

Seniors Housing Action Group

Newsletter summer 2017

Welcome to the first Senior Housing Action Group newsletter from Roy, the Chairperson and Peter, the Service Manager.

We want to share with you who we are, our successes and how you can get involved.



Peter Huntbach, Service manager (left) and Roy Crowhurst, Chairperson (right)

Who we are

We are a group of residents and housing management officers. We work together around issues of importance to all schemes, such as allocations and scheme managers.

It is the place where residents hold the council to account, and influence changes in residents favour.

Through our discussions residents get to know and understand the processes and policies the council follows.

Housing officers find out about the issues that concern people living in Seniors Housing.

"I want residents to be in the driving seat of service changes"

Peter Huntbach, Service manager

"Residents strongly opposed any changes to laundry charges. We argued our case, we were listened to and we got what residents wanted"

Roy Crowhurst, Chairperson

Our successes

Over the last four years the Action group has talked about some serious subjects that affect the service everyone in Seniors Housing receives.

Service Offer

The service offer is made by Senior Housing Management to the tenants. It is an important document, getting to the heart of what Seniors housing is all about.

A new service offer was negotiated between Peter Huntbach and the Action Group starting back in 2013.

The institute of Housing provided input and support, running all kinds of meetings across all the schemes.

Peter Huntbach said "I wanted residents to be in the driving seat of service changes. The message we were getting strongly from reps, the residents in our communities as well as staff, was that scheme managers were too bogged in paper work, stuck in front of the computer.

"We need to address loneliness and isolation and get a feeling of community back into the schemes, we need to do aging in a more friendly way.

"That is now written into the new service offer. Representatives at the Action Group voted on it line by line. The council agreed it in March 2015."

Laundry service

The councils' contract for the laundry service in seniors schemes was up for renewal. The council was considering changing the system to pay-as-you-go, the same as in general housing and launderettes on the high street.

However, at each stage of consultation tenants disagreed. At the Action Group meeting 100% were against. When a consultation was done at all schemes, 90% of tenants said no.

The council listened and acted on the results of the consultation and laundry costs continue to be included in service charges. The cost did go up slightly, as is to be expected.

The Chair of the Action Group also sat on the contract panel, so he knows exactly what is in the contract and can help tenants hold the contractors to account.

"It's a no-brainer to have a customer representative involved in the contract, it helps deliver what the customer wants"

Peter Huntbach, Service manager

Why get involved ?

- Do you have ideas about how Seniors Housing could be improved?
- Do you think it is important that people who live in Seniors Housing have a say in how their services are provided?
- Would you like to meet the officers who manage Seniors Housing and find out how things work from their perspective?
- Do you enjoy meeting and working with other people?

"There is power in numbers—the more of us who get involved the more we can influence the decisions that are made about our housing"

Roy Crowhurst, Chairperson

If the answer to any of those questions is 'yes', then the Seniors Housing Action Group is the place for you!

Seniors Housing Action Group meeting and Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 13th September 2017

10am – 12.30 at Leach Court

Park St, Brighton BN2 0DJ, room buzzer 38

Your transport costs will be covered if driving, and taxi vouchers are available

refreshments ♦ everyone welcome

At this meeting the Chair for the coming year will be elected, as well as representatives to the four Service Improvement Groups.

We will also be discussing the role of a scheme spokesperson, and ways to encourage more open participation.

For more information contact Hannah Barker 01273 296639 or Roy Crowhurst 01273 278996

How to get involved

- Come along to Seniors Housing Action Group meetings. Anyone living in Seniors Housing can come. The next meeting is our Annual General Meeting - details on previous page.
- Talk to the Chair of the Action Group, Roy Crowhurst. He can give you more information about the meetings, or come and speak to a meeting at your scheme.
- Look out for the minutes of the Action Group meetings displayed on the noticeboards at your scheme.
- Join our Seniors Housing five minute group - see the flyer in this newsletter.

Could you be a spokesperson for your scheme?

Not every scheme has a Residents Association, but we want every scheme to be represented at the Seniors Housing Action group.

The spokesperson's role would be to find out what issues mattered to their residents, and bring these up at Action Group meetings on their behalf. They would then report back to their residents on what went on at the meeting.

We can help by providing a short set of notes—like a prompt sheet.

We will be discussing how this role will work at our AGM in September.

Contacts

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Housebound?

Would you like to get involved but can't get out to meetings? There are still ways you can join in.

- Become part of the five minute group - see page 6 in this newsletter.
- Get the minutes of meetings mailed to you. Contact Hannah Barker on 01273 296639.
- Give the Chair, Roy Crowhurst, a ring on 01273 278996 to find out more and contribute your ideas.

What activities are happening now in Seniors Housing?

Following the new service offer, housing management are now working hard to develop more and more activities across our schemes.

We support residents to set up groups and partner up with other organisations who are looking to offer their activities around Brighton's older peoples community.

So, from cheese and wine evenings and lunch clubs to art classes, here is a flavour of what is going on:



Weekly physio: 'Standing Tall' at Leach Court, run by Albion in the community.

Cooking class: for adults with learning disabilities at Elwyn Jones, run by Grace Eyre.

Boccia: at Elisabeth Court, run by HOP50+

Massage therapy: at Elwyn Jones Court, run by an independent therapist.

Film club: at Laburnum Grove, run by a resident.

Digital gadget workshops: at various schemes, run by Digital Brighton & Hove.

Men in Sheds: at Leach Court, run by Fabrica.

Art clubs: at Manor Paddock, Somerset Point (run by residents), Elwyn Jones (run by the Womens' Institute) Broadfields (run by local art group, Metamorphosis).



Join our Seniors Housing five minute group

Would you like to take part in quick surveys or one off focus groups about different parts of the seniors service that will effect real service developments?

You can choose whether to receive a short survey by post, email or a phone call. We will sometimes offer members an opportunity to join a focus group and will send you something to be involved in at least twice a year.

It will always be up to you if you want to be involved in any particular subject. You might also want to suggest a topic for the Action Group to look at.

If you are interested, fill in the slip below and give it to your Scheme Manager, or email:

Hannah.barker@brighton-hove.go.uk
or call Hannah on 01273 296639 or Roy on 01273 278996.



Yes please! I would like to join the Seniors Housing 5 minute group

Name

Address

Please tell us how you would prefer to answer your short survey questions:

by email (please give us your email)

online (please give us your email)

by post (make sure you have given us your address above)

by phone (what number do want us to call on?)