

The Hyelm Group

Accountability Statement and Stakeholder Analysis

Introduction

The Hyelm Group is committed to open and accountable ways of working, following a stakeholder model of accountability. In doing so, we follow the principles and practice of equal opportunities in all areas.

We aim to give each group of stakeholders the possibility of involvement in our decision making in a way that meets their needs and expectations. We respond openly and positively to comments and complaints about our accountability, and welcome suggestions for improvement.

This statement sets out the main ways in which we seek to deliver accountability across all our areas of activity and governance. It is reviewed on an annual basis and is aimed at our residents, partner organisations, and other stakeholders.

Promoting Accountability

We actively promote Hyelm and its accountability in a wide and positive way. It is our intention not only to be accountable, but to be widely seen as accountable.

- We have and implement strategies for the active promotion of our accountability to all of our stakeholders, partners and interested parties.
- We publish and distribute this statement widely, which describe the range of organisations and individuals to which and whom we are accountable and how we seek to fulfil our responsibilities to them.
- We report widely, in our published outputs and in other media, on progress made in achieving and sustaining accountability, and on performance. There is a brief annual statement on accountability in our annual report which also contains performance information.

Openness

Openness is the essential underpinning of our accountability. We aim to act in an open and accountable way in relation to our residents, local communities, local authorities and other interested parties.

- **General**
 - We have made a public commitment to openness, and accept a general obligation to account for our actions and performance in an open manner.
 - Information about Hyelm, its work, its Board and employees is available on request, unless there are good reasons of confidentiality or practicality why not.

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Openness (*Continued*)

o **Openness About Governance**

- o In our published annual report, we make a statement about our compliance with the National Housing Federation's code of governance, and make full supporting information available on request.
- o We publish a separate annual report of the organisation's structure, activities and performance, as set out in the Code of Governance; we circulate this to our key partners, and make it available on request to others.
- o We make available other key documents on request, including those policies and reports concerning:
 - (1) Governance and accountability.
 - (2) Standing orders and terms of reference.
 - (3) Equal opportunities.
 - (4) Other areas of public interest.

o **Openness for the Board**

- o We regularly consider how to make available and accessible the proceedings and activities of the organisation's Board and committees. At present, and subject to previous notice, we undertake to:
 - (1) Allow observers to attend non-confidential parts of our Board meetings.
 - (2) Make non-confidential Board papers and minutes available at our offices for inspection.
 - (3) Maintain a public register of the interests and declarations of Board members, staff and involved residents.

o **Making other Information Available**

- o In our bulletins to residents, we publish information about our performance against key indicators, our progress in reviewing and reshaping services, and how we have taken residents' views into account.
- o We make available other key documents and policies on request, including (but not exclusively) those policies concerning:
 - (1) Access to information.
 - (2) Access to our housing.
 - (3) Rent levels.
 - (4) Complaints and compensation.
 - (5) Performance.
- o We comply with outside requests for information wherever practicable. If it will be expensive or time consuming to provide particular information, we will explain this, and try to reach a satisfactory arrangement.

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Openness *(Continued)*

o **Review of Openness**

We review the openness of the organisation's arrangements on a regular basis and take account of further developments of good practice.

Our Board and its Members

Our Board is at the centre of our governance structures, and is also the focus of the web of accountability. The Board ensures a spirit of accountability throughout the organisation, and is responsible for ensuring a proper balance of accountability to each group of stakeholders.

o We publish:

- (1) A clear and widely distributed statement about how our Board and committee members are elected or co-opted.
- (2) A statement of the responsibilities of our Board members. Newly elected Board members are asked to sign and return a copy of this to indicate their understanding and acceptance.

- o We review annually, and publish in advance of the Annual General Meeting, our statement of the required qualities, skills and experience of Board members.
- o The majority of our Board members are openly elected by our shareholders at our Annual General Meeting.

The Role of Residents in Governance

Hyelm is accountable to a wide range of groups, and must be accountable in different ways to residents, potential residents, local authorities and other community interests. But the involvement of residents is a main focus of our accountability. We aim to have in place a comprehensive framework of measures which meets the needs of our residents, of which involvement at Board level is one part.

o **The Framework**

- o We encourage the involvement of all residents, and aim to have a framework which gives opportunities for any resident to become involved at a level which meets their needs and those of the organisation.

o **The Board**

- o We currently have a board of between 8 and 12 members, and welcome applications from residents and ex-residents to join the Board.
- o We ensure that the support and training needs of resident Board members, like all Board members, are regularly reviewed and met. We also support work to prepare potential future Board members for their role.

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Our Shareholders/Members

Hyelm has a shareholding Membership, which elects the Board annually. We regard our shareholders as an important group of stakeholders, and seek to have a balanced shareholding membership.

- We review regularly the purpose and role of shareholders in the organisation's governance, and our policy for admission to shareholding membership. We publish our Membership policy statement.
- Based on the published policy, we choose shareholding members in a way which realistically serves their role in governance, and contributes to our long-term constitutional stability.
- We make clear our expectations of shareholders, and their role in our governance, in a statement to new shareholders. They are asked to sign and return a copy, to indicate their understanding and acceptance.

Hyelm provides its shareholders and, indeed, all of its stakeholders with information on its work through its Annual Report.

Additional information, if required, is circulated through the year in a number of ways, including bulletins and newsletters.

Accountability for Service Delivery

There is more to stakeholder accountability than open governance structures, important though these are. Service providers, such as Hyelm, need a comprehensive package of measures to ensure their accountability for services provided.

- **Publication of Policies and Performance Information**
 - We publish our policies for involving our residents in the decisions that affect their lives, and keeping them informed, and ensuring that we are aware of their views. We also publish:
 - (1) An annual performance report for residents, which includes publication of performance results, whether good or bad, comparison with others, resident views, plans for improvement and targets.
 - (2) A handbook for residents.
 - (3) As previously referred to, bulletins with regular performance reports.
 - (4) The publication of explicit service standards and comparisons to enable residents to judge value for money.
 - (5) Complaints and compensation procedures for residents and others.

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Accountability for Service Delivery *(Continued)*

- **Involved Residents**
 - We encourage and provide some financial support for residents' committees, associations and other groupings. We consult with all recognised residents' groups on our policies and operational matters, and seek to respond to views expressed.
 - Our staffing and committee structures are designed to ensure effective delegation to the local level, so that appropriate decisions are made close to those affected by them.
 - We encourage and support any residents' committees to consider and progress the options for active resident involvement in, or control over, the management of the homes that they occupy.
- **Surveys and Review**
 - We regularly survey resident satisfaction to obtain up-to-date information on residents' views. We use these to inform our plans for improvement and cost reduction.

Local Authorities

Hyelm has a history of successful partnerships with local authorities. These depend upon good working relationships, shared comparison and good practice, and on mutual recognition of the responsibilities of each party.

In this sense, the accountability is two way. But in terms of their strategic enabling role, local authorities have legitimate expectations of independent social landlords working in their area.

We take a proactive approach to this area of accountability, and aim to develop an integrated and comprehensive approach to working with our local authority partners.

- **Agreements**
 - We aim to enter into agreements, where appropriate, with all the local authorities where we have projects.
- **Provision of Information**
 - We provide all the information currently submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency on annual returns to all our local authority partners. We will share performance comparisons and good practice with them.
 - On a confidential basis, we make available regulatory reports from the Homes and Communities Agency to key local authority partners.
- **Local Authority Role in our Governance**
 - We aim to have at least one Board member with local authority experience or expertise.

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The Communities that we Serve

Our activities have a major impact on our local communities and neighbourhoods. It is also local communities who contain that important (but often ignored) stakeholder group, the potential residents of the organisation.

We aim to work closely with local communities, so as to assess the impact of our work, and ensure that we are open to local influences on our decision-making.

We value, and seek to reflect, the diversity of the communities we serve. We aim to work with all sections of the community in line with our commitment to equal opportunities.

As appropriate:

- We seek accurately to identify the communities affected by our activities, and the ways in which consultation and partnership mechanisms with them can be made effective. These include working jointly with local authorities to consult the wider community.
- We use a broad range of involvement and participation techniques to ensure that the community has been consulted and involved on both the formulation and implementation of proposals, and the review of existing policies.
- We assess and take regular account of the impact of our work on local communities.
- We work actively with other social landlords owning or managing housing in the same community areas.

Our Other Stakeholders

The complexity of our work means that a great number of other organisations have a legitimate, or even statutory, interest in our activities. Some may be key partners in service delivery. Others simply have activities that overlap, or are affected by, the work of the organisation. In different ways, many of these can properly be regarded as stakeholders. We aim to ensure an appropriate accountability to this wide range of stakeholders, based on positive and open relationships.

○ **Our Partners**

- We identify, and review regularly, the full range of our partner organisations, and others with a legitimate interest in our work. These may include statutory enablers, regional offices of government, health authorities and trusts, training and enterprise councils, chambers of commerce, private sector funders and partners and voluntary sector organisations.
- After consultation, we aim to make clear to each stakeholder or group of stakeholders what accountability it can legitimately expect from the organisation.

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Our Other Stakeholders *(Continued)*

- We aim to maintain constructive and appropriate relationships with the full range of stakeholder organisations, making provision for reciprocal accountability arrangements, and the sharing of performance information where appropriate.
- We regularly consult our stakeholders, so as to open up our policies, procedures and future direction to wider discussion and comment, as part of our programme of reviews.
- We aim to keep our contractors, consultants and major suppliers informed about our work.
- **Our Regulators**
 - We have a formal accountability to the Homes and Communities Agency and our other statutory regulators. We aim to have an open and positive relationship with our regulators, and to work with them to promote best practice and high standards.
 - We will comply, as a minimum, with the Homes and Communities Agency's regulatory requirements for accountability.
- **Our Funders**
 - We are accountable to our funders for loans received, primarily through the mechanisms set out in loan agreements and other formal documentation. As with our regulators, we aim to go beyond this minimum, and maintain positive and open relationships.

Audit, Review and Monitoring

Without regular review and monitoring, no policy can hope to be sustainable. As an organisation with a commitment to accountability, we will keep the whole area under regular review.

- We annually consider at the Board a specific report on the organisation's accountability to different stakeholder groups over the past year.
- We carry out a regular review of our accountability, using outside assistance as required, to identify and audit the strengths and weaknesses of our approach to accountability.
- We welcome comments from our stakeholders on ways we can improve our accountability, or complaints about ways in which we may not have achieved our goals.
- We respond positively to comments and complaints, and seek to use them to improve our performance. Our Complaints procedure should be used in this regard.
- We actively investigate new techniques and mechanisms to enhance accountability to each stakeholder group.

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Stakeholder Analysis

Our key stakeholders, and their connections with our organisation, have been identified as follows:

- **Residents**

Accommodation, facilities and services are provided to a total of 125 residents. Residents are interested in ensuring that our standards remain high and that our rent and other charges are kept at affordable levels.
- **Membership**

Members are entitled to receive annual reports and to attend and vote at annual general meetings. They are interested in ensuring that the ethos of our organisation is maintained.
- **Board**

The voting Board currently comprises a Chair, Vice-chair, Chief Executive and a further 6 Non-executive Directors. Collectively, the Board is responsible for and is interested in ensuring that appropriate strategic objectives and policies are put into place and that the performance of the organisation is monitored.
- **Employees**

We directly employ a total of 7 staff. Lead by the Chief Executive, they are responsible for implementing the strategic, policy and other decisions of the Board and are interested in personal career development.
- **Major Contractors**

Contractors have been appointed to provide cleaning at our scheme.
- **Consultants and Professional Advisors**

Consultants and advisors have been appointed in relation to internal and external audit work, legal advice, treasury management and property development issues. Staff numbers vary.
- **Homes and Communities Agency**

The Homes and Communities Agency act as Chief Regulator and funder of The Group. It is responsible for and are interested in ensuring that all grants that they allocate are managed in an effective and competent way and to the highest standards of probity.
- **Other Regulators**

The Charity Commissioners and Companies House are responsible for and are interested in ensuring that we operate within the legal and regulatory frameworks that apply to charities and companies.

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Stakeholder Analysis *(Continued)*

- **Local Authorities**

The local authorities, within whose geographical areas we operate, are interested in ensuring that, as a housing association, we assist them in achieving their local housing strategies.

- **Private Funders**

The private institutions that lend money to us are interested in ensuring that their investments are not put at risk due to ineffective management.

- **Smaller Contractors and Suppliers**

The smaller contractors and suppliers that we do business with are interested in our general performance, progress and plans and our future business intentions with them.

- **Local Community**

Members of the local community have an interest in our general performance and in how our future plans may affect them.