

Resident Consultation Service



for sheltered, retirement and extra care housing



Elderly Accommodation Counsel

EAC is an independent national charity offering free information and advice on accommodation and services for older people.

Our website www.HousingCare.org welcomes 4million unique visitors a year. It contains searchable directories of sheltered, retirement and extra care housing, care homes, and home care and support services.

EAC's FirstStop Advice Line service provides personal advice and guidance to 18,000 new clients every year.

To maintain its directory of 25,000 housing schemes for later life, EAC relies on the co-operation of some 2,000 housing providers throughout the UK. In return we offer them a range of website and data services. *The Resident Consultation Service* is one of these, offering useful feedback to housing providers and potential residents.

The EAC Card game, a consultation tool, conceived and developed by Alex Billeter, *Projects Manager, EAC*

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Overview

The *EAC Resident Consultation Service* involves residents in a card game, stimulates reflection and discussion, and captures satisfaction ratings on design, management, services and well-being.

Over 4 years it has been used in 1,111 sheltered, retirement and extra care schemes, and involved 12,645 residents.

This guide explains the consultation process, its benefits to residents and housing providers, and how the collected data enriches our understanding of what works.

Introduction

Background

The new method of consulting residents of sheltered and extra care housing was developed and trialled in 2009 by EAC and its consultants, with the support of the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Housing LIN¹.

The card game, complete with rules and score sheets, first appeared as a tool for residents to nominate their schemes for *EAC's National Housing for Older People Awards*. By late 2011 the nomination tool had become a fully-fledged consultation tool capable of reporting residents' views on their facilities, services and lifestyle, and of comparing ratings regionally and nationally.

Advantages

The card game can be seen as stand alone or complementary to other consultations or surveys carried out by housing providers; it has its own distinct characteristics:

- Residents find the process engaging, even entertaining.
- Residents are given the opportunity to discuss or argue their scores with each other, whilst they can still enter scores individually and confidentially.
- The consultation is managed by an independent party (EAC)
- EAC's analytical tools make it possible to produce reports efficiently and at remarkably low cost (*see page 10*)
- These reports are clear and concise.
- The reports also provide valuable evidence to present to commissioners and funders, and in Scotland, to the Care Inspectorate.

¹ Housing and Learning Improvement Network (then of the Department of Health)

Consultation format

Typically residents play the card game for about an hour, making a social event of it. The consultation can be organised by the residents or by the scheme manager or warden who should not be present during the game, nor see the score sheets.

In small retirement developments a single group of 4 to 8 residents might take part; in large schemes several such groups submit their returns. Generally, a 20% participation rate is the minimum required for reliable results, and 25+% is preferable.

The 28 cards are arranged into 4 main topics: *Where we live, My home, Services and Lifestyle*. Sixteen cards invite the residents to discuss statements and agree on a score; the other 12 cards ask for individual scores which do not have to be agreed with the other players. Consultation packs for use in extra care schemes include statements about care services and meals. Score sheets are returned confidentially to EAC. Each consulted scheme is automatically entered into EAC's annual *National Housing for Older People Awards*.

The rules, the score sheets and each card can be seen in the annual Reports of each *National Housing for Older People Awards*. See www.HousingCare.org.

The Report

For each scheme surveyed, residents' scores are collected and analysed by EAC to produce a confidential *Provider Report*, available only to the organisation which has commissioned it.

Each report is self-contained and includes an explanation of the consultation methodology, an overview of national findings to date, and three pages of results specific to the scheme. At both summary and detailed levels these pages highlight areas where the scheme performs well and not so well. See sample at www.HousingCare.org.

At the detailed level, the report shows residents' ratings for each card, providing helpful pointers to specific issues or concerns. Many of these can be attended to in the short or medium term. However, managers and landlords will seldom be able to address unsatisfactory ratings for location or buildings; nevertheless, that information should be useful for the planning of future facilities, and should prompt thinking about marketing strategies.

The report also highlights areas where ratings indicate a result in the top 10% of schemes in the UK, or in the bottom 10%. This combination and analysis of scores provides a valuable overall assessment of the residents' well-being and quality of life.

Other features of the *Resident Consultation Service*

Other resident consultation methods are able to incorporate questions and issues specific to a scheme at a particular time. EAC's *Resident Consultation Service* cannot do that as it relies on generic statements. However, at a fraction of the cost it will:

- give confidence to residents that you value their views;
- give residents an enjoyable and stimulating opportunity to discuss issues which are important to them;
- re-assure residents that the consultation is handled in confidence by an independent organisation;
- require almost no work or preparation on your part;
- offer you clear feedback on strengths and weakness, and pointers to issues that can be addressed immediately;
- inform you about features of your schemes which ought not to be repeated in future projects;
- provide resident ratings for all key facilities and services in your scheme, comparisons with other surveyed schemes, plus benchmarking against all similar schemes regionally and nationally.

The *Resident Consultation Service* data

Figures

Over four years the EAC *Resident Consultation Service* and *National Housing for Older People Awards* have collected data from 1,111 sheltered and extra care schemes². This is an unusually large sample, and with an average participation rate of over 11 residents per scheme, tells us much about the success of the full range of models of housing for later life, from the almshouse to the retirement village.

By November 2013 the data had been collected from:

- 1,111 schemes, of which 884 were retirement housing, and 227 housing-with-care.
- 3,054 groups totalling 12,645 residents

Of these schemes

- 833 provided some form of rented accommodation
- 186 provided some type of ownership
- 54 provided both type of tenures

The schemes were managed by 225 landlords and management companies

- 138 by private sector managers
- 157 by statutory sector landlords (local authorities and ALMOs)³
- 816 by voluntary sector landlords and managers

Both private sector managers and leasehold schemes are very well represented in *Residents Consultation Service* results to date.

² Where one scheme has been surveyed more than once, only one scheme is counted, and only the results of the latest survey are taken into account.

³ Arms Length Management Organisations

Distribution of the 1,111 surveyed schemes

Distribution by type of scheme

	England	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland
Retirement Housing	793	55	18	18
Housing-with-Care	201	4	16	6
Total	994	59	34	24

Distribution by Region (England)

North East	47	Eastern	125
North West	140	London	71
Yorkshire and the Humber	84	South East	180
East Midlands	61	South West	121
West Midlands	125		

The distribution of surveyed schemes by county roughly reflects the geographic distribution of the older population.

These schemes also include a fair mix of urban, suburban and rural locations.

Resident participation by scheme averaged 25.7% for retirement schemes and 21.9% for extra care schemes. We look forward to increasing these figures in future years and thereby strengthening the value of our findings.

Use of the *Resident Consultation Service* and its data

Presenting residents' views on our website

Residents' views can also help inform prospective residents about the specific qualities and strengths of individual sheltered and extra care schemes.

www.HousingCare.org now flags those features of each scheme which residents have rated very highly. The screenshot below shows a scheme that did very well on 5 of the 22 possible features.

Rossiter Court website presentation⁵

Residents' views

A number of residents have taken part in the EAC National Housing for Older People Awards, or used the EAC Residents Consultation Service (RCS); they have given **top marks** to this scheme for:

- ✓ Community spirit
- ✓ Consultation
- ✓ Number / size of facilities
- ✓ Quality of the building and facilities
- ✓ Quality of the garden

Data, statistics and findings

The combination of EAC's established directory of *factual information* about sheltered and extra care housing and the new data on user views provided by the EAC *Resident Consultation Service* is creating a uniquely rich source of market intelligence for the retirement housing industry. Some illustrative examples are available in the annual Reports of each *National Housing for Older People Awards*⁶. One significant weakness remains to be fully addressed – at the moment resident consultation data is biased towards schemes with a dedicated scheme manager or warden who can encourage and support residents to get involved. EAC acknowledges the importance of reaching residents in the growing number of later life housing complexes which are not staffed in this way.

⁵If no features of a scheme are highly rated, or if the results are mediocre or worse, no mention of the consultation is made on the website.

⁶Downloadable from the Housing Awards' pages on www.HousingCare.org

Commissioning your *Resident Consultation Service*

Sequence

- 1 Get your residents and scheme managers on board!
- 2 Let us know the name and postcode of each scheme in which you wish to conduct a resident consultation.
- 3 Tell us if you wish the consultation packs to be posted to each scheme or to your office.
- 4 From our database we will know each scheme's full address, its type (standard or housing-with-care) and the approximate number of residents.
- 5 We will send the consultation packs (cards, score sheets, rules, Freepost return envelopes) within two or three working days.
- 6 Within 5 to 10 working days of receiving the completed score sheets, we will email you each scheme's Provider Report.

Cost

Thanks to generous sponsorship by Legal & General we are able to keep the cost of the EAC *Resident Consultation Service* very low. Charges are related to the size of a scheme or development, as below.

Total Number of properties	Under 30	30 - 44	45 - 59	60 - 99	+100
Price excluding VAT	£35	£50	£65	£90	from £105

For an extra £5 + VAT we will send you a bound copy of your Provider Report.

Place your order by email to housingawards@eac.org.uk by phone on 020 7820 3755 or download an order form at www.housingcare.org

Our website is a showcase for all UK specialist housing for older people.

It is a free service designed to help future residents appreciate the wide range of housing for later life, explore what is available in their area and make contact with individual providers. For a modest subscription providers can add details of their current availability and a limited amount of branding.

More information on the website.



New SHOP@ tool

Developed in partnership with the Housing LIN.

This new tool for commissioners and developers of extra care housing draws on EAC's data sets of existing provision of

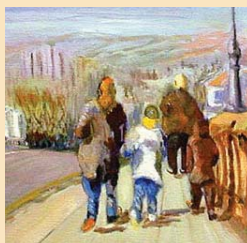
specialist accommodation, plus key demographic data sets, to provide a simple tool to forecast and meet the demand for specialist housing. SHOP@ is free to use, and comes with an optional consultancy service. Email: SHOP@eac.org.uk or call 020 7820 7867

EAC's Quality of Information Mark



EAC rewards those schemes which complete its full 7 page questionnaire with the EAC *Quality of Information Mark*. The kite-mark highlights these schemes on all the printed reports we provide to our

clients and allocates them 5 additional web pages of details on the website. This service is free. For a minimal subscription, housing providers can order printed certificates and arrange for using the QI Mark logo.



Encourage your residents to enter the annual EAC *Over 60s Art Awards*.

Entries are invited from beginners as well as more experienced amateur artists working in all mediums. Individual and collaborative works are accepted, and entries from artists in later-life housing are especially welcomed. Visit www.eacartawards.org.uk

EAC gratefully acknowledges the financial support provided over the years towards its *Resident Consultation Service* and *National Housing for Older People Awards* by



The game was originally developed with the support of



Edwina Currie, Nick Abbey, CEO ExtraCare Charitable Trust, and John Galvin CEO EAC, celebrate the 2013 *National Housing for Older People Awards* at the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham.

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