



INTRODUCTION TO PLACESHAPERS

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PlaceShapers is a national network of over 100 community-based housing associations formed in 2008. We own and manage over 725,000 homes between us, provide services to more than two million people and employ over 70% of our staff locally. We completed over 40,000 affordable new homes between 2008 and 2012 and plan to invest around £5bn to deliver a further 32,000 new homes by 2015.

We came together because we believe in the importance of working in depth with partners at a local level to achieve real improvements within an area. Good housing is the bedrock for a decent life and we are conscious of our pivotal role as change agents in our local communities. Unemployment, crime, poor health, low educational achievement are all linked so what we do as housing associations to help residents, local government and other agencies work together can make a huge difference to society. We achieve results through learning from and working with each other to create sustainable, economically and socially active communities.

Our members understand the strategic priorities of central and local government and contribute to their delivery as close and valued partners. Local focus and helping to create economically and socially active communities are central to our objectives. We distinguish ourselves as a network because we are committed to local decision-making, ensuring that national policy can be implemented in a way that achieves the best results for our communities. We believe that it is crucial to remain truly accountable at the local level. We are already doing an enormous amount of good work in partnership with government agencies, the voluntary and private sector and most importantly our customers. This includes always looking for new ways in which we can increase the wider social value we add and our value for money through the ways in which we work. We are an important part of the future and are delighted by the impact we have already made in these changing and challenging times.

This short manifesto has been developed to support our members in discussions with MPs, local councillors, government agencies and others. It sets out the key principles that underpin our ethos together with a series of commitments that illustrate what these mean in practice.

For further information on PlaceShapers activities and membership, please visit our website www.placeshapers.org or contact:

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Our Values

1. We put our residents and customers at the centre of what we do and ensure they have real influence on our organisations.

We will:

- Recognise the crucial role that residents and service users have in shaping services and business development. We support genuine engagement at all levels of our organisations and empower our residents to achieve the influence they rightly expect.
- Have in place effective and appropriate mechanisms to understand and respond to our diverse customer profile. We will use this profile to develop appropriate services and to support resident involvement structures that reflect local and personal needs.

2. We provide more than just landlord services because we care about the people and places where we work.

We will:

- Use our capacity to drive a legacy of long-term investment in our communities.
- Invest our resources locally, will employ locally where possible and will be recognised for our contribution to creating opportunities, neighbourhood pride and social mobility.
- Be transparent about how we are using our resources
- Reflect local needs through a balance of regeneration and development thus addressing the needs of current and future families.
- Be integrated effectively in the local voluntary sector, working jointly with partners (and leading where appropriate) to nurture stronger economically and socially active communities.
- Employ high standards in our neighbourhoods, nurturing personal responsibility and being tough on anti-social behaviour.
- Use our resources to help our customers fulfil their potential, thus increasing economic activity and reducing their dependency on the welfare state and local authority support.

3. We recognise the importance of a local focus and work actively with our local authorities and other local partners to improve and shape places at both a strategic and operational level.

We will:

- Expect senior managers of PlaceShapers housing associations to contribute to and challenge local partnerships to jointly drive local improvement in neighbourhoods and services.
- Commit to determining our agreed role in any given local authority area whether this be to lead, to influence, to follow or, if appropriate, to exit.
- Use our assets flexibly to increase housing supply, to drive up housing standards and for wider investment in our communities.

4. We believe there is strength and benefit to residents and stakeholders in maintaining a strong, independent, diverse, values-driven housing association sector.

We will:

- Offer strong local accountability and dynamic participation in our key areas to ensure that the value of an independent, diverse and innovative housing association sector is recognised.
- Influence government and policy makers to ensure that national and local policies are developed in a way that promote a local focus and help to improve the quality of life for our communities.

(Revised May 2014)