



oaklee 
housing

*Tenant
Engagement
Strategy*

2023-2025

oaklee.ie

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MacUilliam
Tallaght,
Dublin 24



Mill House
Carrick-on-Suir,
Co Tipperary

Baltrasna Park
Moate, Co
Westmeath



Tenant Forum Foreword

This three-year Tenant Engagement Strategy is written by both Oaklee Housing and us tenants. It promises to give tenants a stronger input into how Oaklee Housing is run. It sets out how we can continue to develop tenant participation in decision making and improve the housing services we receive.



The Tenant Forum is the place where Oaklee Housing discuss its policies and strategies with tenants, so that we can make our communities better places to live. We have developed a good working relationship with Oaklee Housing, and we appreciate the partnership approach taken by them to ensure we are heard.

We want to make sure that tenants get value for their rent money and we want to improve the quality and fuel efficiency of our homes. These topics need tenant involvement to get them right and we look forward to continuing to jointly address them.

We appreciate that not everyone has the time or interest in getting directly involved, and we work hard to be a representative Tenant Forum. We are always looking for more tenants to join the Tenant Forum to help ensure there is a strong and diverse tenant voice in Oaklee Housing.

The Tenant Engagement Strategy also promises other ways to get involved. There are a range of opportunities with hopefully something for everyone. So please take the time to read this strategy and if interested, please get involved and help us to work together to improve our housing services and our communities.

We welcome this strategy and we hope it works for all tenants.

DR ROBBIE SINNOTT
Chair, Oaklee Housing Tenants Forum

Chief Executive Foreword

I am delighted to see the culmination of all the work of the Tenant Forum and the Oaklee Housing team with this Tenant Engagement Strategy. For the last number of years, Oaklee Housing has had a Tenant Forum along with a range of other channels through which our tenants can provide feedback to the organisation.



In Oaklee Housing we have had a Tenant Forum for several years, this, along with other mechanisms for tenant communications and feedback has kept us connected to our residents. However, recognising the need to do more, in our Corporate Plan 2020-23 we added two important goals:

- The delivery of exceptional services and
- Engagement with our key stakeholder groups, one of which is our tenants.

This strategy builds on previous work of the Tenant Forum and reaffirms our commitment to involving tenants in the shaping and improving of our services and to deliver positive outcomes for our tenants and their communities.

As we recover from the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and adapt to its on-going presence in society, we see ourselves returning to a new normal. This new normal incorporates a new way of living and working along with a heightened awareness of the vulnerable individuals and families in our communities. As a result of the Pandemic, the importance of a thriving, connected, community and its impact on the wellbeing of our tenants has become increasingly evident.

The Board of Oaklee Housing sees this Tenant Engagement Strategy as an important building block which will ensure that the overall Corporate Strategy is grounded in meeting our tenants needs. It also creates the structure necessary to ensure that not only is their voice heard but that they also inform our policies and the design of our tenant services.

SHARON COSGROVE
Chief Executive, Oaklee Housing



We Are Oaklee Housing

We are Oaklee Housing. We are an Approved Housing Body (AHB) established in 2001 to deliver high quality modern homes for older people, families, mature single people and people with complex needs. Continually collaborating with our statutory and voluntary partners we have rapidly grown our presence across Ireland to become one of Ireland's most ambitious providers of customer-focused housing and support services.

Established with a strong social purpose, we have charitable 'not for profit' status and play a significant role in delivering much needed social housing against a backdrop of the current housing crisis. We are driven by our mission to build a strong business with a social purpose, and to be a leading provider of quality customer focused housing and support services. All surpluses recorded are re-invested in the business, with no benefits to shareholders.

The Oaklee Way

At Oaklee Housing, our MISSION is: *to build a strong business with a social purpose and be a leading provider of quality focused housing and support services.*

Our VISION is for us to be a leading provider of great homes:

- that are of a high quality in safe vibrant neighbourhoods,
- where our customers receive high quality responsive services that meets their needs and expectations,
- through collaboration with our statutory and voluntary partners to respond to housing and support needs,
- by challenging the norm and constantly seeking out ways to improve and innovate.

We are governed by a set of values that guide us each and every day in the way we do business.

We are TRUSTWORTHY

Diligent in our efforts to be honest, accountable and transparent in how we do business. We are uncompromising in achieving value for money whilst delivering excellent quality homes.

We are CUSTOMER CENTRIC

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do. Collaborating with our stakeholders and partners we strive to deliver homes and create communities in a helpful, professional and fair fashion.

We are DYNAMIC

Always learning, we constantly seek out new and better ways to improve what we do in a responsive and innovative way.

Our commitment to our stakeholders and partners

At Oaklee Housing our ambitions are high. In doing what we do we promise that:

- We will provide **service excellence** to our stakeholders.
- We will deliver good quality **new homes** that will help to address homelessness.
- We will continue to **invest in our assets** to ensure that new or old an Oaklee house is excellent quality.
- We will at all times keep open lines of **communication with our stakeholders**.
- We will operate with the **good governance** that provides assurance to our stakeholders that we conduct our business at the highest possible standards.

We are an ambitious organisation; our sights are set on success.

In 2020 we launched our three-year Corporate Strategy and set out our commitment to:

- Deliver New Homes
- Invest Wisely
- Provide exceptional services
- Work with our stakeholders and partners

We are in the final year of that plan and despite the impact of COVID 19, we have maintained our commitment to those goals.



Churchwell Gardens
Ayrfield,
Dublin 13

HOW WE DEVELOPED THE STRATEGY

This Tenant Engagement Strategy was co-created with our Tenant Forum and the process was facilitated by an independent organisation Supporting Communities. A focus group was established to drive its development, the focus group consisted of Oaklee Housing staff and Tenant Forum members who met virtually every two weeks for four months, discussing every element contained within this document including the three-year action plan.

The process started in Autumn 21 with training for staff, board members and tenants. The training raised the profile of tenant engagement, how important it is for Oaklee Housing, for tenants and the wider tenant body. We then moved to form our focus group after Christmas who finalized our draft strategy and actions in July 22.



Trish McMahon

Alex Walker and Sarah Louise Grey

“It has been said the ‘communication is the lifeblood of any relationship... going through this process with Oaklee Staff, and the Supporting Communities Representative, this statement has proved very true. As a tenant representative, I feel that our input was valued and appreciated. Our thoughts and ideas run through this Strategy Plan.”

TRISH McMAHON
Tenant Forum Member

“Creating the Tenant Engagement Strategy was a good opportunity for staff and tenants to work together. As Helen Keller once said “alone we can do so little, together we can do so much”. During this process we were able to explore ideas to enhance tenant engagement, shape the strategy to meet their needs which will empower our tenants to make a difference in their communities.”

ALEX WALKER and SARAH LOUISE GREY
Oaklee Housing staff.

What is Tenant Engagement?

Tenant Engagement is involving our tenants and **empowering** them to have input into the services we provide to their homes and neighbourhoods. Oaklee Housing is committed to placing our tenants' experiences at the heart of the services we provide. By working closely together we can jointly improve our services, build stronger communities, and drive tenant centric change.

What are the benefits of Tenant Engagement?

At Oaklee Housing, we believe that there are many benefits to engaging with our tenants; not only is it the smart thing to do, but it's also the right thing to do.

Some of the benefits of effective tenant engagement are as follows:

- Improved services
- Providing services that reflect **tenants' needs**
- Increased **tenant satisfaction**
- Better relations between Oaklee Housing and tenants, each being more aware of each other's position and perspective
- Improved efficiencies and better **value for money**
- Meet new people
- Increased knowledge and understanding
- Sharing ideas and finding solutions
- Building mutual **respect and trust**
- Increased communication between tenants and staff
- Creating a **sense of community** where tenants feel valued



Maureen Lawler receives her inaugural Tenant Award from the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Caroline Conroy at the Oaklee Housing 21 Year Celebration.

The regulatory requirements governing Tenant Engagement

In 2018 the Housing Agency produced a Performance Standard and Assessment Framework which outlined ways AHBs should deliver excellent tenant services, assist in building capacity and manage stock efficiently. Following this the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019 (the Act) was launched which provides for the regulation of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) for the purposes of protecting housing assets provided or managed by such bodies.

Liseggerton
Clones,
Co Monaghan



Droughill
Portarlington,
Co Laois

Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority (AHBRA)

AHBRA was established on the 1st of February 2021 by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), Darragh O'Brien TD. The Regulator has responsibility for establishing a regulatory framework that delivers effective oversight OF all AHBs.

AHBRA's role is to oversee the effective governance, financial management and performance of all AHBs, in accordance with the legal framework set out in the Act.

Approved Housing Bodies are regulated on the four following standards:

1. Governance
2. Financial Management.
3. Property & Asset Management &
4. Tenancy Management

Tenant Engagement falls within Tenancy Management Standard

The Tenancy Management Standard establishes a set of outcomes that AHBs are required to achieve in their management of tenancies and communication with tenants. This Standard requires that AHBs have effective policies and procedures in place for the delivery of tenant services, ensuring AHB tenants are central to the work of the AHB, with the main objective of safeguarding tenants.

Outcome 6 states Tenant engagement *regarding the delivery of tenant services is encouraged and facilitated*

AHBs must demonstrate:

- They actively seek input from tenants and provide regular opportunities for tenants to engage with the AHB on service provision.
- Consultation with tenants when developing policies that impact on any aspect of tenant services.
- Clear communication to tenants on how they can influence current and future service delivery; and
- Consultation with tenants on approaches for improving the communities they live in.

To read more about AHBRA visit:

ahbregulator.ie/for-ahbs/about-the-standards

How you can get involved

We have developed a Menu of Engagement based on the feedback from our Tenants Forum, this menu is a starting point for our Tenant Engagement activities, it will evolve and expand as our engagement activities increase. You can engage with us at a level that suits you, whether that is from the comfort of your home, to being a member of our Tenants Forum or both.



Opportunity: TENANT FORUM 1

What is it?

The Tenant Forum is a group of Oaklee Housing tenants from various housing schemes around the country. Its purpose is to work in partnership with Oaklee Housing to improve service delivery by:

- Providing feedback on plans, policies, and strategies
- Overseeing all tenant related procedures & publications and
- Keeping tenants informed

TIME COMMITMENT
The Tenant Forum meets at least 4 times per year. Meetings last no longer than 2 hours and can be held in person at an agreed location, online or a mix of both.

Opportunity: RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS 3

What is it?

Tenants in particular housing schemes come together to address locally based issues. Oaklee Housing recognises the importance of resident associations and can assist groups to get started. If you are interested in setting up a Resident Association for your area, please contact your Housing Officer.

TIME COMMITMENT
This is very much dependent on the residents themselves.



Opportunity: HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE 2

What is it?

The Housing Services Committee is a committee of the Oaklee Housing Board. At committee meetings, Board members and members of the Senior Management team meet with two nominated Tenant Forum members to present policies and performance related information.

TIME COMMITMENT
At least 4 meetings per year.

Opportunity: ESTATE WALKABOUT 4

What is it?

This is an opportunity for the Oaklee Housing team and tenants to conduct a joint walkabout in their estate / area to help identify issues that are having an impact on their neighbourhood.

TIME COMMITMENT
1 estate walkabout per annum.



Opportunity: EDITORIAL PANEL 5

What is it?

The Editorial Panel is a small group of tenants whose role is to assist the Oaklee Housing communications department to collate and produce regular newsletters per year as well as the annual calendar.

TIME COMMITMENT
There will be a maximum of 4 newsletters produced per annum.

Opportunity: FOCUS GROUP 7

What is it?

From time-to-time Oaklee Housing may wish to seek your views and opinions on a specific service area to assess how it is being delivered and more importantly how it can be improved.

TIME COMMITMENT
Focus groups can be held in person, online or a mix of both and should last no longer than 2 hours maximum.

Opportunity: SURVEYS 6

What is it?

This involves tenants' completing surveys to provide feedback on specific issues and responding to the Oaklee Housing annual tenant satisfaction survey.

TIME COMMITMENT
At your own discretion.



Opportunity: ARMCHAIR PANEL 8

What is it?

Would you like to provide your feedback on Oaklee Housing policies, procedures and consultations without the need to attend a meeting? Then this opportunity allows you to do so from the comfort of your own home.

TIME COMMITMENT
At your own discretion.



We know how important it is to provide you with good quality, up to date information which is accessible to everyone and free of jargon.

Some of the methods we use to keep you informed will include:

- By letter
- By email
- Face-to-face meetings
- Home visit
- By text
- On our website
- Newsletters
- Tenant meetings
- Local Housing Officer clinics



We provide all written information in a clear, accessible, and easy to understand format, using plain language. This includes making information available on request in other languages, formats such as Braille, large print as well as audio. In addition, we offer translation services including Irish sign language.

OAKLEE HOUSING NEWS

Our aim is to produce Oaklee Housing News 4 times per year and have our tenants sitting on an editorial panel. This panel decides the content of the newsletter ensuring it contains important information and stories that you would like to read. In addition, the editorial panel also is responsible for the development of our annual tenant calendar.

TENANT HANDBOOK

The Tenant Handbook is an important part of our commitment to providing tenants with detailed information about our housing services and your tenancy. The Tenant Forum reviews the handbook ensuring it is user friendly, attractive, up to date and useful.

REPAIRS HANDBOOK

The Repairs Handbook provides you with information about the Oaklee Housing repairs service, how to report a repair, what information they need when reporting a repair, what repairs are the tenants responsibility, response times and how you may go about undertaking home improvements. Like the Tenant Handbook our Tenant Forum provides feedback on content for the Repairs Handbook, ensuring it is user friendly and up to date.





**Supporting
Tenant/Resident
Associations**

Above: Ravel Grange
Below: Cuir na
Habhann



RESOURCING TENANT ENGAGEMENT

Oaklee Housing is committed to making tenant engagement successful, we will offer a range of resources to ensure that tenants feel confident that they can engage effectively. We will resource our engagement strategy in a number of ways including:

- Travel expenses for tenants attending meetings - this will be reimbursed in line with travel expenses policy
- Venues for meetings
- Refreshments
- Training for staff and tenants
- Attendance at conferences and workshops
- Supporting Tenant / Resident Associations and
- Translation / Interpreter services if required inc ISL

Oaklee Housing is committed to protecting our environment and in the future will seek to provide as much information online or via social media platforms. We do however recognise that this is not an option for everyone, so a small number of paper copies will be produced to accommodate everyone's needs.





MONITORING TENANT ENGAGEMENT

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Tenant Engagement Strategy Action Plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis, with feedback on progress being made to:

- Tenant Forum
- Senior Management Team
- Oaklee Housing Board
- Oaklee Housing tenants via the website and newsletters

The Tenant Forum will take on the responsibility of monitoring progress of the Action Plan and this will form a standard agenda item at meetings.

EQUALITY FOR ALL

Oaklee Housing is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all our tenants. We are committed to treating people respectfully, fairly, and equally ensuring all our services are accessible irrespective of:

- Gender
- Marital status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Race
- Religion
- Age
- Membership of the Traveller Community
- Socio economic group

The final point above is currently under consideration for inclusion in new legislation, Oaklee Housing will ensure our equality for all addresses any additional grounds.

The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 (the Acts) prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods and services, accommodation, and education. The Acts cover the nine grounds of gender, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community. In addition, the Acts prohibit discrimination in the provision of accommodation services against people who are in receipt of rent supplement, housing assistance, or social welfare payments.

(Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission)

1.	WHAT we will do	Recruit Tenant Engagement Officer
	HOW we will do it	Oaklee Housing to undertake selection and recruitment of Tenant Engagement Officer with involvement from Tenants Forum
	WHEN we will do it	February 2023
	OUTCOMES	Coordination of tenant engagement activities
2.	WHAT we will do	Grow membership of Tenants Forum
	HOW we will do it	Engage all Housing Officers to actively seek representation from wider geographical area Produce Menu of Engagement Leaflet to be circulated to all tenants
	WHEN we will do it	February 2023
	OUTCOMES	A representative Tenant Forum Raise awareness of tenant engagement as well as promoting more involvement
3.	WHAT we will do	Devise a calendar of tenant engagement activities
	HOW we will do it	Tenant Engagement Officer to coordinate a calendar of dates for the Tenant Forum meetings, drop in centres, editorial panel meetings, walkabouts and local community events or fun days
	WHEN we will do it	April 23
	OUTCOMES	Clear timetable of tenant engagement activities
4.	WHAT we will do	Review estate walkabout process
	HOW we will do it	Carry out scoping exercise on the area best fit to have estate walkabouts Devise a standard pro-forma and therefore consistent approach Incorporate a process to provide tenant feedback
	WHEN we will do it	May 23
	OUTCOMES	Estate walkabouts consistently delivered across the housing stock, improved local areas
5.	WHAT we will do	Establish new Tenants Associations / support existing Tenant Associations
	HOW we will do it	Tenant Engagement Officer will assess where the need is and facilitate setting up of at least 2 Tenant Associations per year Oaklee Housing to develop guidance regarding the setting up of a Tenants Association
	WHEN we will do it	For the duration of the Tenant Engagement Strategy
	OUTCOMES	Tenants empowered to get involved in their estates or schemes and represent their community's needs
6.	WHAT we will do	Provide adequate resources to enable effective tenant engagement
	HOW we will do it	Tenant Forum will work with the Tenant Engagement Officer to prepare an annual budget proposal to be presented to the Oaklee Housing Board for approval. The proposed budget will include travel costs, hire of rooms, refreshments, Tenant Forum Christmas dinner, training and attendance at workshops/conferences
	WHEN we will do it	Quarter 3, year 2
	OUTCOMES	Tenant Forum empowered to make decisions on what resources are required and how this money is spent
7.	WHAT we will do	Monitor the implementation of the Tenant Engagement Action Plan
	HOW we will do it	Tenant Engagement Action Plan update to be a standard agenda item at Tenant Forum meetings
	WHEN we will do it	March 23
	OUTCOMES	Open and transparent Tenant Engagement Strategy

8.	WHAT we will do	Promote the Oaklee Housing tenant engagement activities
	HOW we will do it	Use every opportunity to promote tenant engagement, e.g. by the production of promotional materials or by attending and presenting at conferences, networking events, website, etc
	WHEN we will do it	Through the lifetime of the Tenant Engagement Strategy
	OUTCOMES	Greater awareness of tenant engagement activities and increased numbers of involved tenants
9.	WHAT we will do	Organise a tenant conference
	HOW we will do it	Tenants Forum and staff will work in partnership with the Communications and PR department to plan the Tenant Conference and decide the venue, agenda, hosting, refreshments, travel etc. (The conference can be a vehicle to review progress on the strategy and tweak where necessary following feedback.)
	WHEN we will do it	September 2024
	OUTCOMES	Raise the profile of tenant engagement opportunities within Oaklee Housing Showcase the achievements of the Tenant Forum and Tenant Engagement Strategy
10.	WHAT we will do	Tenant Forum to produce an annual review
	HOW we will do it	Working in partnership with the Oaklee Tenant Engagement Officer and the Communications and PR Department, the Tenant Forum will produce a report to highlight their work and achievements
	WHEN we will do it	April 23
	OUTCOMES	Promoting the work of the Tenant Forum
11.	WHAT we will do	Review the Tenant Handbook (bi-annually)
	HOW we will do it	Tenant Forum to review and update Tenant Handbook ensuring content is up to date, informative, easy to read and useful
	WHEN we will do it	Quarter 4, 2023
	OUTCOMES	Tenant approved document that is fit for purpose and useful
12.	WHAT we will do	Review Repair Handbook (biannually)
	HOW we will do it	Tenant Forum to review and update Repairs Handbook ensuring content is up to date, informative, easy to read and useful.
	WHEN we will do it	Quarter 3, 2022
	OUTCOMES	Tenant approved document that is fit for purpose and useful
13.	WHAT we will do	Carry out review of Tenant Newsletter
	HOW we will do it	Head of Communications & Editorial Panel to review Oaklee Housing Newsletter The newsletter will be both informative and useful and will be produced quarterly
	WHEN we will do it	Quarterly, annually
	OUTCOMES	Tenants will be kept informed about Oaklee Housing events and activities
14.	WHAT we will do	Ensure services are accessible and inclusive (Reasonable accommodation)
	HOW we will do it	Explore opportunities, services, and options available to accommodate specific needs e.g Irish sign language, translation services etc
	WHEN we will do it	Quarter 2, year 1
	OUTCOMES	Barriers to engagement are reduced / removed making services accessible to all tenants, with specific accommodations for tenant with disabilities and those from minority and multicultural background



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Portarlinton,
Co Laois

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