

HEARTWARMING HOMES WEBINAR MONDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2023

Hello, I'm Terry Tasker a resident of the Yorkshire Housing Association, based in Malton, North Yorkshire.

I was involved in the Northern Housing Consortium's Climate Change Jury exercise for a period of ten weeks in July to September 2021. The members were all residents of social housing providers and gave us learning experiences from attending experts. Being on this jury not only provided knowledge and shared opinions from other residents but it also threw up some differences in the way that housing providers work. More importantly, it highlighted the differences in how providers 'engaged' (or not) with their residents. It was an interesting experience to hear other tenants' ideas, opinions and test out my own theories, in the safety of small groups. Having 'industry experts and academics in their field' talking us through proposals for 'net zero' targets and retrofitting heating systems, certainly helped us make informed decisions about our own homes.

The Jury Report (**on the Northern Consortium's website**), [**A - HOLD UP REPORT PAGE**] ultimately provided a number of recommendations. It is good to see that this started a sea-change in working with residents, but there is still a long way to go. The Climate Change Jury initiative is an important one and should be repeated as it has brought home the fact that many tenants in housing associations and housing providers could do more to persuade our landlords what works for us, in changing our habits. **However**, it needs a closer symbiotic working with each other (residents and housing providers; housing providers with other housing providers).

From the outcomes of the 'jury' initiative, some big plans have been suggested and some are currently being worked on up and down the country by local authorities and housing providers, but what we need is "*action now.*" We don't want long debates and budgeting questions dominating what can be done. One key statement from the jury was "***We came to the conclusion that tacking climate change in the North's***

homes and neighbourhoods, needed to start by listening to the people who live in those homes and neighbourhoods.” If nothing else, take this from today’s session – we are the people who need the opportunities to talk to landlords; we are the people that will ultimately be affected by whatever changes are decided.

To get back to today, I would stress three words – **ENGAGEMENT – COMMUNICATION – EDUCATION**. Housing Providers are facing, I am sure, the biggest challenges in the provision of housing for their residents in a very long time, particularly in relation to decarbonisation and achieving net-zero targets for their property stock.

When making policy decisions, the key to success is **‘involving the residents’**, whether this is in future policymaking or proposals for improvements to current dwellings. These dwellings are the residents **‘homes’** and although there are cases to the contrary, many residents in social housing are proud of their homes and take care to keep them in a condition as if they were the owners. Many of the residents have contributed to society, had successful working lives, but for various reasons, be it social, economic or health reasons are now dependent upon social housing providers. They **want** to work with their provider as any outcome from changes will affect the way they live.

In the Northern Region, subsequent to the **Climate Jury initiative**, a **‘Heartwarming Homes Tenant Advisory Group** was formed’ which has continued to keep the jury recommendations alive and work to inform providers how the future can look in working towards not only decarbonisation, but also to keep a dialogue with providers on what will work and what will not.

One clear initiative that has come about is the **‘Heartwarming Homes’ toolkit** (A toolkit to engage residents in energy efficiency improvements’) **[B - HOLD UP THE FRONT PAGE] – also on the Northern Housing Consortium website**. The toolkit represents ways of working that will support my three words above - **ENGAGEMENT – COMMUNICATION – EDUCATION**. There are suggestions for ways of engaging with residents; suggestions for ways to help in communicating with residents and importantly allows a route to ‘educate’ residents in why changes are

necessary at the same time, demonstrating the benefits of such changes. In essence, **“come and talk to us” or arrange situations where community residents can give and share their opinions and ideas!**

THE TOOLKIT – Research – The toolkit is backed up with ways of working with residents by undertaking two major pieces of work – **Northern Housing Consortium Climate Change Jury**, already mentioned which highlighted recommendations for the way forward; **PlaceShapers and TPAS Residents’ Voices in the Net-Zero Journey**. Both pieces of work highlighted the need for engagement and communication with residents, putting their needs at the heart of any energy efficiency programmes and proposals.

In the Toolkit - Advice

The route to success in the future is around **how landlords and residents can or are able to work with contractors** who are doing the work in residents homes. Communication with different groups using diversity and inclusion for different groups of residents is of paramount importance, both in approach and language be it written or oral. Suggestions for educating residents in a way they understand that energy efficiency can be an easy choice for them. Bear in mind also, that residents don’t just comprise of individuals, but groups could be in all shapes and sizes, family members, extended families, inter-generational groups.

Toolkit – Resources

In the absence of key people that residents can communicate with, it has long been suggested that *Housing Liaison Officers* be re-instated if not already there. Their main purpose is to communicate with residents, encourage engagement with local plans for their properties and give support through the change process. Recruiting ‘resident ambassadors’ who can immediately relate to their own neighbours and community to support the need for changes on this decarbonisation journey.

Not only is there a need for education on this subject important for residents but housing provider staff and representatives need to be upskilled and updated on all that the future proposals for decarbonisation changes. This will help residents who need to contact

their providers and able to speak to someone who is knowledgeable on the proposed changes.

Toolkit - Resources

To save reinventing the wheel so to speak, the toolkit provides extensive **examples of ways to communicate** through a **process of letters and information, examples of paperwork and language** to use; **video demonstrations** particularly of retrofitted properties, and finally ideas of the sort of **questions** that housing providers or their representatives may be asked.

Self-Assessment Retrofit Checklist

There is also **(on the NCH website)** a self-assessment retrofit checklist that housing professionals can use to support putting residents at the heart of the retrofit journey.

To finish off, thank you for listening to this dialogue but to emphasise the work has already been done (as mentioned above) to support your efforts in **engaging, communicating** and **educating** residents that proposals for change are worthwhile. A happy resident is a happy housing provider!!

Thank you.

Ms Terry Tasker
9 October 2023