

Abbeyfield National Residents' Panel

Minutes 07/04/2026

Present:	Resident Engagement
SP (SP)	Abbeyfield Resident - Esk Moors Lodge, Whitby
BS (BST)	Abbeyfield Resident – Ivy House - Somerset
AK (AK)	Abbeyfield Resident - Esk Moors Lodge, Whitby
CH (CH)	Abbeyfield Resident - Abbeyfield House, Garstang
BS (BSA)	Abbeyfield Resident - Privett Farm House, Gosport
JG (JG)	Abbeyfield Resident - High Lane, Stockport
PH (PH)	Abbeyfield Resident - Poplar Lodge, Isle of Wight
RG (RG)	Abbeyfield Resident - Salisbury
SF (SF)	Abbeyfield Resident - Girton Green, Cambridge
Marc Marrero (MM)	Abbeyfield Living Society Board Member
Justin O'Brien (JO'B)	Resident Engagement Manager - Abbeyfield
Apologies:	
AE (AE)	Abbeyfield Resident – Downing House, Manchester
MB (MB)	Abbeyfield Resident – The Old Vicarage, Somerset
MN (MN)	Abbeyfield Resident – Abbeyfield House - Ulverston
AO (AO)	Abbeyfield Resident - Esk Moors Lodge, Whitby
PB (PB)	Abbeyfield Resident - Carnarvon House, Nottinghamshire

	ITEM
1.	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies: The meeting opened with introductions from attendees, including Marc Marrero Board member. Apologies received from: AE MB MN
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record.
3.	Action Log: The Panel reviewed the updated Action Log, which replaces the previous “Matters Arising.”

	Update: • 20 actions currently recorded • Majority completed, with remaining actions open or in progress Panel feedback: • The new format was welcomed as: ◦ Clearer and easier to follow ◦ Providing improved visibility of progress ◦ Supporting better tracking of outcomes • It was noted that many actions currently sit with the Resident Engagement Manager, reflecting coordination rather than sole responsibility. Discussion: • Clarification was provided on previously shared documents: ◦ Senior Leadership Team (SLT) list ◦ Key Contacts document • Some confusion between the two was acknowledged, and it was suggested that future versions could be simplified or combined.
4.	Marc Marrero (Board Member) Marc Marrero introduced himself and outlined the purpose of attending: Purpose: • To hear directly from residents • To strengthen links between the Panel and the Board • To ensure Board discussions are informed by resident experience Questions from Panel Members and Responses Board visibility and engagement Panel members asked: • How often Board members visit services • How connected the Board is to day-to-day resident experience Response: • Board members are expected to visit at least two services per year • Marc confirmed he had visited four services in the previous year and intends to increase this Future perspective – would Board members choose Abbeyfield? Panel members asked: • Whether Marc would consider living in an Abbeyfield service Response: • Some services would be places he would consider living • Others would require improvement, particularly in: ◦ Décor ◦ Maintenance ◦ Overall environment

Understanding challenges and priorities

Panel members asked:

- What has surprised the Board about Abbeyfield
- What the key priorities are for the next few years

Response:

Marc highlighted:

- Ongoing challenges in funding across the sector
- A previous need to strengthen financial and commercial awareness
- A shift toward:
 - Financial stability
 - Reinvestment in homes
 - Future growth opportunities

Purpose of visits and learning from residents

Panel members asked:

- What Board members aim to achieve when visiting services

Response:

- Visits provide insight beyond reports, including:
 - First-hand understanding of building condition
 - Resident and staff experience
- Feedback from residents does not always align with internal reporting, particularly in relation to repairs and contractor performance

Decision-making and Board authority

Panel members asked:

- What level of authority the Board holds

Response:

- The Board:
 - Oversees the CEO and senior leadership
 - Approves budgets and major expenditure
 - Makes strategic decisions rather than operational ones

Local issue escalation

A Panel member raised a property under long-term review and the impact of prolonged uncertainty on residents.

Response:

- No recent decision had been made
- The importance of resolving uncertainty was acknowledged

Agreed action:

- Further investigation to be undertaken and update provided

Additional issues raised with the Board

Residents also raised:

- Delays in repairs and maintenance

	• Poor communication on timelines and updates • Issues with contractor performance • Internet/Wi-Fi reliability Marc acknowledged these concerns and the need to better understand the gap between reported performance and resident experience. Sense of belonging and value for money Residents expressed concerns about: • Feeling disconnected from the wider organisation • The need for clearer communication • Understanding value for money Marc confirmed: • Investment is planned into existing homes • Rebuilding a sense of belonging is a key priority
5.	Housing Satisfaction Survey - summary A summary of survey findings was presented. Key findings: • Overall satisfaction remains high • Strong positive feedback on staff and feeling of safety Key areas for improvement: 1. Repairs and Maintenance ◦ Main issue is communication rather than completion 2. Communication ◦ Ongoing and consistent concern across surveys 3. Food and Menu Planning ◦ Inconsistent resident involvement in menu planning across services 4. Internet/Wi-Fi ◦ Inconsistent provision across homes 5. Community and Activities ◦ Desire for more opportunities to engage Panel reflections: • Many issues are recurring year-on-year • Progress is not always visible to residents • Communication is a key underlying issue across multiple areas Next steps: • Development of “You Said, We Will” action plan • Draft to be presented at the next meeting • Agreement to introduce quarterly progress updates

6.	Equality and Diversity A summary of the Equality and Diversity policy was shared. Feedback: - The policy was viewed as strong and relevant Discussion: - Importance of: - Training and awareness - Embedding the policy in practice - Supporting a sense of belonging Consider inclusion of similar policy reviews in future meetings
7.	LGBTQ+ Housing Pledge – Update An update was provided on progress following sign-up to the pledge. Progress: - Initial actions completed - Communication and awareness activity delivered Opportunities: - Residents invited to attend bi-monthly sector forums JO'B to share dates of Pioneer Pledge Forum
8.	Older People's Housing Designations Follow-up discussion from previous meeting. Outcome: - Changes require sector-wide consultation - Abbeyfield looked at this previously and any changes in isolation of the sector can negatively impact referrals and applications as it can create issues with online searches. - Action closed on the log but retained for future discussion
.	Policy Review (Standing item) No policies were presented for review at this meeting.
9.	AOB Potential Funding: A question was asked about 'Theory of Change' which is an internal review of an organisation Marc confirmed this was related to the Charities Commission but Homes England doesn't require this for funding but we do effectively do it for the Charities Commission

Rent and Service Charge Breakdown (Transparency and Communication)

A detailed and strongly felt discussion took place regarding the provision of rent and service charge breakdowns.

Background

Panel members highlighted that:

- Detailed breakdowns had been provided in previous years
- This information was not consistently provided this year
- In some cases, residents only received the information after requesting it
- Practice appeared to vary across services

Key concerns raised

Residents expressed concerns about:

- **Lack of communication**
 - No clear explanation had been provided regarding any change in approach
 - Residents were unclear whether this was a deliberate decision or an inconsistency in practice
- **Transparency and trust**
 - Residents expect to understand what they are paying for
 - The absence of detailed information led to concerns about:
 - Transparency
 - Consistency
 - Fairness
- **Inconsistency across services**
 - Some residents received detailed breakdowns
 - Others did not
 - This inconsistency contributed to confusion and frustration
- **Perception of being overlooked**
 - Some residents felt decisions had been made without consultation
 - There was concern that residents were not always treated as informed stakeholders

Additional discussion points

- Differences between leaseholder and renter requirements were acknowledged
- However, Panel members emphasised that:
 - Legal requirements should not limit transparency
 - There is a broader expectation of openness as part of good practice
- It was also noted that:
 - Some residents rely on this information to understand rising costs
 - Clear breakdowns support confidence in value for money

	Agreed next steps • A senior representative from operations or finance will be invited to attend a future meeting • The session will aim to: ◦ Clarify the current approach ◦ Explain any changes in practice ◦ Provide a consistent position for residents ◦ Consider how information is shared more transparently going forward Business Plan Consultation The Panel were informed that a draft business plan had been shared via email. Discussion • A summary document had been provided to support accessibility • It was acknowledged that: ◦ The timeline for feedback is short ◦ However, it is important that resident feedback is included before submission to the Board Agreed approach • Panel members will: ◦ Review the documents individually ◦ Provide feedback via email • Feedback to be submitted by the following Monday • Feedback will be: ◦ Collated by the Resident Engagement Manager ◦ Shared with the Board as part of the consultation process Resident Publication (“A Life Shared”) Feedback was provided on the latest edition of the resident publication. Comments included: • Positive recognition that: ◦ The publication is becoming more focused ◦ Content is improving • Suggestions for further development: ◦ Include more house-level stories and resident experiences ◦ Reduce perception of content being primarily “head office focused” ◦ Strengthen editorial content and relevance to residents ◦ We are keen to have resident input into the editorial process.
10.	Forward Plan Upcoming items include: • Housing Quality Audits update • Communications and 70th anniversary activity

	• Board and Customer Committee engagement • CEO attendance (June) Additional item added: • Rent and service charge discussion
12.	Next Meeting Tuesday 12 May 2026 – 2:00pm (via Teams)