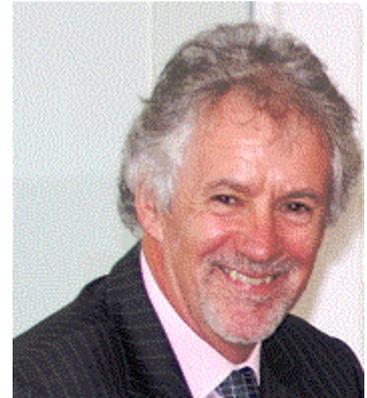


ALMOS – giving tenants a voice

Hugh Broadbent, National Federation of ALMOS (NFA) Chair

ALMOs are local council housing companies, which directly cater for the needs of councils and local residents. Every area is different and, as such, the NFA believe that it is essential to give tenants a voice to help shape services accordingly - they are at the heart of everything we do.



All our ALMO members have some form of tenant scrutiny process and provide training and support to help tenants become board members or engage more widely in their housing services. We believe that tenant engagement is essential in shaping and improving services as well as building trust and communication with residents. Our tenant satisfaction scores show that this approach is working with an average of 85% of ALMO tenants satisfied or very satisfied with their housing management across the sector.

Because we listen to tenants and talk to our councils, we do more than just manage homes - we help develop communities and support the needs of tenants. This includes building new homes to meet the increasing demand for social housing in our communities as well as supporting tenants into training, education or work through our innovative schemes to tackle worklessness.

ALMOs built a total of 542 new homes in 2014, a 20% increase on the year before and they were planning to build a further 9,000 new homes over the next 5 years. This illustrates how, given the opportunity, ALMOs will deliver on both local and national housing priorities. Building these homes is not just about the numbers though, it is about providing the right sort of homes for our communities and making the best use of public sector assets by building on small and difficult parcels of land that other developers aren't interested in.

One example of where tenants have helped shaped new builds is the inclusive engagement work by our member, Derby Homes. They set up the Osmaston Community Association of Residents (OSCAR) to deliver the community led regeneration of an area. Derby Homes supported the residents in the formation of the association, providing a community office and dedicated officer to assist them. The new build site was carefully considered by the residents prior to development, to consider local needs. They identified there were no one-bedroom properties in the area, and just three bungalows. Their work led to the development of 40 social housing properties, including ten bungalows and thirty 1 or 2 bedrooled homes to meet this local requirement.

In 2014, 17 of our members provided support to tenants to help tackle worklessness, often working with the most vulnerable tenants who were furthest from the workplace in terms of education, skills and confidence. Schemes such as the Steps to Success programme that my own local ALMO, Six Town Housing, funds show what a difference we can make to our tenant's lives. By providing personalised, intensive support for tenants, Six Town Housing

helps people break the cycle of benefit dependency by creating apprenticeships, voluntary opportunities and work placements, and by helping tenants into higher education. From Six Town Housing's programme alone, 328 tenants have accessed 46 free courses to help boost their employability since 2013. Several of those who have accessed apprenticeships and work opportunities through this programme are proud to declare how "life changing" it is ([here is an example](#)).

The above provides a snapshot of just two ways our NFA members work closely with tenants across the UK. On October 13th 2015, I will be briefing MPs at Portcullis House in Westminster, on the NFA's new tenant engagement report - "Our Homes, Our Say." This includes comprehensive findings explaining why it is important to give tenants a voice.

www.almos.org.uk;

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