

# Resident Involvement Strategy

**2011 – 2013**

Board approved: 29 September 2011



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## Definitions & Abbreviations

**SURF** stands for the BCHA **Service Users & Residents Forum** – a body of service users and residents that was set up to enable effective RI.

**RI** stands for Resident involvement

A “**resident**” (or “**tenant**”) is someone who lives in BCHA Group accommodation.

A “**service user**” is someone who uses BCHA Group support services.

Some people may be **both** a tenant/resident and a service user. For the purpose of this strategy residents, tenants, services users, clients and other customers will often be referred to as **residents**.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Section 1 Introduction**

This section introduces the strategic plan for Resident Involvement (RI), noting the scope, describing the historical and organisational context, the nature of our business the risk context and equality and diversity dimensions. The importance of RI is stressed and the need for this strategy highlighted. The methodology for consultation used in preparing it and the key findings are outlined.

### **Section 2 Current Position**

The current position is outlined in terms of the key components of RI and any resources available are noted.

### **Section 3 Description of the Strategy**

The key principles underlying action are listed, stressing the importance of flexibility in approach and the broad reach needed. Desired outcomes for residents and for the BCHA Group are described with a stress on mutual benefit. Options for involvement are given and key themes for action are highlighted:

- **Participation Groups**
- **Resident Involvement Coordinator and Staff Input**
- **Consultation and Feedback**
- **Good Practice**

An action plan follows and arrangements for managing, measuring, monitoring and reviewing the progress of the strategy are described.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion stresses again the value of RI from the point of view of residents and the organisation.

## VISION

The vision for Resident Involvement (RI) is that all residents have the opportunity to participate in a variety of methods to the optimum level in influencing BCHA and driving continuous service improvement.

The importance of RI stems from:

- the expectations of funders and regulators
- a desire to achieve business success
- the general trend in public services toward demonstrating customer responsiveness

But, **most importantly**, it stems from the core purpose and values of BCHA, which exists to help people take control of their own lives and to find a way forward.

## AIMS

- BCHA will take a flexible approach to RI in order to maximise participation
- All BCHA residents will be enabled to express their views and thus play a part in influencing the organisation - participating according to their interests and abilities.
- BCHA will be a receptive, listening organisation that acts on service user and resident views.
- The effects of resident involvement in BCHA will be clearly visible.

## **SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 General**

This strategy document outlines the ways in which BCHA will seek to enable RI in the period July 2011 – April 2013 in order to ensure that residents effective and genuine opportunities to express their views and to influence the activity of the organisation.

### **1.2 Scope**

This strategy covers the whole BCHA Group, including Salisbury Trust for the Homeless, and across all geographical areas. It focuses on residents in general needs and supported housing but the strategy's aims and principles extend to service users receiving floating support services or attending learning services.

### **1.3 Background**

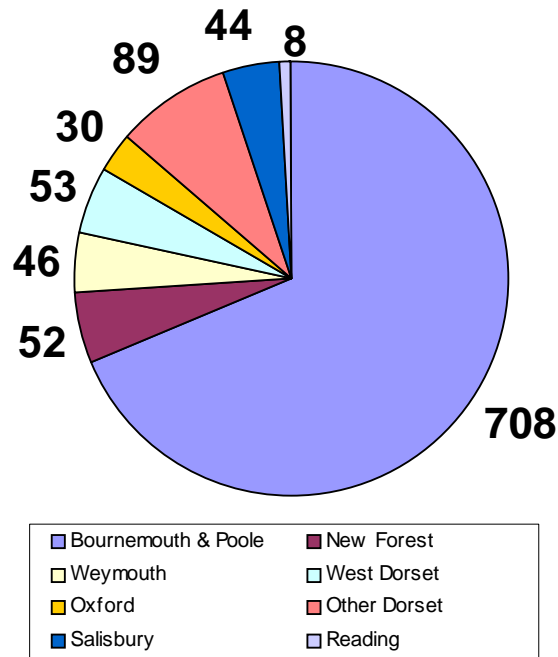
BCHA has been in existence for over 40 years and has improved and developed RI during that time. BCHA is a dynamic organisation providing specialist housing and social care support covering a range of areas: general needs housing, mental health, homelessness, substance misuse, ex-offenders, young people, domestic violence, and learning & work. RI has many dimensions but the establishment of SURF was a major step forward in 2003. It is important to acknowledge the invaluable contribution made to the work of BCHA by SURF – in particular its Committee.

In a typical year, BCHA has contact with 5,000 people who have different needs and experiences of the organisation, for differing periods of time. BCHA has always had a special emphasis on working with people who may have:

- difficulty in engaging with services, (often thought of as being “challenging” or described as being “hard to reach”)
- communication difficulties
- health issues
- low self-confidence
- difficulty associated with geographical and social isolation
- financial deprivation.

All these issues make involvement and participation more challenging.

Services are located in a variety of locations, from cities to quiet villages. The geographical distribution (at 1/4/2011) of BCHA's managed properties is as follows:



NB: During the drafting of the strategy, BCHA took into management a sheltered housing scheme in Devizes (27 units) and a 46 bed homeless hostel in Plymouth.

This strategy supports and is a parallel document to the BCHA Business Plan. BCHA is committed to ensuring that accommodation and services meet the needs and expectations of service users and residents and that there is continuing improvement in responsiveness and customer service.

Delivery of this strategy will enable BCHA to meet this quality commitment as well as the regulatory requirements of Supporting People and Tenant Services Authority.

#### 1.4 Risks

There are 3 key reasons why a documented strategy is needed:

- BCHA is a complex organisation in which a varied approach will be needed
- Communication of the strategy will be important so that staff activity can be focused on agreed outcomes
- Residents will be able to see and participate in the strategy themselves.

The key risks associated with failing to maintain and improve RI are: apathy or skills deficit in relation to residents; weak staff/organisational commitment; poor awareness of participation; regulatory intervention and distorted decision-making as a result of minimal resident input. These

risks are listed within the organisation risk register, along with controls and actions to mitigate the risks.

### **1.5 Being inclusive – Equality and Diversity**

BCHA is committed to providing high quality services that meet the diverse needs of residents and others, and that the services are delivered in a fair and inclusive manner, in line with the Single Equality Strategy. BCHA believes that everyone has a right to be treated with respect and fairness and will ensure that equality and diversity best practice is at the heart of all that we do. Other agencies and partners, working with us and our residents are expected to encompass these key principles.

In line with the principles of the Single Equality Strategy, the action plan below highlights specific actions to reach people who have may difficulty engaging with services and who are often thought of as being “challenging” or “hard to reach”.

### **1.6 Methodology**

In developing this strategy staff and residents were consulted between January and April 2011, including SURF, RI staff reps, focus groups of residents and a managers’ focus group.

### **1.7 Findings**

A number of key issues and themes emerged from consultation and research:

- Staff members suggest RI should be prioritised for staff in the new strategy
- SURF would like to see a partnership built between HYP and SURF
- Marketing RI and SURF to staff and residents needs regular attention. This includes how RI is presented or advertised in schemes and blocks around BCHA.
- House rules are still an issue and still need to be regularly reviewed
- RI needs to be kept fresh as staff turn over is fairly high
- Value for money and staff commitment is important and needs to be encouraged
- We need to regularly feedback survey results to residents and staff

## SECTION 2 CURRENT POSITION

### **Resident's views:**

"My view of resident involvement is pride of my home, friendship with my neighbours and respect of the landlords' regulations and conditions."

"Being involved has shown me ways to give my point of view and that people listen to what I have to say. It has given me confidence to speak up and make a difference."

"...organisations should collaborate closely with residents, listen and implement improvements to quality of service...I am pleased to be a part of that process and feel that I have a real voice..."

### **Staff members' views:**

"... It's important because it increases confidence and can help them realise that they can achieve perhaps more than they thought."

"...It is a vital part of providing a top class service that recognises that people's experiences can provide insight and expertise that we may be lacking otherwise."

### **2.1 Current Structure**

The current structure for RI can be summarised according to the diagram below on page 13. Other observations include:

- RI activity in BCHA varies in its effectiveness. There are a number of examples of good practice in some areas that could be replicated elsewhere.
- Supported Housing Residents participate in key working and are involved in house meetings & social events. Service users and residents take part in new entrant surveys, exit surveys, the STAR resident survey, amongst others.
- The Service Users & Residents Forum (SURF) offers people opportunities for representing their peers and enabling further development of RI. SURF aims to reach out to all Residents & Service Users to enable them to be involved at their optimum level.
- Current activities of SURF Committee Members and other SURF Members include: carrying out audits and reviews, participating in recruitment interviews, reviewing policies, strategies and procedures, mystery shopping, and setting up events and activities. SURF members sit on BCHA committees and on the BCHA board as well as attending BCHA board away days.
- Residents are also involved in focus groups, for example the Diversity and Equality Action Group and Enable, the Disability Equality Reference Group.

## 2.2 Resources

There are three key resources devoted to RI in the BCHA Group are:

### **Resident Involvement Co-ordinator**

A full time position located within the Strategy, Performance & Involvement Team – supported by the Head of Strategy & Performance.

Voluntary assistance is being sought to support this role, particularly with administrative duties.

The role encompasses a number of activities:

- ◆ Developing and monitoring RI policy and strategy
- ◆ Support for staff through training (all staff, as required) and peer discussion (RI Reps group, meeting monthly)
- ◆ Support for the Residents' Scrutiny Panel and SURF
- ◆ Lead in undertaking and analysing corporate level consultation via surveys, focus groups and other methods
- ◆ Providing information for staff and residents on RI activity

### **SURF Committee**

This group of active volunteer residents and service users meets weekly and manages its own budget. The SURF Chair sits on the Board.

The group's primary activities are:

- ◆ Representation of residents within governance structure (Board, committees, strategy review)
- ◆ Feeding residents' voice into BCHA activities
- ◆ Visiting BCHA services to promote SURF to residents and staff, obtaining feedback on service quality
- ◆ Providing a drop-in and advocacy service for residents
- ◆ Promote involvement in the wider community (for example with Bournemouth BC)
- ◆ Organising social events for residents and staff

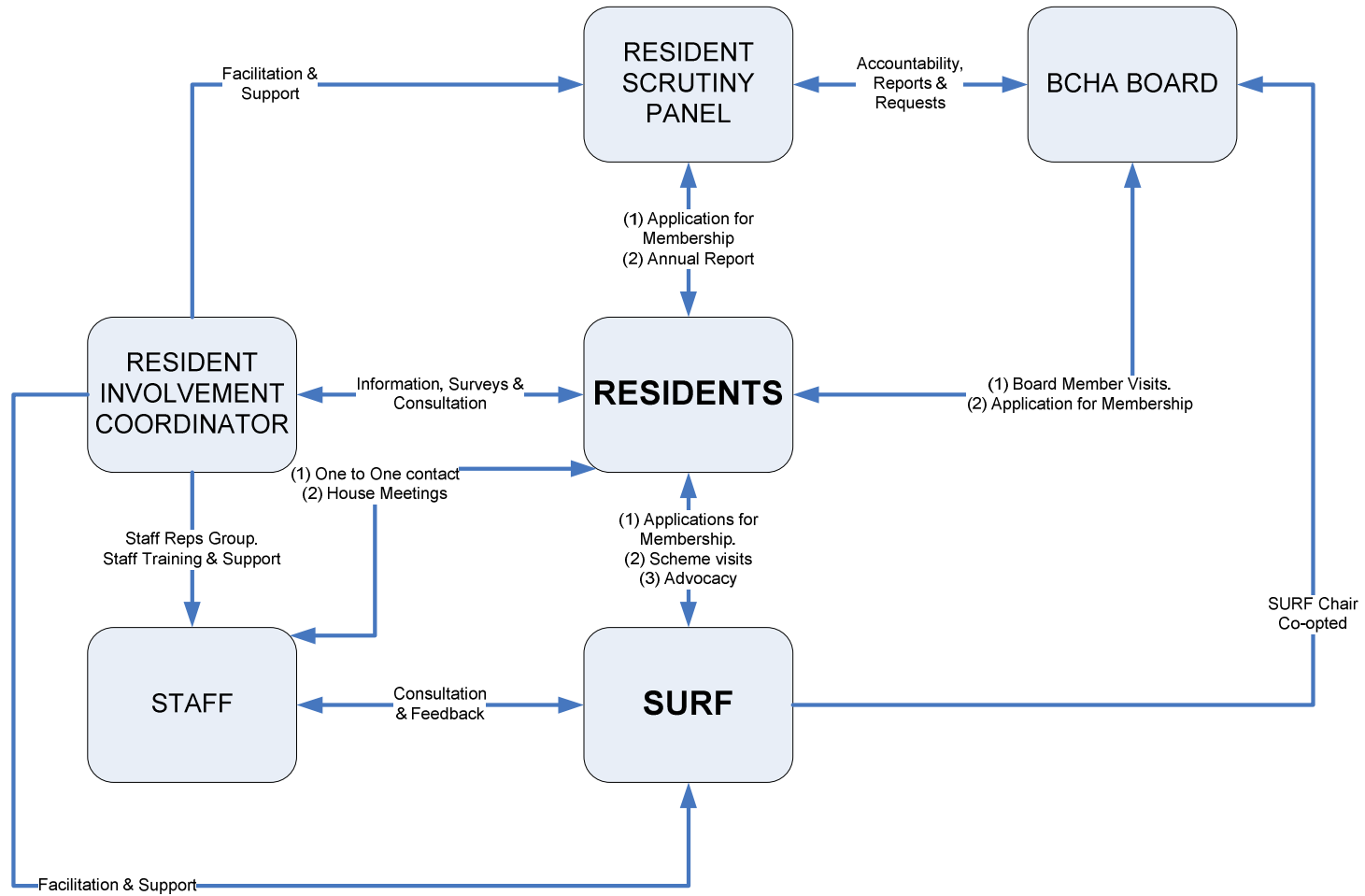
The HyP group has previously served a similar role to SURF for young people. Whilst this group has been in and out of existence over recent years, it does enable the scope for engagement mechanisms with specific groups of residents.

**Residents' Scrutiny Panel**

Newly established in 2011, this group has a more specific focus than SURF – to appraise the quality of landlord services and thereby make recommendations to senior management and the Board. Members of the Panel are all residents, with one being a SURF nominee. The Panel manages its own budget.

There are currently no Area structures within BCHA for groups of residents outside the Bournemouth conurbation.

## 2.2 RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE AT BCHA 2011



## SECTION 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGY

### 3.1 Principles

- Involving Residents in decision making is essential. However, there is a need for flexibility, as not all residents will want to participate in the same way.
- It is beneficial to have as many people as possible involved in different ways so as to develop residents' knowledge and skills.
- Residents should therefore have access to training to build their skills and knowledge to make involvement more effective and meaningful.
- Residents and service users must receive clear, up to date information to enable them to be involved in planning, improving and monitoring services.
- It is important to value residents' time, so it is also important to give an idea of how much time each activity is likely to take.
- Feedback after involvement activity and/or consultation must be accurate and delivered within an agreed time frame.
- Involvement should be seen as a process with definite outcomes that have a visible effect, for the direct benefit of as many residents as possible

### 3.2 Options for Involvement

There are various ways in which a flexible approach to involvement can apply.

Firstly, for instance, involvement can offer different **levels of influence**.

<b>Level 1</b>	Information	Where information is given to residents
<b>Level 2</b>	Research	Where information is sought from residents to help make a decision
<b>Level 3</b>	Consultation	Where views on options are sought from residents, that will be taken into account when a decision is made
<b>Level 4</b>	Participation	Where views on options are sought from residents, with some power to influence decision
<b>Level 5</b>	Partnership	Where views on options are sought from residents, the outcome will be strongly influenced by residents
<b>Level 6</b>	Leadership	Where residents lead the decision making process

Secondly, involvement can be thought of in terms of **different amounts of time commitment** and a variety of types of activity – above and beyond the everyday opportunities for feedback. For example:

- If a resident wishes to spend only 1-2 hours each year, they can become involved at BCHA by filling out surveys or going to fun & information days.
- If a resident wishes to spend only 3-5 hours each year, then they can become involved at BCHA by assisting with service reviews, or being in a focus group.
- If a resident wishes to spend 2-5 hours a month, they can participate in the SURF committee or join a group such as the Diversity and Equality Action Group, Enable, the Residents' Scrutiny Panel or a BCHA Board committee.

### **3.3 Desired Outcomes**

- For residents to have more ownership in developing services and ensuring continuous service improvement
- For staff to have a better understanding of RI and how to achieve RI goals
- To ensure residents feel confident to give feedback and be involved in RI activities
- To demonstrate service improvements are requested by residents themselves

### **3.4 Key Themes**

Key themes for action are as follows:

#### **Key Themes**

##### **1. Participation Groups**

These are resident groups run at various levels of autonomy to review BCHA services, support residents and provide an opportunity to be heard and make a difference. Continued development of these groups is paramount to BCHA providing a quality service.

- Developing SURF
  - Redevelop SURF structure to include a young persons panel (HYP)
  - Review complaints procedure and explore residents' expectations
- Retention
  - For SURF and other resident groups. Explore reasons why people leave groups and find ways to encourage continued involvement
  - Motivational exercises for residents and the SURF Committee
- Develop the Resident Scrutiny Panel
  - Implement a year action plan – 3 or 4 reviews per year

##### **2. Resident Involvement Coordinator and Staff Input**

Staff understanding and commitment to RI is vital to its success. Ensuring staff are all 'on board' with RI and have the knowledge and skills to embed RI into their daily work is very important to the progress and development of RI throughout BCHA.

- Targeted Staff Training
  - Induction training (Along side customer service and E&D)
  - Management to take more ownership of resident involvement
    - Use a variety of methods to develop involvement in their teams
- Targeted Staff Awareness through team meetings, Inform, intranet, email groups
- Involvement volunteer assistant

### 3. Consultation and Feedback

We need to gain residents views and feedback on BCHA services to ensure continuous service improvement and the shaping of service delivery. Focussing on a variety of involvement methods will give the opportunity to maximise our residents' expertise.

- Road Shows – face to face
  - In the regions – hold focus groups in other areas of BCHA services
- Text
- Social media
  - Facebook, twitter, intranet and website
- Resident surveys
- Staff survey
- Maximise number residents involved through a variety of feedback methods
- You said we did, e-outcomes and diversity form consolidation
- Develop online suggestion box to feed into “you said; we did”
  - Website, intranet, inform

### 4. Good Practice

It is vital to share and compare our services with other organisations in order to continually develop a quality service. There is a wealth of knowledge within our peers that can help us continue to grow as an organisation.

- Networking and benchmarking with other organisations and sharing good practice
- Share good practice throughout BHCA with the use of available tools
- Value for money
- Customer Service

## 3.5 Action Plan

### Participation Groups

Action	Deadline	Outcome	Lead
1. Review SURF structure to accommodate project working groups and representation from specific client groups, e.g. Young people	<b>Feb 2012</b>	(a) Revised structure (b) YP rep Co-opted	RIC and SURF Chair
2. Review complaints procedure with residents to make process more customer-friendly	<b>May 2012</b>	Revised process in place	SURF Chair and RIC
3. Explore reasons why people leave groups and find ways to encourage continued involvement.	<b>Oct 2012</b>	Report and action plan delivered	RIC
4. Develop the Resident Scrutiny Panel	<b>Mar 2013</b>	(a) Work Plan in place (b) T&D plan in place	RIC
5. Research opportunities for grant funding for a paid SURF role.	<b>April 2012</b>	Funding received	RIC

## Resident Involvement Coordinator and Staff Input

Action	Deadline	Outcome	Lead
6. Targeted Resident Involvement staff training through the induction training program.	Mar 2012	Training Program in place	RIC
7. Service teams to have a Resident Involvement Champion that will feed back to the RIC.	June 2012	All teams have appointed rep/deputy	RIC
8. RIC to continue with regular updates on resident involvement developments.	Mar 2013	12 monthly bulletin pa	RIC
9. Recruit volunteer assistant to add administrative capacity to the RI service	Dec 2011	Volunteer recruited	RIC
10. Develop staff survey to discover staff understanding of resident involvement.	Jan 2012	2012 survey updated	RIC

## Consultation and Feedback

Action	Deadline	Outcome	Lead
11. Increase feedback from residents living 'in the regions' of BCHA via specific Focus Group meetings in areas including Exeter, Oxford and Plymouth.	Feb 2013	Focus groups held	RIC
12. Use texting to ask a poll question after each focus group meeting.	Mar 2013	6 polls per year	RIC
13. Use social and electronic media to consult, gain feedback and share information with residents and other organisations.	Feb 2013	250 people to 'like' or 'follow' BCHA social media sites	RIC
14. Increase number of completed surveys	Mar 2012	40% return rate	RIC
15. Involve, consult and get feedback from at least 200 residents annually through a variety of methods.	Mar 2013	200 views min pa	RIC
16. Consolidate 'you said we did', e-outcomes and diversity form into one easy to access form, with added on-line suggestion box	May 2012	Wider YSWD launched	RIC

## Good Practice

Action	Deadline	Outcome	Lead
Build professional networks with 3 other organisations to provide best practice sharing opportunities.	Mar 2013	3 visits undertaken	RIC
Costs of RI will be benchmarked with Housemark to ensure ongoing value for money	Annual	Benchmarks published	RIC

### **3.6 Management**

Implementation of this action plan will be managed as a project by the Resident Involvement Coordinator using the Clearview Strategy Suite.

At department level, managers and staff will continue to develop RI in relation to local policies and procedures, bearing in mind the following questions that were originally raised in consultation.

- What are the barriers to effective RI? How can they be overcome?
- What aspects of service will be consulted upon each year?
- How will results be fed back to residents and evidenced?
- Are there any parts of the strategy of relevance for the client group?

### **3.7 Monitoring and Reviewing**

Progress of this RI strategy will be reviewed by the senior management team and by the board up to twice a year, in partnership with SURF. The purpose will be to assess delivery on the strategic aims and to ensure continuous improvement.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

The strategy will be implemented over a two year period. Everyone in the organisation will have a part to play in this task. It is expected that implementation will affect a radical step forward for BCHA, demonstrating effectiveness and continuing improvement in relation to RI. It is also hoped that this will at the same time be beneficial to many individual residents and to the membership of SURF – particularly the Committee members - giving them a voice in BCHA as well as wider benefits in their lives.

## Appendix

### 1 Good Practice

BCHA is a learning organisation that researches best practice to improve services for service users and residents. In order to compare performance, BCHA is a member of:

- TPAS – Tenant Participation Advisory Service
- INSTEP – Information Services for Tenant's Empowerment and Participation
- DCTF – Dorset County Tenants Federation.

Examples of positive practice from high scoring (Good or above) audits by the Audit Commission from 2009 or cited by Housemark:

:

- ◆ **Cheshire Peaks & Plains Housing Trust:** undertakes mystery shopping by looking at diversity scenarios (egg transgender, disability etc).
- ◆ **Herefordshire Housing Ltd:** has a panel of trained resident inspectors to assess the quality of major works such as kitchen and bathroom replacements and rewiring. Results are collated and reported to management.
- ◆ **Eden Housing Association:** had developed a "bring a friend" scheme to encourage involved tenants to bring their neighbours (also tenants) and get reward vouchers.
- ◆ **Sandwell BC Housing:** has developed a number of engagement games to enable people to understand issues such as value for money
- ◆ **Leeds West North West Homes:** has established a complaints panel to review cases (handling and satisfaction).