

## Housing Communications Scrutiny

4 September 2017

### Regular channels

- There is plenty of communication using a mix of on and offline channels – and we build 'OTS' by co-ordinating across them
- Some are 'owned' by the council, some are not
- The main 'universal' channels include the quarterly IslingtonLife pages, annual service charge mailing and housing web pages
- There is a lot of localised and targeted activity
- Repetition is often the key to making messages stick



## Making more of digital channels

- Applications for council homes are now online
- We have an online (non emergency) repairs reporting tool
- We use Twitter and Facebook corporately – mainly for customer service and to promote more human interest/events information and are looking to extend this model to estates.
- SMS? According to Ofcom in 2015 smartphones had overtaken laptops as no 1 device for internet usage



## Hot topics for residents

- Our big picture housing messages focus on tackling the housing shortage in Islington; new build; reducing the numbers of homeless families; improving our repairs service
- Tenants' and leaseholders' concerns are closer to home. Based on a mix of complaints and web data highlight the following transactional issues:
  - Repairs and maintenance
  - ASB (esp dog fouling and litter)
  - Value for money/rent statements/service charges
  - Estate management (including opportunities to have their views taken into account)
- Could we be making more of these opportunities to drive engagement with the service?

## Quality control and evaluation

- The evaluation we do is mainly qualitative
- We don't do any quantitative tracking – and it is very difficult to prove a direct link between communications and behaviour
- There are some issues that residents have fed back about consistently in other reviews on new build and the complaints process:
  - the need for **simplicity**
  - the need for a more empathetic **tone of voice**
  - use of **feedback / resident experience** (for example in new build) which is important for reflecting back to residents.

## Training and support

- Not all communications goes through the communications team – though we tend to be involved in the higher profile/higher profile communications and campaigns and some bespoke projects
- There is a practical toolkit on the intranet for colleagues to help them to 'self serve'. This includes detailed advice on branding, plain English and accessibility
- We have a range of templates and our online system Panacea to make it easy for staff to produce accessible and properly branded materials
- Letter writing and customer service training is offered by our corporate Learning and Development team



## Language translations

- We provide language translations on request. We use a company called Big Word to provide telephone and face to face interpreting (and written where needed). Full details along with the council's policy are available on the intranet
- We include a prompt for requesting translations on the back of our publications and at the bottom of letters.

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## Accessibility

- Our print and online brand guidelines follow RNIB's clear print principles for:
  - font style (same as RNIB)
  - colour contrast
  - alignment
- There are tips for making Word documents more accessible + using photosymbols and easy read
- There is a plain English guide
- We make information available in other reading formats on request and provide a BSL newsletter, video link and Facebook page for Deaf residents
- Our website was tested with disabled staff and residents and meets industry standards for accessibility



## Useful links

- [www.islington.gov.uk/housing](http://www.islington.gov.uk/housing)
- <https://www.islington.gov.uk/repairs>
- <http://izzi/me/staff-essentials/communications-customer-service/Pages/default.aspx>
- <https://app.panacea-software.com/islington/default.aspx>

**Thank you. Any questions?**

