

Member Spotlight

February 2023

West Kent

The logo for WestKent, with "West" in yellow and "Kent" in white, both in a bold sans-serif font, set against a dark blue rounded rectangular background.

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.





Member Spotlight

West Kent Housing Association

We asked Emma Henry, Resident Involvement Manager from West Kent to share what they are up to.

If you'd like to contact Emma about any of the below, click [here](#)

Give us a little known fact about your organisation

Pioneer Cottages, in a pretty Kentish village called Penshurst, were some of the first ever purpose-built social housing homes. West Kent still manages the homes today- along with over 8,000 others!

Tell us about a time that engagement has made a difference to your services or communities?

It's tough to pick just one example! Our team recently worked with our community development team to engage with over 300 residents in a particular neighbourhood and find out what their priorities were for improving the local area.

West Kent listened and responded, tackling a range of issues such as fly-tipping but we also facilitated regular meetings so residents felt confident to drive positive local change themselves. One resident said the meetings had made them "feel proud of where I live again" and another has volunteered to lead a local seed swap scheme and gardening club.

There's definitely been a lift in the local mood and a feeling that things are getting better.

What are you currently working on when it comes to engagement?

It's a long list!

We currently have residents involved with the procurement of a new grounds maintenance provider; our scrutiny panel are in the midst of their 'voice of the residents' review; we're asking residents in our online discussion group what kind of advice would help them with the cost-of-living crisis; and we're about to kick off a new mystery shopping programme.

This year we'll also be embedding our new involvement model and continuing to strengthen our scrutiny panel's relationship with the Board. And we'll be working on a project with multiple teams to review our over 55s accommodation – our part will be hearing the views of our older residents and also understanding how younger residents see the future in terms of housing as they get older.

Oh, and we'll also be co-creating a new resident involvement strategy for 2024-26!



Why did you decide to join Tpas?

Tpas offers a great combination of training and networking opportunities. Our staff and involved residents regularly attend Tpas training and we've had really valuable specific information and advice too when we've needed it.

The annual conference is a fantastic way to learn and share best practice and to meet other involvement staff and residents. We're also active members of Tpas Connect- it's my go to for quick questions and help!

What is your top engagement tip?

Hmmmm... tricky.

I would say the most important thing is really valuing the input from residents and respecting the fact they are giving up their time and energy to be involved. If people feel valued and respected, and that they're making a genuine difference, they'll stay engaged and hopefully recommend it to others. Make sure involvement opportunities are flexible, and meaningful.

I'd also say raising the profile of resident involvement and its value internally – we are a tiny team but try to be very loud!

What's the one thing you are most proud of when it comes to engagement?

Well, a highlight was certainly winning a Tpas award for outstanding tenant communication in 2021!

We worked with a group of residents on co-creating our new domestic abuse policy. It took a lot of very careful planning but was a hugely rewarding and, very humbling project that empowered survivors to use their experiences to make a positive difference.

