

## Arches Housing Neighbourhood Network FAQ

### 1. Why set-up a Neighbourhood Network?

During 2021/22 Arches reviewed its approach to customer involvement and co-regulation and it was identified that the role of customers within the governance of Arches needed to be strengthened.

The creation of the Neighbourhood Network will be a keyway of ensuring Arches Housing meets its legal, regulatory, and business objectives. In November 2020, the Government published its Housing White Paper called 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents'. The White Paper set out that customers can expect **'to be able to hold their landlord to account, know how it is performing and what decisions it is making'** and **'to have your voice heard by your landlord.'** This will be made a legal requirement by the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill which is expected to be made law in 2023.

The Neighbourhood Network will also ensure we meet our service standards and commitments to all Arches Housing customers by giving customers greater oversight and influence within the governance of Arches.

### 2. What do you mean by customers and 'tenant voice', and who does this include?

We regard anyone who legally lives in an Arches home as a customer.

Legally, there will be an agreement with us (either a tenancy agreement or a leasehold agreement) that gives you your rights to occupy the property. This means you can apply to be a member of the Neighbourhood Network. We have also extended the eligibility criteria of the Neighbourhood Network to legal occupants of an Arches Homes for example, adult children or a partner or spouse who is not a joint tenant. If you are not the legally named tenant or leaseholder we will seek confirmation from the tenant or leaseholder that you reside in the home and may request proof of your residence, such as a bank statement.

The term 'tenant voice' is one that the housing regulator uses as they want to ensure that we know and understand the needs of all our customers – this term applies to both tenants and leaseholders.

### 3. Will the Neighbourhood Network be a 'box ticking' group?

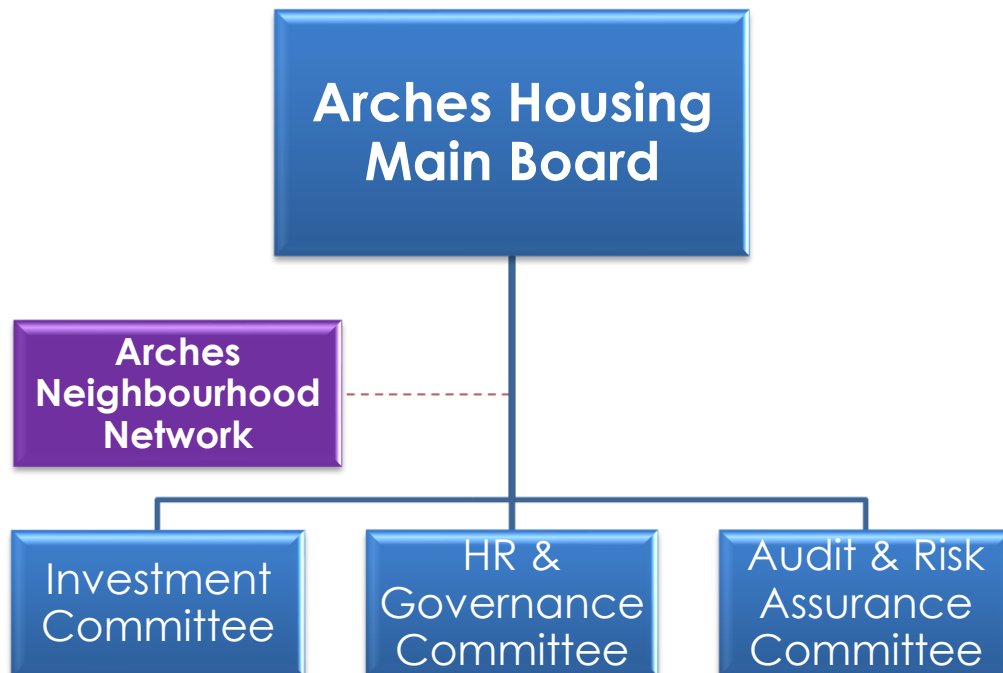
No.

Arches Housing has a main board which has ultimate responsibility for the governance of the organisation.

The Board must ensure that the organisation meets its business, legal and regulatory objectives. The regulatory objectives for social housing include *'consumer standards'*. These cover the day-to-day landlord services such as

repairs, allocation of homes, collecting rent and involving residents in ways that mean they are influencing decision making at Arches.

The aim of the Neighbourhood Network is to ensure we meet our service standards and commitments to all Arches Housing customers in all the areas in which we operate. So, this group will not be 'ticking boxes' because it will have a direct link to our governance; it will be a formal group and it will have a clear reporting mechanism to and from the Board. The diagram shows how the Neighbourhood Network will link to the overall governance of the organisation.



**4. What do you mean when you say that the Neighbourhood Network is a 'keyway of ensuring Arches Housing meets its legal, regulatory, and business objectives?'**

The Board will always want, seek, and expect assurance on the many aspects of our business including, for example, health and safety, finances, employment practices AND that we are delivering our services in the right way to all our customers. Arches Board seeks assurance from lots of different sources such as performance data, the executive team, external audits, specialist independent advisors and legal experts.

The Neighbourhood Network will become one of the many ways the main board has of gaining assurance and, very specifically, assurance about the customer experience of our services.

**5. Who will benefit the most from the work of the Neighbourhood Network?**

Arches Housing and our customers will jointly benefit from the Neighbourhood Network because it will put the 'customer voice' at the heart of governance. It will

focus on ensuring we meet our commitments to all our customers and will enable both colleagues and customers to work together to achieve our shared vision.

**6. What's in it for me if I become a member of the Neighbourhood Network?**

You will have the opportunity to hold Arches accountable and influence housing services and policies which directly impact customers. You will be given opportunities to develop your skills and knowledge of housing practice and governance. This would be a great addition to any CV, a way to build confidence, maybe try something new and meet new people.

If you are motivated to improve lives and communities, then you will see how good quality housing and housing services really do help to change individuals and communities.

**7. How is the Neighbourhood Network different from tenant groups and other forms of resident involvement?**

The formality of the Neighbourhood Network makes it different as does the fact that it will have a direct reporting link to and from the Board. The role profile for the Neighbourhood Network has more detail about members responsibilities.

**8. Is this the same as the scrutiny?**

No.

In-depth scrutiny of our services will continue as a separate activity, and we will be exploring new ways of involving more residents in scrutiny activities and projects. The Neighbourhood Network would see the findings of scrutiny to ensure that recommendations and actions are followed through.

**9. Can I still be involved in my local groups and activities if I become a member of the Neighbourhood Network?**

Yes.

Local involvement and work in your community will remain important and we would always encourage and support, where and when we can, local community activities.

We appreciate that the time commitment for the being a member of the Neighbourhood Network might not suit some of our customers and so developing ways by which the 'tenant voice' can be heard locally and individually through targeted activities will be another way to ensure we are gathering views and ideas from all our customers.