

Ethnic Minority Voices in Tenant Engagement Case Study





Case Study



Church Court, Leicester: Building Community Cohesion in a Diverse Retirement Living Scheme.

Overview

- **Purpose:** This case study explores how Platform Housing Group worked to improve social cohesion, communication and inclusive engagement within a culturally diverse retirement living scheme.
- **Organisation/Community:** Platform Housing Group, working with residents at Church Court, a specialist housing scheme for people aged 55 and over.
- **Location:** Church Court, Leicester City Centre.
- **Date/Duration:** The work described took place over approximately nine months, culminating in a World Community Day held earlier this year, followed by ongoing activity and support.

Background and Context

Church Court is a traditional retirement living scheme built in 1991 and made up of 48 self-contained one and two bedroom apartments, with shared facilities including a communal lounge, laundry, guest room and gardens. It is a popular scheme with occupancy at 98%. The multicultural diversity of Leicester City is reflected in the resident community, with eight languages spoken in addition to English and fewer than half of residents speaking English as a first language.

While this diversity is a real strength, it also created challenges around communication, misunderstanding and fractured relationships between resident groups. Early social activities had limited success, with low attendance and little interaction across established cliques. Staff recognised that a different approach was needed to improve understanding, reduce barriers and build a more cohesive community.

Objectives

The objectives of the work were to:

- Improve communication with residents where English is not their first language.
- Build stronger relationships and social cohesion across different cultural groups within the scheme.
- Increase participation in shared activities by designing them around residents' cultural and faith needs.
- Improve cultural awareness among staff and residents to reduce prejudice and misunderstanding.
- Create sustainable opportunities for residents to shape and benefit from a more inclusive community environment.

Approach and activities

Community Engagement Officers, and the Retirement Living Officer, worked collaboratively over an eighteen-month period to test a different approach to engagement at Church Court.

Key activities included:

- Producing posters and flyers in multiple languages and planning activities around communication and translation needs.
- Working closely across community engagement and retirement living roles to understand barriers and respond in a joined-up way.
- Delivering a World Community Day featuring African drumming, Somali dance, Bollywood dance, henna tattooing and a shared buffet representing different cultures within the scheme.
- Building on the event by introducing ESOL classes, mindfulness sessions, and exploring further culturally appropriate activities such as a women-only exercise class.
- with 'Supporting resident leadership, including an involved customer as an informal interpreter and contributor to the world buffet, and helping residents secure funding through Platform Housing Group's Diversity Fund for a quiet lounge and international reading library.



Outcomes and impact

The work has led to stronger engagement and improved community cohesion at Church Court.

The work has led to stronger engagement and improved community cohesion at Church Court. Although some residents were initially sceptical, the World Community Day helped to reduce barriers and create new opportunities for residents to mix across cultural groups. Shared spaces including the newly created activity room / international library and the recently refurbished main lounge & kitchen are now being used more often, and residents are more willing to interact with each other despite ongoing language barriers. A celebration event was held in May 2026 to recognise everyone's achievements.

The initiative also increased understanding among staff of the practical and cultural considerations needed to deliver inclusive engagement in diverse retirement settings. Residents have gone on to access new opportunities, including ESOL learning, wellbeing support and arts & crafts sessions, helping create a stronger sense of belonging within the scheme. Residents' artwork has been displayed in the activity room.



Lessons learned

A key lesson from Church Court is that inclusion cannot be achieved through standard engagement methods alone. Successful engagement required time, planning and a willingness to adapt to residents' language needs, faith practices and cultural expectations. The work also showed the value of cross-team collaboration and of identifying resident champions who can help bridge gaps and build trust.

Next Steps / Sustainability

The next phase of work will focus on sustaining the improved relationships at Church Court through ongoing activities, continued language and wellbeing support. Progress can be monitored through participation levels, resident feedback, use of shared spaces and continued observation of how residents interact across the scheme.

Evidence and Data

Available evidence includes scheme profile information (48 apartments, 98% occupancy), resident demographic data showing significant cultural diversity, and qualitative feedback from staff and residents about the barriers and progress made. The original case study also references pie charts showing resident diversity; these can be included as supporting visuals if available.

Supporting Evidence

Resident diversity charts, event materials, multilingual flyers, funding application details, and any feedback gathered from residents or staff.



Chris Pinson-Bradley

Community Engagement Manager

chris.pinson-bradley@platformhg.com

07717 580242





T: 0161 868 3500
E. info@tpas.org.uk
W. www.tpas.org.uk

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tpas