

FORUM HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Forum Housing Association is committed to the promotion of Equality of Opportunity, recognising that passive policies will not succeed in combating discrimination.

All the Association's Policies and Procedures have implicit in them a determination to challenge discrimination and promote positive action to achieve Equality of Opportunity which is not a paper exercise but a reality.

The above statement is applicable to this Policy.

PARTICIPATION – RESIDENTS/SERVICE USERS

POLICY

Forum Housing Association is committed to the principles of resident consultation, participation and involvement throughout the Association activities. We aim to establish and maintain policies and practices that encourage and enable all residents/service users to exercise influence in all aspects of the organisation in a mutually agreed manner.

The Association recognises that flexibility is key to meaningful involvement by residents and service users and will monitor and review its Participation – Residents/Service Users' Policy annually in order to ensure that appropriate involvement is maximised.

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this policy – 'Resident and Service User' determines young people accommodated by the Association on Tenancy or Licence and also those in receipt of a service from the Association via 'floating support' or 'drop in'.

PRINCIPLE AIMS

The aims of resident and service user involvement in the Association is:

- To offer residents/service users a greater level of participation and satisfaction in the place they live.
- To improve communication and a better level of understanding throughout the Association.
- To adopt fully the principle of the Behaviour and Lifestyles policy and procedure in areas of consultation and participation of resident/service users.

Feedback from consultation exercises will be delivered to residents and service users as quickly as possible after the completion of the exercise.

The Association will take all views into account before finalising any proposals. However, the Association Board reserve the right to make a decision which it believes in the best interests of Forum Housing Association, as a whole and its residents and service users generally.

INFORMATION

1. Forum Housing Association will ensure that all residents and service users have the following information:
 - 1.1 During the welcome interview process every young person will be given a Welcome Pack, which will be fully explained by staff. The pack will offer the individual all the basic information required to ensure they can settle into their home and/or receive the appropriate support/service they require.
 - 1.2 A service statement will be clearly displayed in every project/service outlining the standards for the Association and the criteria that can be expected.
 - 1.3 All residents and service users can expect information and updates on a range of subjects in the quarterly Newsletter. Residents and service users will be encouraged to contribute towards the design, inclusion and editing of the newsletter via the publicity group of the Residents/Service Users' Panel.
 - 1.4 Feedback on the results of any consultation exercises will be available to all residents via notice boards and the Residents/Service Users' Newsletter.
 - 1.5 An Annual Report giving details of the Association's performance in key areas as set out by the Housing Corporation, will be available to all residents/service users.
 - 1.6 Notification will be provided on notice boards of activities/educational sessions from internal and external sources. An activity whiteboard will also be available for all young people to see in the foyer area of their project/service. The boards will outline all activities available for the forthcoming week.
 - 1.7 The Association will publicise internal and external training opportunities for all residents/service users via Newsletters and notice boards.
 - 1.8 Information on any Policies and Procedures in any area of the Association's activity will be available on request except where this might compromise confidentiality.
 - 1.9 A Bi-Annual Residents/Service Users' Satisfaction Survey will be undertaken giving all residents/service users the chance to comment on the services available and the Association as a whole. The results of the survey will be available via the Annual Report and the Residents/Service Users' Newsletter.

PARTICIPATION

- 2.1 Focus groups will be used to test the level of satisfaction and the views of residents/service users prior to the introduction of any services or policy change. Stringent efforts will be made to ensure that all focus groups reflect every aspect of the Association's user groups.
- 2.2 The Association will ensure that all residents/service users have the opportunity to participate in activities organised by internal and external sources.
- 2.3 The Association will be proactive with staff to network with additional organisations to offer residents/service users the chance to undertake educational and cultural visits to other areas. Support will be offered to the Residents' Panel to undertake network with similar organisations throughout the United Kingdom.
- 2.4 A 'peer led' participation programme to allow young people to have an increasingly active voice in the life of the Association, will be introduced. The resident representatives will continue to place emphasis on encouraging participation and show the Association's commitment towards its user groups. The Resident Representatives will have an overarching remit to encourage participation and therefore have a major impact on all aspects detailed in this policy.
- 2.5 Residents/service users will be invited and encouraged to write articles and letters for publication in the quarterly newsletter. Residents/service users will be actively encouraged to participate in the planning, production and circulation of the Quarterly Newsletter.
- 2.6 The Association will actively encourage all residents/service users to complete a bi-annual Satisfaction Survey. Staff will be available to assist with the completion of the questionnaires and to ensure all residents/service users are given the chance to express their views.
- 2.7 Forum Housing Association will seek the views of residents/service users when planning any change of service reviews. Consultation will be carried out at a pace that residents/service users are comfortable with and at an early stage to ensure that residents/service users have a genuine opportunity in influencing decisions.

MEETINGS

- 3.1 Residents/service users will have the opportunity to meet with the Association's Board annually by informal arrangements, at the Annual General Meeting.
- 3.2 Members of the Residents' Panel will have the opportunity to meet with the Executive Team on an annual basis over a meal to discuss relevant aspects of life within the Association.
- 3.3 The Association will actively encourage all residents/service users to participate in monthly meetings to discuss relevant issues. All meetings will be managed by residents/service users with the support of staff.

- 3.4 Suggestion boxes will be sited at all projects/services for residents/service users to remain anonymous but still pass in their comments and ideas. Each individual that leaves their name on the suggestion box form will receive a letter of thanks and feedback on their suggestion.

SUPPORT FOR RESIDENT/SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT

Forum Housing Association will provide reasonable resources, practical assistance and support to enable residents to participate fully in the work of the Association.

The Association will:

- Provide funding to cover the costs incurred by producing a quarterly Residents/Service Users' Newsletter.
- Provide travel expenses or transport to all residents/service users asked to undertake work or sessions, as required.
- Provide a budget for residents/service users to undertake activities related to participation.

Non compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary proceedings.