



## **UK Housing Awards 2018 – Red Kite submission for ‘Outstanding approach to tenant involvement’**

When we became Red Kite in 2011, the overriding promise that we made to our customers was that we would be truly tenant-led. Having voted for change, an opportunity for real influence and tangible improvements to homes, our people expected that from day one, we would do things differently and genuinely involve them in everything that we do.

Six years later, Red Kite has had more than 143 volunteers, 465 decisions and changes made as a result of direct customer influence, 5 tenant Board members, 17 influencing groups and countless interactions with the people living in our homes and our communities.

Being tenant-led is part of our DNA. Not once does a conversation take place in our business where the question of how a tenant would feel doesn't come into consideration. Tenant-led is not a buzzword or a tick box, it's a way of working that is truly embedded at Red Kite.

There isn't just one thing that makes us tenant-led, because everyone is different and so one approach doesn't suit everyone. We make a really big deal of that and make sure that we offer a whole host of different ways for customers to influence our business – their business – which is seen in the following:

- Customers are welcomed into our offices no differently to staff – they are part of our Red Kite family – they have the same access to our IT, our building, the dining area and the office space
- We have a menu of options for customers when it comes to being involved, depending on how much time they want to dedicate to Red Kite – it could be an hour a week to carry out a phone survey to another customer about a recent repair, or attendance at regular meetings on things like customer service or asset management
- Customers are an integral part of our interview process – we've trained up a number of our volunteers to be involved in recruitment so that they have an opportunity to meet potential new staff and help us decide on who to appoint – whether that's on the panel itself or at a lunch gathering for our senior roles
- We run so much of the work we do by our customers – our Editorial Panel that wrote our customer newsletter evolved into web watchers that comment on our website
- Our customers have also been responsible for procuring contracts worth more than £100million – this approach resulted in our procurement group being nominated for the GO Procurement Awards twice in two years – with training from our procurement team, including a dedicated staff lead and professional procurement training, all of our large contracts have had involvement from this panel

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Achieving this level of tenant-led has been a labour of love because it would be disingenuous to say that it is easy. We set out to work in this way on purpose, because it is absolutely the right thing to do. For Red Kite, being tenant-led is about wholeheartedly embracing the unique and individual perspectives of our customers and knowing that to do great business and be successful, you have to deliver the services that customers want.

We don't just throw our tenants into these situations, we invest real time and money in making sure they are equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence to influence the business. Starting with an induction and training from our HR team, they are supported at every step to make sure they continue to enjoy the time they spend with us.

Our volunteers are our greatest asset, so we have a dedicated 'Community Investment' team that leads on our approach to working with volunteers, recognising that it is everyone's role to keep tenant-led as a unique quality of Red Kite.

One of our best successes has been with our CCIG (Customer and Community Insight Group) which is our 'highest level' involvement group before Board level. They come together to scrutinise areas that they are passionate about and challenge us on things that we would otherwise have a different focus on. In terms of their development, they suggested that they would benefit from being better connected via technology, so after consulting with them and our IT department, we provided them with the same technology that all of our employees now use, at a cost of approx. £10K. The group have access to a dedicated IT colleague who is available to support with technical issues, receiving the same level of training as our staff. With this new technology, the group can Skype, they have their own intranet, reading room, shared calendar and Red Kite email address.

We have also invested in an Away Day for our CCIG, so they can set out their strategic ambitions for the year ahead, as well as setting their own agenda for what they would like to do. The next step is to give them their own procurement cards and budget (approx. £10,000), so they can be truly independent.

With an aspiration to build 500 homes over the next 5 years, we have created a dedicated 'Development Panel', made up of customers and staff. With a cross section of tenants from across our homes, they are being given the option to get their 'CSCS' site card so they can go 'on site' when we start to build. This process is being carried out with significant staff investment, including reading materials, staff revision sessions for the panel, and anything that will help them thrive. This panel has already been instrumental in choosing our architects, helping influence the design of the potential new homes, and being kept fully informed as we move forward with the programme.

Throughout our years, we have continued to develop our way of working that has seen customer satisfaction increase, with more informed tenants and happier communities. With that in mind, we believe that our approach to being tenant-led is award winning.

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