

Abbeyfield National Residents' Panel

Minutes 12/05/2026

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
AE (AE)	Abbeyfield Resident – Downing House, Manchester
MB (MB)	Abbeyfield Resident – The Old Vicarage, Somerset
JG (JG)	Abbeyfield Resident - High Lane, Stockport
RG (RG)	Abbeyfield Resident - Salisbury
SF (SF)	Abbeyfield Resident - Girton Green, Cambridge
Darren Beharry (DB)	Head of Brand Marketing - Abbeyfield
Helen Porter (HP)	Fundraising Officer - Abbeyfield
Rob McVeigh (RMcV)	Head of Technology - Abbeyfield
Justin O'Brien (JO'B)	Resident Engagement Manager - Abbeyfield
Apologies:	
MN (MN)	Abbeyfield Resident – Abbeyfield House - Ulverston
AO (AO)	Abbeyfield Resident - Esk Moors Lodge, Whitby
PB (PB)	Abbeyfield Resident - Carnarvon House, Nottinghamshire
PH (PH)	Abbeyfield Resident - Poplar Lodge, Isle of Wight

	ITEM
1.	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies: Justin O'Brien welcomed everyone to the meeting. Panel members, colleagues and guests introduced themselves. Apologies recorded from PH and MN.
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 April 2026 were reviewed. Panel members confirmed that the minutes were an accurate reflection of the discussion and the minutes were approved. Justin briefly summarised key points from the previous meeting, including: - discussion with Board member Mark; - the Housing Satisfaction Survey update; - equality and diversity discussions;

	- the LGBTQ+ Housing Pledge update; - and discussion around terminology such as “sheltered housing” and how this may need wider sector review.
3.	Action Log: Justin provided an update on outstanding actions. Fire Alarm Evacuation Procedures The action remained in progress and continued to be followed up with Meg. Wi-Fi and Internet Connectivity Justin confirmed that approximately 25 properties across the organisation had been identified where Wi-Fi coverage was not reaching all areas of the building. Residents were advised that: - assessments of affected properties were underway; - improvement work was planned; - and extending Wi-Fi coverage remained an active IT project. Panel members welcomed the update and noted the importance of reliable internet access, particularly as more services and communication become digital. Rob McVeigh – head of Technology is attending today's meeting. Rent Breakdown and Transparency Justin confirmed that arrangements were being made for a senior colleague to attend a future meeting to discuss rent breakdowns and transparency, following concerns raised by residents about inconsistencies in the information provided. Business Plan Feedback Justin thanked panel members for their feedback on the business plan and confirmed that comments had been shared with Gail, who had also provided a response of thanks. Pioneer Pledge Forum Dates Justin acknowledged that forum dates had not yet been circulated and confirmed these would be shared after the meeting.
4.	Fundraising and Resident Feedback Darren Beharry and Helen Porter attended the meeting to discuss fundraising proposals and gather resident feedback. Darren explained that fundraising formed part of one of the supporting strategies within the wider organisational business plan. He noted that Abbeyfield Living

Society, as a charity, wanted to explore new ways of increasing fundraising income while ensuring approaches remained ethical, appropriate and resident-focused.

Legacy Giving Leaflet

The panel reviewed a draft leaflet promoting the option of leaving a gift to Abbeyfield in a resident's will.

Darren explained that gifts in wills had historically generated significant income for the charity, but that Abbeyfield had not actively promoted this in recent years.

The panel generally felt the leaflet was clear and sensitively written. It was recognised that many charities promote legacy giving and residents understood why Abbeyfield may wish to raise awareness of this option.

The panel discussed whether the leaflet should more clearly explain that residents may choose to leave a gift to a specific Abbeyfield house as well as to the wider charity

It was also noted that many existing residents were likely to have already made wills and suggested that while the leaflet was appropriate, its primary audience may need wider consideration, including family members, future residents and others connected to Abbeyfield

Panel members highlighted the importance of:

- keeping the tone optional and non-pressurised;
- ensuring residents understood Abbeyfield is a charity;
- and making information easy to understand.

Lottery Proposal

Darren and Helen outlined early discussions around a possible charity lottery scheme.

The proposal was described as being at an exploratory stage only.

The discussion covered:

- monthly subscription-style entry into prize draws;
- the use of an external lottery management company;
- and the need for strong ethical safeguards and regulatory compliance.

The panel raised a number of important points and questions.

Resident Questions and Feedback

Panel members asked how people would sign up and whether this would rely mainly on digital access.

Darren and Helen confirmed:

- telephone sign-up options would likely be available;
- external providers would manage the scheme;
- safeguards would be in place around gambling regulations;
- spending limits and opt-out arrangements would apply;
- and vulnerable residents would need careful consideration.

The panel highlighted that many Abbeyfield residents do not use computers or tablets regularly and stressed the importance of accessible, non-digital communication.

Some panel members felt the proposal could provide a useful additional income stream for Abbeyfield, particularly if participation costs remained low.

Panel members shared positive experiences of similar charity lottery schemes used by other organisations and felt residents may support a simple, low-cost approach.

Some panel members raised concerns around public awareness and brand recognition, noting that larger national charities may attract more participation because they are more widely known.

The panel also discussed the importance of local fundraising and supporting community-based charities.

The panel discussed how some houses focus fundraising activity on a small number of local and national charities each year.

Sponsorship and Advertising Opportunities

Panel members suggested that advertising or sponsorship opportunities linked to resident publications could potentially generate additional income.

Discussion included:

- sponsorship of resident publications;
- partnerships with trusted organisations;
- and clearer identification of sponsors in future communications.

Darren confirmed that recent sponsorship activity linked to promotional items had generated additional income and that wider sponsorship opportunities may be explored further.

Resident Benefit Schemes

Darren also asked for resident views on whether Abbeyfield should explore resident discount or benefit schemes similar to those available to staff.

Examples discussed included:

	• insurance discounts; • health-related benefits; • cinema or retail discounts; • and other cost-saving services. The panel responded positively to the idea and felt it was worth exploring further. Panel members noted that extending certain benefits to volunteers could also support volunteer recruitment and retention. Darren confirmed volunteering levels had reduced during COVID and rebuilding volunteer numbers remained an organisational priority. JO'B confirmed DB and HP will attend future meetings to discuss further. Action: Panel members to provide any further comments on the legacy giving leaflet to Justin within two weeks for collation and onward sharing with Darren and Helen.
5.	IT Update and Resident Q&A Rob McVeigh – Head of IT Rob McVeigh attended the meeting to discuss technology, connectivity and the upcoming PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network) switch-off, which will affect analogue telephone services across the UK from January 2027. Rob explained that Abbeyfield Living Society had been carrying out significant work over recent years to modernise digital infrastructure across services, including upgrades to Wi-Fi, telephony systems, Alertacall devices, fire safety systems and emergency lift communications. PSTN Switch-Off and Telephone Services Rob explained that traditional analogue telephone lines will be phased out nationally and replaced with digital services. He reassured the panel that Abbeyfield had already migrated many internal systems to newer digital technology to avoid disruption. The panel discussed the implications for residents who still rely on traditional landline telephones. Rob explained: • future telephone services would rely on internet connectivity; • Abbeyfield was exploring simple and accessible telephone solutions for residents; • residents would not be tied into long-term contracts;

- and the organisation wanted to avoid overly complex equipment or multiple adapters where possible.

Rob confirmed that Abbeyfield was working with suppliers, including Alertacall, to explore potential solutions and pilot options later in the year.

Residents discussed the importance of ensuring any future systems remain simple, reliable and suitable for residents who may not feel confident using newer technology.

Wi-Fi Connectivity Across Services

A significant part of the discussion focused on Wi-Fi reliability and internet access across homes.

Panel members raised concerns that:

- internet coverage did not consistently reach all resident rooms;
- some residents had needed to pay privately for internet services due to poor connectivity;
- black spots remained in several buildings;
- and unreliable internet was affecting residents' ability to use tablets, televisions, video calls and online services.

Rob confirmed that:

- approximately 25 properties had been identified where Wi-Fi coverage required improvement;
- surveys and reassessments were underway;
- and additional access points or infrastructure changes would be implemented where necessary.

Residents were reassured that the intention remained for full Wi-Fi coverage across all resident rooms and communal areas.

Property-Specific Questions and Updates

Residents asked a number of questions about specific properties and installation timescales.

Rob confirmed:

- Ivy House and Old Vicarage in Wellington were scheduled for Wi-Fi improvement works, with installations expected within approximately six weeks, subject to engineering schedules;
- both Salisbury properties had now been approved for internet installation works;
- orders had been placed with the provider and engineering work was being arranged;

- and issues around internet capacity in Salisbury had now been addressed.

Residents from Salisbury explained that they had been waiting several years for progress and welcomed the update.

During discussion, concerns were also raised about rumours regarding the future of one Salisbury property. Justin agreed to follow this up separately and provide clarification to residents outside the meeting.

Residents from Garstang raised concerns about inconsistent Wi-Fi coverage and reliance on boosters within the building. Rob confirmed the property was included within the re-survey programme and further investigation would take place.

Residents also discussed internet black spots affecting individual rooms and the importance of ensuring all residents could reliably access services.

One resident shared positive feedback that internet connectivity at Dunning House was generally working well, aside from occasional issues.

Resident Feedback on Technology and Communication

The panel discussed the increasing importance of digital services within Abbeyfield homes.

Residents highlighted:

- the importance of balancing digital and non-digital communication methods;
- that many residents still preferred offline communication;
- and that staff support remained important for residents less confident with technology.

Discussion also covered:

- the use of Alertacall devices;
- improving communication through digital systems;
- and ensuring technology supports residents rather than creating barriers.

Cyber Security and Online Safety

Residents raised questions about cyber security, scams and protecting resident information online.

Rob reassured the panel that cyber security remained a major organisational priority and that systems and monitoring processes were continually reviewed.

The panel agreed that helping residents stay safe online and recognise scams remained important as digital services continue to expand.

Future Engagement

Rob confirmed he would be happy to return to a future panel meeting to provide further updates and answer additional resident questions as work progresses.

	The panel thanked Rob for attending and for responding openly to the panel's questions and concerns.
6.	Care Survey – Update Justin provided an update on the upcoming Care Resident Satisfaction Survey. He explained that, following review, it had been agreed that the resident survey would return to a paper-based format rather than using a digital survey platform. This approach was agreed to ensure the survey remained as accessible as possible for care residents and would support stronger participation. Alongside the resident survey, a separate online survey for family members and friends will also be launched. This survey will be accessible via QR code and web link displayed within services. The panel noted that running the two surveys alongside one another would provide separate opportunities for both residents and their families or friends to share feedback, helping to ensure both perspectives are captured clearly.
7.	Annual Resident Panel Survey Justin shared a summary of the Annual Resident Panel Survey results. Ten panel members completed the survey, representing approximately two-thirds of the panel. The results were broadly positive and indicated that most respondents felt the panel was making a difference. However, feedback highlighted several areas for further development, including: • creating clearer visibility of the impact the panel is having; • increasing opportunities for panel members to contribute to organisational decision-making; • and strengthening feedback loops so panel members can more clearly see how their input has influenced outcomes and decision making. Justin confirmed these findings would help inform future development of the panel and how resident feedback is communicated and acted upon.
8.	Deferred Agenda Items Due to time constraints the remaining agenda items were deferred to the next meeting. These will be carried forward on the agenda for further discussion.
9.	Policy Review (Standing item) No policy was presented for review at this meeting

10.	AOB Can we get a flow char of the organisational flow chare for the panel? JO'B to action Discussion about the Repairs transactional survey. Justin shared the survey with panel members and asked for feedback. Could add question – was an appointment date provided It was confirmed the repairs team will lead and manage the surveys Feedback from the panel was generally positive about these new repair's surveys
11.	Forward Plan Paul Tennant (CEO) and Jno Earnshaw(Complaints Manager) will be attending the next meeting The forward plan was noted and will be updated to reflect deferred agenda items and upcoming priorities.
12.	Next Meeting: Tuesday June 2nd at 2pm on Teams