



North and East Housing Association CLG:
Tenant Engagement and
Communications Policy

Version History

	Modification	Date modified
1	Initial approval of policy	2/12/24 New
2	Most recent review and approval by Board	2/12/24
3	Date of next review by Board	2027

Amendments to policy

Old version number	Reason for updating	New version number & date of issue
n/a	(a) To outline North and East's general approach to tenant engagement and communication.	001

1. Purpose

North and East is an approved housing body that currently provides homes across many local authority areas. We aim to deliver consistent services to achieve efficiency and improve the quality of life for our tenants. We are committed to providing new homes to help tackle the housing shortage and help those in housing need.

Our Tenant Engagement Strategy outlines our commitment to engage, communicate and actively listen to the tenants of North & East. In addition, we have given commitment to provide opportunities for our tenants to influence our decision-making process. All our tenants are encouraged to participate in the work and activities of the Association.

2. Scope

The scope of this policy relates to all current and future tenants and resident associations.

3. Policy

Tenant engagement and community development practices are instrumental in increasing tenant participation, neighbourliness and in facilitating communities collectively to strive to thrive.

Tenant participation practices will be embedded in North and East's governance structure. It is important that our tenants have multiple opportunities to individually and collectively create vibrant communities *and* influence service delivery.

This policy acknowledges that effective and varied communication is important to ensure that North and East tenants are well informed and know how to engage with us. It lends authority and guidance to the process of providing and introducing structures and developing systems and methods of communication to inform tenants and increase their engagement/participation.

4. Tenant Engagement and Community Development

- 4.1 North and East intends to build the capability and capacity of tenants to participate individually, and as a collective in their community and with North and East, and we provide guidance and support in an accessible way that meets varied individual and local needs.
- 4.2 We encourage tenants to establish autonomous resident associations to have greater ownership of their neighbourhoods, to access funding, and to make provisions for their community.
- 4.3 We develop and carry out local initiatives that promote social inclusion and sustainability.
- 4.4 North and East's Tenant Engagement Lead works closely with our front-line housing team

to implement various community development initiatives that promote community ownership and autonomy.

4.5 Work is targeted where it is most needed and/or where there is a demand from tenants.

4.6 North and East understands that a partnership approach is best when delivering a community development programme and actively works with other local organisations.

5. Tenant Communication

5.1 North and East employs and will continue to develop multiple communication channels to engage with our tenants. These include:

- Digital Platforms: Email, social media, and dedicated tenant portals to provide instant updates and facilitate two-way communication.
- SMS Alerts: Text messages for urgent notifications and to ensure that important information reaches tenants promptly.
- Community Focus Groups: With specific focus and to offer a personal touch and foster a sense of belonging among residents.
- Physical Notices: For critical information, physical notices in common areas or direct mail to units.

5.2 We have implemented and will continue to improve a Feedback System to not only help in addressing tenant concerns but also in improving services:

- Surveys: Conducting regular surveys to gauge tenant satisfaction and gather suggestions for improvements.
- Suggestion Boxes: Placed in common areas, these will provide an anonymous way for tenants to voice their concerns or ideas.
- Online Feedback Form: Accessible through the tenant portal, this form will make it easier for our tenants to communicate issues directly to us.

5.3 We ensure transparent and timely communication, as a means of building trust with our tenants, by:

- Proactive Updates: Keeping our tenants informed about upcoming maintenance, policy changes, and community events in advance.
- Clear Policies: Ensuring that all housing policies, procedures, and tenant rights are clearly communicated and easily accessible.

5.4 We support conflict resolution and dispute management through:

- Mediation Services: Offering mediation to resolve disputes between tenants amicably.
- Clear Complaint Process: Establishing a straightforward and transparent process for tenants to lodge complaints, ensuring they know what to expect in terms of response times and resolution processes.

6. Types of Tenant Communication

- 6.1 North and East operates a Tenant Support Desk, which assists tenants and the wider public with general queries and tenants with tenancy and community-related queries.
- 6.2 North and East tenants receive a quarterly newsletter that informs them of general North and East news, interest stories, updates on tenancy-related matters, and wider community and resident led initiatives. North and East encourages tenants to contribute to these newsletters.
- 6.3 North and East is committed to providing an annual report on key performance indicators to tenants.
- 6.4 All new tenants receive a handbook that is a practical and resourceful document that can be used throughout their tenancy. This handbook is periodically reviewed.
- 6.5 North and East will also provide additional information leaflets to cover a range of key issues.
- 6.6 North and East has an interactive Tenant Portal, designed to focus on tenant requirements. It can be used to manage certain aspects of a tenancy such as paying rent and reporting a repair. It will also be used to share up-to-date information and relay important updates and news.
- 6.7 North and East uses an integrated housing management system called Civica Cx to support improved tenant service. We will enhance the efficiency of all case-related communications to our tenants and will automate, integrate and prioritise correspondence, through this system.

7. Resourcing

This policy recognises that integrating tenant communications platforms to deliver consistent and timely messages will promote successful tenancies and contribute to better business outcomes. North and East therefore commits to the following four critical success factors underpinning this policy:

- 7.1 Staff training with communication skills at the core
 - 7.1.1 Putting services and supports at the centre of the relationship between staff and tenants will build trust, help to improve services, and support successful tenancies. We have already established customer care standards and best practices for all staff to follow to support the delivery of a consistent message across the organisation. Respectful communications between frontline staff and tenants, and effective management of communications processes and policies, are keys to success.
- 7.2 Information management
 - Collecting, analyzing, maintaining, and publishing data on a regular basis will provide a framework for communicating North and East's progress in achieving results, highlighting improvements, and sharing and celebrating milestones with tenants. Providing integrated access to well-managed, up-to-date information across platforms will improve our

responsiveness to tenants' needs.

7.3 Making better use of information design

Simple language, clear graphics and visual cues eliminate ambiguity, break down complex issues, and make communications accessible to a broad audience regardless of culture, language, literacy, age or ability. We recognise information design will make it easier for our tenants to find and understand information; it will also provide additional support for those who need it.

7.4 Website as central platform for content and navigation

Keeping our website well-maintained and up to date, including the addition of a dedicated Tenant Portal, is an essential platform for North and East's communications with tenants. Although not all tenants have access to a computer or the Internet, a majority do have access either at home, or at school/college, in the workplace or at a public library or community centre. North and East's website will become a resource that tenants can use to get information they need. Furthermore, we will ensure that web-based content is designed so that it is easy to print and distribute for those without online access.

North and East will make a specific budget allocation in our annual budgets to support the achievement of these success factors as well as tenant engagement, community development and communication initiatives in general.

8. Related Documentation

- NEHA Tenant Engagement Strategy
- NEHA Tenant Engagement Action Plan
- NEHA Customer Care Policy
- NEHA Standards for Good Practice in Tenant Services and Engagement
- Tenant Communications Protocol

9. Complaints and Appeals

North and East will deal with all complaints about any perceived shortfall in the operation of the Tenant Engagement and Communications policy in accordance with its Complaints Policy. A Copy of North and East's Complaints Policy is available upon request and on our website.

10. Legislation and Compliance

North and East owns and manages tenancies in accordance with the provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (as revised) and the Residential Tenancy Board (RTB).

North and East will adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018 in order to ensure that information

provided by an applicant or sought by North and East is relevant only to assessing their housing need and is treated in the strictest confidence.

North and East will comply with the Equality Act 2010 which protects persons from being discriminated against. North and East will not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment or sexual orientation.

11. Policy Review

The Tenant Engagement and Communications Policy will be reviewed every three years, unless an earlier review is necessary following e.g.

- legislative, regulatory and good practice requirements
- the views of tenants and staff