

Abbeyfield National Residents' Panel

Minutes 01/09/2026

Present:	Resident Engagement
SP (SP)	Abbeyfield Resident - Esk Moors Lodge, Whitby
AK (AK)	Abbeyfield Resident - Esk Moors Lodge, Whitby
BS (BST)	Abbeyfield Resident – Ivy House - Somerset
AO (AO)	Abbeyfield Resident - Esk Moors Lodge, Whitby
JG (JG)	Abbeyfield Resident - High Lane, Stockport
SF (SF)	Abbeyfield Resident - Girton Green, Cambridge
RS (RS)	Abbeyfield Resident – Girton Green, Cambridge
PS (PS)	Abbeyfield Resident – Isle of Wight
Petra Taylor (PT)	Head of Governance and Company Secretary - Abbeyfield
Meg Broom (MB)	Head of Customer Relations - Abbeyfield
Elizabeth Cottam (EC)	Senior Digital Officer - Abbeyfield
Justin O'Brien (JO'B)	Resident Engagement Manager - Abbeyfield
Apologies:	
CH (CH)	Abbeyfield Resident - Abbeyfield House, Garstang
MN (MN)	Abbeyfield Resident – Abbeyfield House - Ulverston
MB (MB)	Abbeyfield Resident – The Old Vicarage, Somerset
PB (PB)	Abbeyfield Resident - Carnarvon House, Nottinghamshire
RG (RG)	Abbeyfield Resident - Salisbury
AE (AE)	Abbeyfield Resident – Downing House, Manchester

	ITEM
1.	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies: All welcomed and apologies recorded as above
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the meeting held on 4 August 2026 were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record.
3.	Action Log: The log contains 4 open actions and 7 actions in progress. There was a discussion about action Ref 20. I was clarified that residents need to understand what to do in the event of a fire out of hours. I was recognised different homes have different processes. It was agreed to invite a representee from H&s to attend to discuss and clarify.

4.	Roger Less Roger Lees did not attend. This item did not take place.
5.	Meg Broom – Head of Customer Relations Meg explained that full rent breakdowns had not been included in this year's rent packs because the letters were considered to contain the key information about increases. Producing individual breakdowns involved additional work. They remained available on request and were supplied to local authorities for residents receiving Housing Benefit. Some managers had provided breakdowns in advance, creating an inconsistent experience. The Panel asked for full breakdowns to be provided routinely. Knowing the overall increase did not explain which individual costs had changed or why. Residents wanted to compare items such as electricity and other service costs between years and understand what they were paying for. They regarded this as an important part of transparency and being treated as informed customers, rather than an optional extra. One example highlighted the frustration of seeking information from Abbeyfield and eventually obtaining it from a resident's family member instead. Meg acknowledged that the discussion demonstrated a clear need for full breakdowns. She committed to working with Finance to include them in next year's rent packs, rather than relying on individual requests. Rent meetings and accessible information Meg described the intended annual process: regional managers discuss residents' priorities in September before budgets are set, then return around late January or February to explain the agreed charges and provide written rent packs. Residents questioned whether this was happening consistently. Some did not recall a September discussion; others reported missed meetings, short notice or papers supplied less than a day beforehand. The Panel identified difficulties with the way complex financial information was presented and suggested practical improvements. Speaking too quickly, failing to speak clearly or audibly, and handing out papers during meetings made it difficult to follow the explanation or ask informed questions. Residents asked for adequate advance information, clear written explanations of the main cost changes, simple charts where useful, and better presentation and meeting management. Meg agreed to check that rent packs included explanations of the main changes and to pass the feedback promptly to the relevant teams. She said she would cascade it that afternoon because September meetings were due to begin within days. A historic example at Ivy House also prompted a request to ensure staff

understand rent increase notice requirements. Meg acknowledged Abbeyfield's responsibility and agreed to check staff awareness.

Girton Green charges

Residents questioned how costs were apportioned between leaseholders and renters at Girton Green and whether the information available allowed them to assess fairness. A formal complaint was already in progress. Meg explained that the charging arrangements differed between tenures. Residents challenged the initial explanation about reserve fund contributions, and Meg clarified that renters did not pay into the sinking fund, although both groups contributed to property upkeep through different charges.

The discussion did not resolve the question of apportionment. It was recognised as a site specific matter requiring separate follow-up.

Ivy House Housing Benefit and communication

The Panel raised unresolved concerns at Ivy House following a change from an initially notified 10 per cent increase to 6 per cent. Residents were uncertain whether the revised figures had been reflected in Housing Benefit calculations and their accounts. They described repeated enquiries, inconsistent messages from Abbeyfield and Somerset Council, and frustration at still lacking clarity in September. The emphasis was on resolving accounts and communicating clearly, rather than revisiting the history of the problem.

Meg reported that a council system upgrade had delayed award information. Abbeyfield had been pursuing the council, and the Customer Accounts team was now working through the accounts, making adjustments and writing to residents as information became available. The Panel stressed that this did not address the lack of communication during the delay. Meg agreed to check whether the planned letters had been sent and, if not, why.

Marketing and resident stories

Elizabeth Cottam joined the discussion to seek residents' views on why they chose Abbeyfield, what information helped them decide, and which aspects of daily life would be useful to prospective residents. She invited volunteers to contribute testimonials, blogs or videos reflecting their own experiences.

Residents welcomed the opportunity to contribute to marketing and offered ideas drawn from their experience of living at Abbeyfield. They also questioned the visibility and consistency of local marketing, including concerns about vacant apartments at Girton Green and missed opportunities to promote services locally. Meg explained that Abbeyfield used social media and worked with managers to promote events, but its resources were more limited than those of large

	commercial providers. Justin encouraged the discussion to consider the wider organisation as well as individual sites. Residents felt that the website was too text heavy and did not adequately convey the lively communities residents described. More photographs, resident stories and personal accounts could help prospective residents understand daily life. Residents also highlighted Abbeyfield's charitable status, companionship and community as reasons for choosing it, and suggested that these strengths should be more visible. Residents explained that their challenge reflected a wish to see Abbeyfield improve because they valued living there. Suggestions included practical guidance for managers on local marketing, inviting local press to significant birthdays or anniversaries, developing community partnerships, using shared spaces to welcome local groups, and considering retirement shows. Residents gave positive examples of resident organised coffee mornings, local groups using facilities and fundraising events supported by managers. They also described uneven support between services and questioned whether managers had the budget and confidence to undertake this work. Meg confirmed that services had modest local marketing budgets. Elizabeth explained that each house had received a tailored community engagement pack that year, covering possible partnerships and local events. Residents suggested checking the use of these packs through service audits. Meg agreed that the team needed to consider how managers could be supported to put ideas into practice. Elizabeth also described the website's new events section and promotion through social media and Google events, which were generating registrations and enquiries. The Panel highlighted families, including those of former residents, as potential advocates who could help raise awareness locally. A regular family newsletter and greater attention to families in community engagement guidance were suggested. These were ideas for consideration; no specific implementation was agreed. Several residents agreed to be contacted about sharing their stories. Justin agreed to pass their contact details to Elizabeth. He also said he would contact Elizabeth and Darren about the website feedback and how residents could contribute to reviewing the design. Meg confirmed that the comments would be passed to the relevant people.
6.	Care Survey - Update Justin had shared a brief summary that afternoon and had prepared a more detailed report and draft action plan. Given the time available, the Panel agreed to defer the substantive discussion to October. Justin will circulate the report and draft action plan for that meeting.

7.	Policy Review (Standing Item) review of current process Justin sought feedback on the process used for the first three policies: circulating the policy, a summary and a set of questions. The Panel indicated that this approach was working and could continue. Residents asked what happened to their comments, particularly critical feedback on the Repairs Policy, and whether other members had raised similar concerns. Residents explained that without feedback on the outcome, it was difficult to see whether their contributions had made a difference, which could discourage participation. Feedback after each policy was preferred so residents could see the effect of their involvement. Justin explained that the Panel and Senior Leadership Team reviewed policies at the same stage. Their feedback was passed to the policy owner for consideration and amendments before Executive Team approval. He referred to the safeguarding policy owner's offer to explain the changes made following feedback. Justin accepted the need to make residents' influence visible and agreed to consider feedback after each completed policy, with regular recaps as a possible approach. The precise format was not finalised.
8.	Forward Plan The October meeting was expected to include Board member David Carr, the deferred care survey report and draft action plan, and a progress update on "You said, we will" for housing and care.
9.	Any Other Business Justin noted that Jonathan Earnshaw, Complaints Manager, had shared his quarterly complaints report. The Panel agreed that he should be invited to the October meeting to provide an update. The Panel requested a future discussion about the quantity, quality and consistency of communication with residents, including information about changes, actions and recurring issues such as food. A suggestion box was offered as one possible way to gather views, alongside a question about how suggestions would be monitored and followed up. Justin agreed that communication would be revisited. Residents reported that Ivy House did not have structured monthly resident meetings, describing informal coffee gatherings instead. Gaps of several months between meetings were also reported at Newport. The Panel asked whether this was picked up through audits and support for managers. Justin confirmed that resident meetings should be taking place and said the issue was being considered through monitoring. At Girton Green, residents explained that a resident

	committee provided a more practical route for raising issues given the size of the service. No new arrangements were agreed during the meeting.
10.	Next Meeting: Tuesday October 6 at 2pm on Teams