

## Peabody Housing Is Listening - Stakeholder Engagement Activity

### Housing Strategy Recommendations

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#### Peabody Background

Our mission at Peabody Housing is to make London a city of opportunity for all by ensuring as many people as possible have:

- A good home... A place that is safe, warm, clean, light, well-maintained – somewhere that evokes personal pride
- A real sense of purpose... This means regular endeavour – whether that is work, learning, caring for others, personal development or volunteering. Doing something that people look forward to because it makes them feel valued
- A strong feeling of belonging... Belongingness grows from active involvement in the neighbourhood and the spirit of togetherness and friendliness that goes along with that.

Our four key aims are to:

- Provide great services and quality homes
- Build thriving communities
- Achieve influential growth
- Achieve business excellence

Since its inception Peabody has successfully delivered homes, regeneration programmes and community services across London, however Peabody is determined to build on its success and improve its offer to residents so we have been talking to residents to explore what's new & what's possible in term of service delivery around:

**Investing for the Future to:**

- Prevent Poverty
- Treat People Fairly
- Cover Cost of Services

**Housing Future Generations**

- Most Important Things Young People Need?
- What Should Peabody Be Doing?

**Housing Affordability**

- What are the Issues Around Affordability in London?
- How do These Issues Affect Different Groups of People?

**What Else Should Peabody be Hearing?**

We are grateful to all the residents from across the Peabody region that attended one of the two events that were held and to those people who shared thoughts and opinions via email or telephone calls. Your insights and feedback will form a key part of our next strategy, and at a time when housing providers are under increasing pressure to make sure residents receive the best value for money from their landlord, it's essential that we focus on what is needed now and use our resources wisely to deliver as much as we can.

## Key Findings - Current Issues

**Estate management** – residents told us they want to see a single point of contact re-instated in their communities. Several requested estate managers that are visible in the community and who can enforce expectations around resident behaviour.

**Repairs and Maintenance** – Residents repeatedly reported frustration around the repairs and maintenance service, the main areas of discontent were communications from Peabody and the quality of work undertaken. Several residents suggested that the service could be brought in-house and that this might also generate opportunities for local people to access training and employment opportunities with Peabody.

**ASB** – Residents want end-to-end support in tackling incidents of ASB in their communities. Whilst every case is specific to individuals there was an agreement that Peabody staff are over stretched and so the process of support can break down and ongoing ASB issues are not resolved leaving residents feeling isolated and in extreme cases paying for accommodation where they don't feel safe.

**Communications** – residents want to see improved communications across the organisation including a desire to have more contact with senior staff and board members and more opportunity to inform policy – residents felt that they live with the consequences of decision-making but have little opportunity to question/challenge.

## Key Findings - Future Directions

**Investing for the Future to:**

- Prevent Poverty
- Treat People Fairly
- Cover Cost of Services

**Remember the purpose** - Residents were concerned that Peabody had lost touch with its roots and several residents were concerned that in the focus on development activity the purpose – to provide social housing, was being lost. Also there was a call from the residents that Peabody should be challenge rather than complying with current policy especially in light of proposed developments around the Right to Buy and welfare reform.

**Development Activity** – Residents expressed concern around the balance of development activity versus the day-to-day activity and that rents climb whilst maintenance and neighbourhood management services appear to decline.

**Housing Future Generations**

- Most important things Young People need?
- What should Peabody be doing?

**Family cohesion** - Residents commented on the use of a Sons and Daughters policy where children of current residents have rights to secure a Peabody home close to their families. The desire for a sense of community and belonging and a feeling of being able to stay close to family without the need for adult children to remain living at home is strong. This is a universal issue for housing providers and one that Peabody is very aware of and wants to address. Residents suggested allocated properties might be made

available for young people and that these might have a reduced rent, so that young people can stay in the communities they have grown up and provide a family support network nearby.

**Employability** - Residents would like to see Peabody invest in the creation of training and employment opportunities for young people, offering them the chance to get local work placements, training programmes and jobs. Some residents felt that an in house maintenance service would offer improved performance and a chance to create jobs and/or apprenticeships for residents.

### Housing Affordability

- What are the issues around affordability in London?
- How do these issues affect different groups of people?

**Definition** – residents agreed that's its almost impossible to define what's meant by affordable housing as individual's circumstances are so varied across the City. However all agreed that if, as an individual, you are eligible to access social housing then nothing else is affordable. As the levels of rent climb across the capital some boroughs have become impossible places to live and some groups of people have been completely displaced from the communities in which they lived previously, especially older people, young people, disabled people and families on low incomes.

**Ownership fears** - Residents also told us they are fearful about a lack of shared ownership opportunities in some boroughs; the potential impact of the new Right to Buy initiative and the potential rise in the threshold for social housing need. Residents want to feel supported by Peabody and would welcome updates about how Peabody's reaction to such issues will impact on them and their living arrangements.

**Rising Rents** – concern around rising rents was universal but more specific in relation to residents that live on the Regency estates where rents for some have risen by 40% over 4 years. However the issues of rising rents were exacerbated when coupled with the experience of many that was poor service in relation to repairs and maintenance. Tackling the supply chain deficiencies in repairs and maintenance would temper the feelings of injustice in relation to rent increases.

### What Else Should Peabody be Hearing?

Although a lot of residents were happy with what Peabody does, constructive comments came from residents especially about opportunities to develop additional services such suggestions include:

- Functioning community hubs providing space where partners can deliver:
  - Welfare information and internet access
  - Employment support
  - Training
  - Rights and employment rights
  - Social skills
  - Communication skills
  - Group work projects
  - Intergenerational projects
  - Drama – reflection workshops
  - Family outings
- Encouraging young people forums and Resident Associations
- Key workers based in hubs to do specific pieces of tailored work around the individual needs of young people, this may include:
  - Drop in activity
  - Structured programmes around tenancies, employment etc.

- Youth programmes that engage young people to contribute back into the community based on gardening, Music based space/initiative, Graffiti/art programme etc.
- Include young people in decision making around anything to generate more ownership and respect
- Networking with secondary schools
- Provide affordable housing – starter homes and build a mix of properties to ensure the right house for the right customer
- Extend the handyman team to others that may not be able to afford such services on the open market
- Consider providing community cafes within community hubs in order to offer subsidised meals and or foodbanks

These have been considered alongside other comments provided by residents as well as other influencing factors affecting the housing sector at present. The following conclusions and recommendations have been made to ensure the key messages from the consultation process are considered in the Peabody Housing Strategy.

### Conclusions

1. Many residents do not feel listened to by Peabody and some are sceptical that this will change. Genuine consultation with residents is essential if they are to believe that Peabody is an excellent housing provider that lives into its values.
2. There is a demand for housing for younger people and residents would like a review of eligibility criteria to consider the re-introduction of the Sons and Daughters policy.
3. Peabody has reliable infrastructure services and makes large purchases of services; it needs to use this to improve the repairs and maintenance service as resident's perceptions of Peabody's new developments are affected by their own experience that feels poor and inadequate.
4. Residents want employment/volunteering opportunities across the area for younger people as well as adults experiencing unemployment or long-term unemployment. Activities that can increase resident's employability via community hubs would be welcomed. Specialist partners could do this and so Peabody could develop relationships with partners and provide venues for delivery.

### Recommendations for potential inclusion to the Housing Strategy:

#### Communications

In all engagement and/or consultation exercises residents want to be kept informed of outcomes and decisions and so the need for improved communications across the organisation is vital. Consider all means of communication but do not rely upon digital media as not all residents want to use the

#### Affordability

Review the eligibility criteria-consider the re-introduction of the Sons and Daughters policy.

#### Support Services

Look at ways to improve the repairs and maintenance service and the way that services are provided at the next tendering opportunity. Consider opportunities to partner with Voluntary Sector and Social Enterprises to offer employability support, welfare advice, community gardening projects, community cafes etc. to increase the range of services on offer for residents.

### Other External Environmental Factors

Peabody has to balance the requirements of the regulator (HCA) to offer value for money against the requests from residents to provide a range of services.

Capped rents will benefit some individual tenants but reduce overall income so choices have to be made about best use of resources.

The property market in London is unlike any other area of the country and opportunities to optimise income through new developments and sales must be considered alongside the need for day-to-day services for existing residents.