

UNDERSTANDING OUR CUSTOMERS

One of the Audit Commission recommendations is to 'Complete a Comprehensive profile of all our customers by all diversity strands. Use this information to tailor services to meet tenant needs'.



This is something that Sadeh Lok were planning to do during 2009 as we want residents to have the best service that we can provide and we want to plan ahead to provide even better services in future. So, over the next few months, we will be asking all our tenants to complete a form 'Understanding our Residents' to tell us about the people living in their home.

We have already sent this form to around 600 residents.

If you have received a form and not returned it please do so as soon as possible. All forms returned are entered into a prize draw to win £25

Why do we need this information?

Understanding Your Needs

Many residents have specific needs that it would be useful for us to know about. For example if it takes you a long time to answer the door due to a mobility difficulty or if you would like a family member present when a Housing Officer or contractor calls.

Improving Access to Our Services

Not all residents find it easy to contact us because of disability or language barriers. If we know about any issues that affect your access to services it will be easier for us to keep in touch with you in future. For example through this process we have already received a number of requests for residents to receive information in large print.

Planning for the future

We want to continually improve our services. Having an accurate picture of our residents helps us to plan ahead to improve services.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q I've given you this information before why do I need to give it you again?

A By law we have to make sure that details we hold about you are correct and up to date. If you fill out this

form we can update our records with any changes or new information.

Q What will you do with my information?

A We will keep your details on our computer database and use it to make sure we manage your tenancy in a way that suits you best. The information will be held in strictest confidence. However, where you give your consent we will share relevant information with our repairs contractors to enable them to provide a better service to you. Please be assured that without your consent we will never share this information with third parties.

Q What if I don't want to answer some of the questions?

A You don't have to answer any question that you feel is too personal. However the more information we receive the better service we can provide to all our customers. If you choose not to answer particular questions we would still like you to sign and return the form so that we know you have received and read it. This applies even if you refuse to complete any questions. Simply tick the refuse box, sign and return.

Q What if I need help filling out the form?

A If you need help to complete the form please contact the Sadeh Lok Customer Services Department on **0845 0577082** and staff will either give you help over the phone or arrange a home visit.

If you have received a form and not returned it please do so as soon as possible.
ALL FORMS RETURNED ARE ENTERED INTO A PRIZE DRAW TO WIN
£25



SADEH KHABAR NEWS EXTRA

NEW TENANT BOARD MEMBER FOR SADEH LOK HOUSING BOARD



Sadeh Lok Housing has a new Board Member, Carol Williams, a resident from Sadeh Lok's Red Doles scheme, Fartown, attended her first Board meeting in May.

Jane Ashcroft met with Carol recently to ask her why she decided to become a Board Member and how her first meeting went. Carol said

"I believe it is very important that tenants are as involved as much as possible in the decisions that Sadeh Lok make. Having been involved in the workings of Sadeh Lok through the Red Dolls

Residents Association and as part of the Residents Steering Group, I knew that Sadeh Lok were keen encourage residents to become part of the Housing Board.

As it's the Board that makes the decisions about Housing services and it is those decisions that effect us every day, I wanted to be a part of that process as I will bring a 'tenant's' view to the discussions and decisions that are made."

On how her first Board meeting went Carol, pictured above, said:

'Balbir, the Chair made time before the meeting to introduce himself and to go through the agenda and minutes. This helped me understand more of how the meeting would be. In the meeting I was pleased to find that discussions were not just about business and finance but about the effect on the community, which played a big part in the decisions.

Other Board members were friendly and made me feel welcome and I was encouraged to take part and ask questions if I didn't understand. I learnt a lot just from one meeting, and although it was about serious issues, there was still humour in places.

I'd encourage any resident who is interested or feels they have something to offer to consider becoming a Board Member. I've found the staff and Board Members very supportive towards me and expenses such as child care costs are covered, but be warned the snacks at the meeting are rubbish'.

Ken Elliott, Chief Executive, Sadeh Lok Housing Group said:

"I welcome the appointment of Carol Williams as a Tenant Board Member.

I hope that this will be the first of many

others to follow. It is the intentions of the governing body to ensure over the coming months that more control of the association affairs is vested with tenants.

Their involvement and input is critical to our intended continuous improvement of service standards."



If you are interested in finding out more about joining the Sadeh Lok Board please contact Sue Scargill, on **01484 435715**.

Sadeh Lok Inspection Focus Update

During February Sadeh Lok Housing had two of its key services areas inspected by the Audit Commission acting on behalf of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), the main regulator of housing providers such as Sadeh Lok Housing.

You will find enclosed with this newsletter a letter from the Audit Commission to our customers explaining what they found during the Short Notice Inspection of Sadeh Lok.

We reported their findings to you in a special Inspection Focus Sadeh Khabar in March. In this special edition of Sadeh Khabar New Extra we will update you on the work Sadeh Lok, in partnership with our residents are doing to improve the service.



Promising Prospects for Improvement

Sadeh Lok has developed an action plan to address the issues raised by the Audit Commission. Based on this action plan and their findings during the inspection, the Audit Commission have awarded Sadeh Lok 'Promising Prospects' for improvement.

Paul Dolan, Group Operations Director said " *Promising prospects for improvement is a positive inspection result for Sadeh Lok and our tenants. We have a solid foundation to build on and will continually look to improve the quality of the services we deliver. We need tenants to play a key part in this journey, working with Sadeh Lok to ensure the priorities we set are the right ones and that we are accountable to our tenants for the standard of service they receive.*"

QUALITY SERVICES AT THE RIGHT COST? YOU TELL US!

Sadeh Lok is committed to providing excellent services to tenants. We also want to ensure the services we provide are the services tenants actually want and that they are delivered efficiently, effectively and at the right cost.



'Value for Money' is about ensuring Sadeh Lok does not waste money and focuses on delivering the right service, to the standards our customers expect, at the right cost. To help us achieve Value for Money as an organisation, Sadeh Lok has recently developed a draft Value for Money Strategy and Action Plan. The strategy and action plan sets out how we intend to ensure we deliver quality services with a clear understanding of the costs associated with the service.

Another important part in getting our approach to Value for Money right is getting our tenants involved in influencing how we prioritise services and how we target our resources, for example our staff and money. We have set up a Value for Money group to look at these issues and we would like

tenants to get involved. Don't worry if it sounds complicated or you think you won't fully understand the issues. Value for Money is an area of Sadeh Lok's business we need to develop. We can develop this best by working together and learning from each other.

If you are interested please contact Jane Ashcroft on **0845 0577082**, by email to customerservices@sadehlok.co.uk or by completing and returning the form enclosed with this newsletter to our office at Trafford House.

We would like your views on the draft Value for Money Strategy and Action Plan which is available on our website at www.sadehlok.co.uk. If you would like a hard copy of the policy or would just like to find out more, please contact Jane Ashcroft.

What the Audit Commission said

Here are the main areas that the Audit Commission think we should do to improve;

What we have done so far?

How you can help?

Review, with tenants, the weaknesses identified in the approach to diversity and customer focus

1. Develop measurable service standards for all services and ensure that performance is monitored and reported to tenants

We have consulted customers and staff on what they think should be included in the standards for:

- Maintaining Your Home Customer Care
- Resident Involvement
- Anti Social Behaviour

We have used the feedback from this consultation to draft the new standards

We will further consult customers and other stakeholders on these draft standards before submitting them to the Sadeh Lok Board for approval

Give you views on the draft service standards or help us to develop service standards in other areas

Such as Equality and Diversity (treating you fairly), rent management, scheme management, leaseholder standards, empty property relet standards and allocations (letting our properties).

You can do this by completing a short questionnaire to give your views.

Monitoring the standards by:-

- Joining the Residents Steering Group
- Being a mystery shopper
- Being a Resident Inspector
- Taking part in satisfaction surveys

Giving your opinion through comments, compliments and complaints. Please complete and return the enclosed insert to record how you would like to get involved and we will then contact you

2. Improve the range and quality of website information and ensure that it is accessible to people with diverse needs

We have carried out an assessment of the current website and whilst in the short term we will make some changes to make it more accessible and easy to use, going forward we plan to launch a new website which will give us far greater scope to have an informative, user friendly, interactive website

Help us to improve the website by:-

Being part of a dedicated working group to assist staff in developing the new site

This will involve attendance at ad hoc meetings or giving your views through email and written correspondence

3. Complete a comprehensive profile of tenants by all diversity strands. Use this information to tailor services to meet tenants' needs

We have developed an 'Understanding Our Residents' form to collect this information. This has already been sent out to over 600 of our residents from which 25% have already responded

From this we now know more about individual preferences such as:- providing information in large print, using interpreters, carrying out same sex interviews, asking staff to remove shoes when visiting and allowing residents extra time to get to the door

Ensure you complete and return the Understanding our Residents form that you will receive over the coming months.

Make sure you tell us if you have any specific requirements we should know about

If you need help to complete the form please contact the Sadeh Lok Customer Services Department on **0845 0577082**

Review, with tenants, the weaknesses identified in resident involvement during inspection

4. Ensure that residents, who are involved in monitoring, managing and developing services, are representative of the general tenant profile

We are now using the profile information we are collecting to analyse which of our residents are responding to surveys, attending meetings and giving us their views

We want to ensure that we are listening to all groups of residents so will take action to get the views of any residents who we find are not represented

Get involved and give Sadeh Lok your views. You can do this in a way to suit you. However you take part it all counts and is all important

This may be by giving us feedback through complaints, compliments or comments, responding to surveys, being part of the Reader Group, taking part in focus groups, attending local meetings or becoming a Steering Group or Board Member

Please complete and return the enclosed insert to record how you would like to get involved and we will then contact you

Audit Commission highlighted Weaknesses; what and what we have done so far in responding.

What we have done so far?

How you can help?

Review, with tenants, the weaknesses identified in the approach to diversity and customer focus *cont.*

5. Effectively involve tenants in strategic and policy making decisions, including full representation on the boards

We have a new Tenant Board Member (see article on page one of this newsletter) and are actively seeking more tenants to join the Sadeh Lok Housing Board.

We will also be holding a consultation week in August when staff, Senior Managers and Directors will be visiting schemes to ask our customers about their priorities regarding their home and neighbourhood. You will be informed when staff will be in your area nearer the time

If you want an informal chat about becoming a Board member contact Sue Scargill on 01484 435715.

Speak to Sadeh Lok staff, Senior Managers and Directors when they are in your area during August and let Sadeh Lok know about the issues regarding your home and neighbourhood that are important to you

Review, with tenants, the weaknesses identified in income management during the inspection

6. Develop and implement a robust approach to managing and recovering former tenant arrears

We are currently reviewing the policy and procedure we have in place for collecting former tenant debt. This includes reviewing the arrangements we have in place with external agencies for collecting the debts. We want to ensure that we get the best value for money as any debt we collect can be reinvested into the Housing Service we provide

We will be consulting with residents on the new policy and procedure. If you are interested in being part of the consultation please complete and return the form enclosed with this newsletter

7. Use profile information of tenants in arrears to target benefit and debt management advice through clear partnerships with other agencies

This analysis has commenced and further information will be provided in our next newsletter

We will be consulting with residents on how we intend to use the information we glean from this analysis and if you are interested in being part of the consultation please complete and return the form enclosed with this newsletter

Review, with tenants, the weaknesses identified with value for money during inspection:

8. Develop a comprehensive value for money strategy and action plan

We have developed a draft Value for Money Strategy and Action Plan and have set up a Value for Money working group

Join our Value for Money working group as a resident representative or give your views on the draft strategy – see article on page 2 or complete and return the form enclosed with this newsletter.

Tell us about any ideas you have to help Sadeh Lok achieve value for money

Address weaknesses identified during inspection, including those relating to operational and performance management

9. Ensure that the outcomes of all initiatives and improvements, for both the association and customers, are measured and reported to tenants

We are reviewing the information we provide to residents through both the newsletter and the website to develop a clear communications plan

Tell us what information you would like in the newsletter. What performance information are you interested in. What are the key areas where you'd like us to measure satisfaction with the service – See the list of Priority Items for Feedback (to residents) on the form enclosed with this newsletter