

# Residents' Annual Report 2021

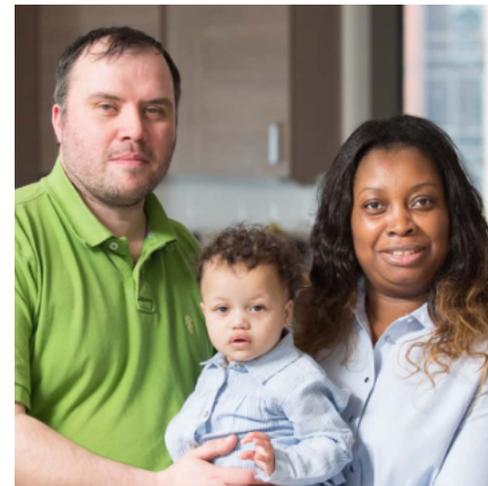


# Residents' Annual Report 2021

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Notting Hill Genesis residents and staff



# Welcome

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**Stephen Bitti**  
Chair of the Resident  
Voices Group

It has been a pleasure working alongside other members of the Resident Voices Group across the past year, even though we have endured difficulties due to Covid. As residents and staff, we shifted our engagement online, collaborating on a range of resident involvement projects, informed by experiences and opinions of fellow Notting Hill Genesis residents. This new Residents' Annual Report provides an opportunity for us to feedback about our recent resident involvement activity and the positive difference we are beginning to have in the boardroom and throughout the organisation.

It is important however, that we acknowledge what came before our current resident involvement arrangements. The experiences of our tenants and leaseholders have always been important to Notting Hill Genesis, and it is fair to say that much of what

we are doing today may well have been discussed previously. I want to thank all our involved residents, both current and those that have contributed until now. We share in the progress made on our journey to date. Whether raising a complaint, completing a resident satisfaction survey, or taking part in a focus group, our residents' voices matter and are greatly appreciated.

Putting residents' voices at the heart of our governance and operations has enabled the Resident Voices Group to develop evidence-based recommendations that have supported improvements in how Notting Hill Genesis delivers resident services. I feel this can only be a good thing. I hope this report inspires us all to continue to tackle our challenges and achieve improvements together.

# Welcome

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**Ian Ellis**

Chair  
Notting Hill Genesis  
Board

Serving our residents well is critical to fulfilling our corporate objective of being a resident centric, digitally enabled, financially robust Housing Association that our people are proud to work for. To fulfil that ambition we need to understand our residents' expectations and do all we can to meet them within overall operating conditions. This requires engagement with many diverse stakeholders and an interactive dialogue to shape our future.

The Board has fully embraced this resident focus and the establishment of the Resident Voices Group and Operations Committee was a vital step in giving our residents a voice which would be listened to and responded to.

This inaugural report clearly shows the depth and breadth of activity now happening. We are a large

organisation and by focusing on specific areas for improvement, with residents and staff then working out the best way forward, we can make a positive difference to thousands of people.

I would like to thank Stephen for his leadership, everyone mentioned in the articles and the many others involved who have enabled us to make progress on this crucial initiative.

I hope that you enjoy reading about what is happening within Notting Hill Genesis and if not already engaged please do get involved yourself. Notting Hill Genesis is here to provide the best possible service to our residents and your thoughts are always welcome.

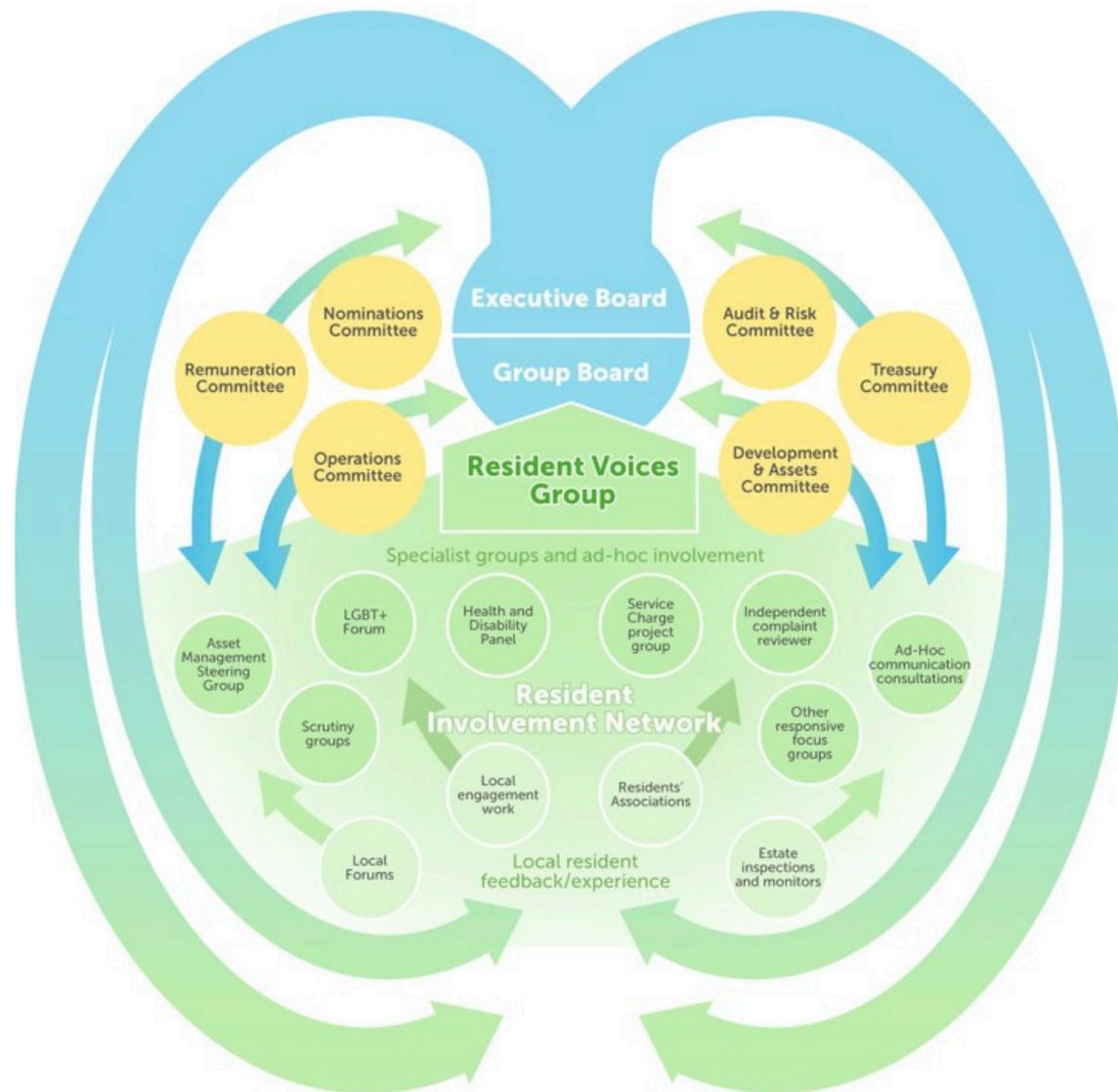
# Introduction

## Who are we?

The Resident Voices Group (RVG) is led by residents, for residents, with representation from all parts of the resident involvement network and resident members of the governance community, such as resident Board members and resident committee members. We work collaboratively with senior staff across Notting Hill Genesis and act as the hub where resident feedback intersects with senior NHG staff and the Group Board, informing improvements and the future direction of the services provided by NHG to residents.

We regularly review feedback from resident involvement groups, residents' associations and as well as feedback from individual residents through complaints and satisfaction surveys, so the voice of residents is heard and used to better understand the resident experience. We work with NHG staff to create recommendations that make a difference to the services we as residents receive.

NHG are committed to maximising opportunities to listen and respond to a range of resident voices, growing a dynamic resident-led culture.



We're pleased to be supporting and helping to build on this commitment. The RVG is at the heart of the resident involvement network.

How our resident involvement network is structured, from local to governance levels.

## Why was the RVG formed?

Notting Hill Genesis is committed to becoming a more resident centric organisation. We had feedback from residents about the need to do more to ensure the resident voice was being heard, and our Chair set us the challenge to ensure resident feedback, particularly at a local level, reached the ears of the NHG Group Board and its sub-committees. A lot of feedback was being given, but there wasn't yet a structured way that it all came together. Working with residents, the Resident Voices Group was created to listen and act upon the voices of residents.

The RVG first met in July 2020. Whilst 18 months seems like a long time, we are yet to meet in person owing to government restrictions and look forward to being able to do this soon. We have been using Zoom to keep in touch through the pandemic, for meetings, project work and thank you events.

[Download and read more of the NHG corporate strategy](#)



NHG Corporate strategy 2020-2025.pdf



Photo of the first meeting of the RVG

## Working with NHG Group Board

RVG members sit on each committee of the NHG Group Board, with a particular close relationship with the work of the Operations Committee.

The Operations Committee oversees the operational performance of NHG, identifying specific areas of focus or risk to the organisation. This committee's remit encompasses issues at the heart of the resident experience, from repairs to service charges.



My Account Log in

A recent example of a project that both the RVG and the Operations Committee have turned our attention to is My Account. The key aim of our project was to increase registration numbers and ensure My Account developed in way that worked for residents, with additional features and ensuring the platform is as user-friendly and effective as possible. A specialist survey and a focus group formed part of our work, whilst ensuring any plans we had fit into any upcoming developments that were already scheduled for My Account based on resident feedback through complaints, compliments and resident satisfaction surveys.

# RVG Members & Aims

## Who is in the Resident Voices Group?

The membership of the group comprises representation from the resident involvement network and NHG staff. This membership is linked to the existing network groups, and we'll continue to review this. Below is a list of the current resident members of the Resident Voices Group.

### Julia Bird

#### What encouraged you to get involved?

*"I wanted to learn more about how a housing association worked, and how that affected life in my block of flats."*



#### What do you enjoy the most about being a member of the Resident Voices Group?

*"Getting to know fellow residents and NHG staff, understanding more about how to manage my relationship with NHG."*

#### What do you think the key challenges are for the group over the next year?

*"UK housing policy is not as effective as it might be - how does NHG answer those challenges?"*

Name	Position	Additional Information	 Links to profiles
Stephen Bitti	Resident	Chair of the RVG, Group Board member and Operations Committee member	
Arike Oke	Resident	Group Board member, Development & Sales Committee, and Remunerations Committee member	
Linde Carr	Resident	Chair of Remunerations Committee and Audit & Risk Committee member	
Liam Stigant	Resident	Treasury Committee member	
Sebastian Kola-Bankole	Resident	Operations Committee member and Chair of the Resident LGBT+ Group	
Stephen Johnson	Resident	Chair of the Kensington & Chelsea Resident Scrutiny Group	
Patti Openibo	Resident	Chair of the Hammersmith & Fulham Resident Scrutiny Group	
Mary Burke	Resident	Chair of the Outer West Resident Scrutiny Group	
Michael O'Connell	Resident	Chair of the Bolney Meadow Resident Scrutiny Group	
Sos Grigorian/Susan Cinik	Resident	Chair of the Resident Health & Disability Panel	
Lindy Leonce	Resident	Chair of the Resident Oversight & Scrutiny Panel	
Julia Bird	Resident	Former member of the Resident Services Committee	
Martin Dean	Independent	Chair of the Resident Asset Management Scrutiny Group	

## RVG Members & Aims

### Who is in the Resident Voices Group from the staff at NHG?

In order for residents and staff to be able to effectively work together, staff from across the business are part of the RVG representing the different areas of service that residents receive from us. Below is a list of the current NHG staff members of the Resident Voices Group.

#### Ellie Desborough

*"The Resident Voices Group is an invaluable resource for operational businesses to work with when reviewing ways of working to ensure the resident experience is at the heart of what we do. Through the task and finish groups and the group's scrutiny on the resident involvement piece, the RVG has provided a steer that highlights when Notting Hill Genesis can reflect on their approach so that it is transparent and resident focused. The group has also supported us in reviewing key decisions and processes and helped us to deliver the best outcome possible. Home Ownership have seen the value in the RVG's input and look forward to continuing our work with them".*



Name	NHG position	Additional Information
Mark Vaughan	NHG executive team	Group Director of Housing
Carl Byrne	NHG executive team	Group Director of Commercial Services
Adam Cresser	NHG Senior Leadership	Director of Business Improvement
Sue Sargeant	NHG Senior Leadership	Director of Housing
Brett Hohls	NHG Senior Leadership	Director of Repairs
Ellie Desborough	NHG Senior Leadership	Assistant Director of Leasehold Services
Suzanne Barrows	NHG Head of Service	Head of Policy & Customer Experience
Ollie Levy	NHG Manager	Resident Involvement Manager
Tanya Basse	NHG Manager	Resident Involvement Project Manager

## Listening to residents

The last 18 months has highlighted more than ever the importance of a home. We want to help improve services so residents can be proud of where they live. In the resident voices group we are keen to ensure local feedback is listened to, and most importantly acted upon. As you'll see from our first Residents' Annual Report we'd like to work with the 40+ registered residents associations, as well as resident involvement groups and residents who decide to get involved in shorter, more focused surveys or share feedback through local meetings or virtual forums. We also want to know more about why you love where you live!

We want to know more about why you love where you live!



Be proud of where you live !

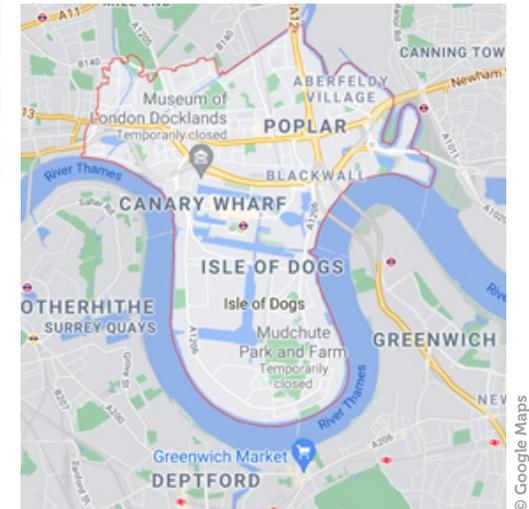
Check out some of the stories so far



My Community in E14



My Community in W2



© Google Maps

Love where you live stories images



# Key focuses for 2020/21

## What did RVG focus on?

Over the first year, we sponsored a round of 'task and finish' projects, responding to resident experiences and issues. We chose these projects after listening to feedback from across the resident involvement network and from resident surveys, residents' associations, resident groups and resident complaints. We focussed on the things you told us mattered most. With so much information and feedback to understand, we began by splitting everything into 3 themes:

- **Communication**
- **Resident Satisfaction**
- **Home Ownership**

### Residents and staff working together



Residents and staff working together

We added structure to the issues we wanted to explore further by setting up 8 projects to identify solutions to and further improve:		
Communication	Resident Satisfaction	Homeownership
Local officer recruitment and training Annual visits Resident & staff relationship agreement	Gathering feedback – repairs surveys Gathering feedback – transactional surveys My Account	Complaints action planning 3rd party managing agents
How we did this and what we achieved		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involved new residents in each project, advertising through Connections and gathering more feedback through short surveys and telephone calls.</li> <li>• Worked in collaboration with staff, with a senior sponsor for each project to support tasks and monitor and report back on progress.</li> <li>• Worked with the Resident Involvement team to ensure each project could demonstrate the difference made by residents, be it through satisfaction trends, complaint numbers or ad-hoc feedback.</li> <li>• Changed the way Notting Hill Genesis delivers certain services.</li> <li>• Improving the resident experience.</li> </ul>		

## Case study – Local Officer Recruitment and Training Project

*A look at recruitment and training methods for Housing Officers and Property Management Officers, with a view to improving the emphasis on communication, customer service and building positive relationships.*

### What worked well?

- Thorough recruitment process, customer care and conflict management was tested
- Good quality training for permanent staff
- Career progression within NHG
- Peer learning for new starters has been beneficial

### What needed improving?

- Handover processes needed more depth and structure
- Temporary staff did not have access to the same training as permanent staff
- Training lacking on more specialist subjects
- An ongoing buddy system has worked well in the past but had not been formalised
- Staff found it hard to obtain historical information about an state or area

### What actions were implemented based on resident recommendations?

A 'buddy' system for housing officers and property management officers, ensuring newer staff have the support and guidance of a more experienced officer.

Detailed information sheets for staff showing the key information for the areas they manage.

A 'go to' information sheet for staff showing the areas and queries that each department is responsible for.

A schedule of important dates and communication to residents, including rent statements.

Handover sheets and templates for staff to complete for new officers.

'Pre-induction' packs for local officers - short packs of important information on the role, requirements and expectations.

More support for staff to test and try out systems, using dummy accounts and testing scenarios.

More accountability and ownership for managers, who will take the lead on any training and development for staff members.

A new support section on the NHG staff intranet for new staff members.

## Local Officer Recruitment and Training: Longer term plans...

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A defined training programme- identifying and filling gaps (incorporating feedback) for a rounded plan. This includes formal communications training.



All new starters and temporary staff to have access to all online systems and training opportunities.



A new HR system which will be used to imbed a better plan and delivery for staff development.



NHG internal systems to contain all historic and current information on a local area, block or estate, rather than on a separate document.



Notting Hill Genesis staff training sessions

## Local Officer Recruitment and Training: What difference did the project make?

We compared the scores for resident satisfaction following contact with their 'local officer' (housing officer or property management officer), where residents can score based on aspects such as the effort they needed to put in and whether the staff member took ownership of the issue raised.

We can see that between October 2020, before the start of the project, and May 2021, after the project had been completed, scores for all areas had steadily increased. We recognise that these scores are still not where we would like them to be, so there is still further work to be done. The group will continue to monitor the outstanding actions which should contribute further to improved satisfaction with local officers, focusing on communication, customer service and building positive relationships.

Question	Customer effort	General satisfaction	Ownership	Advisor Manner	Next steps
<b>Month</b>					
<b>October 2020</b> (before project start)	50.3	56.4	58.3	65.5	53.1
<b>May 2021</b> (project complete, majority of actions already implemented)	51.3	62.2	61.9	69.0	59.9

### What did we learn from the project?

- Importance of regular refresher training
- Need for access to training for temporary staff
- Benefit of regular 'check-ins' with staff to check confidence with different aspects of service delivery

### What did we learn as a group?

- The importance of setting realistic timescales for projects, particularly when all tasks were carried out remotely
- Deciding on how we will measure the impact of our efforts at the beginning of the project, so this can be done at regular points after where necessary.

## Case study: Annual Visits

*A project to review the remote annual visit experience during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the overall in person process, with a focus on improving communication to residents and using information learnt for improvements.*

The Oversight & Scrutiny Group took a lead on this project and with staff created 8 recommendations for NHG to commit to implementing.

We'll be monitoring and reporting back on the progress of these recommendations, particularly now that face to face services are resuming. We'll be looking at two key factors to measure how successful the project was:

- The number of complaints regarding annual visits
- Feedback from residents who received an annual visit during the project, to compare their next experience.

### You said...

Purpose and expectations of annual visits needs to be made clear to residents and staff.

Prior notice of the annual visit should be given.

Annual visits to be carried out in normal working hours unless agreed with the resident.

Where annual visits are happening over the telephone, the offer of doing this via video should be made.

Residents need to have an introduction to their housing officer and know who they are if they have not met them before.

Security and safety is a concern, so residents need to know who their housing officer is.

Information being asked at the annual visit can be sensitive and needs to be done in an inclusive way.

Residents need to be able to see what happens to the information collected at the visit and know what the next steps are.

### NHG will...

Publicise annual visits in resident newsletters and provide training for staff

When we resume doing in person annual visits these will be booked in with residents in advance at a mutually agreed time.

When we resume doing in person annual visits the time of the visit will be mutually agreed.

Continue to aim to complete the annual visit with a resident in their home as this is our first preference, however due to Covid-19 we appreciate some residents may still be nervous about this so will offer to do this over video.

Send out welcome letters to all residents when there is a change to their housing officer, introducing themselves. 'My Account' users will be able to see a picture of their housing officer.

As well as the above, we will carry ID on us and show this prior to coming inside your home.

Ensure the visits do not feel like an interview or survey, but rather an open conversation. We will also publicise the visits and why we do them through our Connections magazine.

Ensure annual visits will be visible to residents in 'My Account' and as more features are rolled out, residents will be able to see the progress of issues raised such as repairs.

## Together with Tenants

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**Together with Tenants** is a housing sector-wide initiative focused on strengthening the relationship between residents and housing association landlords. This came to the RVG as a proposal to consider and we recommended NHG consider it. In May 2021, NHG became adopters of the Together with Tenants charter, which means there's a strong focus on the 6 commitments listed here:

Read more about the Together with Tenants initiative here



Together with Tenants



Tenants charter

An update on the progress we have made to continue to meet the charter commitments



NHG News link

*"The adoption of Together with Tenants demonstrates a very real commitment from Notting Hill Genesis to support resident involvement".*

**Martin Dean, RVG member**



**1. Relationships:** Housing associations will treat all residents with respect in all of their interactions. Relationships between residents and housing associations will be based on openness, honesty and transparency.

**2. Communication:** Residents will receive clear, accessible and timely information from their housing association on the issues that matter to them, including important information about their homes and local community, how the organisation is working to address problems, how the organisation is run, and information about performance on key issues.

**3. Voice and influence:** Housing associations will seek and value the views of residents, and will use this information to inform decisions. Every individual resident will feel listened to by their housing association on the issues that matter to them and can speak without fear.

**4. Accountability:** Collectively, residents will work in partnership with their housing association to independently scrutinise and hold their housing association to account for the decisions that affect the quality of their homes and services.

**5. Quality:** Residents can expect their homes to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.

**6. When things go wrong:** Residents will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress. Residents will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.

## Together with Tenants: Meaningful Involvement and Engagement with Residents



Whilst most of the commitments are already being met in some way, the RVG will oversee NHG's progress to ensure continuous work is being done to meet and exceed the expectations in the Together with Tenants charter.

We're excited to see more progress being made to show residents that there is a commitment to improving relationships and trust. One member of our group, Stephen Johnson (pictured above), is part of the independent tenant advisory panel, who helped to create the above commitments. Here's what he has to say:

*"Together with Tenants is a journey that both staff and residents are about to embark on - together!"*

*It is important that both staff and residents are made aware of Together with Tenants and how the charter aims can be reflected in every aspect of NHG. Together with Tenants should in practice involve a commitment to ensure meaningful resident involvement and engagement in decision making at all levels of the organisation.*

*NHG should be open to the challenges that all of this brings including being prepared to commit resources to supporting residents' ability to hold the organisation to account and for staff and residents to work together to design and constantly improve methods for providing oversight.*

*By working more closely with their residents, listening to them and involving them in decision making at all levels, in a genuinely transparent and inclusive way in line with the aims of the Charter, not only will this ultimately benefit the organisation but also the communities that they serve."*

# Resident Involvement in a Challenging Year

## A look at how resident involvement as a whole over the last year.

Covid-19 has had a major impact on our lives, with many of us working from home and interacting via video calls. While we are still dealing with the impact of our experiences over the past year, working remotely has been a positive factor in getting more of our fellow residents involved. Previously it was difficult for some to attend meetings due to the location or timing being inconvenient. Now residents can join virtual forums, online meetings and send in their feedback from the comfort of their homes, working around other priorities.

This is great news as it means the RVG can work with more of our residents. We want to say a big thank you to everyone who has worked with us over the last year. We recognise the online format of engaging doesn't suit everyone, so we have been consulting with residents to understand a blended way of working open to all residents.

Resident Involvement Key performance indicators	20/21 target	20/21 actual	19/20 target	19/20 actual
Number of involvement activities	60	63	50	62
Number of attendees	300	407	200	349
Overall completed / actioned recommendations as a result of the activity	70	93	30	30

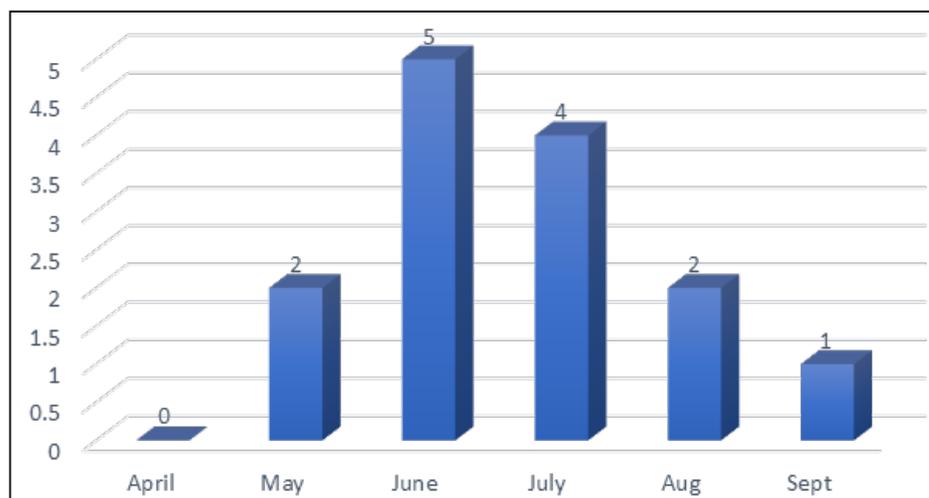
### What went well this year?

- A full programme of resident involvement continued online despite challenges of remote working and the pandemic.
- Slight increase in overall activities taking place in the year (63).
- Increase in individuals taking part in activities (more than 400 residents).
- New opportunities for residents to feed into the work we do, including procurement, compliance, The Lab (repairs pilot projects in the West region) and our virtual forums.

## Case study: Gas Safety Check Warning Letters

In May and June 2020, the Hammersmith and Fulham Resident Scrutiny Group identified a rise in complaints about letters to residents when access could not be gained to carry out a gas safety check. Complaints were predominantly regarding the tone and language of these legal letters. The group identified improvements to the letter from a resident perspective, which were actioned, resulting in a month-on-month decrease in complaints regarding the letters after the updated version went into use in July. The newly formatted letter began to be sent out on 13th July 2021. The chart below shows the positive impact this work has had, showing an improved experience for residents.

Number of complaints about the letter by month across NHG



### Further learning from this project:

- More of a focus on the weeks prior to the letter being sent, demystifying the legal processes so residents understand the importance of compliance and the process around this.
- Using the same feedback to update compliance warning letters.

More general information on gas and fire safety published on our website



[Information on Gas and Fire Safety](#)

# The Year Ahead

As well as looking at new and emerging issues next year, we also know there's more to do on the themes we have already started to look into, such as repairs.

We have lots of learning from our first full year, and have identified upcoming themes from resident feedback to focus on:

- **Complaints handling**
- **Management of void (empty) properties including the condition**
- **Welcoming new residents into the community**

We'll be looking into these areas in more detail in 2022, as well as hearing about any emerging issues coming through from residents. We'll build on the way we worked with staff last year, doing so together, and ensuring residents are fully involved in improving these areas.

Find out about the actions NHG are taking on the above issues



## A new Resident Involvement Strategy

NHG are currently developing a Resident Involvement strategy for the next 5 years. Resident Involvement is key to achieving ambitions set out in the corporate strategy. It states "we will maximise opportunities to listen and respond to a range of resident voices to grow a dynamic resident led culture. The resident involvement network, with the Resident Voices Group at its heart, will be central to this".

Through surveys and focus groups with residents over the summer, 3 priorities were identified from 10 areas of focus. Each area was discussed with residents and actions were agreed with residents to take forward.

Inclusive	Measurable	Connected
Digital inclusion Representative and inclusive groups Hybrid meetings Young people Scheduling meetings Communications Local Offer	Outcomes & recommendations Impact measuring Resource	Representative and inclusive groups Hybrid meetings Scheduling meetings Resource Communications Local Offer

## Resident Involvement Strategy – What we will focus on



### Digital exclusion

We need to continue to ensure all residents have the opportunity to be involved. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many were unable to participate due to lack of digital access. We'll be working with NHG to develop a more, blended way of involving residents in all aspects of service delivery, so all residents can have a voice.



### Implementing recommendations

We have seen some great examples of how resident input has improved services in 2020/21 and are committed to showing the positive impact that residents have had in the collaborative work that has taken place.



### Demonstrating impact

We recognise that residents have given a lot of time and commitment to make recommendations for improvement and want to ensure that progress is made in a timely manner for all projects. We'll be working to ensure that no recommendations made are lost and that all actions from past projects are monitored.

**Our new Resident Involvement Strategy will be published in the 2022/23 financial year.**

## Case study – Roofing Pilot Project



Residents in the Kensington & Chelsea (K&C) Scrutiny Group have been working closely with the Assets team to pilot a roofing project in West London, as part of a new 'Lab'. The

aim is to improve the overall service and communication with residents.

This 'Lab' project was launched based on feedback from the K&C Scrutiny Group, who raised concerns about NHG's approach as it was felt that money spent on roofing repairs, wasn't effective, suggesting ideas on how this could be improved.

Residents have been part of a series of workshops held with surveyors and NHG contractors to identify the issues, discuss ideas and solutions, and to scope out the pilot project, including how any actions would be implemented and monitored.

The pilot project began in October 2021 and included:

- NHG carrying out initial checks after repairs are raised, looking at aspects such as previous repairs carried out and planned works or replacements scheduled.
- Providing as much information as possible when jobs are sent to contractors, to increase the chance that the issue is fixed on the first visit.
- Contractors carrying out inspections of the entire roof when repairing, so the overall condition is noted and any other issues (or potential issues) can be picked up as early as possible.
- NHG carrying out possible inspections mid-way through a repair to ensure repairs are being completed to a high standard.
- Carrying out post-repair inspections which will include:
  - **Water testing as standard**
  - **Internal checks of affected properties**
  - **Full reports including before / during / after photos**
  - **Joint sign off from both the resident and the NHG Assets team**
  - **Use My Account and SharePoint to store warranties internally**

## Opportunities for residents to get involved



Residents promoting resident involvement at a community event

There are many ways residents can get involved, including activities such as open meetings, panels, residents' associations, consultations and focus groups which are listed on the right. To learn more about any of the opportunities listed and to see regular updates on some of the achievements of us working together, take a look at our resident involvement page.



[Resident involvement page](#)

### Some of our regular resident involvement opportunities

- Local forums
- Scrutiny groups
- Residents' association
- Task and finish projects
- Health and disability panel
- LGBT+ forum
- Asset Management Scrutiny group
- Resident monitors
- Focus groups and specialist requests
- Independent complaint reviewer
- Procurement and resident involvement
- Rents and Service charge Forum
- Resident Voices Group projects

Please use the links on the below to get in touch with the Resident Involvement team for more information or questions you may have. If you'd like to receive opportunities to get involved, please complete our 'expression of interest form'. NHG recognises all resident involvement and rewards your contribution. For more details see our rewards and recognition policy.



[Contact the resident involvement team](#)



[Expression of interest form](#)



[Talk to your local officer](#)



[Our rewards and recognition policy](#)