

Resident Involvement Agreement 2009-2011

Standards of Consultation & Involvement



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This Resident Involvement Agreement is about how Northwards Housing and its residents can work together to shape the housing service.

The Agreement

By signing this Agreement we show our shared commitment to work in partnership to achieve the objectives agreed together and outlined in the Action Plan.

Signed: S. Rutchford

On behalf of Northwards Housing Board (Chair)

Signed: D Heywood

On behalf of Northwards Residents (Chair of Wilton Area Panel)

Signed: d Hae.

On behalf of Northwards Residents (Chair of Riverways Area Panel)

Signed: John Biggs

On behalf of Northwards Residents (Chair of Fourways Area Panel)

Aims of the Agreement

The main aim of the Agreement is to explain how you can get involved with Northwards to help us shape the housing service. It also explains how you can get information, how you will be consulted on decisions affecting your housing service and how you can make a difference by influencing those decisions.



What is a Resident Involvement Agreement?

A Resident Involvement Agreement is an agreement between a landlord and residents about how they can work together to influence and shape the landlord's services. It is a document which describes how you can get involved in the decision-making to improve your housing service and how Northwards Housing will support you to get involved.

Agreements work out the best ways to put residents at the heart of decision-making on issues that may affect your home and community. This Agreement makes sure that you can:

- Have an informed view of the housing service
- Be involved in planning and improving that service
- Check how Northwards Housing is performing
- Identify problems and take action to make improvements

This Agreement guarantees Northwards Housing's overall commitment to resident involvement and sets out the standards it will meet.

Resident volunteers and Northwards Housing jointly produced this Agreement. This partnership of residents and landlord offers you the opportunity to get involved in shaping the housing service.

If you have any comments about this agreement or the choices of involvement on offer please contact the Resident Involvement Team (see contact details on page 19) or look on the Northwards website, www.northwardshousing.co.uk.

What do we mean by residents?

In this Agreement we refer to 'Residents', meaning:

- Tenants of Northwards Housing
- Northwards Housing Leaseholders (people who have bought their Council flat)
- Residents living within Northwards estates
- Residents in Northwards extra care or retirement housing schemes
- Board members of existing Tenant Management Organisations
- We are also committed to seeking the views of would-be residents to ensure that their opinions are reflected in our policies and services.

About Northwards Housing

Northwards Housing is an 'Arms length management organisation' (ALMO) that took over the management, maintenance and improvement of 12,500 City Council homes in north Manchester in December 2005.

Although Northwards Housing manages your home, you are still a Council tenant, with Manchester City Council as your landlord.

Northwards Housing is governed by a voluntary board made up of tenants, council nominated representatives and independent people who bring a range of skills and knowledge to the organisation. The 12 person Board makes informed decisions independently of the Council.



How we make decisions

Northwards Housing believes that local people are in the best position to shape their housing service. That's why there are four tenant members on the Northwards Board. They are equal to the other board members and have the same powers to make decisions about the housing service.

The board makes decisions about policies and plans for Northwards, sets our wider aims and objectives and makes sure that the staff working day-to-day are meeting standards of service and improvement.

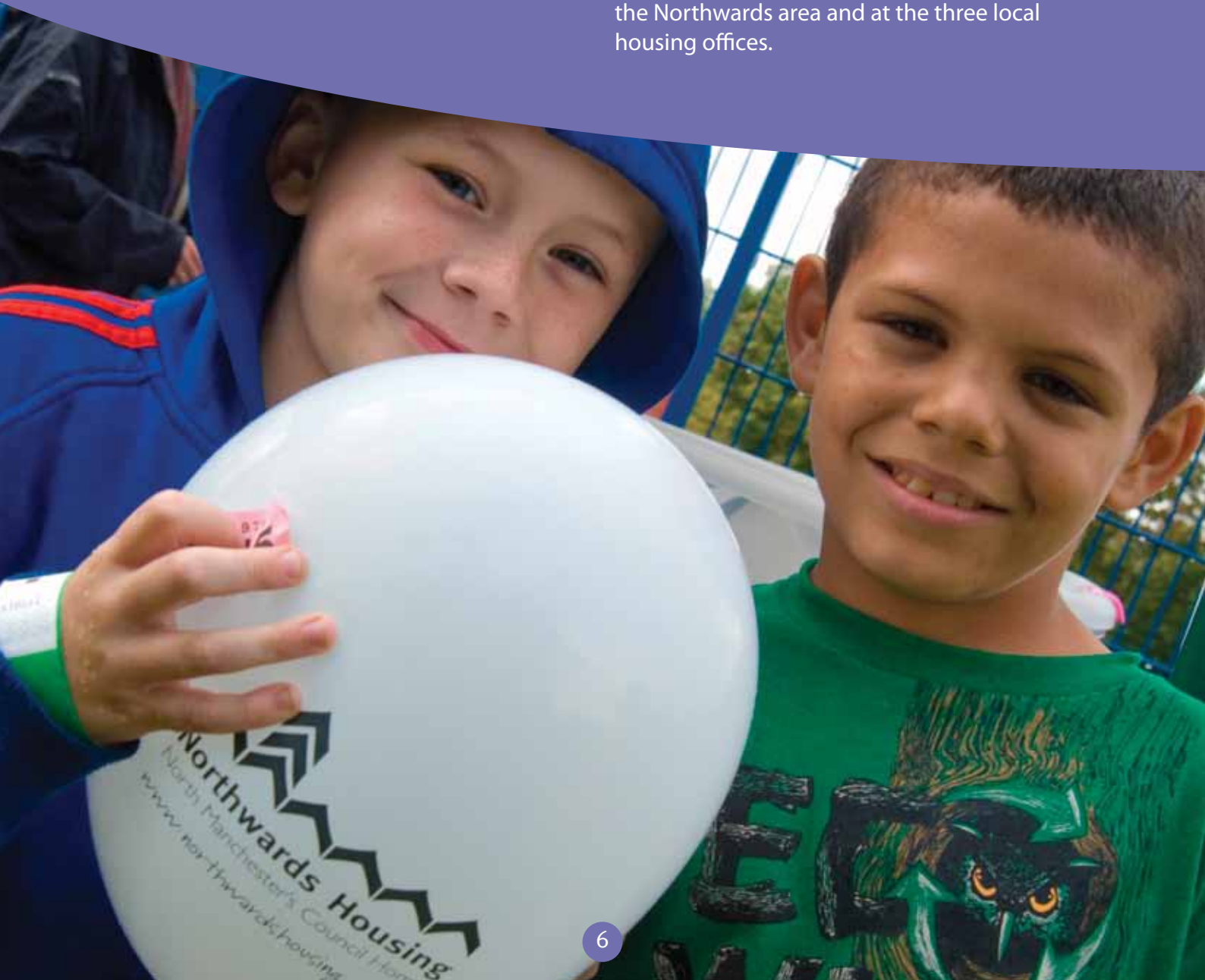
There are lots of ways to get involved in Northwards, from board membership to commenting to a member of staff about how the service should be delivered. Turn to page 11 of this agreement to see how you can get involved.

If you see something you like please contact the Resident Involvement Team. If you can think of ways that you might like to get involved, but they are not mentioned here, please let us know as we would love to hear from you.

Come to a Board Meeting

The board meets every two months on a Tuesday evening. You are welcome to attend a board meeting. Contact the Resident Involvement Team and they will make arrangements for you.

Minutes of all the board meetings are available at www.northwardshousing.co.uk, or contact the Resident Involvement Team who can send you a copy of the latest minutes. Papers for board meetings are available seven days before the meeting on the website, at local libraries in the Northwards area and at the three local housing offices.



Sub Committees

The main Northwards Board has set up three sub-committees to look at important issues in more detail and to make recommendations.

Subject to the approval of the Board, members of the public can be co-opted (on a non-voting basis) on to sub-committees. Each sub-committee can have up to two co-optees.

You are welcome to come along to a sub-committee meeting. If you would like to attend please contact the Resident Involvement Team.

Each sub-committee is made up of members of the Board. The committees are:

- **Resources Sub-Committee**
Key responsibilities are finance, technology, staffing policies and strategies, annual accounts, remuneration and health and safety.
- **Operations Sub-Committee**
Deals with customer and tenant involvement and satisfaction, local services policies and priorities, access to services, complaints and financial inclusion, the improvement programme, void property management, responsive and planned repairs, policies and performance, regeneration and energy efficiency.
- **Audit Sub-Committee**
Deals with insurance, risk management and financial audit.

Details of all the minutes of the sub-committees are within the minutes of board meetings and are available for you to see at www.northwardshousing.co.uk.

Making decisions at a local level

Although Northwards Housing covers 12,500 homes over a wide area, we keep strong local connections through three 'Area Panels'.

Each Panel has seven Northwards tenants, two owner-occupiers, one leaseholder, and a councillor from each of the wards in its area. The panels are:

- (a) Wilton: Higher Blackley; Crumpsall; and Cheetham wards
- (b) Fourways: Charlestown and Moston wards
- (c) Riverways: Harpurhey; Newton Heath & Miles Platting and Ancoats and Clayton wards

What do the Area Panels do?

The panels provide feedback about the housing service in their area and reflect the needs and views of local communities. They comment on proposals, monitor the services provided and make suggestions to the main Northwards Board. They also recommend improvement schemes after consulting local people.

Panels help engage all sections of the community – membership of the panels reflects the make-up of the different communities each area panel represents.

You're welcome at area panel meetings, and you can ask to speak. Space is limited so contact the Resident Involvement Team to book your place.

Excellence Committee

Our Excellence Committee is a team of residents from the Northwards area who check how we are performing to make sure we do the best possible job. All Northwards tenants are welcome to join and no previous experience is necessary, as training will be given.

The Committee scrutinise specified areas of Northwards' business, looking at service quality, performance and business direction. They champion customers' views and recommend improvements and changes following investigation and scrutiny.

Resident Involvement Agreement Standards

Northwards Housing is committed to involving you in deciding how to run and deliver the housing service. As a landlord, it is also committed to involving you in the decisions that affect your home and the area in which you live.

You can be involved in a range of activities, including:

- Monitoring budgets and looking at financial issues
- Developing the environmental works programme
- Developing and monitoring policy and performance in key areas including investment, repairs, lettings, anti-social behaviour and equality and diversity
- Setting, monitoring and reviewing our service standards and ensuring that these standards are met

- Specifying what goes into new contracts
- Coming up with new ways for people to get involved

Service standards explain what service you can expect to receive from us.

We have developed service standards for a number of services including:

- Repairs
- Empty Homes
- Customer Services
- Rents
- Caretaking

Details of these and other standards are available on our website and at local housing offices or by calling us on 03000 123 123.





To make sure that service standards are met and that they are developed and improved, Northwards have various forums. Forums are made up of residents and staff who closely examine services to make sure they're delivered to a high quality.

Forums have been set up to cover the following areas:

- Resident Involvement
- Communication
- Rehousing
- High Rise Living
- Retirement Housing
- Repairs and Improvements
- Leaseholders

- Black and Minority Ethnic
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
- Access to Services
- Disability

The forums identify the potential for improving and developing services and their recommendations will be put in to an action plan which they will monitor.

The forums link in with the area panels and board sub-committees. If you are interested in joining a forum, please contact the Resident Involvement Team.

Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs)

Northwards recognises the vital role that tenant and resident associations (TRAs) play in their community. In order to recognise a group, and to enable us to give groups funding, we expect them to:

- Adopt a constitution which meets the minimum standards described in the Northwards model constitution – details of this are on the Northwards website
- Comply with Northwards Equality and Diversity policy by encouraging all sections of the community to join in, and being aware of and responsive to their needs
- Hold regular meetings, including an Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- Ensure membership is open to everyone living in the area covered by the group
- Communicate regularly with all members; this can be done in a variety of ways including newsletters and the internet
- Keep open financial records
- Sign the Funding Aid Agreement each time an application is made for funding

Northwards has agreed with tenant and resident groups the following standards:

- Information from Northwards will be sent to the Chair and Secretary of each TRA (or other nominated person identified by the group). Correspondence relating to financial matters should also be sent to the group's Treasurer
- Northwards will notify groups of changes to staff in a timely manner and will make sure that work is effectively handed over. Where appropriate, the reason for the change will be discussed with the group (this may not be possible at times if there are confidentiality issues)
- Northwards will ensure that an appropriate member of staff attends a TRA meeting if they have been given reasonable notice and information about the meeting
- Northwards will assist TRAs to complete funding forms

Northwards and TRAs have agreed that they will work positively together and demonstrate mutual respect for each other.

Further information on constitutions, funding and how to set up a tenant and resident group can be obtained from the Resident Involvement Team and is available at www.northwardshousing.co.uk



How can I get involved?

You should have as many opportunities as possible to get involved and to air your views. The following table shows the range of ways in which you can get involved and how much commitment is required of you if you choose that method.

Opportunities for involvement	What they do	Level of Commitment
Tenant Board Member	The board makes policies and plans for Northwards, sets its wider aims and objectives and makes sure that the staff working day-to-day are meeting standards of service and improvement.	Meets every two months. Members are required to read documents and keep their knowledge of housing matters up to date. Tenant board members are also required to attend training and act as an ambassador for the organisation; and also to attend board and sub-committee meetings.
Board Sub - Committees	The sub-committees look at important issues in more detail and make recommendations to the board.	Meet every month. Board members attend two sub-committees a month. Members of the public can be co-opted onto a sub-committee, (up to two at any time per sub-committee)
Area Panels	They consider how well Northwards is performing at a local level and make recommendations to the board on a range of issues. They are the main consultation body for Northwards and assist in spending money on environmental works.	Meet every two months. Members are required to read documents and keep their knowledge of housing matters up to date.
Excellence Committee	This Committee was formed in 2010 to scrutinise service areas to ensure that Northwards residents receive the best possible service.	Meeting frequency to be decided. Members will attend meetings and meet with officers outside these to scrutinise service.
Repairs and Improvement Programme Forum	Monitors the repairs service and the improvement programme. Looks to develop and improve the service.	Meets every quarter. May also need to attend training sessions.
BME (Black Minority Ethnic) Forum	Considers how BME issues affect the delivery of services and how services can be developed.	Meets every quarter. May also need to attend training sessions.
LGBT Forum	Considers how Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) issues affect services being delivered.	Meets every two months. May also need to attend training sessions.
Disability Forum	Considers how disability issues affect the services being delivered.	Meets every quarter. May also need to attend training sessions.
Communication Forum	Monitors performance and looks to improve and develop communication between Northwards and residents. They agree and approve the content of the Northwards Natter, and approve the use of the tenant friendly stamp.	Meets quarterly but also will write to members in between meetings for feedback and give the "Tenant Friendly" stamp to publications. May also need to attend training sessions.

Resident Involvement Forum	Considers how to effectively engage residents and monitors the resident involvement service.	Meets quarterly. May also need to attend training sessions.
Leaseholders' Forum	Discusses issues that affect leaseholders.	Meets quarterly. May also need to attend training sessions.
Retirement Housing Forum	Residents in these communal schemes get together to discuss the service they receive and how it can be improved.	Quarterly meeting.
High Rise Living Forum Forum	Residents in these multi storey blocks get together to discuss the service they receive and how it can be improved	Meets every two months
Tenant and Resident Associations	Groups operate at a local level to improve their neighbourhoods. They meet and liaise with Northwards staff and are involved in consultation.	Each group decides how often they meet, though it is usually once a month. Action in between meetings by members may also be required to make progress on specific issues.
Contact Groups	Informal groups who provide local feedback but are not formally established in the same way as tenant and resident groups.	Each group decides how often they meet. Can be regular but may be just occasional meetings regarding specific issues.
Tenant Inspectors	A group of tenants who are responsible for inspecting the services that Northwards Housing provide. Look at front line services and also suggest their own inspections.	Anticipated to carry out two inspections per month depending on individual's commitment. Attend training sessions as and when required.
Mystery Shoppers	A sample of residents who assess services provided by Northwards Housing. Contact by phone, on line, letter or in person.	Provide three feedback forms. To be carried out when there is a legitimate cause to contact Northwards Housing. May need to attend training.
'Ask Northwards' Online Form	Residents can put a question to the Northwards Board on the website.	Low level of commitment – just submit a question at any time on line.
Focus Groups	A sample of residents are asked to get together to discuss specific service areas It will usually focus on one specific topic, for example the repairs service.	Usually a one off meeting lasting up to two hours.
Estate Walkabouts	Residents meet with local housing staff and walk round estates to identify any problems or issues.	Quarterly, dates published in local offices and on the Northwards website.
Commenting as an individual Resident	Talking face to face with a member of staff, phoning in or texting your views or using the website.	One off activity at a time of your choosing.
Surveys	Northwards may ask you from time to time to complete a survey to get your views.	Surveys usually take around 10 minutes to complete and can be done from home at a time of your choosing.
Facebook	Facebook is a popular social networking website in which Northwards has its own profile. It is aimed at getting more young people involved as many are already on Facebook.	As and when users log onto the site.

If you would like more information on any of the above please contact the Resident Involvement Team.

Complaints and Praise

Northwards are determined to provide a high quality service for all customers and would like you to tell us when you feel our service has not been good enough.

The complaints procedure is designed to help you to tell Northwards when things go wrong, and give us all the information we need to put things right.

If you need to make a complaint there is a clear step-by-step guide on how to do this. See our website, pick up a leaflet from your local housing office or call 03000 123 123 for more details.

The number and type of complaints we receive will be monitored by the Northwards Board and the Neighbourhood and Quality Services Sub-Committee. Steps to ensure the problem does not re-occur will be taken.

Northwards also has a Complaints Panel, to consider complaints and praise and to ensure that information about complaints is used effectively to improve services. The panel consists of residents, senior managers from various departments of the organisation and Manchester Working. The Panel meets every six weeks and monitors the types of complaints, identifies patterns or any trends and ensures relevant lessons are drawn from complaints where services need to improve.

If you have had a speedy and efficient service, or if someone has been especially polite or helpful, you can help us improve our services by telling us when we do something well, either by filling in a form on our website, or picking up a leaflet from your local housing office.



Reaching out to everyone

Northwards is committed to encouraging involvement from all sections of the community regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion/belief, age, disability or sexuality.

In developing this agreement, we want to make sure that we have in place a range of ways to get involved that are attractive to all residents. We recognise that we have much work to do in reaching out to all residents. We will be working with the following groups to develop our plans for involving you.

- Resident Involvement Forum
- Equality and Diversity Forum
- Black and Minority Ethnic Forum
- Disability Forum
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Forum
- Board Sub Committee on Equality and Diversity

We will also look at ways of increasing the involvement of young people in improving our services.





Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)

Some groups may wish to take on the management of their properties themselves. Groups who do this are known as Tenant Management Organisations.

Northwards Housing currently supports two TMOs: 'SHOUT', and 'Avro Hollows'. Northwards are committed to supporting existing TMOs and will give advice, financial support and guidance to tenants who wish to explore tenant management.

Meetings

Meetings between residents and Northwards are very important, as they are a vital way of working together to resolve issues and improve services. To make sure that meetings are well run and productive, the following standards will apply to residents, staff and board members.

- Agendas, minutes from meetings and any other supporting information will be sent out one week in advance of a meeting
- All information will be in plain English
- Where appropriate, refreshments will be provided at meetings
- Meetings will be conducted in a transparent and open manner
- Meetings will not last longer than two hours
- If they do need to run for longer, adequate breaks will be built into the agenda
- Any special requirements will be met, e.g. information in large type, use of translators, etc.
- All meeting venues will be accessible to all
- All participants at meetings will abide by a code of conduct
- All meetings will have a clear purpose
- Agreed timescales for giving feedback from meetings will be met



Resident Involvement Team

We have a dedicated Resident Involvement Team who offer information, support and advice to you and residents who want to get involved.

Training

Northwards provides a range of training courses to help tenant and resident group representatives and individuals to develop their knowledge and skills to enable them to work effectively.

Resident Involvement staff provide a range of in-house and external training which can be delivered locally to meet residents' needs.

The following courses are available:

- Induction training on Resident Involvement for new staff
- Basic Book Keeping
- Committee Skills
- Involving Everybody
- Fundraising
- Equal Opportunities
- Chairing Skills
- Secretary Skills
- Access to IT Training

The Resident Involvement Team has produced an information booklet highlighting training available. All in-house training is evaluated and the Resident Involvement Forum monitors the quality of training provided. The forum will look to develop and improve the programme to meet the needs of residents.

Resident Involvement staff will also promote available external training. They will be able to tell you if funding is available for you to undertake the training.



Resources

Northwards has a budget for resident involvement. This budget provides resources for:

- The Resident Involvement Team
- Development of resident involvement policy and strategy
- Training
- Provision of funding to Tenant and Resident Groups

Northwards can offer specific financial support to groups.

The amount involved varies according to the circumstances. To find out more about the support available please contact the Resident Involvement Team or visit www.northwardshousing.co.uk

Information

Northwards is committed to providing a range of information which covers all aspects of our services. We will make sure that this is in a format which meets your needs. Where appropriate, we will make information available in a range of formats including, Braille and CD, and we will also make sure that translated materials are available.

The Communications Forum will monitor the information we provide to ensure it is accessible and easy to understand.

We will provide information in a variety of ways including

- A newsletter sent to all tenants and leaseholders four times a year
- An annual report available by request and online at our website
- Information leaflets available at our local housing offices and online
- Housing consultation documents and new regulations available on request
- A Tenant Handbook
- Home Improvement DVD
- Or DVD

All of the above can be found at www.northwardshousing.co.uk, which is a quick way to access all the information we provide.



Monitoring and Measuring Performance

We want to make sure that this Agreement meets your needs and delivers its objectives. To do this, a resident focus group will meet to discuss and monitor the Agreement on an annual basis.

In addition, Northwards will:

- Conduct a full customer survey at least every three years which will assess customers' satisfaction with the opportunities to get involved
- Compare the service with other high performing organisations and learn from others
- With the Resident Involvement Forum, continuously monitor the effectiveness of your opportunities for involvement
- Continually monitor all tenant and resident associations to assess how they meet the agreed standards
- Use customer complaints and comments to monitor satisfaction levels with this Agreement and ensure that Northwards complies with the Agreement
- Fully review this Agreement annually



Northwards Customer Service Centre – 03000 123 123

Deals with all aspects of the housing service including rent, repairs, anti-social behaviour and any other tenancy issues.

Northwards Housing Head Office

Northwards Housing
6th Floor, Hexagon Tower
Crumpsall Vale
Blackley
M9 8ZS
Tel: 0161 720 5800
info@northwardshousing.co.uk

Northwards Resident Involvement Team

Deals with any queries about resident involvement, including support for tenants and residents groups, arranging attendance at Area Panel and Board meetings and support for individuals who want to get involved.

Resident Involvement Officer- Riverways Area
Alexandra Wood
Monsall Street Local Services Office,
1 Monsall Street,
Collyhurst, M40 8QZ.
Tel: 0161 203 2485
alexandra.wood@northwardshousing.co.uk

Resident Involvement Officer - Wilton Area
Vacant
Cheetham Hill Local Services Office,
549 Cheetham Hill Road,
Manchester, M8 9NW.
Tel: 0161 720 4053
info@northwardshousing.co.uk

Resident Involvement Officer - Fourways Area
Ian Gillett
Whitemoss Road Local Services Office,
Whitemoss Road,
Blackley, M9 6NZ.
Tel: 0161 741 5324
i.gillett@northwardshousing.co.uk



To get this agreement in Braille, on CD or to request a magnifier:

Call: 03000 123 123

E-mail: info@northwardshousing.co.uk

Fax: 03000 124 123

Text phone: 0161 274 0899

Ky është buletini i lajmeve për qiramarrësit e Northwards Housing. Për të marrë një kopje në gjuhën tuaj ju lutemi telefononi 03000 123 123.

Albanian

هذه هي النشرة الإخبارية الخاصة بملاك نورثواردز هاوسينج (Northwards Housing). للحصول على نسخة من هذه النشرة بلغتك، رجاء الاتصال على الرقم 03000 123 123

Arabic

这是 Northwards Housing 承租人新闻简报。如要获取您所用语言的版本，请致电 03000 123 123

Chinese

Toto je bulletin pro domovní nájemníky v Northwards. Pokud máte zájem o kopii ve vašem jazyce, zavolejte prosím na 03000 123 123

Czech

Voici la lettre d'informations destinée aux locataires de Northwards Housing. Pour obtenir un exemplaire dans votre langue, veuillez appeler le 03000 123 123.

French

نەمە بۆ ئاواکەرەکانی کرێچییانی خانووبەرەکانی نورثواردس (Northwards Housing). بۆ ئەوەی کە کۆپیەکەت بە زمانی خۆت دەستبەکەوتێت تەنیا تەلەفون بکە بۆ 03000 123 123

Kurdish

Este é o boletim informativo do inquilino da *Northwards Housing* (Habitação Northwards). Para obter uma cópia na sua língua por favor telefone para 03000 123 123.

Portuguese

Kani waa warad-wareedkii kirayste ee Northwards Housing. Si aad u hesho koobi ku qoran luuqaddaada, fadlan wac 03000 123 123

Somali

یہ نارتہ وارڈز ہاؤسنگ کا کرایہ دار کے لئے خبرنامہ ہے۔ اپنی زبان میں اس کی نقل حاصل کرنے کے لئے برائے کرم 03000 123 123 پر فون کریں

Urdu

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