

A group of people, including men, women, and children, are participating in a community gardening activity. They are standing in front of a raised garden bed filled with dark brown soil. One man on the left is holding a garden fork, another man in the center is holding a small yellow cup, and a man on the right is holding a trowel. A young girl in a pink jacket is also visible on the right. The background shows bare trees and a clear blue sky.

# Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy

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2019-2021

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## Purpose of strategy

There has never been a more important time to restate our commitment to working in partnership with tenants. With an award-winning track record of engaging tenants and communities, we want to move to the next level and engage with even more tenants in a more meaningful way.

We want to continue to put tenants at the heart of our business; work with them to improve our services and provide a flexible framework to support tenants to make a difference. Our commitment to tenants is backed up by the Welsh Government who want to make sure that we involve tenants at a strategic level. This is set out in Welsh Government Performance Standard 2 which states there must be 'effective and appropriate tenant involvement and high quality and improving services'. Demonstrating this standard includes involving tenants in strategic decision making, shaping services and keeping tenants safe in their homes. We must work together and ensure tenants feel empowered to bring about change where it is needed. We cannot do our job properly without our tenants.

We have now launched our new organisational purpose which is, 'creating the right environment for people to flourish'. Together with tenants, we have big plans which will be delivered through the OneLinc business plan taking us up to 2021. Our purpose is supported by our refreshed values which are:

- o **Respectful**
- o **Passionate**
- o **Ambitious**

Since the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, housing associations have faced tough questions about their relationship with tenants and residents. The conversation that followed has also exposed a stigma associated with living in social housing, which we will work with our tenants to address. This strategy will provide a framework for engagement over the next two years. Listening to a diverse cohort of tenants through a variety of channels will help inform the decisions we make. Our approach will be guided by our principles which include being open, transparent and inclusive. There are challenges facing Linc and its communities, but there are also opportunities, which together with our tenants, we will embrace. It is now more important than ever that we seek ways to provide the best possible services and opportunities to enhance the lives of tenants and make a difference across communities.

## What is Tenant and Community Engagement?

Together with staff and tenants, we believe that Tenant and Community Engagement is about tenants and communities taking part in making decisions about their lives, homes and communities. There is no one size fits all to engagement, and it can be done through a variety of ways including traditional models of engagement and new and innovative approaches.

## The Benefits of Engagement

Providing an inclusive environment for tenants to shape what matters to them is a core part of our business. The benefit of engagement to both tenants and Linc are vast, and can include:

- ✓ Better service delivery and improved value for money
- ✓ Opportunities to develop new knowledge, skills and confidence
- ✓ Better communication between staff and tenants
- ✓ Better links between communities and landlords
- ✓ Empowered tenants who have the skills and confidence to influence decisions
- ✓ Staff and tenants being more aware of each other's perspectives and organisational and financial limitations
- ✓ Breaking down misunderstandings, helping to remove any mistrust between landlord and tenants, and building mutual respect and understanding.
- ✓ Increased tenant satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood.

## How this strategy was developed: Our co-production approach

The strategy was co-produced with tenants and staff. We considered the range of information and insight we already hold, and this included looking at what we are currently doing well in terms of engagement and considering future opportunities and challenges.

### Our Tenant's views and aspirations for engagement

During 2017/18 we carried out a digital and manual Engagement Survey which had 77 responses. All the views and comments we gathered have helped to build this strategy. It's very clear that tenants value the role engagement plays in shaping Linc's services and the wider community.

It's also clear from a wider tenant co-hort that we need to do more to listen to tenants. Workshops were held with the tenant panel via a small steering group to feed into the strategy development and many of the ideas raised have been built into the strategy. The tenant panel also considered what good engagement looks like, and this is available in appendix 1. Panel members also attended TPAS Cymru (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) workshops where they were invited to take part in the review of 'Tenants at the Heart', supplying the regulation team with feedback.

A WhatsApp group was formed with tenants and staff to feed in further comments on the strategy approach. Tenants stated they were keen to do more work in their communities, tackle loneliness and isolation and continue to champion diversity and inclusion. Affordable rents, reducing the stigma associated with living in social housing and tackling issues such as homelessness were also discussed.

## Our local context

Linc homes and communities are spread across 10 local authority areas. Many of our homes are not concentrated in one area or street, and hence Linc works with many dispersed communities.

This provides an ongoing challenge to target our limited resources on where we can make the biggest impact. We continue to take an asset-based approach in our communities, empowering and supporting tenants to make a difference locally. Many of our tenant and community groups enjoy operating independently, tailoring their approach to serve their own communities and seeking support from us when needed.

## National issues which can influence engagement

**There are a number of national issues which influence our local approach, and these include:**

- o **The Welsh Government Regulator:** sets out performance standards we are expected to meet – with a view to putting ‘tenants at the heart’ of what we do.
- o **The Housing Sector Risks:** includes ‘a lack of effective tenant involvement’ as a risk factor to be mitigated. Other risks tenants have been involved in include issues such as Welfare Reform.
- o **The Public Accounts Committee (PAC):** Inquiry into Regulatory oversight of Housing Associations 2017. The recommendations included those around governance, openness, transparency and data. Our tenants provided feedback into this review.
- o **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:** sets out to create a sustainable future for Wales - to improve social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being. It places an emphasis on participation, co-operation and empowerment of communities to effect real change.

- o **The Right Stuff:** developed by The Welsh Government as an approach to good governance. The principles contained within this model have been applied to the strategy. Our Panel have received a presentation on this and fed into strategies developed using this approach.
- o **'Tenants at the Heart':** The Regulatory Board for Wales (RBW) is undertaking a strategic review to understand what positive tenant participation looks like (and what works in different contexts) and to develop a tool to support tenant engagement. Our tenants took part in this review.

## Linc's Business Plan priorities and objectives

This strategy has also been developed to complement and support Linc's Business Plan based on the following themes:



### Modern & Excellent Services

- o Invest in new systems
- o Embrace opportunities for digitalisation
- o Evidence based service decisions
- o Simplify what we do to get good results
- o Focus on the customer journey



### New Business & Growth

- o New developments
- o Property sales and mixed tenure
- o New methods of construction
- o Amazing green spaces



### Wellbeing & Personal Development

- o Leadership training
- o Supporting staff with the skills to deliver our modern and excellent services programme
- o A working environment that promotes wellbeing
- o We will utilise and help develop the skills of our tenants to engage with Linc and their local community
- o To support tenants to access employment, training and work placement opportunities



### Prosperous Business

- o Robust governance framework
- o Financial management
- o Value for Money
- o Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- o Welsh Language



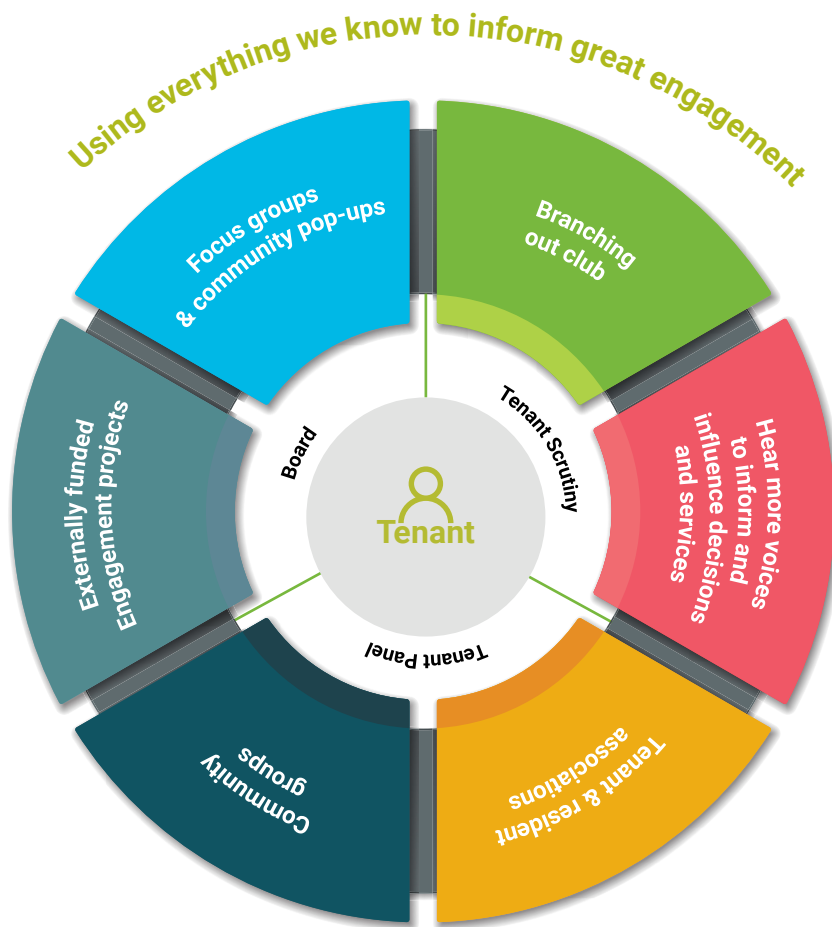
## Our Principles of Engagement

Our approach will adopt the following principles of engagement:

- |   |                                   |   |                                      |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
|  | <b>Listening &amp; responding</b> |  | <b>Data driven &amp; accountable</b> |  | <b>Accessible &amp; inclusive</b> |
|  | <b>Timely</b>                     |  | <b>Interactive</b>                   |  | <b>Flexible</b>                   |
|  | <b>Open &amp; Transparent</b>     |  | <b>Value for money</b>               |  | <b>Strength focussed</b>          |
|  | <b>One team approach</b>          |  | <b>Celebratory</b>                   |   |                                   |



Our principles of engagement will be supported by our existing structure and 'Menu'.



We are continuing to refresh our offer to include more digital methods of engagement, recognising that some tenants will not wish to get involved in more formal methods of engagement. As we strengthen our approach to engagement over the next two years we will review the structure to ensure it remains fit for purpose and takes into account new and emerging priorities for Linc, its tenants and communities. Our digital offer will include:

- ✓ Online survey communities
- ✓ Video (including developing tenants skills to make their own)
- ✓ Digital story telling
- ✓ Social Media – e.g. Facebook groups, Instagram and Twitter.
- ✓ Experiment with technology including live-streaming

See Appendix 2 for full description of our menu of engagement options.

# Our priority outcomes: what difference we want to make

Together with our tenants, we have developed the following Priority Outcomes. They are also aligned to our Business Plan and will be built into our business planning process.



## Outcome 1

We will hear and capture more tenant voices to guide, influence and shape services through a variety of engagement methods.



## Outcome 2

We will work with the tenant panel to refresh their purpose and structure so they have more of a say on strategic rather than operational or day to day matters.



## Outcome 3

We will share our story of engagement and positive practice to encourage more tenants to get involved and help to reduce the stigma that can be associated with living in social housing.



## Outcome 4

We will ensure that our service is inclusive to all and increase the diversity of tenants involved with Linc.



## Outcome 5

We will collaborate with communities through working with schools, independent living schemes, nursing homes, third sector organisations and other appropriate organisations to increase our community impact.



## Outcome 6

We will develop new models of tenant led scrutiny to shape and improve our services



### Outcome 7

We will support all staff to take an active role in listening to the voices of tenants and increasing the number of voices we hear.



### Outcome 8

We will build stronger links between board members and engagement tenants through regular reporting mechanisms.



### Outcome 9

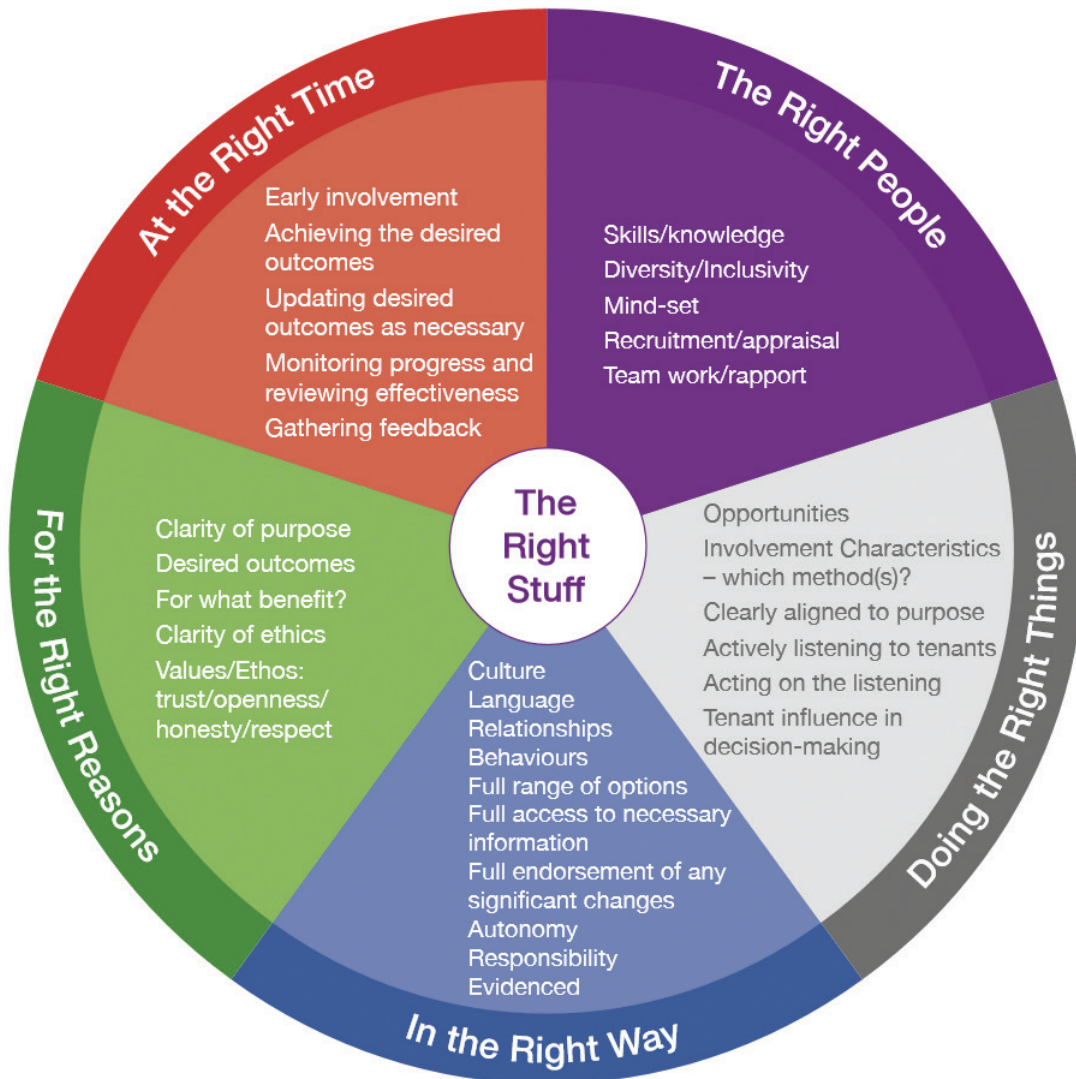
We will build the skills and confidence of our tenants, to increase the impact they have in their local community, and to improve service engaging with Linc, thus decreasing isolation and social exclusion.



## The Right Stuff

In line with other strategies being developed across Linc we are adopting the principles of the Welsh Government 'Right Stuff' Model for Governance

Appendix 3 contains the outcomes from a workshop held with tenants and the Community Engagement Team on how the 'Right Stuff' could be applied to tenant and community engagement.



## Monitoring and Evaluating our engagement work

We will develop an annual operational plan to accompany this strategy. Progress against this plan will be reported every 6 months to the Linc tenant panel prior to the Board.

We will check how we are doing against the outcomes set, and ensure our activities add value, ensuring we are effectively contributing towards the Linc business plan. We will also use the HACT (Housing Association Charitable Trust) social value measurement tool to help us to measure the health and wellbeing outcomes of our work where possible.



## Value for Money

**Demonstrating value for money from our engagement activities will remain a priority for us. During the monitoring and evaluation of our engagement work we will also look at value for money, this will include looking at:**

- o Cost and efficiency: what we have spent, and could we have done it differently
- o Demonstrating value for money from the tenant perspective
- o Social value: the value that people place on the changes they experience in their lives or communities
- o All other actions in relation to tenant engagement that are highlighted in our Value for Money strategy.



## Resourcing our engagement strategy

Our team consists of a full time manager, one full time and one part time Officer. The staff resource is supported by an annual budget for the tenant panel, and a budget for wider engagement activities.

From time-to-time the team raises funds from external sources where a community has identified a project which furthers its aims. Examples include our Lottery Heritage Fund (LHF) 'Loving the Lysaght' project and our Fusion (a Welsh Government Funded programme set up to create opportunities through culture) funded projects.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is integral to the role of Linc and its community engagement team. We want to ensure all our tenants have opportunities to engage with us.

Some ideas from tenants, particularly around involving people who experience loneliness and isolation, have been put forward and we will incorporate these into our delivery plan. Loneliness for instance is an issue that cuts across a range of communities.

Whilst we strive to ensure all our engagement opportunities are accessible, we will do more to use plain language and to make sure we complete 'equality impact assessments' to improve the way we do things, and ensure there are no unintended consequences to any individuals particularly those with protected characteristics (these are age, sex, disability, religion or belief, race, marriage and civil partnership; sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment).

## Celebrating Success: Learning from and sharing best practice

We will celebrate success and share the positive practice from our engagement and involvement across Wales.

This, we know, is a great way to encourage other tenants to get involved in housing services or their communities. We will encourage groups doing good work to share their stories, and where appropriate, enter awards to gain local or national recognition.



## Your chance to have your say

Whilst this strategy is designed to give us a focus for the next 2 years, we want to be able to respond and to adapt to local issues and the changing needs of our tenants and communities.

You can have your say. Please provide your comments to a member of staff. We'd love to hear from you.

If you would like to get involved with any community engagement activity please contact the community engagement team on:

**Telephone:** 0800 072 0966

**Email:** [contact.centre@linc-cymru.co.uk](mailto:contact.centre@linc-cymru.co.uk)





# Appendices

1. Engagement Methods explained
2. What Good Engagement Means to our Tenants
3. The Right Stuff

## Appendix 1 – Engagement Methods Explained

**Engagement through everyday interactions and conversations** - we want to make sure that we listen to a wider range of tenant voices, capturing the information to support us to make better decisions. Engaging with us covers a wide spectrum: from day-to-day conversations with staff to using our website, social media, new digital techniques and trialling more innovative approaches. This option for engagement is open for all.

**Our Tenant Panel** – this is our strategic tenant body who get involved in matters such as Service Improvements, Welfare Reform, Regulation, Health and Safety, Community Matters and Diversity and Inclusion. The Panel draws members from across our 10 local authorities. The panel are also a vital part of our self-evaluation progress, regularly assessing our core services and giving feedback.

**Tenant Scrutiny Boot Camps** – A fun, engaging, social and active way for tenants and staff to work together to take an in-depth look at an area of business. Our most recent tenant scrutiny boot camps include reviewing our lettings process and health and safety. The recommendations are presented to Board by tenants and form an important part of our approach to continuous improvement.

**Tenant Satisfaction Survey** – Our quarterly tenant satisfaction survey is completed by an external company to make sure we have a clear and unbiased view on our services from our tenants. Over 500 tenants a year take part, and the results help us focus our efforts on the issues that matter most.

**Tenant Focus Groups** – We run focus groups with a selection of tenants who have completed our tenant satisfaction survey. Tenants are incentivised to come along and informally share their views on our services. This provides us with more detailed feedback on what is going well, and where we need to improve.

**Branching Out Club** – Sometimes our tenants do not wish to attend initiatives in our formal engagement structure but still have a valuable contribution to make. Our Branching Out Club has over 500 members, who can get involved as little, or as much as they like. From completing a survey online, to giving us feedback on a new policy, to commenting on our tenant magazine, there are lots of opportunities to have a say without needing to leave the house.

**Tenant and Resident Groups** – We support local communities to run their own youth projects, community gardens, knitting, bingo, social activities and music groups amongst other things. Some groups are formal, others informal. We can offer advice and guidance on raising money and making grant applications as well as practical support such as Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) processing.

**Community Grants** – Each year we have a pot of money which formal and informal community groups can apply for to get help to run their own community-based initiatives. We fund several projects a year to empower local people to run projects that matter to them. For example, one of the projects funded this year is a Dementia-friendly community garden in Aberbeeg.

**Funded projects** – We work with our tenants to shape funding bids for local projects. Recent successful funding applications include from Natural Resources Wales, employing a project worker to work with the local community to improve green spaces and a National Lottery Heritage Fund (HLHF) to work with 1000's of people in Newport who will share their stories through the 90 year history of the Lysaght Institute.

## **Appendix 2 – According to our tenant's good engagement means**

- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Getting the basics right -especially around communication with tenants
- ✓ Involvement from all groups of people from all walks of life
- ✓ Using new and old ways to engage people
- ✓ Showing the results of engagement and that improvements have been made
- ✓ Sharing decision making with others
- ✓ Bitesize consultation about different things

- ✓ Building on existing methods which work
- ✓ Using good insight and information well
- ✓ Empowering people to make good decisions
- ✓ People getting together whether this be in person or digitally
- ✓ Knowing who your tenants and their communities are and what makes them tick
- ✓ Ensuring that opportunities to get involved are not restricted to 9-5
- ✓ Collaborating with others to bring better outcomes
- ✓ Using the latest research and understanding what will happen in the future
- ✓ That everybody within the organisation supports it

### Appendix 3 – The Right Stuff Explained

#### The Right People

Having the right people to engage tenants and communities is important. We want to create an engagement buzz where all staff and all tenants feel they want to contribute and can get involved to the level they wish. We accept that people are different and many will choose not to get involved.

We will invest in our staff to create a culture whereby people can thrive and achieve their potential. We will also invest in our staff and our tenants to ensure they are equipped to drive the strategy forward.

- We will ensure we are clear about 'our offer' for involvement
- We will work hard to involve all groups of people – including young people to engage them
- We will make sure we recruit the right people, with the right mindsets to engage others
- We will support the team to develop new and innovative approaches to engagement, working closely with tenants to do this
- We will ensure the team is trained to tap into the latest technological advances
- We will develop a 'One Team' approach, utilising the skills from across the Linc staff to help mainstream engagement
- We will involve the Panel in strengthening their group, their skills and capacity
- We will explore opportunities to strengthen links between our tenants and our Board

- We will work closely with our 'Business Improvement Lead' to ensure a co-ordinated approach across the business
- We will ensure our Menu for Tenant & Community Engagement is widely publicised and adapts where necessary to meet future demand
- We will ensure that tenants can choose the level of involvement that is right for them

## Doing The Right Thing

We will:

- Listen, learn and improve what we do
- Show tenants the results of their engagement and how they have made a difference
- We will use every day insight and data to develop our services
- Offer a menu of opportunities for tenants to have their say and get involved
- Work with our Tenant Panel to support them to focus on more strategic matters
- Pilot a new and innovative programme of Scrutiny
- Explore opportunities to revive events in the community working in collaboration with others where possible
- Engage our active tenants in projects and initiatives that focus on improving their health and wellbeing
- Build on capabilities and the strengths within our engagement programme and do what works
- Use more digital ways to involve people and develop more digital based services
- Look to the future so we can plan for it
- Use creative and interactive techniques to engage - building on the latest research and ideas
- Support communities to do what they would like to do
- Make sure opportunities for engagement and the results are more accessible to all
- We will share our story and encourage our tenants to share theirs
- Where needed we will offer flexible services to ensure an inclusive strategy
- Celebrate success, particularly success that tenants have been part of
- Measure the impact our activities are having to ensure they are providing value for money.

## In The Right Way

We will:

- o Work collaboratively with our tenants, ensuring we listen and take on board good ideas
- o Work as one team to make sure more tenants voices are heard and we know what matters to them so we can prioritise services
- o Ensure we have the right systems in place to capture more insight and views
- o Work to involve under-represented groups such as young people, people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities and people from Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities
- o Provide feedback to let tenants know how their opinions, feedback and involvement has made a difference
- o Gather evidence to make decisions and shape services
- o Develop partnerships with other landlords and organisations to enhance outcomes particularly those with a focus on health and wellbeing
- o Ensure the structure for engagement is fit for purpose and that it continues to meet needs and aspirations of all our tenants
- o Empower staff to deliver the best levels of engagement through training and support
- o Offer tenants a range of opportunities to get involved, have their say, make decision and shape services
- o Use a model of engagement based primarily on co-production or co-design
- o Be flexible in our approach when needed

## For The Right Reasons

We will develop a strategy and engage for the right reasons. We want our strategy to bring out the best in our staff and the best in our Tenants and Communities.

- o Reach a wider range of tenants – achieving inclusion is important to us
- o Continue to do what we do well, improve and act on concerns
- o Promote that anybody can get involved to the level they wish
- o Keep our tenants interested and involved, enhancing their skills and opportunities along the way

- o Support our Panel to make decisions about the emerging themes from other tenants
- o Develop links between our Tenant Panel and our Board so they know who we are and what matters most
- o Build both staff and tenants skills to become more digital
- o Meet Performance Standards set by the Welsh Government
- o Make sure engagement programmes are fit for the future
- o Create a friendly, safe and accessible way for people to take part
- o Provide opportunities for everyone to take part, regardless of their needs, using a range of techniques to deliver a range of outcomes in line with our business priorities

### **At The Right Time**

It's the right time to be developing a new strategy

- o Our existing plans have reached their end date. We are now fully informed about what works and what doesn't.
- o It's now the time to develop online communities, chats, an online presence, and spaces to further engage. Wales has a digital by default agenda.
- o It's now the time to increase the scope for people to get involved and broaden the scope of opportunities to bring in those that were previously uninvolved and hear a wider range of voices.
- o Our research via surveys shows that many more tenants are keen to get more involved. This we believe is a result of cuts across a range of other services.
- o More and more tenants are engaging with their front-line officers and in need of support or want to volunteer their time to improve services and their community.
- o We now have access to more remote working opportunities (via technology and via community spaces).
- o We now support our tenants with Employment opportunities, an often-natural progression from getting involved and often a reason for getting involved in the first place.



**Telephone: 0800 072 0966**

**Email: [contactcentre@linc-cymru.co.uk](mailto:contactcentre@linc-cymru.co.uk)**

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