



# Resident Involvement Strategy 2010 - 2013

**Barnet Homes  
Resident Involvement Strategy**

**2010 - 2013**

**Contents**

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## **1. Introduction**

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This strategy sets out our aims and objectives for resident involvement at Barnet Homes and how we will achieve and measure this over the next three years. We use a wide definition for resident involvement, embracing community development and all customer feedback on our services.

Tenant Participation is a two way process involving sharing of information and ideas, where tenants are able to influence decisions and take part in what is happening

This strategy links to our "Planning for success, Improving lives not just housing Business Plan 2009 – 2014" and other strategies such as Sustainable Communities Leasehold Management and Youth Engagement strategies.

Over the years the traditional methods used to involve residents have changed considerably with more informal ways being adopted based on resident preferences. Barnet Homes is committed to providing a diverse range of opportunities for residents to be involved in helping us shape our services, with a blend of both formal and informal approaches based on preferred choices.

During 2007/08 a value for money review of resident involvement was carried out and this has made some significant changes to the strategy.

Our Tenant Compact is a formal three way agreement between Barnet Homes, Barnet Council and residents as to how they can be involved in many opportunities to improve our services.

The key elements of this strategy have been agreed with residents and are incorporated within our Tenant Compact.

### **The National Context**

Barnet Homes is committed to engage, involve and consult with our residents, as well as ensuring their involvement leads to successful and measurable outcomes. Our strategy will reflect this commitment by continuing to complement new national agendas and targets.

### **Tenant Services Authority**

In December 2008 the functions of the Housing Corporation were transferred to the newly formed Tenant Services Authority (TSA) as the new independent regulator of affordable housing in England.

It is expected that by April 2010 the TSA will regulate all social housing providers, including local authority landlords and Arms Length Management Organisations.

Part of the TSA's role has been to consult with residents on the new regulatory framework on how best to monitor the service being delivered by their housing provider.

The strategy responds to future TSA standards that are subject to statutory consultation with a deadline for responses being 5 February 2010.

One of the proposed standards includes 'Tenant Involvement and Empowerment'. Arrangements must be in place to empower tenants with the opportunity to;

- monitor and scrutinise our housing performance
- measure and scrutinise how effective their our involvement and empowerment policy is
- Arrangements for involvement and empowerment are clearly published and accessible for tenants.

### **Homes and Communities Agency**

In December 2008 the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) was also established. The HCA is the new national agency leading the delivery of homes and regeneration in England. The HCA also includes the Academy for Sustainable Communities.

### **National Tenant Voice**

As part of the TSA's drive to fully engage with tenants the TSA has set up the National Tenant Voice (NTV) group that will look at housing policy issues.

The NTV will consist of 50 tenants from across the country, who will act as a sounding board on a range of housing issues for a new National Tenant Voice organisation.

### **Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE's)**

The Audit Commission's key lines of enquiry (KLOE's) are widely recognised as useful tools which have helped organisations' self-improvement and provide a clear perspective on the inspection process.

KLOE documents are designed to provide Barnet Homes with a supporting framework through which to view and assess our services.

KLOE's form an integral part of staff team meetings to ensure they are continuously reviewed against resident involvement, customer care and access with demonstrated outcomes

Barnet Homes recognise and adopt the resident involvement KLOE's and use it as a valuable benchmarking tool to measure how excellent a service we are providing our residents.

The Audit Commission has recently indicated that it will be issuing a consultation in March 2010 on proposed changes to the KLOE's. We are keeping abreast of these changes.

## **2. Our business aims**

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Barnet Homes is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) created by the London Borough of Barnet in 2004. We manage and maintain 15,000 homes on behalf of the council, including 3,900 leasehold properties. Underpinning what we do are our three core business aims:

**Aim 1:** To deliver excellent services to all our customers

**Aim 2:** To make the best use of resources by providing value for money services and developing new business

**Aim 3:** To manage regeneration estates successfully

### **This strategy aims to support our business aims by:**

- Having residents involved at the heart of our services, which will lead to improvement
- Ensuring opportunities for involvement reflect the needs and preferences of residents
- Embedding resident involvement across the organisation
- Empowering residents to engage effectively and constructively with Barnet Homes at all levels
- Outlining a clear governance structure that residents understand and can have the opportunity to participate in
- Developing the capacity of residents to be involved in and influence decision making and also build sustainable community involvement
- Developing the role of all staff to facilitate wider resident involvement
- Ensuring value for money and maximising outcomes from involvement activity
- This strategy will ensure we are meeting the core needs of the business which will mean in some instances, we will provide residents with signposting to partners.

## **3. Our Aims and Guiding Principles**

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Listening to our residents is important for Barnet Homes to gain a better understanding of their needs and to continuously improve on the services we provide to them.

Results from our 2008 STATUS survey highlighted that overall tenant satisfaction with Barnet Homes as a landlord had remained at 71%, the same level as in 2006

with overall satisfaction with repairs and maintenance being 70%, compared to 76% in 2006.

We believe involving residents will not only help us improve customer satisfaction, but also demonstrate that we wish to listen, involve and consult with them over all our services.

Our involvement strategy is based on the following principles:

- Residents are at the heart of our business and make a valuable contribution to helping us shape and improve services
- Opportunities for involvement are well publicised, residents are encouraged to participate and they consider their views matter and will make a difference
- Opportunities for involvement are regularly reviewed to ensure they are effective, provide value for money and meet the preferences of all residents including those who are traditionally less involved
- Support and training is provided for residents who wish to be involved to ensure they can play a full part in contributing to improvements within Barnet Homes and in building sustainable community involvement for the future
- Residents receive clear and prompt feedback on how their involvement has helped shaped services and communities
- The success of the strategy is built on a successful partnership between residents, staff, partners and the Board
- Residents are aware of a wide range of opportunities to be involved and that they consider that their involvement has made a fundamental difference to achieving better homes, services and communities
- Residents feel assured our services and the way they are delivered are transparent and that we are accountable to them
- Maximising the benefits and outcomes from all involvement activity

### **Measure of Success**

We believe the success of this strategy will be determined by meeting 3 key objectives in working with our residents to ensure our opportunities for involvement meet their needs and desired outcomes.

1. Increased satisfaction and successful outcomes and attendance at our resident hub meetings.
2. Increased opportunities for resident involvement from 60% to 70% by 2012
3. Production of an annual impact assessment that provides valuable evidence that resident involvement has driven improvement in our services.

## 4. Menu of Involvement

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We have dedicated staff that engage with residents and enable them to participate in a wide range of opportunities for involvement. There are a variety of formal and informal opportunities that meet the needs of all residents

### **Barnet Homes Board**

The Board of Directors are responsible for the overall running of Barnet Homes, making policy decisions and overseeing the organisation's business plan. The Board consists of council members, independent directors and residents. Any resident can apply for the opportunity to be on the Board.

### **Performance Advisory Group**

A resident-led group established to monitor and scrutinise our housing performance and help us improve services for residents.

### **Resident Inspector**

Opportunities ranging from inspecting our estates and caretaking services, through to conducting a 'residents experience' interview and gathering their views on our services, including repairs.

### **Involvement Hub**

Meetings are held four times a year in different venues across the borough to enable residents to meet Barnet Homes staff and discuss our services, how services can be improved and give views on new services. These events also provide residents with an opportunity to meet with our Housing Officers prior to the Hub to report repairs, nuisance or answer any general enquiries.

### **Youth Forum**

A mobile forum that organises youth related events and activities at youth clubs across Barnet. The forum also provides opportunities for our younger tenants to apply for funding that will help towards improving their local environment, as well as social health and well-being of young people

### **Sheltered Housing Partnership Panel**

Meetings are held six times a year bringing together residents from our sheltered housing scheme to meet officers from Barnet Homes, discuss local issues that affect older people and invite partners from all sectors to contribute to improving the lives of our senior citizens

### **Resident Associations and Community Groups**

These are an active way for residents to get involved in their community. Support from a dedicated team of Barnet Homes staff includes capacity building, funding and increased opportunities for local residents to voice their views on how we can improve their local environment

### **Involving our Leaseholders**

Leaseholders have a range of opportunities to get involved and express their views on the services we offer them. Listening to leaseholders through regular surgeries, open forums and focus groups helps us to increase our understanding of how services affect leaseholders. This strategy set out to take leaseholders' views into

account as set out within our Leasehold Management Strategy and set targets over the next three years to increase satisfaction opportunities for them to participate

### **Regeneration - Neighbourhood Panels**

Each of our four regeneration estates holds meetings with residents six times a year to discuss how we are performing in managing their estates.

### **Focus Groups**

Random residents are invited to take part in small discussion groups for Barnet Homes to gain qualitative and in depth views from residents on a specific service or topic. These are usually made up of six to 12 residents and are facilitated by an external facilitator.

## **5. Our Strategic objectives and achievements to date**

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Barnet Homes and our residents have developed four strategic objectives for delivering our strategy. We continue to involve residents on how best to engage and involve a wider scope of residents to ensure our objectives continue to be reflective of customer needs.

We are considerably proud of our achievement to date, although we recognise that continuous improvement is what makes the difference between a good 2 star ALMO and achieving 3 stars (excellence).

### **Strategic Objective 1: Provide a comprehensive range of opportunities for involvement, based on the preferences of residents**

Over the years we have shifted resources to focus on more informal methods of involvement, encouraging broader opportunities for involvement that will help improve services.

We value the importance of an accountable and formal participation framework and make this accessible to all residents who wish to join in.

### **Achievements to date**

- Introduced a resident 'Hub' based on residents' preference for involvement
- Set up "Viewpoint" – our Housing Sounding Board - a high quality database of more than 800 residents who have told us their preferences for involvement and areas that interest them
- Carried out an annual programme of 625 face to face interviews by an independent market research company driving service improvement – an opportunity to hear the views of all residents
- Developed a programme of focus groups across the organisation
- Opened resident resource centres at two locations in the borough

## Key developments for 2010-2013

- Market resource centres to improve access for associations and community groups, and maximise usage
- Identify new innovative ways to engage with a wider range of residents, making better use of new technology, such as bulk text messaging, online social networking and email bulletins
- Establish a resident-led Performance Advisory Group to monitor and scrutinise our services

## Strategic Objective 2: increase satisfaction with opportunities for involvement for all residents

We want to be one of the best landlords at delivering resident involvement. At present we have some way to go - 60% of residents are satisfied with opportunities for involvement. In particular we need to target people in the "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied category".

Improving satisfaction with involvement opportunities is essential in helping to improve satisfaction with the overall service – our aim is to increase overall satisfaction from 71% in 07/08 to 82% by 2013.

We have a very diverse population - 25% of residents are from the black, minority and ethnic community (BME) with a lower satisfaction level of involvement at 55%.

Residents on regeneration estates are more likely to be younger, from a BME community, have children and be less satisfied with services (only 47% were satisfied with opportunities for involvement compared with 57% other estates). There are more than 750 non secure tenants on regeneration estates.

## Achievements to date

- Targeted the preferences of involvement for BME residents through focus groups
- Carried out innovative involvement work on the *Disability Equality Duty*, including face to face surveys with 250 tenants with disabilities
- Held annual language open days for our non-English speaking tenants
- Introduced new involvement methods on regeneration estates which meet residents' preferences for involvement
- Introduced "you said, we did" as a ongoing featured article in AtHome
- Delivered an annual training program for residents involved in our business, as well as those seeking to gain further knowledge and employment opportunities within housing

## Key developments for 2010-2013

- Carry out a publicity campaign for resident involvement
- Increase proportion of tenants satisfied with opportunities for involvement from 60% to 70% of (measured by face to face survey)
- Review and refocus our equality and diversity action plan

- Increase leaseholder satisfaction with opportunities for involvement from the average 28% to 35%

### **Objective 3: Ensure that resident involvement drives improvements in services**

Developing services based on residents' views, needs and preferences provides the key to increasing satisfaction. 77% of tenants felt that we took account of their views when developing services (15% a lot and 62% a little) – which suggests we can do much more. All of our services are open to the involvement of residents and are encouraged at an early stage.

#### **Achievements to date**

- Carried out a value for money review of resident involvement including a fundamental review of the formal involvement structure
- Invested £800,000 into the adaptations programme to reduce waiting times for residents with disabilities
- Established a resident-led Performance Advisory Group to monitor, review and scrutinise our housing performance
- Developed 12 resident inspectors for our housing services and repairs teams

#### **Key developments for 2010-2013**

- Produce a single annual consultation plan of work by all service areas
- Improve staff awareness of involvement opportunities and the relevance to their work
- Produce an annual impact assessment report, evidencing how resident's involvement has driven improvements and shaped our services.
- Introduce new monitoring and performance systems to capture residents' involvement and outcomes
- Review service standards with residents
- Engage residents within future value for money reviews

### **Objective 4: Residents are involved in a range of community projects that lead to safe, sustainable, cohesive communities**

For Barnet Homes to succeed in "improving lives, not just housing" it is essential that strong communities are developed alongside the physical improvements of Decent Homes and regeneration.

The majority of our housing stock is in the most deprived areas of the borough – indices of deprivation show 12 areas within the 20% most deprived nationally. One of our biggest challenges is to improve the quality of life in these areas so it moves towards the standard for Barnet as a whole.

Successful projects require joint working by Barnet Homes staff and our partners from within the voluntary and community sector, including residents. Resident

Associations and community groups play a valuable role in contributing to developing sustainable communities in their area.

During budget and business planning consultations residents also highlighted the importance of engaging with children and young people. This has been reflected in our development of a Youth Engagement Strategy, along with a panel that ensures actions from the strategy are delivered and achieve outcomes based on choice identified by children and young people.

### **Achievements to date**

- More than £600,000 external funding achieved in the last three years
- Gardening scheme for residents – with a Bronze Award in the BBC Gardeners World competition
- Funded £45,000 towards estate based and staff innovation projects
- Funded £60k towards youth engagement projects each year
- Built partnerships within the voluntary and community sector to support our business aims

### **Key developments 2010-2013**

- Improve publicity and resident participation in estate action days and estate inspections
- Increase awareness and opportunities to develop resident associations and community groups
- Identify external funding for projects such as youth work, regeneration estates, information technology and training
- Introduce an estate and neighbourhood improvement initiative – *Your Voice Your Choice*

## **6. Participatory Budget – Your Voice Your Choice**

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We believe that the best experts on how to look after estates and neighbourhoods are the very people that live on them. Our aim for *Your Voice Your Choice* is to put residents at the heart of what we do. Residents help us develop local solutions for local concerns, empowering local residents, creating better communities and improving our services.

Your Voice Your Choice will give residents an opportunity to make decisions on how money is spent to improve the estates and neighbourhoods we manage.

## **7. Resources**

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Resident involvement is a shared responsibility for everyone at Barnet Homes. We are committed to ensure that this continues and complements our strategy by:

- Having dedicated budgets for involvement initiatives

- Developing a corporate calendar of events and surveys to reduce resident consultation/involvement overload
- Develop inter-departmental initiatives
- Improve inter-departmental communication and briefings
- Establish resident involvement workgroups and champions within the organisation
- Include support of resident involvement within staff inductions, supervisions and annual appraisals
- Encourage greater staff involvement and attendance at resident-led meetings, including the Barnet Homes Involvement Hub, focus groups and consultation events
- Participate in estate fun days and events

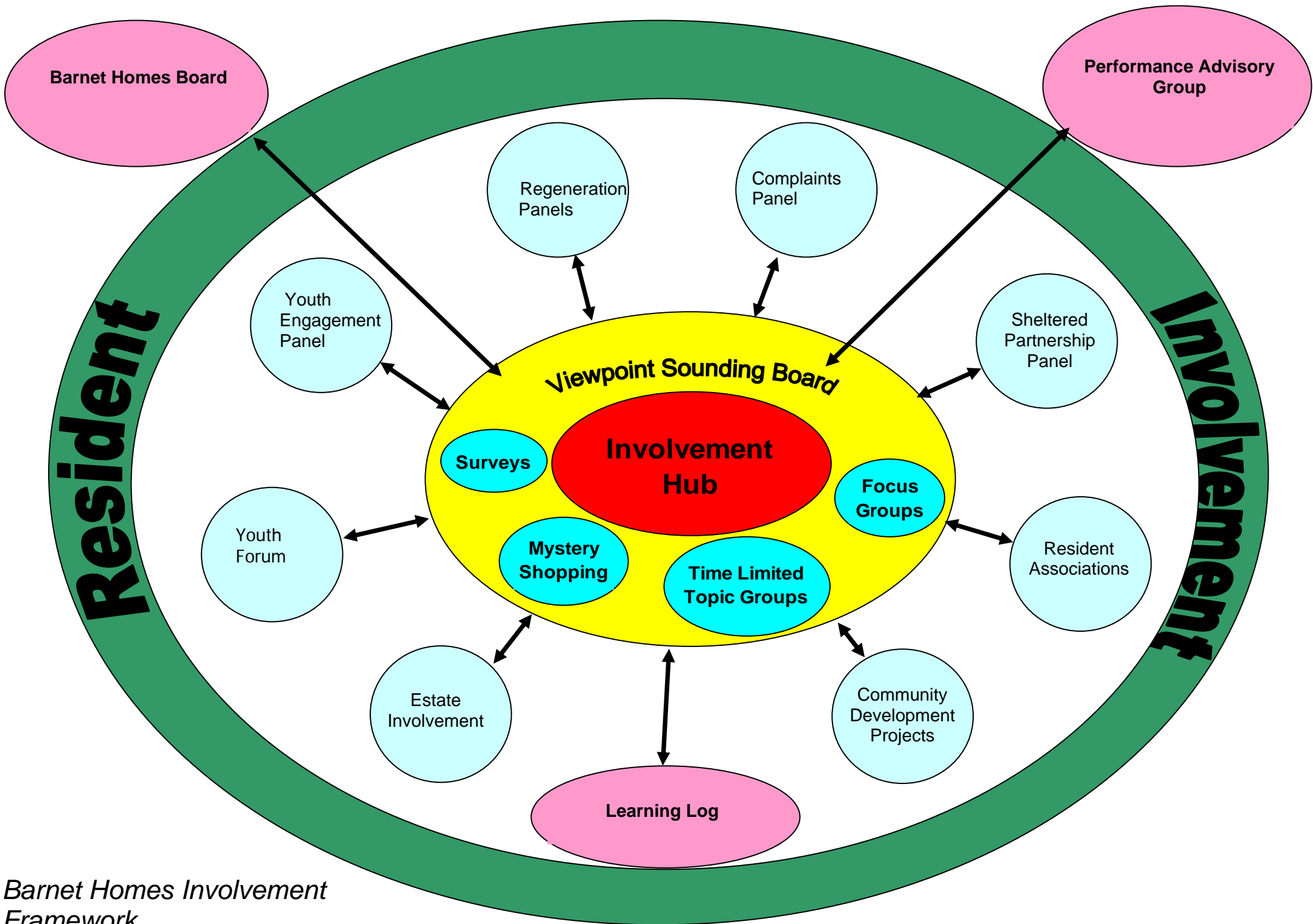
## **8. Monitor, review and evaluate**

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Regular monitoring of progress and outcomes against the strategy and action plan will be reported to the Standards & Asset Management Sub Group of the Board and the Performance Advisory Group.

The success of this strategy will be measured by:

- Achievements against targets and measurable outcomes in the action plan
- Benchmarking against other high performing landlords
- Benchmarking against Key Line of Enquiry for Resident Involvement
- Feedback from residents, Barnet Homes Board, PAG and our staff
- Annual impact assessment review
- Carrying out a value for money review on the new involvement structure in Early 2010



*Barnet Homes Involvement Framework*