

## **Wythenshawe Community Housing Group Tenant Feedback on Housing Green Paper**

### Introduction

Following the publication of the Governments Green Paper “A New Deal for Social Housing” Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) embarked on a project to gather tenant’s views on its contents, its key themes and key questions for tenants. Views were gathered over a 5 week period with a key focus on one theme a week. A range of events were held to gather views including tenant focused events, inbound telephone calls and also visitors to the Groups reception area. Tenant events were held in our high rise accommodation, tenants and residents associations, complaints panel and with new tenants. In total over 600 tenants were spoken to and their views are summarised below by theme.

### Theme 1 – Ensuring Homes are safe and decent

Over 90% of tenants expressed that they felt safe and secure in their homes. Feedback from tenants was positive about WCHG and the work that had been done to increase security through neighbourhood wardens, CCTV and additional lighting on the estate. These have also been investment into tenant’s homes and specifications are reviewed to ensure that they provide a safe home for tenants. These factors are monitored by the Group’s survey of tenants and residents; which monitors the satisfaction of the neighbourhood as a place to live.

90% of tenants were also happy that the Group has improved their home to a high standard. Tenants spoke of the pride that they take in their home and desire to maintain it to a high standard. Some of the comments include:

“Our homes are a good standard”

“Yes, WCHG has improved our homes and we are happy, no construction as good as a direct labour (workforce)”

“Yes we feel safe in our home. We will be happier if we get more cameras”

Where tenants were dissatisfied it concerned desires to improve their homes further with newer bathrooms and kitchens, removing condensation / damp issues and having a quicker repairs service. WCHG continue to work with tenants on improving services and have a clear investment strategy in place. Where bathrooms or kitchens are identified as being below standard they are replaced in order to ensure that the tenant can enjoy their home. Condensation is a project that the Group continues to tackle in homes built in the 1940s and 1950s, the Group has invested in a range of initiatives to mitigate the condensation caused by modern living and undertaken a range of awareness campaigns on how to avoid it. The Groups repair service benchmarks well in the sector and performance is continually reviewed and communicated to tenants in order to inform expectations. Repairs are triaged at the first point of contact to ensure that emergencies or those repairs for people with vulnerabilities are dealt with as a priority.

Finally tenants were asked, “What does a safe and secure home look like to you?” the results are summarised below and clearly show that physical security including locks, fencing, alarms and cameras were important to our tenants.



**Theme 2 – Effective resolution of complaints**

85% of tenants asked stated they knew how to make a complaint to WCHG, the remaining 15% stated they didn't know, but would look it up or would be happy to ask the Group how to do it.

Over 95% of tenants asked would be happy to make a complaint against the Group if they wanted to and the Group continues to promote this as an option in all its contacts. This helps to create open dialogue with tenants to resolve issues.

80% of tenants supported a tenant's complaints panel to help facilitate complaints on behalf of tenants, however, there was a concern of tenants finding out other tenants private matters. Tenants trust the Group to handle their data and information sensitively, but, this would be harder to maintain if information was provided to another source.

Some of the comments about this from those asked were

“As long as representatives of all areas and ages”

“Should be independent of WCHG”

“Yes as it will give a change to have an outsider view”

“The process is too long.....I would open it out to a wider body i.e. Councilors, MPs if the complaints continue”

### **Theme 3 – Empowering residents and strengthening the Regulator**

There is a clear split in tenants concerning the need for a national voice only 50% of tenants believe that tenants have a voice when it comes to the national level agenda. Tenants were clear that they need a voice at all levels in order to inform the future development of the services that are offered. Some tenants were happy to not have a national voice so long as at a local level their views were listened to, this is summarised by one tenant as

“It’s not important at national level as long as my landlord listens to me”

Other tenants wanted to make sure that their voice was heard with comments such as:

“Our voice is not heard, our voice is important”

“The Government doesn’t listen to us”

90% of tenants wanted to be involved in the development of neighbourhood plans that could impact on them. The preferred method of communication for this is via meetings, followed by surveys and then social media.

### **Theme 4 – Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities**

Tenants were asked if they felt that there was a stigma to be a social housing tenant, this was something they felt very strongly about, saying:

“No got lots of friends all over no one judges only the government”

“Yes you can feel embarrassed”

“I am 91 years old there has always been a stigma living in council housing”

“It depends where your social house is. I love where I am and very happy”

“Yes I think it does sometimes -a bit sorry for myself”

When asked what the Government could do to improve the situation, tenants asked that more funding is put into social housing and housing is made more affordable for all to access.

Stereotypes need to stop being reinforced through government language and TV dramas, there needs to be more positive role modelling of social housing tenants and community life. Tenants said

“The media needs to stop focusing on the negative. There are lots of programmes that focus on people on benefit who think its an easy life, showing the negative side and not people who genially require help and need the benefits. Disabled people are shown in a negative light.”

“Promote good television programs not shows like Shameless or Benefit Street. Wythenshawe is the best place to live”

## **Theme 5 – Expanding supply and supporting home ownership**

Tenants were asked about the current housing situation and what could be done by the Government to improve the lack of affordable housing.

85% of tenants asked stated they did not believe there was enough social housing at the moment, when asked what they thought was an affordable rent, the answer varied between £80 to £100, which is in line with the Groups average social rents. Feedback included:

“There is not enough social housing in Wythenshawe”

“Young people are waiting for a long time to get social housing”

“There is large demand for social housing, there is a long queue on Manchester move (lettings system) It used to be affordable to rent privately, but now it’s not”

Whilst 75% of responses supported the diversification of housing supply and options into home ownership, 25% were keen to support the need for additional social housing as an affordable solution to end the housing crisis. Our tenants have told us

“Shared Ownership is a good idea for younger people to get on the housing ladder”

“Shared Ownership is not a good idea for over 50s”

## **Conclusion**

Overall feedback from 600 tenants has been very positive. The Group will use the information that has been provided to inform future decisions and will also feedback to the wider tenant base. WCHG will continue to involve tenants throughout the following months as the contents of the Green Paper are crystalised and implemented as policy.