

Member Spotlight

December 2023

settle.





We asked Sue Crossey, Customer Engagement Co-ordinator from settle to share what they are up to. If you'd like to contact Sue about any of the below, click [here](#)

Give us a little known fact about your organisation.

settle is based in Letchworth, the world's first Garden City. Founded by Ebenezer Howard in 1903, the Garden City was based on ideas published in his book *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Reform* and created as a solution to the squalor and poverty of urban life in Britain in the late 19th Century. Letchworth Garden City inspired town planning across the globe; according to the writer George Orwell, it also attracted "every fruit-juice drinker, nudist [and] sandal-wearer" in England!

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

In the Summer of 2021, we reached out to a group of residents in Letchworth to begin discussions about the redevelopment of their homes, which were built in the late 1940s and expected to last only 60 years. Since then, we have engaged and worked with local residents, partners and the wider community to shape these redevelopment plans. We have held five public consultations, 20 meetings with the Resident Steering Group and extensive 1:1 meetings with individual households. Throughout, we have made valuable changes based on the thoughtful feedback we received. We are currently working on our final proposals for the area, which will provide 157 new affordable homes with a variety of 1 and 2-bedroom apartments, terraced, semi-detached and detached houses. The scheme also provides fully wheelchair accessible flats, houses and bungalows. Every property will have access to a private outdoor area, either through a private garden or balcony, together with parking.

The proposals are in direct response to what we heard through our engagement with residents and partners in the community, and in line with the Garden City principles. One of the residents involved in earlier stages of the proposals shared her story in a podcast – you can listen to this [here](#).

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

At the moment we're focused on improving the inclusivity of our engagement offer. We know that to be the best social landlord we can be, we need to ensure that a diverse range of voices and experiences are being heard and influencing how we do things. As an example, we know that in-person engagement doesn't work for everyone, so we've recently set up a digital engagement platform called settle connect to reach more people and offer residents a way to get involved in their own time. The platform has lots of potential uses, from policy reviews to regeneration projects, so we're currently exploring ways of encouraging as many people to sign up as possible.

Why did you decide to join Tpas?

No housing association is an island! Tpas has a wealth of experience and expertise that can help us become a better social landlord – why wouldn't we make the most of that? Having set up our Voice of the Resident panel over the past year, it's also particularly great to have access to Tpas' resources to help upskill not only our colleagues, but also panel members and all other residents who want to get involved.



What is your top engagement tip?

Engagement is everyone's job! It cannot be reduced to one panel or one team; it needs to be embedded into the culture of your organisation in a way that involves every colleague. One of the best ways that we live out this principle at settle is through our Big Door Knock. Every few months, every single team heads out into our neighbourhoods to speak to residents in person and find out how they are doing, how they think we are doing and how we can do better. The Big Door Knock has become an integral part of settle's fabric, a regular reminder to all colleagues of the people at the heart of the work that we do.

What is the one thing you are really proud of when it comes to engagement?

Over the past year, we have been working hard with a brilliant group of highly engaged residents to set up our Voice of the Resident panel. A couple of months ago, three members of the panel spoke at a Q&A session during our annual all-colleague event 'homefest'. They talked about their experiences of getting more involved with settle and shared their highlights, frustrations and hopes for the year ahead. It was a really inspiring conversation that resonated widely with colleagues. You can see the highlights [here](#)!



