasehold and Major Works evidence, and the Head of Customer Experience response to questions posed by the scrutiny group.
- 3.15 This helped the Panel understand the internal barriers that can prevent good engagement, including inconsistent information-sharing, unclear ownership, disconnected systems and pressures on staff.

- 3.16 **Accessibility and disability evidence – April to May 2026:** - Additional evidence from Disability Action Haringey was added to the review. This strengthened the findings on clear service pathways, digital access, face-to-face support, disability-trained staff and the need for reasonable adjustments to be built into everyday housing contact.
- 3.17 **Findings and draft recommendations – May 2026:** - At the May 2026 RAP meeting, members debated the draft recommendations and agreed the recommendations to be included in the report. The recommendations were developed to reflect the evidence gathered from residents, leaseholders, staff, service responses, survey findings and Disability Action Haringey feedback.
- 3.18 **Report drafting and finalisation – May to June 2026:** - The report was drafted in June 2026. The final report brings together the survey, desktop review, resident and leaseholder feedback, staff evidence, service responses and Disability Action Haringey feedback. Its recommendations focus on the practical changes needed so tenants and leaseholders can see the Strategy reflected in everyday housing services.

4. Summary of evidence gathered

- 4.1 The review used a mixed evidence base. RAP looked at strategic documents, previous reviews, annual review material, engagement structures, survey evidence, resident sessions, staff workshops and community organisation input.
- 4.2 The approach was intended to triangulate evidence. RAP wanted to understand whether the issues raised in the survey were reflected in residents' detailed experiences, staff evidence and desktop review material.

Evidence source	What RAP considered	Main relevance to review
Resident survey	831 responses to RAP's engagement review survey, including tenure, service, principle and free-text analysis.	Provided the main quantitative evidence on satisfaction, weak principles, service areas and barriers to involvement.
Leaseholder focus group	Six leaseholders discussed engagement, service charges, major works, communication, follow-up and accountability.	Helped explain why leaseholders were more dissatisfied and what would improve communication and coordination.
Working-age low-rise tenant evidence	A planned focus group attracted no attendees, so RAP used a short follow-up survey with eight responses.	Provided evidence on practical barriers, trust, timing, work commitments and frustration with communication and follow-up.
Leasehold / Major Works staff workshop	Staff from leasehold, major works, resident liaison and service charge functions discussed barriers to good engagement.	Tested resident evidence against staff experience and highlighted organisational hand-offs, workload and complex information.

Communications / Resident Involvement / Customer Services workshop	Staff discussed communication, resident involvement, internal information, Homezone, outreach and feedback loops. Customer Services were invited but did not attend.	Provided insight into how engagement is understood internally and where communication breaks down.
Head of Customer Experience written response	The Head of Customer Experience and Resident Support responded to RAP questions about barriers to first-contact resolution and joined-up information.	Highlighted fragmented information, inconsistent use of NEC Contacts, unclear ownership and repeat contact.
Disability Action Haringey meeting notes	Feedback from disabled residents and members about barriers to accessing housing services, reporting issues, using the Council website, involving carers or support agencies, and obtaining face-to-face or disability-informed support.	Strengthened the evidence base for recommendations on accessibility, reasonable adjustments, disability-trained staff, clearer service pathways and links with disability organisations.
Desktop review	RAP reviewed strategy, annual review, previous independent reviews, RVB documents, HQN mock inspection material and publicity materials.	Provided context on strategy commitments, engagement structures, strengths, gaps and previous recommendations.

5. Strategic and desktop review context

- 5.1 The desktop review shows that Haringey Council has a substantial engagement framework in the Housing portfolio. The Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy sets out a clear ambition to build trust, listen better, create opportunities for residents to influence decisions, learn from mistakes and break down barriers for residents whose voices are too often overlooked.
- 5.2 The Strategy also recognises that getting the basics right is essential to trust. It says that if the Council is going to increase trust, everyday interactions must be as easy, effective and supportive as possible. This is important because RAP's review found that residents judge engagement mainly through those everyday interactions.
- 5.3 The Council has created a range of formal and informal routes for involvement. These include the Resident Voice Board, Resident Advisory Panel, Continuous Improvement Groups, Task and Finish Groups, Resident Associations, Haringey Leaseholders Association, focus groups, consultations, estate inspections, online surveys, roadshows, pop-up events and estate drop-in sessions.
- 5.4 The Resident Engagement Annual Review for 2023/24 shows significant activity, including resident groups, resident training, estate drop-ins, community facilities and local engagement projects. It also gives positive examples of estate-based engagement at Ermine Road, Plevna Crescent and Northumberland Park, where local presence,

partnership working and resident forums helped build relationships and address practical issues.

- 5.5 The Resident Voice Board has also provided evidence of resident influence on a wide range of policies and service areas, including safeguarding, vulnerable residents, ASB, housing arrears, income collection, tenancy strategy, estate parking, KPIs and generic correspondence. This shows that meaningful involvement is taking place within formal structures.
- 5.6 At the same time, the desktop review shows recurring gaps that are relevant to this review. Previous independent reviews and mock inspection evidence have identified the need to move from activity to outcomes, make engagement a cross-cutting responsibility across housing, improve data and household insight, strengthen feedback loops, and show more clearly what changes as a result of resident involvement.
- 5.7 RAP therefore found a mixed picture: strong foundations and examples of good practice, but a continuing need to make those foundations visible and consistent across everyday housing services.

6. Survey findings

- 6.1 The survey provides the broadest evidence base for the review. It received 831 responses, including 567 secure tenants and 205 leaseholders. Overall, 56.1% of respondents were dissatisfied with engagement, including 40.9% who were very dissatisfied.
- 6.2 The weakest Strategy principles were 'evidence-led', 'responsive' and focused on impact'. Only 21.8% agreed that engagement was evidence-led, while 56.6% disagreed. Only 23.8% agreed that the Council was responsive, while 50.8% disagreed. Only 26.4% agreed that engagement was focused on impact, while 44.0% disagreed. Collaborative working was also weak, with 33.2% agreeing and 43.0% disagreeing.
- 6.3 Across services, engagement was rated most negatively in repairs and maintenance, major works, estate services and neighbourhood improvement, leasehold services and asset management. These are service areas where residents are most likely to need clear information, reliable updates, named ownership and follow-through.
- 6.4 The survey also showed significant barriers to involvement. Among residents who answered the barriers question, the main barriers included negative past experience or believing nothing changes, lack of information or short notice, meeting times, meeting locations, disability or health, confidence, caring responsibilities, digital access and language barriers.
- 6.5 Nearly half of respondents did not think tenants and leaseholders from all backgrounds have a fair chance to be heard. This is an important fairness and inclusion warning sign for the Council.

- 6.6 **Leaseholder evidence** - Leaseholders were significantly more dissatisfied than secure tenants. Around 76.6% of leaseholders responding to the survey said they were dissatisfied with engagement overall, compared with 50.8% of secure tenants.
- 6.7 The leaseholder focus group suggested that leaseholders do not experience engagement as a separate positive process alongside services. They experience it through everyday dealings with the Council, especially when trying to understand charges, challenge decisions, resolve repairs or major works issues, or obtain explanations from more than one team.

What RAP heard from leaseholders: *Participants were not asking for engagement to be more elaborate. They were asking for it to be clearer, more honest, more joined-up and more accountable.*

What RAP heard from leaseholders: *Poor follow-up makes engagement feel pointless.*

- 6.8 Leaseholders described poor communication, fragmented responsibility, limited transparency, late or incomplete explanations and weak follow-up. The main improvement they wanted was not simply more meetings. They wanted clearer ownership, better internal coordination, earlier involvement, more understandable information and evidence that concerns had been heard and acted on.
- 6.9 The Leasehold/Major Works staff workshop reinforced many of these points from the staff perspective. Staff recognised that engagement can be fragmented across teams, shaped by legal and procedural requirements, and made harder by workload, limited resources, hand-offs and the difficulty of obtaining complete information quickly enough to respond clearly to residents.
- 6.10 **Working-age tenants in low-rise homes** - RAP attempted to hold a focus group with working-age tenants living in low-rise homes because the survey suggested higher dissatisfaction among younger and working-age residents, and among residents living in low-rise blocks. No residents attended the planned session. RAP therefore used a short follow-up survey to hear from the target group.

What RAP heard from working-age tenants: *These residents do not feel listened to or taken seriously in their everyday dealings with the Council.*

- 6.11 Although only eight residents responded, the responses were detailed and strongly expressed. Residents described long-running issues, delays, poor communication, lack of follow-up and a sense that they only received a response when they complained formally or involved councillors.

What RAP heard from working-age tenants: *They do not necessarily want more formal meetings. They want to know that when they raise an issue, it is acknowledged, tracked, followed up and resolved.*

- 6.12 This evidence suggests that some working-age residents may be unlikely to attend formal meetings, particularly where they have work, caring responsibilities or previous negative experiences. Flexible engagement, short digital routes, direct outreach and clear proof of impact may work better for this group than traditional meeting formats.
- 6.13 **Disabled residents, health and accessibility** - The survey showed that overall dissatisfaction among disabled respondents was similar to non-disabled respondents,

but disability or health was a significant barrier to involvement. This indicates that the issue is less about a simple satisfaction gap and more about accessibility design, service pathways and reasonable adjustments.

- 6.14 Meeting notes from Disability Action Haringey provided more detailed evidence about the practical barriers faced by disabled residents and members. Participants did not feel that the Council had made service pathways clear for them to engage with or access housing services. They described contacting the Council as difficult and said that reporting housing issues could be hard because of their disability needs.

What Disability Action Haringey told RAP: *Reporting housing issues is hard due to residents' disability needs.*

- 6.15 DAH members said the Council website and online reporting tools were difficult to navigate and were not always designed with disabled residents' needs in mind. They also felt that reporting and complaints processes did not always show enough understanding of the nature of their disability to respond appropriately.

What Disability Action Haringey told RAP: *More face-to-face access would improve communication and decision-making concerning disabled residents directly.*

- 6.16 DAH members suggested that access and engagement would be improved through more face-to-face contact, specialist support at customer service centres, and disability-trained housing officers attending disability hubs or forums. They also wanted carers, personal assistants and support agencies to be able to report issues or engage with the Council on their behalf where appropriate, without unnecessary procedural barriers such as requiring a Lasting Power of Attorney in every case.
- 6.17 This evidence reinforces the wider finding that engagement cannot rely only on formal meetings, digital routes or standard contact channels. For disabled residents, engagement is also about whether everyday access routes are usable, whether staff understand individual needs, and whether reasonable adjustments are built into service design from the start.

What staff told RAP: *Good engagement depends on clear communication, trust, ownership and follow-through.*

- 6.18 **Staff and internal systems** - Staff evidence generally supported the resident evidence. Staff recognised the importance of clear communication, ownership, trust and follow-through, but described barriers created by complex services, inconsistent information from internal teams, unclear ownership and gaps between services.

What staff told RAP: *Improving engagement is not only about producing more communication. It is about making communication clearer, more local, more joined-up, more accountable and more visibly linked to action.*

- 6.19 The response from the Head of Customer Experience was particularly important because it described barriers to first-contact resolution. Customer Services staff do not always have full visibility of case activity or correspondence, cannot confidently confirm next steps or timescales, and must rely on other teams for updates. The response also noted that NEC Contacts (Council's housing management system) has not been adopted consistently across housing services, leaving information fragmented across systems such as Teams, Outlook and NEC.

- 6.20 This means residents can be left chasing the Council and Customer Services staff can be left unable to give a clear answer. From RAP's perspective, this is not only a customer service issue. It directly affects whether residents experience engagement as responsive, transparent and accountable.

7. Findings of the Review

Finding 1: The Strategy is strong, but not yet consistently experienced in practice

The Strategy sets out the right direction and has strong alignment with the Haringey Deal and the consumer standards. However, many residents do not yet experience its principles consistently in their everyday dealings with housing services. The gap is not mainly about the wording of the Strategy; it is about delivery, visibility and consistency.

Finding 2: Engagement is judged through everyday service contact

Residents judge engagement through practical experiences: whether enquiries are acknowledged, whether appointments are kept, whether communication is clear, whether residents know who owns an issue, and whether the Council follows up and closes the loop. This means engagement cannot be seen only as formal resident involvement.

Finding 3: Feedback loops are the central weakness

The survey and workshops repeatedly show that residents do not always see what happens after they give feedback. The Council needs to show what changed, what did not change, and why. Without this, engagement can feel tokenistic even where activity has taken place.

Finding 4: Ownership and internal coordination affect residents' trust

Residents and staff both described problems where issues cross service boundaries. If staff cannot access information, obtain timely input from other teams or identify who owns the response, residents experience this as being passed around or ignored.

Finding 5: Leaseholders appear to experience a distinct engagement gap

Leaseholders reported particularly poor experiences, especially around service charges, major works, consultation timing, legal or technical information, estimates, actuals and communication between teams. The issue is not only the content of messages, but also the timeliness, clarity and coordination behind them.

Finding 6: Accessibility and inclusion need to be built into the design of engagement

Residents face barriers linked to health, disability, language, digital access, confidence, caring responsibilities, timing and location. Formal structures alone will not reach everyone. The Disability Action Haringey evidence shows that accessibility is also about the design of everyday housing routes: whether websites and reporting tools can be used, whether complaints staff understand disability-related needs, whether residents can obtain face-to-face help, and whether carers or support agencies can help residents communicate with the Council when needed.

Finding 7: There is positive practice to build on

The Council has examples of good engagement, including the Resident Voice Board, resident training, estate drop-ins, Resident Associations, local community work and the Resident Engagement Team's outreach. RAP's recommendations aim to build on this, not dismiss it.

Finding 8: The Resident Engagement Team is valued, but should not be left to carry the whole engagement agenda

Evidence from previous reviews, current staff evidence and resident feedback indicates that the Resident Engagement Team is generally well regarded. Staff and residents recognised the team's commitment, knowledge and ability to support residents to take part, understand housing issues and influence services.

What RAP heard: *The Resident Engagement Team was valued as a practical bridge between residents and the wider Council.*

However, the evidence also points to a wider organisational issue. Engagement cannot depend mainly on one specialist team. The Resident Engagement Team has expertise that should be used to support, train and challenge other teams, but the responsibility for listening, explaining, following up and involving residents must sit across all housing services.

This means engagement should be treated as part of everyday housing service delivery, not as an additional activity carried out by the Resident Engagement Team after decisions have already been made.

Finding 9: Evidence and performance information need a resident-facing narrative

The Council collects performance information and resident feedback, but the link between engagement activity, resident insight and service improvement is not always visible to the wider resident body. A stronger resident-facing narrative is needed to show what was heard, what changed and what will happen next.

What staff told RAP: *Residents may not notice internal changes unless the change is visible and relevant to their own issue.*

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The following recommendations are intended to help the Council meet the principles in its Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy and ensure residents experience those principles in practice.

1. Involve residents earlier in decisions that affect them

The Council should involve residents earlier where decisions are likely to have a direct practical, financial, service, estate, block or major works impact, rather than waiting until proposals are largely fixed.

2. Provide clearer ownership, escalation and engagement planning

A clearly identified contact, team or officer should take responsibility for resolving resident issues from beginning to end, especially when more than one department is involved. Residents should receive enough information to escalate, challenge or reopen stalled or wrongly closed issues without needing to make a formal complaint. Major works and

significant local projects should also include clear resident engagement plans, ideally developed with residents, explaining how they will be informed, involved and kept updated.

3. Improve follow-up and closure

The Council should improve follow-up arrangements so residents receive meaningful updates and clear confirmation of what has happened, what remains outstanding and when an issue has genuinely been resolved or closed.

4. Introduce clearer issue tracking across housing services

Housing services should adopt a clear and consistent issue-tracking approach so residents and staff can monitor progress at each stage. Residents should receive meaningful updates showing how their issue is progressing and, where relevant, how their feedback has influenced outcomes. Tracking should support residents directly and not be used only for internal purposes.

5. Provide honest, clear and plain English communication

Communication with tenants and leaseholders should be honest, clear, accurate and in plain English, especially when action is delayed or cannot proceed. The Council should explain what went wrong, what happens next and how resident feedback has shaped decisions. It should also strengthen “You said, we did / we cannot because” feedback so residents can see what has changed and why some actions cannot be taken.

6. Use the Resident Engagement Team’s expertise across housing

The Council should use the Resident Engagement Team’s expertise to help staff engage residents effectively and consistently across housing services. It should also create a joined-up housing engagement plan showing how residents can take part, how feedback will be used and how outcomes will be reported back.

7. Promote involvement opportunities and the role of resident engagement more clearly

Resident communications should be used more effectively to promote involvement opportunities, explain resident groups and scrutiny roles, and show how the Resident Engagement Team supports residents and works with other services. This could include regular contributions to Homezone, social media and other resident communications.

8. Improve leaseholder communication and coordination

The Council should improve coordination between Leasehold Services and other housing teams so leaseholders receive timely, clear and joined-up responses on service charges, estimates, actuals, major works, insurance, repairs responsibilities and other related issues.

9. Explain housing finance and service pressures more clearly

Tenants and leaseholders should receive clear annual information, through Homezone or other suitable communication routes, explaining how housing funds are spent, the pressures on the Housing Revenue Account, and the reasons behind decisions on services, works and charges.

10. Make appointments and engagement opportunities more flexible

Appointments and engagement opportunities should be more flexible, accessible and resident-focused, with better notice, more choice, digital options, out-of-hours options, follow-up and one-to-one contact where needed.

11. Build accessibility and reasonable adjustments into engagement from the start

Formal engagement should be accessible and flexible from the outset, with reasonable adjustments, face-to-face support where needed, and a range of digital, in-person and out-of-hours options so all residents can participate.

12. Create clearer housing routes for disabled and vulnerable residents

Disabled and vulnerable residents should have clearer and more accessible routes to raise housing issues. This should be supported by joined-up working across housing services, contractors, social care and disability forums. Face-to-face support should remain available where digital or phone contact is unsuitable.

13. Strengthen housing links with disability forums and organisations

Housing services, especially repairs, should build regular links with disability forums and organisations such as Disability Action Haringey, MIND or equivalent groups, so disabled residents have a clear route to raise housing issues and influence service improvements.

14. Improve internal coordination so residents receive consistent answers

Housing services should improve internal coordination through clear response standards, escalation routes, shared information and joined-up engagement planning, so residents receive timely, accurate and consistent answers.

15. Co-produce engagement plans for major works

The Council should involve residents as early as possible in major works planning and co-produce action plans where appropriate. These plans should be communicated clearly and followed up regularly throughout delivery.

16. Give Customer Services reliable shared records and clearer ownership of repeat issues

Customer Services should have access to reliable shared records and clear ownership arrangements for repeat housing issues, so residents receive accurate first-contact responses and accessible routes for support.

17. Use resident insight to plan engagement more proactively

The Council should use complaints, feedback, surveys and service data to understand residents better, identify communication gaps, target engagement and support groups needing different forms of help.

18. Further develop local communication at estate, block and neighbourhood level

Residents should receive timely and targeted updates on issues affecting their block, estate or neighbourhood through suitable local communication channels, such as estate bulletins, WhatsApp groups, digital noticeboards or other appropriate routes.

19. Use resident feedback in service and contractor monitoring

Resident feedback should be used more directly to monitor service quality, contractor performance, contract management and future procurement decisions.

20. Improve mutual understanding between residents and staff

The Council should use staff training, shadowing, case studies and shared learning so staff better understand resident experience and residents better understand how housing services work.

- 8.2 How the recommendations support the Strategy principles - Taken together, the recommendations would help residents see the Strategy reflected in everyday housing services. The table below maps the recommendations to the main Strategy principles and commitments.

Strategy principle	Linked recommendations	How they help
Open and transparent	2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18	Clearer ownership, tracking, plain English explanations, finance information, internal information flow and visible feedback.
Inclusive and accessible	10, 11, 12, 13, 18	Flexible routes, reasonable adjustments, face-to-face support, disability links and local communication.
Collaborative	1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 20	Earlier involvement, co-produced plans, engagement as

		everyone's responsibility and shared learning.
Responsive / feedback loop	2, 3, 4, 5, 14, 16, 17	Clear follow-up, case visibility, internal standards, first-contact information and use of resident insight.
Evidence-led	17, 19, 20	Use complaints, repeat contact, feedback, performance and resident experience to inform services and contractor monitoring.
Focused on impact	3, 4, 5, 6, 15, 17, 19	Show what changed, what remains outstanding, how progress is tracked and how resident feedback influences delivery.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 RAP recommends that the Council responds to each recommendation with a clear action, lead service, timescale and proposed measure of success. Some actions may be quick improvements, while others will need to be built into business planning, digital development, staff training or service improvement plans. Where the Council is unable to accept or deliver a recommendation, it should provide a clear explanation of why, including whether the issue is linked to resources, legal constraints, system limitations, competing priorities or a different planned approach.
- 9.2 RAP should receive a progress update at agreed intervals, including what has changed, what remains in progress, and what residents should expect to notice. Progress updates should avoid describing activity only; they should show outcomes and impact.
- 9.3 The Council should consider publishing a resident-facing engagement impact report or update, showing what was heard, what changed, what could not be done and why. This would support transparency, trust and the Strategy's commitment to accountability.
- 9.4 RAP recognises that some recommendations will take longer than others and that not every issue can be resolved immediately. However, the Panel believes residents should receive a clear response, honest explanation and visible progress. The test of success will not be whether more engagement activity takes place, but whether tenants and leaseholders experience clearer communication, earlier involvement, better follow-up and more visible impact from their feedback.

MAIN REPORT ENDS

Appendices: Session notes and responses

1. RAP engagement review survey report
2. Leaseholder focus group notes and outcome note
3. Working-age low-rise tenant outcome note
4. Leasehold and Major Works staff workshop notes and outcome note
5. Communications / Resident Involvement / Customer Services workshop notes and outcome note
6. Head of Customer Experience response to questions posed by the resident-led scrutiny group
7. Disability Action Haringey meeting notes and discussion material

Appendix 1

Resident Advisory Panel – Engagement review survey findings –

Summary

This resident survey provides the evidence base for RAP's engagement scrutiny review and helps answer RAP's review question: ***“How can we ensure that all tenants and leaseholders experience engagement that reflects the principles outlined in the new Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy (2025–2028)?”*** It shows, at scale, where engagement is working and where it feels most broken — both by engagement principle and by service area. The headline picture is that many residents are dissatisfied, and the strongest themes are about trust and follow-through: residents want clearer communication, consistent responses, and proof that their feedback leads to action or, where it can't, a clear explanation. The findings point RAP towards an inspection phase focused on how the Council closes feedback loops, makes outcomes visible, assigns clear ownership, and involves residents early enough to influence decisions — so the six engagement principles are experienced consistently across services, not just set out in the [Strategy](#).

A. Survey findings analysis

1) Dataset overview (what we've got)

- 831 responses; 41 fields.
 - Tenure split (strong base sizes):
 - Secure tenants: 567
 - Leaseholders: 205
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2) Headline finding: overall dissatisfaction is high

Overall satisfaction with engagement (831 responses):

- Very dissatisfied: 40.9% (340)
- Fairly dissatisfied: 15.2% (126)
- Neither: 15.0% (125)
- Fairly satisfied: 16.5% (137)
- Very satisfied: 10.3% (86)
- Not sure: 2.0% (17)

Net: 56.1% dissatisfied (very + fairly).

The standout is how many are “very dissatisfied” — that usually signals not just “could be better” but strong frustration / low trust.

3) Which engagement principles (from Haringey's new Tenant Engagement strategy) are weakest (the top 2–3 priorities)

The six Strategy principles were measured directly on a 6-point scale. The pattern is consistent:

Weakest principle 1 — Evidence-led

Agree: **21.8%** vs Disagree: **56.6%**

This is basically: *"You ask us for feedback, but we don't believe it's used to improve services."*

Weakest principle 2 — Responsive ("You said, we did")

Agree: **23.8%** vs Disagree: **50.8%**

This is classic *feedback loop failure*: residents don't feel they get a clear response, outcome, or explanation.

Weakest principle 3 — Focused on impact

Agree: **26.4%** vs Disagree: **44.0%**

Even where the Council does engage, residents don't see visible change on estates/blocks/services.

Next weakest (close behind): Collaborative

Agree: **33.2%** vs Disagree: **43.0%**

Residents don't feel involved *early enough* to shape decisions.

The extra "ways of working" statements reinforce the same story

- **Learn from mistakes:** Agree **17.3%**, Disagree **55.4%** (very weak)
- **Share power:** Agree **20.1%**, Disagree **53.3%** (very weak)
- "Overlooked voices" and "Focus on what's strong" are also net negative / low agreement.

What this means for RAP:

The inspection phase should test the things that make residents trust engagement: whether the Council replies properly, whether people can see what changed as a result, who is responsible for making things happen, and whether residents are asked early enough to influence decisions (not after decisions are already made).

4) Which services feel most problematic (where engagement is "poor/very poor")

Across services, the most negative are:

- **Repairs & Maintenance:** 69.0% poor/very poor (highest)
- **Major Works:** 55.9% poor/very poor
- **Estate Services & Neighbourhood Improvement:** 53.3% poor/very poor
- **Leasehold Services:** 52.6% poor/very poor
- **Asset Management:** 50.2% poor/very poor

Interpretation

These are services where residents are more likely to experience disruption and need clear, timely communication, named ownership, and reliable follow-through (for example, progress updates, realistic timescales, and clear explanations of decisions). This aligns with the survey's weakest engagement principles, particularly Evidence-led, Responsive ("You said, we did") and Focused on impact.

Relationship to RAP's recent repairs review

Members will be aware that you recently completed a resident-led review of the repairs customer journey, with recommendations agreed in June 2025. Many of those recommendations relate to systems, communication and service culture and may take time to embed and translate into improved resident experience. This engagement scrutiny review should therefore avoid duplicating a full repairs inspection, and will focus primarily on how the Council is embedding the six engagement principles across other key housing services. RAP should maintain light-touch oversight of progress on repairs by requesting a brief update against the June 2025 recommendations (including what has changed, what is in progress, and what residents should expect to notice).

5) Barriers to involvement (why engagement is hard even when people want to participate)

Have you wanted to give feedback / get involved but found it hard?

- Yes: 348 (42.1%)
- No: 325 (39.3%)
- Not sure: 153 (18.5%)

Among those who answered the multi-tick option question (479 tick responses), the top barriers are:

1. Negative past experiences ("nothing changes") – 45.9%
2. Lack of information / short notice – 44.5%
3. Meeting times – 34.4%
4. Meeting locations – 22.1%
5. Disability or health – 21.3%

Then: lack of confidence, caring responsibilities, digital access, language barriers.

Interpretation:

This is important: the biggest barriers are not "people don't care". They're learned futility ("nothing changes") + practical access (notice, times, health, location). That's actionable for RAP through recommendations.

6) Perception of fairness / inclusion (“overlooked voices”)

Do tenants/leaseholders from all backgrounds have a fair chance to be heard?

- No (definitely not + not really): 45.6%
- Yes (definitely + to some extent): 34.9%
- Not sure: 19.5%

So the dataset is telling you: *nearly half think the system is unfair*, and only about a third think it's broadly fair.

B. Dissatisfaction / “quirks” across groups (what to show RAP)

Leaseholders are much more dissatisfied than secure tenants.

- About 3 in 4 leaseholders (76.6%) say they are dissatisfied with engagement overall.
- About 1 in 2 secure tenants (50.8%) say the same.

When asked about the six engagement principles, leaseholders are consistently more negative than secure tenants. The biggest gaps are on:

- being involved early enough to influence decisions (Collaborative), and
- getting clear follow-up / “You said, we did” (Responsive), and
- believing feedback is used to improve services (Evidence-led).

Services: poor/very poor by tenure (key ones)

Service	Secure tenants: % poor/very poor	Leaseholders: % poor/very poor
Repairs & Maintenance	67.5%	76.4%
Major works	54.5%	69.2%
Leasehold services	39.3%	73.6%
Estate services	51.3%	66.9%
Resident engagement	42.7%	55.3%

Takeaway:

Leaseholders aren't just “a bit more negative” — they look like a separate experience of engagement, especially around consultation, major works, service charges, accountability and follow-through.

2) Age “quirks”

Dissatisfaction is highest among:

(“Dissatisfied” = Very dissatisfied + Fairly dissatisfied)

- 35–44: 67.8% dissatisfied (118 responses)
- 25–34: 65.3% dissatisfied (49 responses)
- 45–54: 58.7% dissatisfied (172 responses)
- 55–64: 53.0% dissatisfied (230 responses)
- 65–74: 51.8% dissatisfied (139 responses)
- 75+ : 28.6% dissatisfied (42 responses) (*smaller base, so treat as a signal rather than a firm conclusion*)
- Under 25: 58.3% dissatisfied (12 responses) (*very small base*)

Possible explanations worth testing in inspection:

- working-age residents face time barriers (meetings / chasing)
 - younger residents may have higher expectations of service updates and digital comms
 - older residents may have stronger local networks, more time, or different engagement routes
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3) Disability

Overall dissatisfaction is similar:

- Disabled: 53.5% dissatisfied
- Not disabled: 55.4% dissatisfied

But disability/health is a major barrier in the “hard to get involved” question (21.3% of tick responses).

So the issue here may be less “overall satisfaction gap” and more accessibility design and reasonable adjustments (formats, venues, follow-up channels).

4) Where people live

Dissatisfaction varies by property type:

- Low-rise blocks: 61.0% dissatisfied
- Houses: 50.9% dissatisfied
- High-rise blocks: 53.0% dissatisfied
- Sheltered/supported: 34.0% dissatisfied (again: smaller base, but consistent with the age pattern)

This is useful if RAP wants to prioritise 1–2 estates/blocks for visits: low-rise blocks look especially negative.

5) Length of time in home (a really interesting “quirk”)

- Less than 1 year: 30.4% dissatisfied and 47.8% satisfied
- Everyone else clusters around ~57–61% dissatisfied.

Interpretation:

Newer residents are far more positive — suggesting dissatisfaction is driven by accumulated experience (repeated chasing, repeated disappointments, long-running issues).

C. Free-text summaries by question (focused on tenant participation/engagement)

1) “Example where the Council has done one of these things well or badly” (406 responses)

Residents most often use this question to describe situations where they tried to raise issues or provide feedback but felt the process broke down through poor communication, unclear ownership, and limited follow-through. Repairs and maintenance is the most common context, but the underlying point is about engagement: people describe having to chase repeatedly, receiving inconsistent updates, and not knowing who is responsible. Positive examples tend to be when a specific officer kept residents informed, explained decisions clearly, and closed the loop. Overall, the examples reinforce the weakest principles: Evidence-led, Responsive (“You said, we did”), and focused on impact.

2) “Please explain your answer” (fair chance to be heard) (338 responses)

Residents describe participation as uneven: those who are confident, persistent, or already connected are perceived as more likely to influence outcomes, while others struggle to get attention or timely responses. Many comments focus on the experience of not being listened to—messages not answered, unclear routes for escalation, and the sense that consultation happens after decisions are effectively set. People often link fairness to visible outcomes: where residents don’t see change, they interpret engagement as tokenistic rather than meaningful. A smaller number of comments suggest good practice exists in pockets, but overall the tone is sceptical and frustration-laden.

3) “Which groups are less likely to be heard, and why?” (171 responses)

Responses repeatedly identify groups that face practical barriers to participation or are less likely to be confident navigating Council processes. The most frequently named are residents with language barriers/limited English, some ethnic minority residents (often linked to language and confidence), older residents, and people who are disabled, digitally excluded, or have caring responsibilities. Working-age residents are also mentioned, mainly due to timing and availability. Explanations combine practical barriers (language, digital access, meeting

times, health) with a broader perception that engagement routes work best for those who already know how the system works.

4) “If you could change ONE thing...” (518 responses)

The most common “one change” is to make engagement more responsive and easier to navigate: timely replies, clear updates, and a reliable way to understand what happens next. Residents want communication that is specific, not generic, and they want consistent ownership so they don’t feel they are being passed around. A second strong theme is being treated seriously and respectfully, with residents wanting their views recorded accurately and acknowledged. A third theme is closing the loop: residents repeatedly ask for the Council to show what has changed as a result of feedback, and to explain when something cannot be done and why.

5) “Anything else RAP should know...” (355 responses)

Many residents use this as a space to explain why they disengage: long-running experiences that have reduced trust and confidence that participation makes a difference. Again, repairs is a frequent backdrop, but the engagement message is broader—residents describe the emotional effort of repeatedly raising issues without resolution, which can lead to resignation (“no point”). People also comment on accountability, staff attitude, and the lack of clear escalation routes. Practical improvement suggestions focus on named contacts/ownership, clearer response standards, honest timescales, and visible closure of issues—including sharing “what we heard / what we did” summaries so participation feels worthwhile.

E. Recommendations: who RAP should speak to during inspections (to generate strong, practical recommendations)

Your work programme already suggests focus groups + community org sessions + staff workshops. The survey gives a clear steer on who should be in those.

1) Resident focus groups (3–4 sessions) — recommended priorities

Group 1 — Leaseholders (must-have)

Because the leaseholder dissatisfaction signal is huge.

What to probe:

- how consultation works in practice (timing, clarity, influence)
- major works comms and “decision already made” experiences
- case ownership, escalation routes, and response standards
- what “good engagement” would look like in leasehold context (documents, understanding costs, timescales)

Group 2 — Working-age tenants in blocks (25–44 bias)

Because dissatisfaction peaks at 25–44 and low-rise blocks are particularly negative.
What to probe:

- contact routes that fail (phone/email/app)
- expectations for progress tracking and timeframes
- practical barriers (meeting times, short notice)
- what would rebuild trust quickly (quick wins)

Group 3 — Residents facing access barriers (disability/health + carers)

Even if overall satisfaction is similar, barriers are real.
What to probe:

- reasonable adjustments: formats, timing, venue, follow-up
- whether systems are “one size fits all”
- what’s inaccessible in real terms (letters, digital channels, processes)

Group 4 — Residents with language barriers / digitally excluded

The “overlooked voices” question points strongly here.
What to probe:

- whether translation and plain-English comms exist in reality
- whether residents know how to engage, and what stops them
- which community channels they trust (faith groups, local associations, ESOL groups)

If RAP can only do three groups, I’d prioritise:

1. Leaseholders
2. Working-age tenants in blocks
3. Language/digital exclusion group

2) Community organisations / community leaders (1–2 sessions)

Pick orgs that can speak for overlooked voices and help with practical solutions:

- local organisations supporting residents with **limited English** (ESOL/community language groups)
- disability support networks (local, not generic)
- faith/community hubs that residents already use
- resident-led groups that reach people who *don’t* join formal TRAs

What to get from them:

- which groups are most missing and why

- what comms channels actually reach people
- what “low-friction” engagement looks like (time/format)
- how to avoid tokenism and build trust

3) Staff workshops (1–2) — recommended attendees and why (amended)

Workshop A — Resident Engagement Team + Contact Centre/front door / Communications Team

Why: The biggest requested change is communication and follow-up, and the “front door” is central to whether residents feel heard.

Probe:

- response standards and consistency
- whether residents can track progress (and what residents are told at each step)
- what data is captured and how it is used to improve services
- how “You said, we did” is currently communicated (and how it could be strengthened)

Workshop B — Leasehold + Major Works

Why: Leaseholders are significantly more dissatisfied overall and major works engagement is strongly negative.

Probe:

- consultation timing and clarity (how early residents are involved)
- how decisions are made and how resident input influences outcomes
- how information is communicated (scope, costs, changes, reasons)
- what would improve fairness, transparency and legitimacy

4) Service visit: Leasehold / Major Works (short inspection idea)

- **Service visit to Leasehold / Major Works** to understand how the service works day-to-day and where engagement breaks down.
- RAP will ask staff to talk through the key stages (how residents are told, when they can influence, how updates/changes are communicated, and how queries are owned and closed).
- RAP will also review a small sample of anonymised communications (e.g., 5–10 letters/emails/updates) to test clarity, timing and follow-up.

Output: a short note on “where it breaks” plus 3–5 practical recommendations (early involvement, clearer updates, named ownership, visible closure).

Appendix 2

Resident Advisory Panel

Leaseholder Focus Group – outcome note

Date: 16 March 2026, 7pm–8pm

Session: Leaseholder Focus Group

Facilitators present: Graeme, Eric and Grace

Leaseholders present: 6 leaseholders attended

1. Purpose of the session

This is RAP's third review since its relaunch. The current review is examining how resident engagement works in practice against the aims and principles set out in the new Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy (2025–2028).

The leaseholder session was held because the survey carried out at the start of the inspection phase showed a significantly poorer experience for leaseholders than for secure tenants. Around three in four leaseholders said they were dissatisfied with engagement overall, compared with around half of secure tenants. The survey also suggested that leaseholders were particularly negative about being involved early enough, receiving clear follow-up and believing that feedback leads to visible action.

The purpose of the session was therefore to hear directly from leaseholders about:

- how engagement with the Council works in practice
- what appears to be going wrong from a leaseholder perspective
- what practical changes would improve engagement and help the Strategy principles be experienced more consistently in reality

2. Attendance and context

Six leaseholders attended the session. Eric hosted the questions.

Although participants often referred to specific service problems, especially around repairs, major works, service charges and leasehold services, the discussion repeatedly came back to the wider issue of how the Council communicates, responds, explains decisions, follows up and takes accountability. For that reason, the main value of the session lies not in the individual cases raised, but in what they reveal about the Council's overall approach to engagement in practice.

3. Overall message from the session

The strongest overall message was that leaseholders do not experience engagement as a separate or positive process running alongside services. Instead, they experience it through

their everyday dealings with the Council, especially when trying to get answers, understand charges, challenge decisions, or resolve long-running problems.

Seen in that light, the focus group suggests that the main issue is not that the Council's new Engagement Strategy sets out the wrong principles, but that leaseholders do not yet experience those principles consistently in practice. The discussion pointed in particular to gaps around early involvement, transparency, follow-up, visible outcomes and clear accountability, which is consistent with RAP's survey findings.

Participants described engagement as being shaped by poor communication, weak transparency, fragmented responsibility between departments, and too little evidence that concerns raised by leaseholders lead to meaningful action. In this sense, the problem was seen not simply as one of communication technique, but of organisational culture.

A particularly important point raised in the session was that the quality of engagement cannot be separated from the Council's wider way of working. One participant observed that responses can sometimes feel drafted to make the problem go away rather than to engage properly with the substance of the issue. This suggests that, for leaseholders, engagement is judged less by whether the Council offers formal opportunities to participate, and more by whether the organisation behaves in a way that is transparent, respectful, accountable and genuinely open to challenge.

4. Key themes heard from leaseholders

A. Communication is poor and often feels one-way

Participants repeatedly described communication as weak, unclear and difficult to trust. Leaseholders said they often received generic or incomplete responses that did not properly answer the question being asked. Some described receiving demands for payment or updates about action without a clear explanation of what had been done, why the decision had been taken, or how figures had been calculated.

This created a sense that communication was often about telling residents something, rather than engaging with them in a meaningful way.

B. Accountability is unclear and the organisation feels fragmented

A strong theme was that residents did not experience the Council as a joined-up organisation. Participants described being passed between departments, struggling to identify who was responsible, and finding that one team often did not seem to know what another was doing.

This was particularly frustrating where leaseholders were trying to understand charges, repairs, insurance issues or major works communication. The result was a strong sense that no one person or team was clearly accountable for resolving the issue from start to finish.

C. Leaseholder issues feel especially complex and financially exposing

Participants felt that some issues affect leaseholders more sharply than tenants because they involve charges, liability, consultation rights, insurance and more complex routes for getting answers.

Service charges, insurance costs, inconsistent figures and unclear calculations were all raised as examples. Leaseholders described the difficulty of being expected to pay significant sums while still being unable to get a clear and reliable explanation of how the figures had been arrived at or who could authoritatively answer their questions.

D. Poor follow-up makes engagement feel pointless

Participants described the effort involved in repeatedly chasing issues, being given reference numbers without resolution, and feeling worn down by the amount of effort needed to get even simple matters addressed.

There was a strong sense that engagement becomes “not worth the effort” when residents have to keep starting again, are not given meaningful updates, or reach the point where external escalation feels like the only way to get movement. This creates resignation and undermines trust in the value of participating at all.

E. Organisational culture matters as much as process

An important insight from the discussion was that leaseholders do not see engagement as a narrow matter of meetings, surveys or consultation exercises. They experience it through the Council’s whole organisational culture.

Participants spoke about whether questions are taken seriously, whether responses are respectful, whether information is openly shared, and whether the Council appears genuinely interested in solving problems. This suggests that any review of engagement needs to look not only at formal participation mechanisms, but also at service culture, tone, behaviour and accountability.

F. Good engagement would mean clarity, ownership, transparency and visible follow-through

When asked what good engagement would look like, participants described:

- clearer and more accessible information
- fewer layers and dead ends
- a way to challenge a repair or issue that has been wrongly marked as complete
- named ownership of issues
- clearer website routes
- stronger senior accountability
- better explanations of decisions, costs and next steps
- greater local visibility and less fragmentation
- more stability in leadership and service arrangements

Participants were not asking for engagement to be more elaborate. They were asking for it to be clearer, more honest, more joined-up and more accountable.

5. What this suggests about the Engagement Strategy

The focus group suggests that the main issue is not that the Engagement Strategy sets out the wrong principles. Rather, leaseholders' experience suggests that those principles are not yet being experienced consistently in practice.

In particular, the session reinforces concerns already identified in the survey around:

- residents not feeling involved early enough
- weak follow-up and closure
- limited visible evidence that feedback leads to change
- uncertainty about who owns issues and makes things happen

The discussion also suggests that, for leaseholders, engagement is inseparable from the everyday behaviour of services. In practice, leaseholders judge the credibility of engagement through the quality of communication, the clarity of information, the seriousness of follow-up, and whether anyone takes ownership when things go wrong.

6. Possible recommendations emerging from the focus group

The focus group pointed to a number of possible recommendations that RAP may wish to consider at the end of the inspection phase is complete and all the evidence from the other sessions has been reviewed.

Although this session focused on leaseholders, many of the issues raised were about the Council's wider approach to communication, accountability and follow-up. Some of the possible recommendations below may therefore have relevance for tenants as well as leaseholders.

1. Earlier involvement in decisions that affect residents

The Council should involve residents earlier where decisions are likely to have a direct practical or financial impact, rather than waiting until proposals are largely fixed.

2. Clear ownership of issues across departments

The Council should make it clearer which team or officer is responsible for seeing an issue through from start to finish, especially where more than one department is involved.

3. Better follow-up and clearer closure

The Council should improve follow-up arrangements so residents receive meaningful updates and clear confirmation of what has happened, what remains outstanding, and when an issue is genuinely resolved.

4. Clearer and more transparent communication

The Council should provide clearer explanations of decisions, charges, responsibilities, timescales and next steps, using plain English and responding directly to the questions residents are asking.

5. Stronger feedback loops

The Council should strengthen feedback loops so residents can see more clearly how their views have been taken into account, including clearer “you said, we did” reporting and honest explanations where a suggestion cannot be taken forward.

6. Engagement reflected in everyday service delivery

The Council should recognise that, for many residents, engagement is judged by everyday experience — whether services communicate clearly, respond properly, follow things up and take responsibility when problems arise — not just by formal engagement activity.

7. Clearer contacts and escalation routes

The Council should make it easier for residents to know who to contact, how to escalate an issue, and how to challenge decisions or reopen cases that have been wrongly marked as complete. One option to explore would be named local contacts or named officers for particular service areas.

8. Resident feedback used more clearly to improve services and contractors

The Council should make better use of resident feedback in monitoring service quality and contractor performance, including considering whether resident experience of contractors and subcontractors should feed more directly into contract management and future procurement decisions.

These points are offered as possible lines for RAP to consider further alongside evidence from the other inspection phase activities before agreeing any final recommendations.

7. Concluding reflection

The leaseholder focus group reinforced the survey’s message that leaseholders often experience engagement as weaker, less transparent and less effective than secure tenants do.

The strongest concerns were not about participation in the abstract, but about the practical realities of trying to get answers, influence decisions, understand charges and see issues through to resolution.

The discussion builds on the survey findings by adding more depth and practical insight into the leaseholder experience. Taken together, the survey and focus group provide a stronger basis for RAP to develop recommendations about how the Council can improve its approach to engagement and make the aims of the Engagement Strategy more visible in practice.

Appendix 3

Resident Advisory Panel

Working-age Tenants in Low-rise Homes Survey – outcome note

Date of planned focus group: 15 April 2026, 6.30pm–7.30pm

Evidence source: Survey feedback from tenants aged 25–44 living in low-rise properties

Facilitators for planned session: Esther and Valdet

Survey responses received: 8

1. Purpose of the exercise

This is part of RAP's third review since its relaunch. The current review is examining how resident engagement works in practice against the aims and principles set out in the new Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2025–2028.

RAP had planned to hold a focus group on 15 April 2026 with working-age tenants 25-44 living in low-rise properties. Esther and Valdet were ready to deliver the session, but no residents attended.

Rather than lose the opportunity to hear from this group, RAP agreed to send the focus group questions out as a short survey to tenants in the same age group (closing on Friday 24 April). The purpose was to understand:

- How working-age tenants in low-rise homes experience communication and engagement with the Council
- why this group may feel less satisfied with communication, involvement and response
- what makes it difficult for them to take part or have their say; and
- what practical changes would improve how the Council communicates, listens and involves them

Although the number of responses was small, it compares favourably to focus group numbers and the feedback gives useful insight into the experiences of a group that RAP had specifically wanted to hear from.

2. Response profile and context

Eight residents responded to the survey.

Most respondents described themselves as living in a low-rise block of up to four floors. One respondent had recently moved to a house after living in a low-rise block for over 10 years, and one respondent lived in a house.

The respondents were aged between 25 and 44. This is important because RAP was specifically trying to understand the experience of working-age tenants, including people who may have work, caring responsibilities, limited time, or previous negative experiences that affect their willingness to engage.

The responses were detailed and often strongly expressed. Several residents described long-running issues, repairs delays, poor communication, lack of follow-up, and the feeling that they only get a response when they complain formally or involve councillors.

3. Overall message from the survey

The strongest overall message is that these residents do not feel listened to or taken seriously in their everyday dealings with the Council.

Several respondents described engagement as pointless because they do not believe anything changes. This was not mainly because they object to being asked for views. It was because their past experiences had made them doubt whether the Council would act on what they say.

The responses suggest that, for this group, engagement is judged through practical service experience: whether repairs are logged, whether appointments are kept, whether emails are answered, whether residents know who to contact, whether they get updates, and whether anyone takes responsibility for resolving the issue.

A repeated message was that residents want clearer communication, direct contact, response times, progress updates and accountability. They do not necessarily want more formal meetings. They want to know that when they raise an issue, it is acknowledged, tracked, followed up and resolved.

4. Key themes heard from residents

A. Residents feel they have to complain before action is taken

Several respondents said they felt they had to complain, escalate, or involve councillors before anything happened.

One respondent said they felt they had to complain to get things done. Another said the Council only listens when an issue is escalated to a formal complaint or when a councillor gets involved. Another described having to fight for an honest factual response before eventually giving up.

This suggests that residents may not experience normal service routes as reliable. If residents believe escalation is the only way to get action, this damages trust and makes engagement feel reactive rather than constructive.

B. Communication and response times are a major concern

Residents repeatedly referred to poor communication, long delays, and not knowing when they would receive a response.

Examples included:

- Emails taking months to receive a reply
- repair reports not being logged
- appointments being booked months ahead
- residents not being told when they would hear back

- residents being told to email, but not being given a clear response time
- lack of clarity about who to contact; and
- residents not knowing whether their issue had been seen, referred or progressed

This suggests that a key improvement would be clearer response standards, acknowledgements, case numbers, progress updates and named or traceable contacts.

C. Repairs and appointments are a particular source of frustration

Repairs were a strong theme in the responses. Residents described delayed repairs, missed appointments, contractors attending only to take photographs, repairs not being followed up, and residents having to take annual leave for appointments that did not happen.

One respondent described waiting three months for a contractor to attend, only for the contractor to take a photograph of a crack that had already been submitted with the repair report. The resident then heard nothing further and the repair remained unresolved.

Another resident described taking annual leave to wait for a gas check appointment, only for no one to attend.

These examples show how poor communication and poor follow-up have a practical impact on working-age tenants, particularly where they have to arrange time off work.

D. Past experiences make residents less willing to engage

A very strong theme was that previous negative experiences have reduced residents' confidence in engagement.

Several respondents said they felt feedback was pointless because nothing changes. Others said they felt unheard, ignored, pushed aside or not taken seriously. One respondent described engagement as feeling like a tick-box exercise.

This is significant because it suggests that low participation may not simply be due to lack of interest. Some residents may not engage because experience has taught them that it is not worth their time.

E. Time is a barrier, but trust is an even bigger barrier

Some respondents identified practical barriers, especially timing. One respondent said groups immediately after the weekly rush hour are not easy to attend. Others referred to lack of time, work pressures, or difficulty attending meetings.

However, the deeper barrier was trust. Residents were more likely to say they would take part if they had confidence that action would be taken.

This suggests that engagement with working-age tenants needs to be convenient, but also credible. Flexible times and formats will help, but residents also need to believe that their involvement will lead to something.

F. Residents want clearer ownership and direct contact

A repeated practical suggestion was that residents need someone they can contact directly to find out what is happening.

Respondents asked for:

- A named or direct contact
- clearer response times
- a case number or reference that can be chased
- updates showing whether a matter has been seen, referred or progressed
- signposting to the right officer if the first person cannot help; and
- clear deadlines for when the resident will hear back

This links strongly with themes from the wider review around ownership, follow-up and closing the loop.

G. Residents want the Council to act on what they say

When asked what one change would most improve communication, listening and involvement, residents repeatedly focused on action and accountability.

Suggestions included:

- Having someone to contact directly about progress
- more transparency around response times
- taking accountability and acting on what people say
- staff having better knowledge of the topic being discussed
- live tracking updates
- case numbers and progress reports
- taking feedback on board; and
- more one-to-one and electronic communication

This shows that residents are not asking for complicated engagement structures. They want practical, reliable and visible follow-through.

H. Working-age tenants may feel overlooked

One respondent suggested that working-class or working-age tenants may be treated as less vulnerable and therefore not treated as a priority. Others referred to the pressure of work, annual leave, timing, and the difficulty of repeatedly chasing.

This suggests that working-age tenants may face specific barriers. They may not be available for daytime appointments or early evening meetings, may lose time or income when appointments fail, and may have limited capacity to keep chasing unresolved issues.

5. What this suggests about the Engagement Strategy

The survey suggests that the Strategy principles are highly relevant to this group, but are not yet being experienced consistently.

- **Open and transparent:** residents want clearer information, response times, contact routes and progress updates.
- **Inclusive and accessible:** engagement needs to work for people who are working, have limited time, or cannot attend meetings at inconvenient times.
- **Collaborative:** residents want to be taken seriously and involved in ways that lead to action.
- **Responsive:** this is one of the strongest gaps. Residents want replies, updates, case tracking and evidence that their issue is moving forward.
- **Evidence-led:** residents want their feedback and complaints to be used to improve services, not treated as a tick-box exercise.
- **Focused on impact:** residents want visible change. Many said they are reluctant to engage because they do not believe anything will happen.

The findings reinforce the wider message from RAP's review: residents judge engagement through everyday service experience. If repairs are not logged, appointments are missed, emails are not answered, or no one owns the issue, residents will not feel engaged, even if formal engagement opportunities exist.

6. Possible recommendations emerging from this survey

Improve response times and acknowledgement of enquiries

The Council should provide clearer response times when residents make contact, especially by email or online forms. Residents should receive an acknowledgement, a reference number where appropriate, and a clear indication of when they can expect a reply.

Introduce clearer progress tracking for resident issues

Residents should be able to see whether an issue has been received, referred, assigned, progressed or closed. This could be similar to tracking used in repairs, but applied more consistently across other housing enquiries.

Provide clearer ownership of issues

Residents should know who is responsible for dealing with their issue. Where the first officer cannot resolve the matter, they should signpost or refer it to the correct person rather than leaving the resident to start again.

Improve appointment flexibility for working residents

The Council should consider how appointments, gas checks, repairs visits and engagement sessions can better reflect the needs of working residents. This includes reasonable appointment choices, better notice, and stronger follow-up when appointments are missed.

Make engagement more convenient for working-age tenants

Engagement opportunities should include flexible options, such as online surveys, short digital feedback forms, evening or weekend options, and one-to-one contact where appropriate. Meetings immediately after rush hour may not work well for this group.

Build trust by showing what changes after feedback

The Council should make clear what has changed as a result of resident feedback. This is particularly important for residents who have stopped engaging because they believe nothing will happen.

Strengthen accountability when things go wrong

Where appointments are missed, repairs are not followed up, or enquiries go unanswered, the Council should explain what went wrong and what will happen next. Residents should not have to make formal complaints before action is taken.

Improve staff knowledge and signposting

Residents should be able to speak to staff who understand the issue or can quickly refer them to someone who does. This is especially important where residents are dealing with complex or long-running housing problems.

Recognise the impact of poor service on residents' wellbeing

Several responses showed that poor communication and unresolved issues can affect residents' mental health, confidence and trust. The Council should recognise this impact when designing engagement and service responses.

Do not rely only on focus groups to hear from this group

Because no one attended the planned focus group, RAP may wish to note that traditional meeting formats may not be the best way to hear from working-age tenants in low-rise properties. Surveys, direct outreach, digital contact and flexible engagement may be more effective.

7. Concluding reflection

Although the number of responses was small, the feedback is consistent and strongly expressed.

The main message is that working-age tenants in low-rise homes may not be disengaged because they do not care. They may be disengaged because previous experience has made them feel that raising issues, giving feedback or attending meetings does not lead to action.

For this group, better engagement would mean clearer communication, direct contact, reliable response times, progress updates, flexible ways to take part, and visible evidence that the Council has acted on what residents say.

The failed focus group is itself useful evidence. It suggests that RAP and the Council may need to think differently about how to hear from working-age residents, especially those balancing work, family, caring responsibilities or long-running housing frustrations.

The key lesson is that engagement needs to fit around residents' lives and prove that their time is worthwhile.

Appendix 4

Resident Advisory Panel

Leasehold / Major Works Staff Workshop – outcome note

Date: 16 April 2026, 2.00pm–3.30pm

Session: Leasehold / Major Works staff workshop

Facilitators present: Eric & Graeme

Apologies: Lee

Staff present: William John (Resident Liaison Officer), Elena Wilmot (Contact Reliance Manager), Suzanne Prothero (Head of Home Ownership), Grace Ayeni (Resident Engagement Officer), Rahel Uddin (Service Charge Team) and Yusuf Ali (Service Charge Team)

1. Purpose of the session

This is RAP's third review since its relaunch. The current review is examining how resident engagement works in practice against the aims and principles set out in the new Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy (2025–2028).

The staff workshop with Leasehold and Major Works was held because the resident survey carried out at the start of the inspection phase showed high dissatisfaction with engagement overall and identified Leasehold Services and Major Works as two of the areas where engagement was experienced particularly negatively. Leaseholders in particular reported significantly poorer experiences than secure tenants.

RAP had already held a focus group with leaseholders to hear directly from residents. The purpose of this staff session was to hear the perspective of officers working in and around these services, in order to understand:

How engagement works in practice from a staff point of view

what gets in the way of good engagement

where staff believe engagement breaks down

what practical improvements might help residents experience the Strategy principles more consistently in reality

The discussion was not intended to focus on individual complaints or to blame particular officers. Its purpose was to understand the service, identify practical barriers, and help RAP test the resident evidence against the staff perspective.

2. Attendance and context

The workshop brought together staff connected to Leasehold Services and Major Works, Service Charges.

The session showed that staff do not generally see engagement as a separate activity detached from core service delivery. Instead, engagement was described as something that happens through day-to-day contact with residents: when bills are issued, when legal notices are sent, when works are consulted on, when queries are answered, and when problems are followed through to resolution.

Although staff spoke about specific service pressures, including service charges, consultation notices, resident liaison, workload and the complexity of queries, the discussion repeatedly returned to wider themes of communication, ownership, hand-offs between teams, and the difficulty of maintaining a clear and complete line of engagement from the resident's point of view.

Staff also stressed that engagement was often more developed around larger projects and estates, partly because there were resident groups already in place to engage with. This suggested that engagement may happen more easily where there is an established collective structure, and may be less consistent where those arrangements do not exist.

As with the leaseholder focus group, the main value of the session lies not simply in the individual examples raised, but in what they reveal about how engagement is organised and experienced in practice across multiple services.

3. Overall message from the session

The strongest overall message from the workshop was that staff appear to recognise many of the problems residents are describing but see them as arising from structural and organisational pressures as much as from individual practice.

Officers described engagement as fragmented across teams, shaped by legal and procedural requirements, and made harder by resource constraints, hand-offs, service complexity and the difficulty of obtaining complete information quickly enough to respond clearly to residents. In that sense, the workshop suggested that poorer engagement is often not the result of indifference, but of systems and ways of working that make it difficult to provide residents with a joined-up, timely and confident response.

A particularly important theme was that engagement responsibilities do not always feel fully clear in practice. Staff valued the dedicated Resident Engagement Team and in some areas described a positive relationship with them, but there also appeared to be some variation in how far teams saw engagement as their own responsibility, how far they expected support from that team, and how joined-up those respective roles felt in reality.

The session also suggested that engagement problems are intensified where residents face complexity, delay or financial exposure. Staff acknowledged that leaseholders often want clear explanations of charges, timescales and decisions, but that services do not always have the information available in a form that can be easily provided or resolved in one contact. This creates frustration for residents and discomfort for staff, particularly where officers feel they are forced to hand residents on rather than resolve matters directly.

Overall, the workshop reinforced the view that the challenge is not simply to improve communication techniques, but to improve clarity, ownership, collaboration and resident focus across the whole service pathway.

4. Key themes heard from staff

A. Engagement is often shaped by the service process, not treated as a complete journey

Staff described engagement happening at many different stages: when residents first make contact, when bills are issued, when consultation notices are sent, when works are planned, and when follow-up queries are handled. However, the discussion suggested that these stages do not always join up into a complete and coherent journey from the resident's perspective.

One officer noted that from a leaseholder point of view there can seem to be no "complete circle" once payment is made. This is significant because it suggests that services may be carrying out multiple pieces of engagement activity, but residents may still not feel that matters are being properly explained, resolved or brought to closure.

B. The role of the Resident Engagement Team is valued, but not always understood in the same way across services

Some staff spoke positively about their relationship with the Resident Engagement Team, describing good rapport, regular sharing of information and practical support around activities and schemes. In Major Works, for example, officers said they share letters and information about schemes, and that the team can help support engagement activity, particularly on larger schemes or where there are resident associations.

Staff also indicated that engagement was often more focused on larger projects and estates, partly because there were resident groups already in place to work with. This may mean that residents outside those settings do not experience the same level of contact or opportunity to feed in.

At the same time, the workshop suggested some variation in staff contact with that team and some uncertainty about where its role begins and ends in relation to service-led engagement. This is important because if engagement is partly seen as belonging to a dedicated team, there is a risk that wider service teams may not always experience it as an integral part of their own role, or that residents may experience gaps where responsibilities are not fully clear.

C. Legal requirements, technical complexity and timing can make communication hard to get right

Staff described a number of structural barriers that can drive poorer engagement, especially in Leasehold and Major Works. These included the formal and legal nature of consultation notices, the complexity of service charge queries, delays in issuing accounts and actuals, and the difficulty of gathering complete information from multiple parts of the organisation.

One recurring issue was that legally required notices can feel inaccessible or unfriendly to residents, even where services try to send more explanatory communication beforehand. Staff also acknowledged that delays in accounts information should not happen and damage trust when they do.

The complexity of leaseholder issues was particularly evident in discussion about service charges, where officers described the challenge of responding to detailed questions when

information may need to be drawn from several teams. This can place frontline staff in the middle of complex information gaps and contribute to resident frustration.

D. Residents are not always involved early enough or clearly enough

The discussion suggested that residents are sometimes informed through formal stages rather than engaged early enough in a way they would experience as meaningful. Staff noted, for example, that by the time some communications go out in relation to major works, residents may already be angry because of earlier delay or uncertainty.

There was also recognition that residents may ask very practical questions about costs, services or decisions which services are not always well placed to answer quickly or fully at the point they are raised. This can reinforce the impression that residents are being told rather than involved.

E. Follow-up and closure are undermined by workload, limited capacity and fragmented information

A strong theme was the difficulty of keeping residents updated and properly closing the loop. Staff linked this to resourcing pressures, limited staffing, restructuring, heavy email volumes and the complexity of cross-service working.

In Major Works, officers referred to the limited number of Resident Liaison Officers in relation to the scale of work. In service charges, officers described very high volumes of emails and the challenge of dealing with detailed queries, especially by phone. This suggests that even where staff want to provide better continuity and follow-up, the operating context makes it difficult to do so consistently.

Importantly, some officers also reflected that the problem is not only about resource. There was recognition that culture matters too, and that resident focus should not sit only with certain teams. This is a significant point because it suggests staff themselves see engagement as requiring a broader organisational shift, not just additional capacity.

F. Staff experience hand-offs and fragmentation as a problem too

An important insight from the workshop was that staff also feel the weakness of fragmented service pathways. Officers described it as uncomfortable and unprofessional to have to pass residents on to someone else rather than resolving the issue directly. There was clear support for better collaboration between teams and for bringing colleagues together to understand each other's pressures and challenges.

This matters because it suggests that improving engagement is likely to require not only better resident-facing communication, but stronger internal collaboration and clearer ownership across services.

5. What this suggests about the Engagement Strategy

The workshop suggests that the main issue is not that staff disagree with the principles in the Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy. Rather, the challenge appears to be how those

principles are delivered consistently in the context of complex processes, multiple hand-offs, legal requirements, resource pressures and varying assumptions about who is responsible for engagement.

The session reinforces several concerns already identified through the survey and leaseholder focus group, especially around:

- Residents not always feeling involved early enough
- weak follow-up and lack of clear closure
- difficulty understanding decisions, charges and next steps
- uncertainty about who owns an issue from start to finish
- fragmentation between departments and functions

The staff evidence also adds something important to RAP's understanding. It suggests that poorer engagement is not simply a matter of staff attitude or communication skill, but is also rooted in workload, service design, information flow and internal collaboration. In practice, this means that if the Strategy principles are to be more visible to residents, the Council may need to strengthen the systems and expectations that support staff to work in a more joined-up and resident-focused way.

6. Possible recommendations emerging from the workshop

The workshop pointed to a number of possible recommendations that RAP may wish to consider once all inspection phase evidence has been reviewed.

Although this session focused on Leasehold and Major Works, many of the issues raised were clearly wider than those two areas and may have relevance across other housing services as well.

Be clearer about who is responsible for engagement

The Council should be clearer about who is responsible for speaking with residents, listening to feedback and following things up. Staff should not assume that engagement is someone else's job, and residents should not be left unsure about who is meant to respond.

Make sure someone owns an issue from start to finish

Residents should be able to see who is responsible for dealing with an issue and seeing it through to the end, even when more than one team is involved. They should not feel passed around between services with no one clearly in charge.

Make formal letters and notices easier to understand

Where the Council has to send legal or technical information, this should be backed up by a clear plain English explanation. Residents should be able to understand what is happening, why it matters, and what they need to do next.

Involve residents earlier

Residents, especially leaseholders, should be brought in earlier when decisions are likely to affect them, particularly where costs, works or service changes are involved. Too often, people feel they are being told something after key decisions have already been made.

Keep residents updated and close the loop properly

The Council should get better at keeping residents updated, explaining what is happening, and making clear when something is actually resolved. Residents should not have to keep chasing for updates or be left unsure whether anything has happened.

Help teams work together better

Different teams need to work together more closely so residents get a more joined-up service. Staff should better understand each other's roles and share information more effectively, so residents are not left dealing with gaps between teams.

Make it easier to get answers about service charges and leaseholder queries

The Council should put clearer arrangements in place for dealing with leaseholder queries that depend on information or action from other service areas. Leasehold officers should not be left managing large numbers of queries they cannot answer themselves. Clearer responsibilities and quicker input from the relevant teams would help residents get more timely and reliable responses.

Treat engagement as part of everyday service delivery

The Council should recognise that residents judge engagement by their everyday experience of services. Good engagement is not just about meetings or consultation exercises. It is also about clear communication, honesty, accountability and dealing with people properly day to day.

Strengthen leaseholder engagement routes

The review may also wish to consider whether the Leaseholder Continuous Improvement Group is currently enough on its own as the main route for former leaseholder engagement. The Council could either make better use of that group to strengthen links with leaseholders or consider whether additional ways are needed for leaseholders to raise issues, test ideas and improve communication.

Help residents better understand the financial constraints the Council faces

The Council should give tenants and leaseholders clearer information and perhaps more input to about how housing money is spent, including the pressures on the Housing Revenue Account, so residents can better understand the context for decisions about services, works and charges.

7. Concluding reflection

The Leasehold / Major Works staff workshop broadly reinforced the picture already emerging from the resident evidence, while also adding important context about the practical and organisational reasons why engagement may be experienced poorly.

Staff appeared to recognise many of the same pressure points that residents had described, particularly around clarity, timing, hand-offs, follow-up and accountability. At the same time, the workshop showed that officers themselves are working within systems that can make good engagement harder to deliver consistently.

Taken together, the workshop suggests that improving engagement will require more than better communications alone. It is likely to depend on clearer ownership, stronger collaboration, earlier and clearer information, and a wider culture in which resident experience is treated as a core part of how services operate in practice.

Footnote

After the workshop, Eric suggested one further practical step that Leaseholder Services could consider. He noted that, when the actual service charge is calculated, usually in the autumn, where the actual cost for any service area is significantly above the estimate for that area, the department responsible for that service area should be required to explain the reason for the overspend, with a footnote added to the statement sent to leaseholders. He suggested that the threshold could initially be set at a relatively high level to allow departments to adjust and then reduced over time. The intention would be to improve transparency for leaseholders and, in the longer term, potentially reduce avoidable queries to the team.

Appendix 5

Communications / Resident Involvement / Customer Services Staff Workshop – outcome note

Date: 27 April 2026, 2.00pm–4:00pm

Session: Communications / Resident Involvement / Customer Services staff workshop

Facilitators present: Eric, Valdet and Graeme

Note taker: Graeme

Staff present: Lynn , Dimitra, Mei, Grace, Kassim, Sharon, Chisa, Shahida and Chris

Apologies / not present: Although invited, no staff from Customer Services were present.

1. Purpose of the session

This is RAP's third review since its relaunch. The current review is examining how resident engagement works in practice against the aims and principles set out in the new Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2025–2028.

The staff workshop with Communications, Resident Involvement and Customer Services was arranged because RAP wanted to hear from services that have an important role in how residents receive information, contact the Council, are supported to take part, and understand what difference their involvement makes.

RAP had already carried out a resident survey, a leaseholder focus group, and a staff workshop with Leasehold and Major Works. The purpose of this session was to hear the perspective of staff working in and around communication, resident involvement and resident engagement more broadly, in order to understand:

- How engagement works in practice from a staff point of view
- what good engagement looks like when it works well
- what gets in the way of clear communication and follow-up
- how the role of the Resident Engagement Team is understood; and
- what practical improvements might help residents experience the Strategy principles more consistently in reality

The discussion was not intended to focus on individual complaints or to blame particular officers. Its purpose was to understand the wider system, identify practical barriers, and help RAP test the resident evidence against the staff perspective.

2. Attendance and context

The workshop brought together staff from Communications and Resident Involvement, along with others whose roles connect to resident engagement. Although Customer Services had been invited, no staff from Customer Services were present. This was a relevant gap because the session was partly intended to explore the resident contact experience and how residents are supported when they first approach the Council.

The discussion showed that staff see engagement as wider than formal consultation or meetings. It includes the quality of everyday communication, whether residents are given enough information to understand what is being asked of them, whether staff can get accurate information from other teams, and whether residents can see that their views have been heard and acted on.

Staff described a range of positive work already taking place, including proactive engagement, outreach events, snack and chat sessions, surveys, recruitment activity, estate drop-ins, WhatsApp groups, Homezone, and work to improve housing communications. However, they also described continuing barriers, including inconsistent information from internal teams, lack of ownership, gaps between services, uneven understanding of the Resident Engagement Team's role, and residents not always being able to see improvements that may have taken place internally.

As with the earlier sessions, the main value of the workshop lies not in individual examples, but in what the discussion reveals about how engagement, communication and resident contact are organised and experienced in practice.

3. Overall message from the session

The strongest overall message from the workshop was that good engagement depends on clear communication, trust, ownership and follow-through, but that these things are difficult to achieve consistently in a large and complex organisation.

Staff recognised that engagement works best when residents understand why they are being contacted, what is being asked of them, what the Council is trying to achieve, and how their views will be used. Good communication was described as a two-way process, where residents are given enough information to make informed decisions and where the Council checks whether the message has actually been understood.

At the same time, staff described barriers that make this difficult in practice. These included difficulty getting information from internal teams, inconsistent approaches to communication, unclear ownership, fragmented service responsibilities, and a lack of shared understanding across the organisation about who is responsible for engagement.

A particularly important message was that the Resident Engagement Team appears to be better understood by residents who work with them than by some internal colleagues. Staff suggested that some teams may still see engagement as something done by the Resident Engagement Team, rather than as part of every service's role. This is important because it reflects one of the recurring themes from the wider review: residents judge engagement through their everyday experience of services, not only through formal engagement activities.

The session also highlighted the difference between communication activity and communication experience. Staff referred to magazines, bulletins, e-bulletins, Homezone and other communication channels, but also acknowledged that residents may still experience communication as poor if it is inaccurate, lacks a named contact, does not explain timescales, or fails to show what has changed as a result of their feedback.

Overall, the workshop reinforced the view that improving engagement is not only about producing more communication. It is about making communication clearer, more local, more joined-up, more accountable and more visibly linked to action.

4. Key themes heard from staff

A. Good engagement is clear, two-way and based on trust

Staff described good engagement as a two-way process where residents understand the purpose of the contact and are given enough information to take part meaningfully.

Good communication was described as clear, timely and targeted to the right audience. Staff emphasised that it is not enough to send information out; the Council also needs to know whether residents have received and understood the message. In that sense, good engagement is not just about issuing information, but about checking understanding and building a shared view of what is happening.

Staff also linked good engagement to trust. The Resident Engagement Team described the importance of doing what they say they are going to do, building relationships, and rebuilding trust when things go wrong. This suggests that residents' confidence in engagement depends heavily on whether the Council follows through on commitments.

B. The Resident Engagement Team has an important bridging role, but its role is not always understood internally

The Resident Engagement Team was described as having both a regulatory and relationship-building role. Staff referred to the need to amplify the resident voice, build capacity, develop relationships, and support the landlord and tenant / leaseholder relationship.

Staff described positive relationships with some managers and teams, including regular contact, monthly meetings, estate drop-ins and WhatsApp groups with residents. They also described residents as being comfortable approaching the team and using it as a bridge into the Council.

However, a strong theme was that the Resident Engagement Team's role may be better understood by residents than by some staff. It was suggested that below Head of Service level, some areas may not fully understand what the team does. There was also a concern that some staff may feel it is not their job to speak to residents, or may avoid contact because they fear difficult conversations.

This matters because it suggests that the Council may need to do more internally to explain the purpose of resident engagement, the role of the dedicated team, and the responsibility of all services to communicate with residents properly.

C. Communication has improved, but remains inconsistent and sometimes fragmented

Staff described improvements in housing communications over recent years. Communications staff referred to dedicated housing communications, Homezone, bulletins, magazines, forward planning and efforts to get the right message to the right audience at the right time. There was a view that things are better than they were and that further improvements are being put in place.

However, the discussion also identified continuing problems. Staff said some communication does not go through the Communications Team, information from internal teams is not always forthcoming, and IT systems are not always as good as they need to be. There was also uncertainty about whether there are organisation-wide customer care standards, as distinct from Housing's own customer care standards.

The discussion suggested that residents may experience communication differently depending on which part of the organisation they are dealing with. This inconsistency can undermine trust, especially where phone calls are not answered consistently, contact details are unclear, letters are inaccurate, or residents are not given a named person to contact.

D. Poor resident experience is often caused by lack of feedback, lack of ownership and negative assumptions about residents

Staff identified lack of feedback and lack of communication as key causes of poor resident experience. They also discussed the risk that some residents are perceived as "problematic", which can influence how staff approach them.

One example was given of a staff member's perception of an individual resident being changed after the Resident Engagement Team explained the resident's situation more fully. The point was made that new staff can sometimes be warned to "steer clear" of particular residents, which may create an unfair or unhelpful starting point.

This is important because it shows that resident engagement is affected not only by process, but also by culture and assumptions. If residents are seen mainly as difficult or demanding, the quality of engagement is likely to suffer. Conversely, where staff understand residents' circumstances and the reasons for their frustration, there is more opportunity to rebuild trust.

E. Engagement can be uneven across the borough

The workshop identified that engagement can be easier where there are established resident groups, larger estates, or specific local projects. Staff referred to outreach events, estate drop-ins, and targeted work in areas with low levels of involvement.

However, there was also concern that engagement may be harder in smaller blocks or areas without active resident associations. This can create inequality in how residents experience engagement across the borough. Residents in areas with established groups may have more opportunities to raise issues, receive updates and influence decisions, while others may have fewer routes in.

The discussion also showed that residents may not always understand the difference between different engagement teams or roles within the Council. Staff acknowledged that there are many people with "engagement" in their job title, and that it may not be clear to residents who is responsible for what.

F. Clear communication is undermined by poor internal information flow

A strong theme was that clear communication with residents depends on staff being able to get accurate and timely information from within the organisation.

Staff described difficulties when information is not forthcoming from internal teams, even after repeated chasing. This leaves front-facing staff in a difficult position because they are expected to communicate with residents, but do not always have the information needed to provide a clear answer.

The discussion also identified problems with accuracy, including wrong letters, unclear contact routes, out-of-date phone numbers, and documents that do not give residents a clear person to contact. These issues can create frustration because residents may think they have got through to the right place, only to find that no one appears to own the issue.

Staff suggested that the Council needs to look more closely at service level agreements, internal response expectations, and learning from mistakes in communication. The purpose would not be to blame individual officers, but to understand where the system is breaking down and prevent the same problems happening again.

G. Closing the loop remains a major weakness

Staff recognised that closing the loop is still difficult. They discussed “you said, we did” reporting, but also noted that residents may only take notice of change if it feels relevant to them.

There was acknowledgement that positive changes may be happening internally, but residents do not always see them. For example, the Council may have changed a staffing arrangement, process or internal way of working, but if a resident’s repair or issue remains unresolved, they are unlikely to feel that things have improved.

Staff also suggested that the Council may need to be more honest where something cannot be done. A “you said, we didn’t” approach was suggested as a way of being more transparent, provided it explains why a suggestion has not been taken forward.

Timescales were also identified as a missing part of many communications. Residents need to know not only what the Council has heard, but what will happen next, by when, and how they will be updated.

5. What this suggests about the Engagement Strategy

The workshop suggests that staff broadly support the aims of better engagement, but that the principles in the Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy are not yet consistently embedded across the wider organisation.

The session reinforced several issues already identified through the survey and earlier workshops, including:

- Residents not always receiving clear or timely information
- weaknesses in follow-up and closing the loop
- uncertainty about who owns issues across service boundaries
- inconsistent communication standards
- engagement being seen by some staff as the job of the dedicated Resident Engagement Team rather than a shared responsibility; and

- residents not always seeing what difference their feedback has made

The staff evidence also adds an important point. It suggests that the Council needs to strengthen internal systems and expectations if resident-facing communication is to improve. Staff cannot always communicate well with residents if they cannot get timely and accurate information from other parts of the organisation.

This means the Strategy needs to be understood not only as a resident-facing document, but as an internal way of working. If residents are to experience the principles in practice, then all services need to understand their own role in engagement, communication, feedback and follow-through.

6. Possible recommendations emerging from the workshop

The workshop pointed to a number of possible recommendations that RAP may wish to consider once all inspection phase evidence has been reviewed.

Although this session focused on Communications, Resident Involvement and Customer Services, many of the issues raised were clearly wider than those areas and may have relevance across housing services more generally.

1. Make engagement a responsibility across all housing services

The Council should make clear that resident engagement is not only the role of the Resident Engagement Team. All services should understand their responsibility to communicate clearly, listen to residents, respond properly and follow issues through.

2. Clarify the role of the Resident Engagement Team

The Council should explain more clearly, both internally and externally, what the Resident Engagement Team does, how it supports residents, and how it works with other services. This could include clearer information on the website and features in Homezone or other resident communications.

3. Strengthen internal communication and response expectations

The Council should improve arrangements for internal teams to provide timely and accurate information to colleagues who are responding to residents. This could include clearer internal service level agreements, escalation routes and expectations for responding to information requests.

4. Improve ownership of resident issues

Residents should not be left feeling passed between teams. The Council should strengthen arrangements so that someone owns an issue from first contact through to resolution, even where input is needed from several services.

5. *Make communication more consistent and accurate*

The Council should review how letters, emails, phone numbers, contact details and resident updates are checked, so residents receive accurate information and know who to contact. Where mistakes happen, the Council should learn from them and put safeguards in place to reduce repeat problems.

6. *Improve local and targeted communication*

The Council should consider how to provide more local communication at estate, block or neighbourhood level. Staff suggested that there is a gap around local communication, for example where residents need quick updates about issues such as water leaks or local disruption. Options such as WhatsApp groups, estate-level updates or more targeted bulletins could be explored.

7. *Strengthen “you said, we did” feedback*

The Council should improve how it shows residents what has changed as a result of their feedback. This should include clear timescales, honest explanations where suggestions cannot be taken forward, and updates that are meaningful to residents rather than only describing internal process changes.

8. *Use resident insight and data more proactively*

The Council should make better use of data, complaints, feedback and resident insight to plan engagement more proactively. This could help identify areas with low involvement, repeated communication problems or groups of residents who may need different forms of support.

9. *Promote better understanding between residents and staff*

The Council could explore resident and staff shadowing, case studies or shared learning activities to help residents understand the constraints staff work under, and help staff better understand the resident experience. This could also provide positive stories for Homezone or other communication channels.

10. *Develop a clearer engagement plan across the organisation*

The Council should consider a more joined-up engagement plan across housing services, showing what engagement activity is taking place, who it is aimed at, how residents can take part, and how they will receive feedback afterwards. A common template for promoting meetings and reporting back could help make engagement more consistent.

11. *Highlight the role of resident groups and involved residents*

The Council should make better use of Homezone and other communications to explain the role of resident groups, involved residents and the Resident Engagement Team. This could help more tenants and leaseholders understand what opportunities exist and how resident involvement can make a difference.

7. Concluding reflection

The Communications / Resident Involvement / Customer Services workshop reinforced many of the themes already emerging from RAP's review.

Staff recognised the importance of clear communication, trust, ownership, feedback and follow-through. They also described positive work already taking place, including outreach, estate drop-ins, resident groups, Homezone, bulletins and proactive engagement activity.

However, the session also showed that residents' experience of engagement is affected by wider organisational issues, including fragmented responsibilities, inconsistent communication, weak internal information flow, unclear ownership and limited visibility of what changes as a result of resident feedback.

The absence of Customer Services staff meant that RAP was not able to hear directly from the team most closely linked to first contact and the wider customer access experience. This may be important to note when considering the overall evidence, because many of the issues raised in the review relate to what happens when residents first contact the Council and how their enquiry is then handled.

Taken together, the workshop suggests that improving engagement will require more than better external communication. It will depend on stronger internal coordination, clearer expectations across services, better local communication, more visible feedback loops, and a shared understanding that engagement is part of everyday service delivery.

Appendix 6

Customer Experience and Resident Support (CERS) input into resident-led scrutiny group's resident engagement review

Background to and purpose of this paper

This paper has been developed in response to a request from the resident-led scrutiny group.

The resident-led scrutiny group is currently doing a review on resident engagement. They have held several workshops with both residents and staff to discuss how well the new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy is being reflected in day-to-day housing services.

The review is looking at whether tenants and leaseholders receive clear information, whether they are involved early enough, whether communication and follow-up are effective, and whether residents can see what difference their feedback has made.

In order to assist with this review, a number of questions have been posed to the CERS team. Those questions are captured below:

- From a Customer Services perspective, what are the main barriers to giving residents a clear and helpful response at first point of contact?
- Are there particular types of housing enquiry where staff struggle because responsibility, ownership, or the next step is unclear?
- What would need to change across the wider housing service so that Customer Services staff can give residents clearer information, better follow-up, and a more joined-up experience?
- What practical improvements would help Customer Services support the engagement principles in the new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy?

The following paper aims to answer the above questions in a way that best supports the review.

Tenancy terminations

There is a need for improved and more consistent communication with residents regarding tenancy termination processes. In particular:

- Clear instructions on where keys should be returned
- The requirement to complete the online e-form prior to booking an appointment at Wood Green CSC

Currently, inconsistent messaging across Haringey CBS, Temporary Accommodation, and Secure Tenancies creates avoidable contact and delays. Introducing a **universal email template**, including all required steps and direct links to the e-form, would support:

- Timely closure of rent accounts
 - Prompt return of keys
 - Reduction in unnecessary face-to-face enquiries
-

Environment and neighbourhood enquiries

There is ongoing confusion regarding escalation routes for issues that sit across service boundaries, such as:

- Dumped rubbish on estates
- Anti-social behaviour
- Tree-related concerns

Clearer guidance is required for both residents and staff. Updating the **Council Tenants page on the Haringey website** with straightforward reporting pathways would help ensure residents are directed to the correct service first time, reducing misdirected contacts and repeat enquiries.

Repairs

Existing repairs (Chasers)

Approximately **70% of repairs-related contact is failure-driven**, with residents repeatedly chasing existing jobs.

The main contributing factors include:

- Missed operative appointments
- Follow-on work not being arranged (e.g. post-asbestos survey next steps unclear)
- Limited communication from contractors or services
- System limitations within NEC/Total Mobile
- Lack of visibility of job progression

As a result, Customer Services staff are often unable to resolve queries at first contact and must refer cases to HRS/M&E teams.

Improvement opportunities include:

- Stronger end-to-end ownership of repairs
- Clearer and more proactive updates from HRS
- Improved system visibility for Customer Services

These changes would significantly reduce avoidable contact and improve resident confidence.

Fobs and keys – process failure

There are multiple breakdowns in the current process for fob and key requests, including:

- Unclear ownership
- Inconsistent processes
- Lack of tracking or updates

This has led to high volumes of repeat contact from residents chasing orders. While discovery work has taken place and recommendations identified, these have **not yet been implemented**, meaning the issue persists. Progressing these improvements is critical to reducing demand and improving service delivery.

NEC contacts

Standardisation of contact channels

NEC Contacts has not yet been adopted consistently across Housing services. As a result:

- Customer Services staff rely on multiple communication channels (e.g. Teams, Outlook, NEC)
- Information is fragmented across systems
- Reporting capability within Northgate is not fully utilised

For example:

- Tenancy Management and Income Collection use NEC Contacts
- Repairs do not, creating inconsistency

This lack of standardisation significantly impacts efficiency. When responding to complaints or complex queries, Customer Services management must review multiple systems to piece together case histories.

A fully standardised approach using NEC Contacts across all Housing services would:

- Improve response times
- Enhance case visibility

- Enable better reporting and oversight
-

Key barriers to first-contact resolution

The primary barrier to delivering clear and helpful responses at first contact is the **lack of timely, accurate, and accessible information** from the wider Housing service.

Customer Services advisors often:

- Do not have full visibility of case activity or correspondence
- Cannot confidently confirm next steps or timescales
- Must rely on other teams for updates

This limits first contact resolution and leads to repeat contact from residents.

Enquiry types with unclear ownership or next steps

This issue is particularly evident in:

- **Housing casework enquiries**
Advisors are unable to view correspondence between residents and caseworkers, restricting their ability to provide meaningful updates.
 - **Tenancy Management escalations**
Referrals to Housing Liaison Officers (HLOs) do not always receive timely responses, resulting in:
 - Delayed resolution
 - Increased repeat contact
 - Reduced resident confidence
-

Changes across the housing service that would help

To enable Customer Services to provide a more effective and joined-up service, the following changes are required:

- **Clear and consistent communication channels** across all Housing services
- **Improved system integration and visibility** of case information
- **Defined ownership and accountability** for all enquiry types
- **Stronger feedback loops** between back-office teams and Customer Services

These changes would allow advisors to:

- Provide accurate, real-time updates

- Set clear expectations with residents
- Reduce unnecessary escalation and repeat contact

Appendix 7

Resident Advisory Panel

Disability Action Haringey discussion – outcome note

Date of discussion: 28 April 2026, 2.00pm

Evidence source: Feedback from Disability Action Haringey members (30 in attendance), provided through Georgina Ansa who attended on behalf of RAP and asked the questions

Session focus: Disabled residents' experience of accessing housing services, reporting issues and engaging with Haringey Council

1. Purpose of the discussion

This discussion formed part of RAP's third review since its relaunch and was an agenda item at the DAH meeting on 28 April. The review is examining how resident engagement works in practice against the aims and principles set out in the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2025–2028.

RAP wanted to understand whether disabled residents and residents with different access needs experience clear, accessible and responsive routes into housing services.

The purpose of the Disability Action Haringey discussion was to understand:

- how disabled residents experience contact with Haringey Council;
- whether service pathways are clear and accessible;
- what makes it difficult for disabled residents to report housing issues or make complaints;
- whether digital routes, websites and reporting tools meet disabled residents' needs;
- how carers, personal assistants or support agencies can support residents to engage with the Council; and
- what practical changes would improve access, communication and decision-making.

2. Context and overall message

Members generally did not feel that Haringey Council had made clear service pathways available for them to engage with or access services. Resident members said that their experience of contacting the Council was difficult.

The strongest overall message was that disabled residents' ability to engage with the Council is affected by how accessible everyday housing routes are. Members were not only talking about formal engagement meetings. They were also talking about basic contact with housing services, including reporting problems, using the website, making complaints, getting face-to-face help, and having support agencies, carers or personal assistants assist them.

For disabled residents, engagement is judged through practical access. If the website is hard to use, reporting tools do not meet residents' needs, staff do not understand disability-related barriers, or residents cannot get help from someone who understands their situation, engagement does not feel inclusive or responsive.

3. Key themes heard from Disability Action Haringey members

A. Service pathways are not clear enough

Members did not feel that the Council had made clear service pathways available for disabled residents to access services or engage with the Council.

This suggests that residents may not always know where to go, who to contact, how to raise a housing issue, or what to expect once they have made contact. For disabled residents, unclear pathways can create additional barriers, particularly where residents already face difficulties with communication, mobility, confidence, digital access or understanding complex processes.

B. Contacting the Council is difficult

Resident members said that contacting the Council was difficult.

This was a central theme in the discussion. The issue was not simply that residents wanted more information. Members described practical difficulty in accessing services and getting the right response.

This links to the wider RAP review finding that residents judge engagement through everyday service contact. If residents cannot get through, cannot explain their issue properly, or cannot obtain a clear response, they are unlikely to feel that the Council is listening or taking their views seriously.

C. Reporting housing issues is hard because of disability needs

Members stated that reporting housing issues is hard due to their disability needs.

This is an important finding because it suggests that standard reporting routes may not work equally well for everyone. Some disabled residents may need more support to explain an issue, complete an online form, understand what information is required, follow up a report, or communicate with the right team.

This suggests that housing reporting routes need to be designed with disabled residents in mind from the start, rather than relying on residents to navigate standard processes that may not be accessible to them.

D. Website and online reporting tools are not accessible enough

Members found it hard to navigate the Council website. They also felt that the reporting tool on the website was not designed with their needs in mind.

This is significant because digital routes are increasingly used for reporting issues, finding information and contacting services. If online routes are hard to use, disabled residents may be excluded from services that are intended to make access easier.

Members' feedback suggests that the Council should test digital tools with disabled residents and disability organisations before relying on them as main access routes.

E. Complaints and reporting processes do not always understand disability

Members felt that the reporting and complaints process had little or no knowledge of the nature of their disability to address their issues adequately.

This suggests that disabled residents may feel that their circumstances are not properly understood when they raise concerns. A standard response may not be enough where a resident's disability affects how they communicate, how urgently an issue affects them, or what adjustment is needed.

This links directly to reasonable adjustments. Residents may need staff to understand not only the housing issue itself, but how the resident's disability affects their ability to deal with that issue.

F. Residents want specialist support at customer service centres

Members wanted the Council to engage with them through a specialist team member at customer service centres in the borough.

This suggests that members value face-to-face contact, especially where issues are complex, digital routes are difficult, or residents need help explaining their circumstances. A specialist or disability-aware officer could help residents navigate housing services more effectively and avoid being passed between teams.

G. Carers, personal assistants and support agencies need clearer routes to assist residents

Members wanted their support agencies, carers and personal assistants to be able to report issues and engage with the Council on their behalf where appropriate, without requiring a Lasting Power of Attorney in every case.

This is an important practical issue. Some disabled residents may rely on trusted people or organisations to help them communicate with the Council. If the Council's process is too rigid, residents may be left without effective support.

The Council will need to manage consent, data protection and safeguarding properly. However, there should be a clear, proportionate and accessible process for residents to authorise carers, personal assistants or support agencies to help them.

H. Disability-trained officers should attend disability hubs or forums

Members wanted a disability-trained officer to attend disability hubs in the borough to increase engagement with disabled residents.

This is a practical suggestion. It would help the Council hear directly from disabled residents in spaces where they already feel more comfortable and supported. It would also help housing staff understand where standard access routes are not working.

This links closely to the wider RAP recommendation that housing should strengthen links with disability forums and organisations such as Disability Action Haringey.

I. More face-to-face access would improve communication and decision-making

Members recommended that more face-to-face access would improve communication and decision-making concerning them directly.

This does not mean digital routes are unimportant. However, the evidence suggests that digital-only or digital-first approaches will not meet everyone's needs. For some disabled residents, face-to-face support may be essential to explain an issue, understand options, challenge a decision or agree a practical way forward.

4. What this suggests about the Engagement Strategy

The Disability Action Haringey evidence suggests that the principles of the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy are highly relevant to disabled residents, but need to be built into everyday access routes and housing services.

- **Open and transparent:** residents need clearer service pathways, clearer reporting routes and better explanations of what will happen next.
- **Inclusive and accessible:** online forms, websites, reporting routes, complaints processes and customer service centres need to be designed around different needs.
- **Collaborative:** disabled residents and disability organisations should be involved in testing and improving access routes, reporting tools and engagement methods.
- **Responsive:** the Council needs to respond in ways that take account of residents' disability-related needs.
- **Evidence-led:** feedback from disabled residents, carers, support agencies and disability organisations should be used to improve housing services and engagement design.
- **Focused on impact:** the Council should show what has changed as a result of disabled residents' feedback.

The main message is that accessibility cannot be treated as a separate engagement issue. It needs to be built into normal housing contact, reporting, complaints, digital services, customer service centres and staff training.

5. Possible recommendations emerging from the discussion

Build accessibility and reasonable adjustments into engagement from the start

Engagement should be planned so disabled, vulnerable and digitally excluded residents can take part from the beginning. This should include accessible information, alternatives to digital-only routes, face-to-face support where needed, and reporting tools that are designed with disabled residents' needs in mind.

Create clearer housing routes for disabled and vulnerable residents

Disabled and vulnerable residents should have clearer ways to raise housing issues, report problems and make complaints. These routes should recognise different communication needs and include clear consent arrangements so carers, personal assistants or support agencies can assist residents where appropriate.

Review the accessibility of online reporting tools

The Council should review the website and online reporting tools with disabled residents and disability organisations to test whether they are easy to find, easy to use and suitable for people with different access needs.

Provide specialist or disability-aware support at customer service centres

The Council should consider providing specialist or disability-trained staff at customer service centres, or clear access to such staff, so disabled residents can receive help with reporting issues, understanding processes and accessing housing services.

Strengthen housing links with disability forums and organisations

Housing staff should attend or establish regular links with disability forums and organisations, such as Disability Action Haringey. This should include disability-trained officers attending disability hubs or forums so disabled residents have a clear route to raise housing issues, influence improvements and explain where standard access routes are not working.

Develop clearer consent and delegated support arrangements

The Council should develop clear and proportionate arrangements so residents can authorise carers, personal assistants or support agencies to assist with reporting issues and engaging with the Council, without requiring a Lasting Power of Attorney in every case.

6. Concluding reflection

The Disability Action Haringey feedback shows that disabled residents' experience of engagement is closely linked to whether they can access everyday housing services.

The main message is that residents need clearer service pathways, more accessible reporting routes, better understanding of disability-related needs, more face-to-face support, and easier ways for carers, personal assistants and support agencies to assist them.

For disabled residents, engagement is not only about being invited to meetings or consulted on strategies. It is about whether they can report a housing issue, make a complaint, use the website, speak to someone who understands their needs, and see that their feedback has led to action.

The key lesson is that accessibility should be designed into housing services from the start, not added afterwards as a separate adjustment.

