



FORUM HOUSING
— it's all about **you** —

SPEAK OUT STRATEGY

*“WELL DONE IS BETTER THAN
WELL SAID”*

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

The Context of the Speak Out Strategy

Forum Housing Association has provided varied levels of support to young people with a housing need for 39 years. Services have increased considerably in that time to meet the challenges of local communities, to steer young people in directions that best ensure their stability and provide them with the confidence needed to contribute fully in the opportunities that are ahead as young adults. Having ambitions and aspirations is important also for our young people, because having a sense of purpose and belief in the future are identified as key components of resilience.

This strategy is one element of an overriding approach by the Association to ensuring that young people's participation and contribution in all aspects of the Association's life is given the highest priority. The strategy recognises that young people need to be supported to engage in consultation and decision making. This support will come through a range of approaches at an individual and group level, and sits within the context of the need to develop excellent skills for front line staff, to ensure that young people can access a full range of personal development opportunities as residents and stakeholders in the Association's core business.

The strategy focuses on taking steps to secure young people's involvement in consultation and decision making within this broader context.

For the Association's young people, their involvement is an ongoing process, not a single activity or event, therefore our strategy and actions aim to address how we:

- Consult young people about all decisions which affect them
- Provide inclusive opportunities for having their views heard, recognised and acted upon
- Support them to be equal partners in the decision making processes at all levels, both internally and where other services impact upon their lives.

The Purpose of the Speak Out Strategy

The purpose of the strategy is to provide an Association framework for ensuring that young people's involvement is secured at all levels and by all groups who sign up for support, and that processes are in place to achieve consistency of quality and standards. The strategy points to models for how young people's strategic engagement will be approached and delivered. It unifies an approach which will be adapted for all local authority areas where services are provided and in all the Association's locality based work and practice. It further aims to make transparent to adults and young people where and how influence in decision making processes and key partnership groups happen.

Our Vision

The vision of this Speak Out Strategy is to ensure that children and young people supported by Forum Housing Association are actively involved in all aspects of decision making, consultation, participation and inclusion which impact on their lives.

Four Main Principles

The following principles of the strategy are built around four main entitlements:

- Young People can take part in and have influence over decisions, which affect them as individuals.
- Young People have influence over the services they receive and how they receive them.
- Young People express their views through processes, groups and forums led by them.
- Young People have their voices heard in adult led democratic and decision making environments.

Providing the highest standards in service

The Association will deliver this strategy using the following regulatory markers to assess delivery and standards.

External

- **People First: Delivering Change Through Involvement - Housing Corporation**
Although the Association is not required to meet the standards set out in this guidance the Housing Corporation expect general compliance with the principles of the policy.
- **Measuring Change: Involvement Impact Assessments**
Focusing on the outcomes of involvement work, this tool allows residents to know how their commitment and input has changed things for the better. Involvement Impact Assessments require Associations to evidence, that their desired outcomes have been successful to the satisfaction of participating residents.
- **Supporting People - Quality Assessment Framework (QAF)**
The Association is required to meet a range of assessment measures and supplementary standards

Internal

- **Business Plan - Speak Out**

The work of the Resident Representatives will be measured through the Speak Out Business Plan produced in order to meet the strategic objectives of the Association's Business Plan - *This is not just a Business Plan it's ...*

- **Housing and Young Peoples Services Committee**

Quarterly reports produced outlining activity programmes and outputs. Relevant Key Performance Indicators and internal targets will be used to measure formal and aspirational achievements

Defining Consultation and Participation

Consultation can be defined as a mechanism for involving young people in decision making. Consultation is most typically regarded as a mode of involvement where the balance of power rests firmly with adults and has the following characteristics: Adults formulate, design and run the initiative. Opportunities are given to young people to contribute, but often it is seen as too risky to allow any greater involvement or the engagement with young people is tokenistic and therefore limited.

It is important to distinguish consultation from participation in that consultation is a chance to express views and opinions whereas participation implies a more active involvement in deciding which issues are important enough to be consulted on in the first place. Consultation is therefore regarded as a process where views are sought but not necessarily taken on board, whereas, participation is regarded as a process where there is a real engagement, according to age/ability, in all stages and development of a programme, from conceptualisation, through operation to evaluation.

This strategy is designed for the development of mechanisms and structures that ensure the full participation of young people housed and supported by the Association. While sitting parallel and enhancing developments in consultation, the strategy will focus on a distinct and imperative aspect of the full inclusion of young people allowing them to take part in, and share in the ownership of all decision making.

Delivering the Strategy

The strategy will be delivered in line with the Association's Business Objectives identified in the Business Plan and is covered under the following headings.

- **Every Child Matters - 5 Outcomes**

The 5 Outcomes sets out the Government's intentions to ensure that all children and young people have access to the highest levels of support, engagement and safety. The Association will continue to use the 5 Outcome themes to generate creative, appropriate and progressive initiatives with young people. The 5 Outcome areas will allow young people to access external services and resources depending upon their level of need.

- **Aiming High for Young People** - is the Government's strategy to transform leisure time opportunities, activities and support services for young people in England. It sets out aspirations for what services should achieve over the next 10 years, and will release funding streams to ensure that these aspirations become real outcomes for young people.

- **Charter of Shared Values**

The values of this strategy will be embodied in the Charter of Shared Values statement, created by and for young people in receipt of Association services. This Charter will establish the following shared values:

- Rights
- Listening
- Equality and Diversity
- Resources
- Privacy
- Confidentiality
- Redress

- **Resident Representatives**

The Association will grow its most powerful consultation and participation delivery team as resources allow to ensure that this strategy meets its desired outcomes. The team will operate within the Association's structures and procedures, but with careful regulation over its independent access to all of the Association's residents.

- **Residents' Panel**

The panel will operate from a membership of representatives of all the Association's projects.

Representatives are democratically selected

- **Project Representatives/Project Meetings**

Appointed by ballot in all projects, the representatives will support managers with consultation and participation requirements for all housing and support services.

- **Speak Out Group**

The group formally established with a terms of reference, will promote peer education amongst existing residents and young people who have moved on from the Association. The group will encourage and seek out the creative talents of young people, to share messages of hope, encouragement and with information in order to better equip young people with the campaigning and citizenship skills required.

The group will lead on all opportunities to deliver conferences, workshops, training, and produce activity sheets, using the medium of the arts.

- **Local, Regional, National and International Programmes**

The Association will market itself with the following principle aims

- To broaden the opportunities for residents to be represented in national arenas
- To promote positive contributions and good practice within other settings and cultures
- To seek out new opportunities to expand services
- To establish bench marking opportunities
- To equip other service providers with tried and tested appropriate skills and knowledge
- To broaden the opportunities and aspirations of young people as citizens
- To ensure best practice is identified and introduced within the Association

- **Speak Ezy's**

The Association will endeavour to expand and make full use of the provision of the Speak Ezy venues in order to ensure young people have a neutral place for consultation and participation opportunities.

- **Tools for consultation and participation**

The Association will use a range of internal mechanisms to ensure that residents can fully engage in the decision making processes. Such examples might be; Suggestion Boxes, Newsletters, Bi-Annual Questionnaires, Executive Meals, Policy Reviews, Internal Representation, Stakeholder Events.

- **Partnerships**

The Association will grow its links with local partners to ensure that resources are maximised and shared practice is sought in order to strengthen the voice of young people internally and externally.