



respond



**Together
we are stronger**

September 2022



Content

Welcome	4
Message from Tenants	4
Message from Respond CEO	5
Tenant Engagement	7
What is Tenant Engagement?	7
How we developed our Tenant Engagement Strategy	8
Benefits of Tenant Engagement	8
Tenant Survey	10
How can you get involved	12
How will we keep you informed?	18
Supporting Tenant Engagement	18
Monitoring and Evaluation	20
Monitoring and Evaluation	20
Action Plan	22
Appendix	27
Tenant Engagement Survey	28

Welcome

Message from Tenants

Welcome to our new Tenant Engagement Strategy! We are a group of tenants who live in Respond homes across the country. Since December 2021, we have been working as a Focus Group in partnership with Respond and Supporting Communities, with the aim of developing a new and exciting Tenant Engagement Strategy.

We are proud of this Strategy which has been designed with tenants at its core. The Strategy sets out what Respond hopes to achieve in partnership with tenants over the next three years through a range of involvement opportunities.

We encourage you to take up these opportunities to whatever level you choose, maybe by attending a local tenants' meeting, completing a survey, or giving your views on improving housing services.

By becoming more involved, we can help Respond shape the services they provide now and, in the years, ahead!



Don Bradley
from New Ross



Fran Devlin
from Ashbourne



Dolores Grady
from Athy



Olivia Roger
from Cork



Eleanor Mc Grath
from Waterford



Nina Joyce
from Cork

Message from Respond CEO

Respond is a listening and learning organisation and the people we want to listen to and learn from the most are our tenants and service users. I am delighted to be writing this introduction to Respond's Tenant Engagement Strategy, Together we are stronger, written by tenants with the support of our staff and the guidance of Supporting Communities. I especially want to acknowledge the tenants who make up our Tenant Forum, who gave much time and consideration to the drafting and design of this publication.

Respond aim to provide tenants with the stability of a lifetime home, support where needed and ultimately, peace of mind that you can live in a community that is being well managed. When we hand the keys for their new home to a tenant, that is the start of our journey together; a journey where both parties have an important voice. Tenant engagement is a relatively new area in Ireland and as an organisation with over 16,000 tenants, we feel strongly that we, along with our sectoral colleagues, have a responsibility to lead and develop new ways of working together.

This Strategy, in line with the new Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority (AHBRA) standards, will form the basis of how Respond and Respond tenants engage with each other. As the title says, Together We Are Stronger. Our Tenant Forum have also created a new 'Approved by Respond Tenants' stamp which you can see on the front cover and which I hope to see across many of our publications for tenants in the future. I would particularly urge you, as a tenant, to read pages 12-15 where your fellow tenants have outlined different ways for you to get involved

and the level of time and engagement required for each. Pick something that suits you – whether you have a few hours to give or want to make a regular commitment. Every tenant has a voice and we want to hear from you.

I would like to thank Don Bradley, Fran Devlin, Dolores Grady, Olivia Rogers, Eleanor McGrath and Nina Joyce of our Tenant Forum for their tremendous work in creating this Strategy and giving so freely of their time. They drafted it and provided us with feedback each step of the way. We are extremely grateful for your time and input. I would also like to thank the Housing team, led by Neil Bolton, for their work on this Strategy, I know how important this has been to them. I thank Supporting Communities for their guidance on the creation of the Strategy and our Advocacy and Communications team who have supported the drafting and design of this document. Finally, I thank our Board of Directors who have been, as they always are, unfailingly supportive of this endeavour.



What does it mean to have a Respond Home?

“

Peace of mind

”

“

Safe and comfortable

”

“

Financial stability

”

“

Having a home gives
you an opportunity to
move on with your life

”

“

This is my door!

”

- Quotes from the Tenant Engagement Forum, taken during some of the workshops held as part of the process of developing the strategy.

Tenant Engagement

What is Tenant Engagement?

Tenant engagement encourages tenants to work in partnership with Respond, knowing that they will be heard, and their feedback acted upon.

We want to support and empower tenants, asking them to engage with us in a two-way process to influence decisions on the services they receive.

Listening to and involving tenants will lead to improvement and positive change for tenants and communities in partnership with Respond.



Young tenants enjoying playground at Finnstown development.

How we developed our Tenant Engagement Strategy

Our Tenant Engagement Strategy was co-produced by tenants and Respond staff who came together to form a focus group. The focus group met online every two weeks for four months, discussing every element contained within this document including the three-year action plan. The process was facilitated by an independent organisation, Supporting Communities.

The process also included training for staff and tenants, the purpose of the training was to raise the profile of tenant engagement, how important it is for Respond, for tenants and the wider tenant body.

Engaging with tenants will provide Respond with rich benefits too:



Benefits of Tenant Engagement

Tenant Engagement is a two-way partnership where tenants will have the opportunity to share information and work together to improve services.

It will promote a culture of mutual respect, trust, and partnership for all involved.

There are many benefits to getting involved, both to tenants personally and to their local communities, for example:



How have you found the experience working with Respond to co-create this strategy?

“
For my part, being a team member of this engagement strategy has given me the confidence to use my voice for change. It has opened the Respond world to me. I really knew very little outside of my estate. Now I am starting to see and understand the bigger picture.
”

- Tenant member of the focus group

Tenant Survey

To gain more tenant insight, the focus group designed a 'tenant engagement survey' circulated to every Respond tenant in February 2022, the surveys were independently analysed by Supporting Communities, and presented to the focus group in April 2022.

The focus group wishes to express their sincere gratitude to every Respond tenant who took the time to complete the survey, the rich information provided has been embedded within this strategy and action plan.

431 responses to the survey were returned and these were from tenants across 168 estates. Most respondents showed that they were aware of the current opportunities for involvement offered by Respond. Options as to ways Respond could encourage more tenant engagement were given with 49% depicting relevant training being the most popular option.

In terms of areas that tenants could be involved the 3 most popular choices were:

#1 Neighbourhood Watch

#2 Supporting community activities

#3 Joining resident groups



431 Responses to the survey were returned



from **168** Different estates

Further survey responses can be found in the appendix on page 28.

Which estate and county do you live in?

431 responses received covering 168 estates. Counties with the most responses were as follows.

6%
Galway
27 responses

19%
Dublin
81 responses

6%
Tipperary
26 responses

11%
Cork
47 responses

8%
Waterford
36 responses

How you can get involved

There are lots of ways you can become involved with us in shaping our services to make a real difference to your home and community.

We understand that time is precious and sometimes we may not have a lot of it to spare. We have designed a 'Menu of Engagement' with elements which need less time than others depending on your interests and availability.

The table below gives an overview of the different levels of engagement on offer, all requiring different time commitments (depicted by clocks). You can choose the level that best suits you, training and support will also be provided.

1 Low Level Engagement

- Help shape the way we communicate – newsletters tenant related publications.
- Support us in developing new technologies.
- Provide your feedback through tenant surveys.
- Review our policies from the comfort of your armchair.

2 Mid Level Engagement

- Join a local resident group.
- Help plan or support local community activities.
- Participate in Environmental Enhancement Projects such as spring cleans, planting initiatives/community gardens, recycling projects.
- Consultation regarding planned upgrade schemes.
- Become involved in Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.
- Participate in Estate Walkabouts or estate forum meetings.

3 High Level Engagement

- Join Focus Groups to look at ways to improve service delivery.
- Join Area Tenant Panels.
- Become active member of Tenants Forum.
- Become a Respond Tenant Ambassador.
- Review of Repairs and Maintenance Performance.
- Scrutiny Panel.

4 Strategic Level

- Become a Board member or Board subcommittee member.

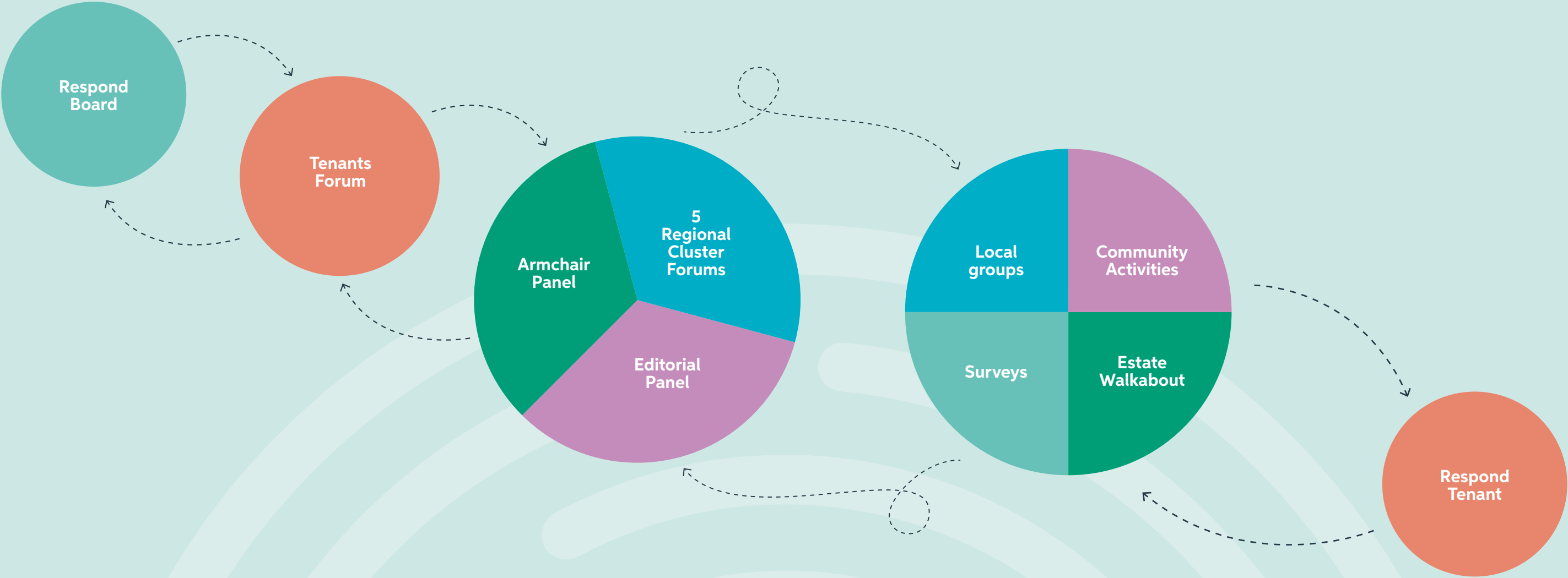
Options for Engagement

Opportunity	What it is	In person	Online	Hybrid	Time commitment
Tenants Forum	The Tenants' Forum acts as tenants' voice for Respond, with the purpose to improve service delivery for all tenants. The Tenants' Forum will review tenant related policies, procedures and publications and will be key to monitoring the implementation of the Tenant Engagement Strategy	✓	✓	✓	  
Regional Cluster Panel x5	Get involved in one of our 5 regional clusters. Tenants from South West, South East, Midlands, Dublin North East and West come together to review regional services and provide feedback to Respond on regional plans.	✓	✓	✓	  
Local Tenant Groups	Become a member of a local group for your estate/community to help improve your area. Your local Tenant Relations Officer (TRO) can help with set up and support.	✓			
Armchair Panel	If you are not interested in attending meetings but would still like to have a say, then being an armchair panelist is for you. From the comfort of your home, you can provide Respond with your thoughts and ideas on tenant related policies and publications, completing surveys, or providing feedback on other things that may from time to time arise.		✓		
Editorial Panel	Are you interested in helping to make our tenant newsletter better? You will have input in policies, procedures and publications, into content of the tenant newsletter, writing articles, making suggestions what is included and approving content.	✓	✓	✓	 
Estate walkabouts (where appropriate)	Have a say about the external areas of your estate. Join Respond staff on walking around the estate and identifying issues to be addressed.	✓			
Estate Activities	Would you like to work with Respond to organize local community activities? Coffee mornings / Neighbour day / Fundays	✓			 



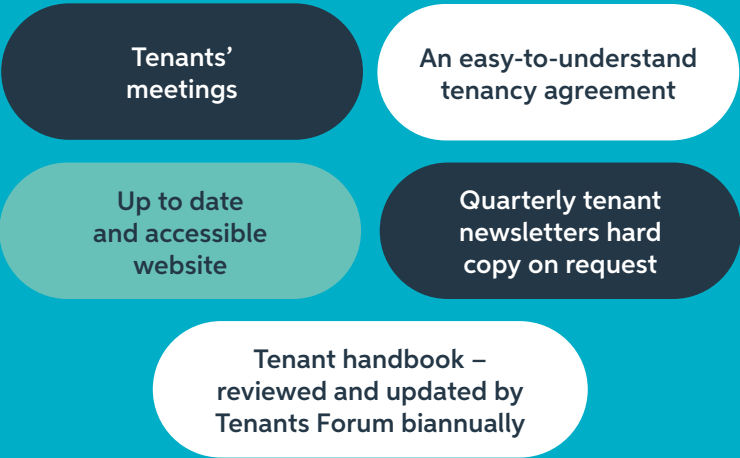
Petting zoo at a Family Fun Day organised by Respond's Tenant Relations Officers.

Opportunities for involvement

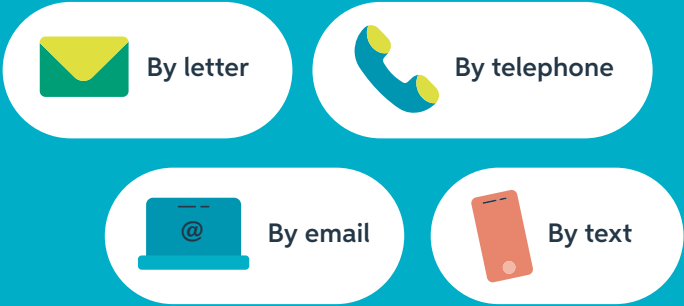


How will we keep you informed?

We will ensure that all information given to you will be easy to understand, up to date and available in a variety of formats and languages upon request.



Based on the key findings of the Tenant Engagement survey we aim to continue to communicate by your preferred methods:



Supporting Tenant Engagement

As part of our commitments to being a learning organisation, Respond is always seeking ways we can improve. Tenant engagement serves as a key cornerstone of our work, and this strategy is the foundation for what we hope to achieve over the coming years. The essence of this strategy has been co-creation and our commitment is that going into the future we will proactively engage with tenants to ensure their voice has an influence on the outcomes of our work.

We are dedicated to insuring that from across the country, every tenant is given the opportunity to be represented and heard. Opening up effective lines of communication between staff and tenants and through various media will allow us to hear the tenant voice and act accordingly.

It will also allow us to monitor and adapt to ensure that we are consistently evaluating and reviewing our work.

The funding of resources, be it specialised staff, training for tenants or specific initiatives, is a key element to the success of this strategy. Respond will ensure that adequate funding will be provided and regularly reviewed to ensure that identified needs are met.

In Respond, we believe that every interaction between staff and tenant is an opportunity to further our tenant engagement. Our staff will be trained and supported to further this idea and specialised staff will be put in place to ensure the goals of the action plan and strategy are fully met. This will empower both staff and tenants to break down existing barriers and further develop the relationship between Respond and tenants.

Equality for All

Respond is committed to encouraging equality in everything that we do.

We value involvement that reflects all our residents. We are committed to treating everyone fairly and equally, ensuring our services are accessible irrespective of:

- Gender
- Civil Status
- Family Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Race
- Religious belief
- Disability
- Age
- Membership of Traveller Community
- Housing assistance in the provision of accommodation

“The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 (the Acts’) prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods and services, accommodation, and education. The Acts’ cover the nine grounds of gender, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community. In addition, the ‘Acts’ prohibit discrimination in the provision of accommodation services against people who are in receipt of rent supplement, housing assistance, or social welfare payments.”

(Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission)

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation

We have created an Action Plan which sets out the steps we will take to put our Tenant Engagement Strategy into practice. This is a living document which we will review and monitor to make sure we are moving forward. Progress updates will be presented to the:

Tenants
Forum

Senior
Management
Team in Housing

Respond tenants
via website
and newsletters

Respond
Board

A specific working group will be set up to ensure the action plan is followed through. This working group will comprise of Respond staff and tenant forum members who will meet on a regular basis to review progress against the targets we have set.



Lots of fun being had by tenants at Charlestown's Family Fun Day.

Tenant Engagement
Action Plan

In order to progress our Tenant Engagement Strategy, Respond, in consultation with tenants, have created a Tenant Engagement Action Plan (TEAC) which we envisage will lead to meaningful and broad tenant engagement. This TEAC will focus on incremental progression and capacity building for tenants, staff and the organisation. The strategic aim is to establish a systematic means of ensuring tenants voice is reflected in how Respond delivers its services, and to ensure tenants have a say in the organisational decisions which affect them.

The following TEAC will focus initially on local tenant engagement at estate level and progress to more regional and national level over time. A key factor of this TEAC is to consistently identify opportunities where Respond can involve tenants and to ensure these are replicated nationally. This TEAC will be regularly reviewed by tenants and senior management within the housing team to ensure it is a living document and that we jointly learn as we progress. The plan includes 6 monthly review workshops which provide a forum to reflect on the work to date and the opportunity to continually improve the plan going forward.



Tenants enjoying a cup of tea and a chat at Andrew Meadows, Athy, Co. Kildare

Goal	Description	Output	Timeline
Estate Level Annual Meeting	Co-Facilitated by housing and tenant representatives, annual online estate annual meetings will be scheduled for all estates.	Giving the opportunity for tenants to discuss matters relating to their estate with managers and staff from Respond resulting in actionable steps to improve the service.	2022 - 2023
Estate Resident Group	Facilitation by Respond (Tenant Relations Officer) to (re)establish tenant groups on estates.	These residents groups could organise estate based events, access funding via the community chest, and invite or visit other estates.	Q3 2022 – Q3 2023
Performance Reporting to Tenants	Using the Tenant Newsletter to report on Respond’s performance twice annually.	Giving tenants a regular update on the performance of Respond and how services are delivered.	Dec 2022. June and Dec annually thereafter
Planned and Cyclical Maintenance Consultation	Asset Management and Housing management staff consultation with tenants at estate level.	Giving tenants decision making opportunities to influence planned and cyclical works taking place on their estate and in their homes.	Q4 2022
Regional Tenant Forums	Establish 5 regional forums.	These forums can meet quarterly with the regional coordinator and/or other senior management of Respond to discuss matters arising in their area and to facilitate the flow of ideas and suggestions from representatives of the broader Tenant Group. These forums can also facilitate estate visits by tenants and Respond management to carry our walkabouts.	Q4 2022
Editorial Panel	Establish a small group who will work with Respond staff to produce the Tenant Newsletter.	Greater tenant influence in the newsletter leading to more relevant articles, and more opportunities for tenants views to be heard.	Q4 2022
Review	6 months review of Tenant Engagement Strategy and Action Plan.	Opportunity for management and tenants to discuss the progress to date and to reassess priorities for the coming 6 months.	Q1 2023

Goal	Description	Output	Timeline
Training and Capacity Building	Provision of training for tenants who wish to develop their capacity to influence.	Training in areas such as collaborative decision making, negotiation, policy, etc. (Exact training to be decided by tenants). This will increase capacity and the ability to be involved at a more strategic level.	Q2 2023
Policy Review Panel	Establish a panel of representatives from each of the Regional Tenant Groups.	Ensuring the tenant voice is reflected in new and reviewed policies which influence the services provided by Respond.	Q2 2023
Estate Services Review	As a once off review, establish a group of tenants to review our overall approach to estate services.	In line with the service redesign of estate management services, consultation with tenants will be key to ensure their experience can shape the delivery of services.	Q3 2023
Annual Tenant Engagement Conference	Hosting the first national online tenant conference.	Tenant Engagement Conference: Agenda and speakers to be decided by tenants. Potential to host presenters from other AHBs or from abroad.	Q3 2023
Review	6 months review of Tenant Engagement Strategy and Action Plan.	Opportunity for management and tenants to discuss the progress to date and to reassess priorities for the coming 6 months.	Q3 2023
Consider establishment of a scrutiny panel to consider relevant tenant matters and possible roles on a Board sub committee	Agree approach with National Tenants Form on the preferred model and how this might be achieved.	Agree a structure/ forum for encouragement and complete relevant capacity training in advance.	Q1 – Q4 2024



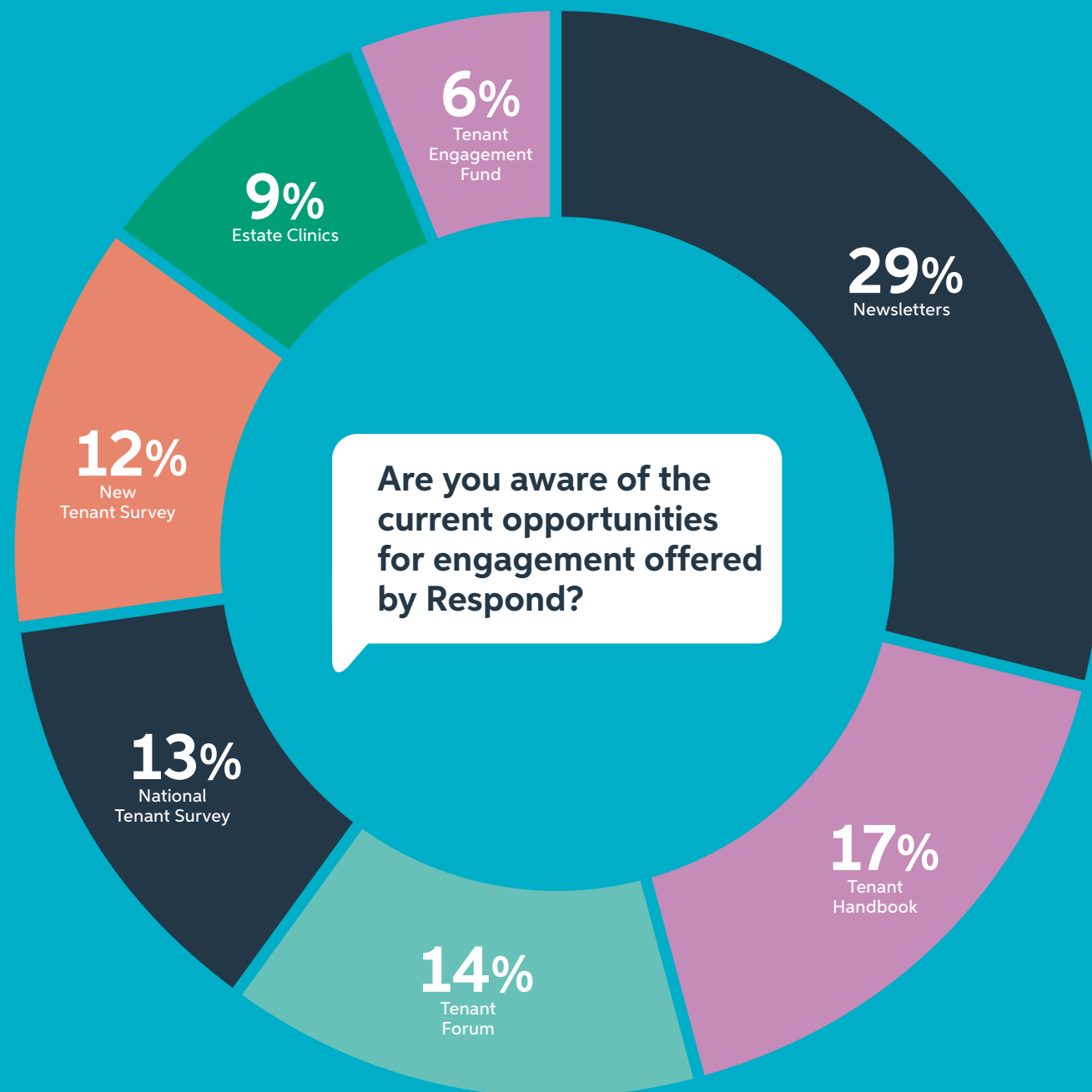
Young tenants enjoying playground at Finnstown development.



Tenant getting creative in a workshop at Andrew Meadows, Athy, Co. Kildare.

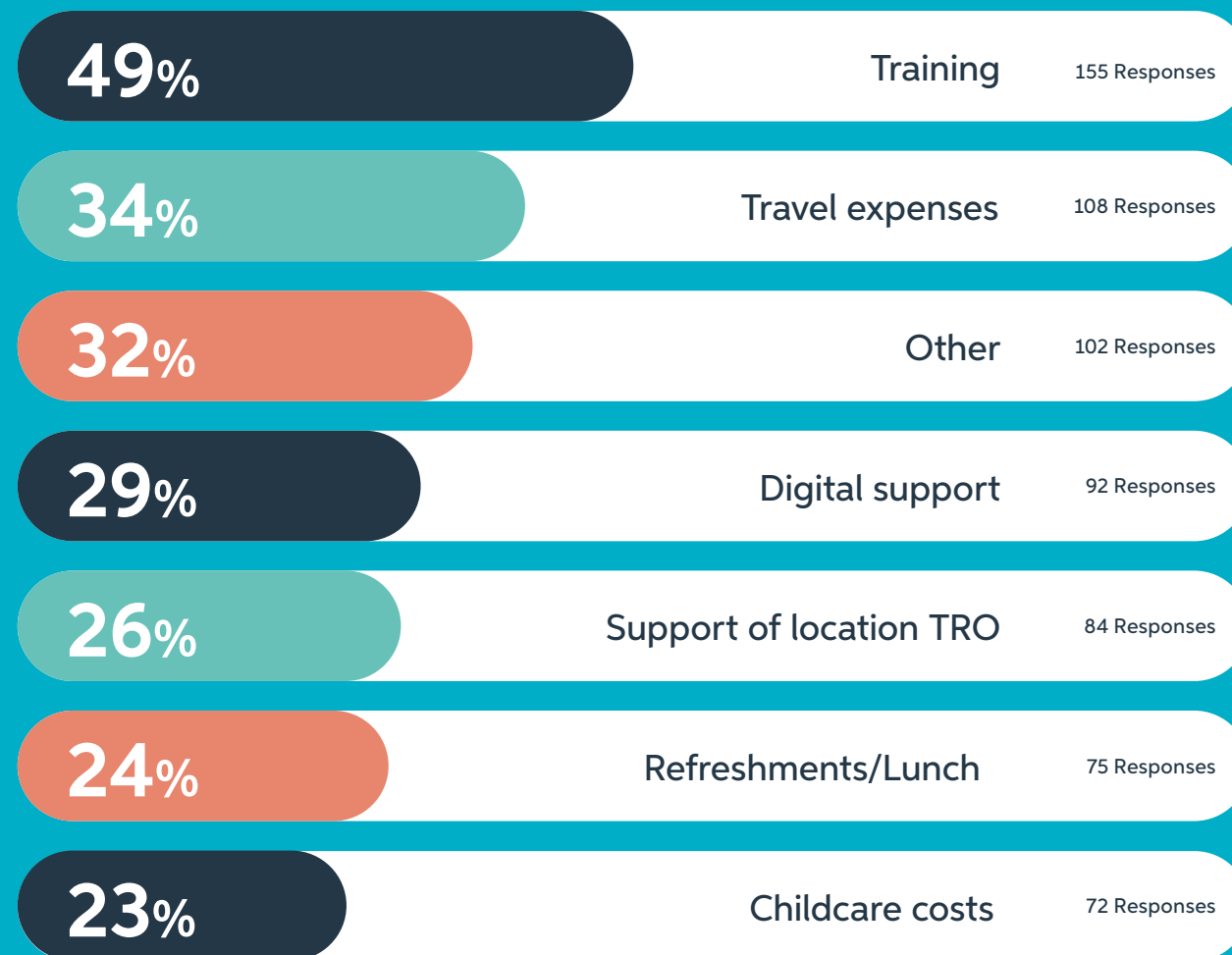
Appendix

The tables that follow show further results from our tenant survey.



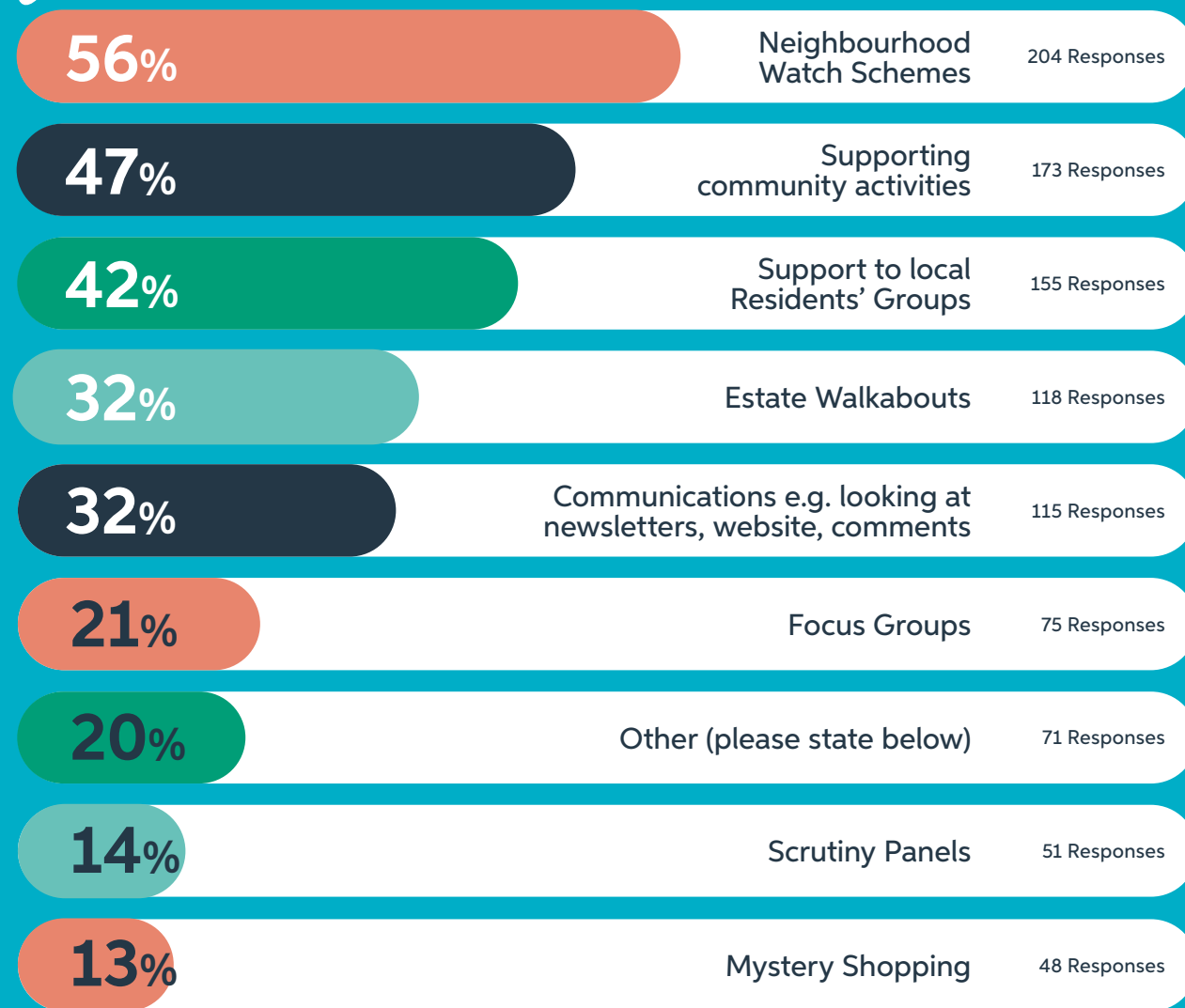
What ideas could Respond look at to encourage you to get involved?

Respondents were given some options as to ways Respond could encourage more tenant engagement.



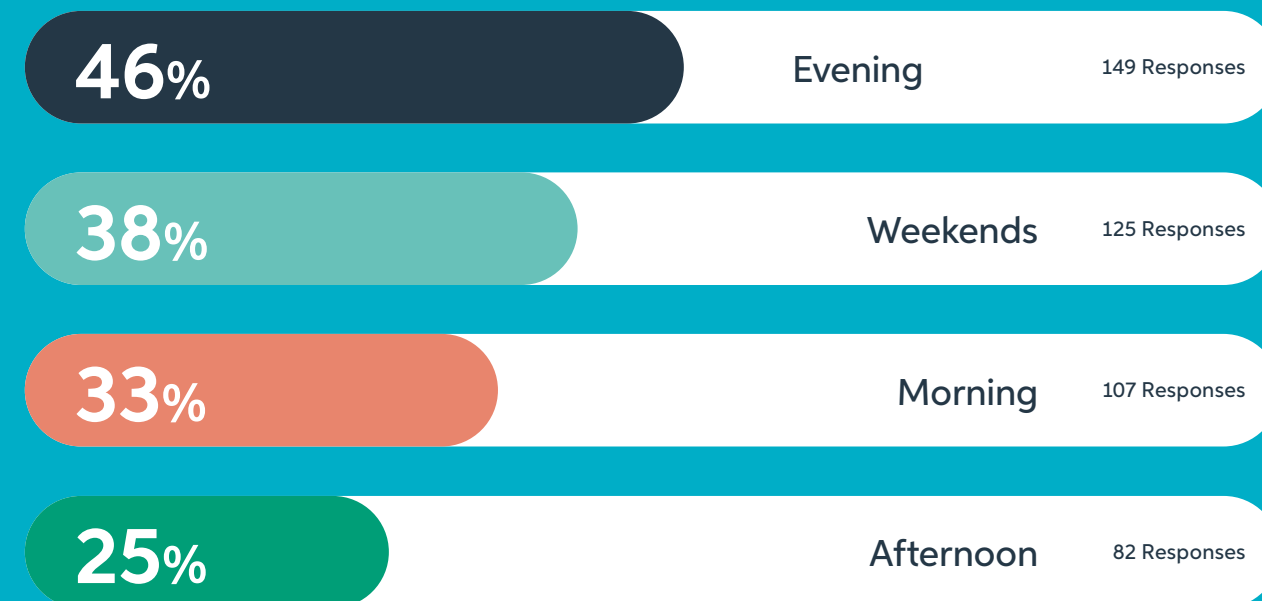
319 answered

Are there any other ways that Respond could use to involve tenants?

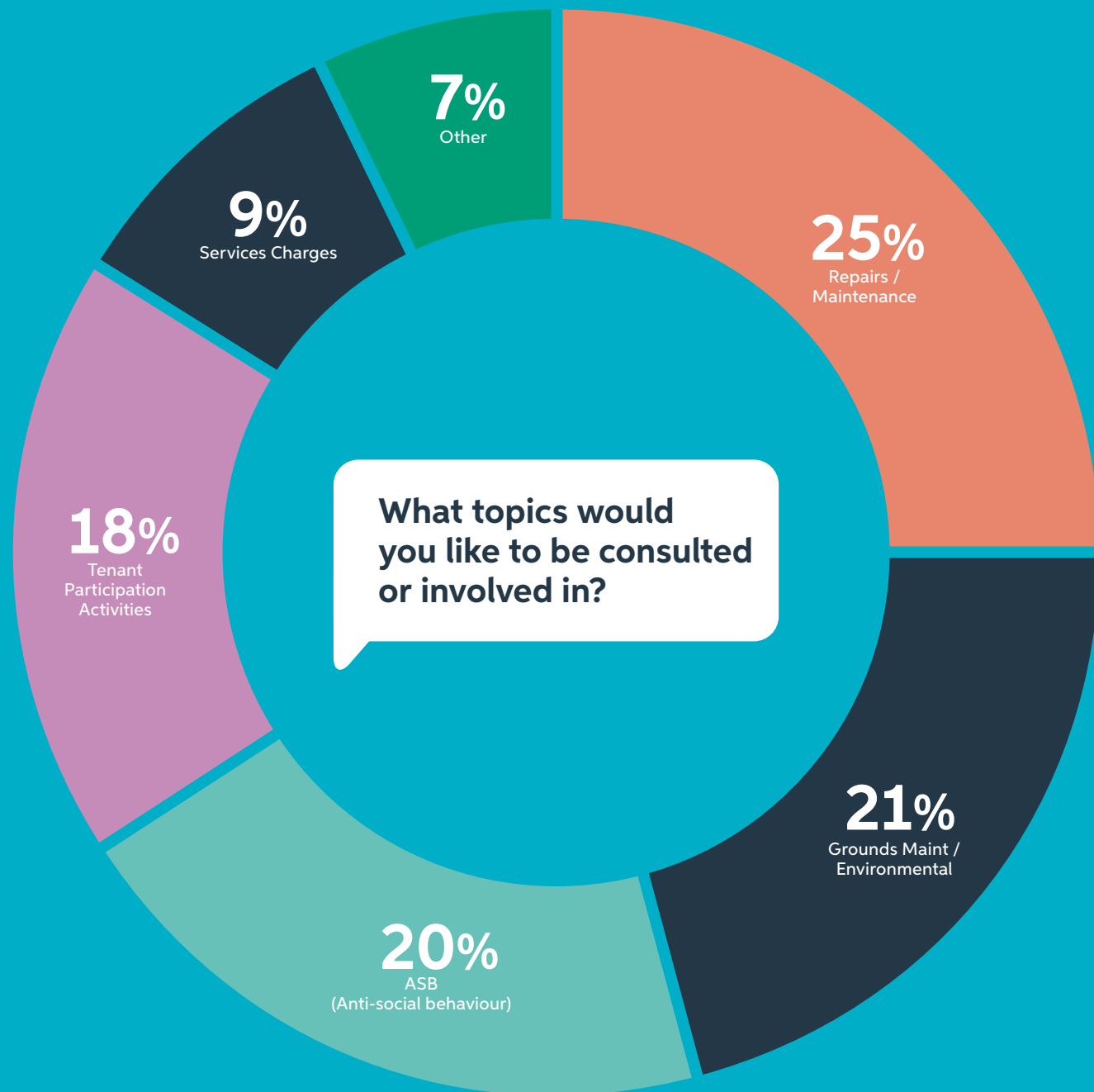


365 answered

When is most suitable for you to be involved?

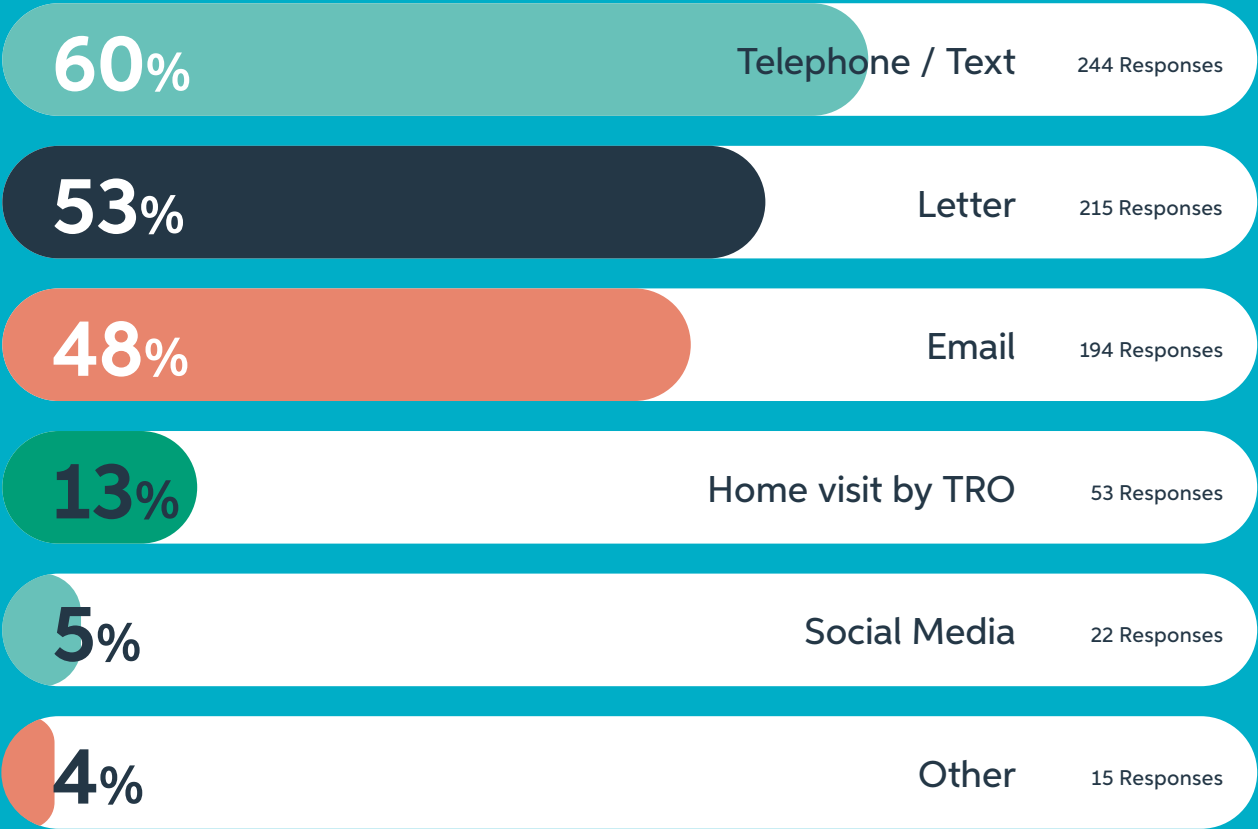


325 answered



Tenants enjoying the petting zoo at a Family Fun Day organised by Tenant Relations Officers.

How would you like Respond to communicate with you?



405 answered

Most popular methods of communication are telephone/text, letter, and email. A suggestion given in 'Other' was setting up WhatsApp groups.

The Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority (AHBRA) is an independent authority which was set up in February 2021.

The purpose of AHBRA is to regulate Approved Housing Bodies such as Respond, to ensure effective governance, management and performance and falls under the legal framework of the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019.

The regulatory role of AHBRA came into effect in 2022 and includes the establishment of:

- Register of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs).
- Standards for AHBs.
- Encouraging and supporting good governance.
- Proper administration and management of AHBs.

Respond, as an Approved Housing Body, strives to uphold the standards of governance and management set out by AHBRA.

Tenancy Management forms part of current standards for AHBs. Within this, Tenant Engagement regarding the delivery of tenant services, is highlighted as a key focus for all AHBs who should demonstrate:

- They actively seek feedback from tenants and provide regular opportunities for tenants to engage with the AHB on service provision.
- Consult with tenants when developing policies that impact on any aspect of tenant services.
- Communicate clearly with tenants on how they can influence current and future service delivery.
- Consult with tenants on approaches for improving the communities they live in.

Respond has embraced this approach and indeed taken further steps, evident in the partnership with their tenants to co-create a new Tenancy Engagement Strategy and Action Plan.



Tenants enjoying the petting zoo at a Family Fun Day organised by Tenant Relations Officers.

Notes

Notes





respond

building homes,
improving lives

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