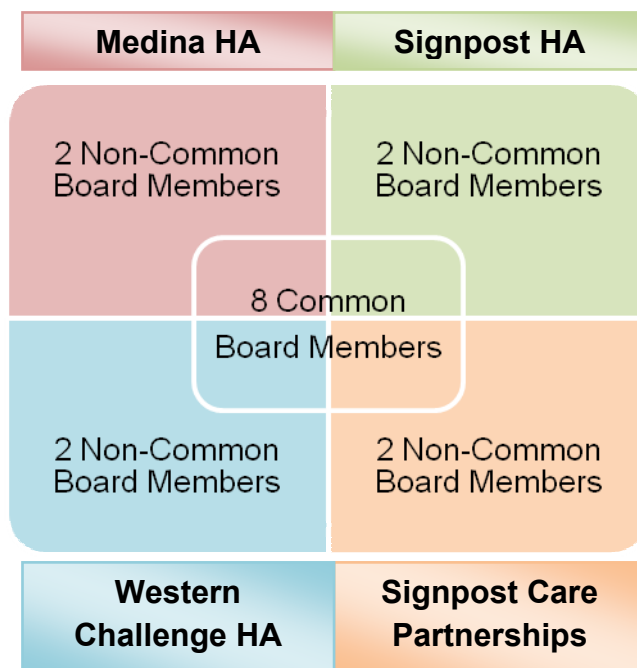


Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Q	What is Spectrum Housing Group?
A	You will be a tenant or a leaseholder of one of the members of the group. There are four landlords in the group: Medina Housing Association, Signpost Housing Association, Signpost Care Partnerships, and Western Challenge Housing Association. They are all subsidiary organisations and the parent organisation is called Spectrum Housing Group Ltd. It doesn't own any homes. There are also two commercial organisations in the group – Signpost Services Ltd and Signpost Homes Ltd. There is also a small charity called the Foyer for the Island.
Q	How do these proposals affect my tenancy if I am a tenant?
A	They do not affect your tenancy in any way. You will remain a tenant of your landlord which will remain part of the Spectrum Housing Group.
Q	How do these proposals affect my lease if I am a leaseholder?
A	They do not affect your lease in any way. Your freeholder will remain part of the Spectrum Housing Group.
Q	Do these proposals affect the services I receive?
A	No they do not fundamentally affect the services you receive. There are no plans to change any services; they will be delivered in the same way and by the same organisations for the foreseeable future. We may well change the way they are delivered in the future but only to make them better in terms of quality and value for money and if we do we will consult you about those changes.
Q	Will the proposals affect my rent or service charges?
A	No.

<p>Q</p>	<p>What does a board do?</p>
<p>A</p>	<p>Each organisation within the group has a board. The board is a group of people called board members. Their role is to make sure that the organisation acts within the law, its constitution and meets the standards expected by the regulator – the Tenant Services Authority.</p> <p>They set the direction for the organisation and agree its plans, strategies, policies and standards. They must also agree the budget and make sure the organisation stays in the black. They work with the staff whose job it is to deliver the services to residents and other customers.</p> <p>Board members are recruited to the board and take up places reserved for residents, for councillors (in the case of Medina and Signpost HAs) and for independents.</p>
<p>Q</p>	<p>So why are the boards changing?</p>
<p>A</p>	<p>The main change is to the boards of the four landlords. The main reason for this is that they all have very similar roles and are increasingly looking at the same issues as we work more and more like one organisation across the group. We think it will be much more efficient if we reduce the size of the boards and the number of board members, and they meet together to make decisions. Those decisions will still be taken organisation by organisation but meeting together will save time and share the skills and experience that we have more effectively.</p>
<p>Q</p>	<p>Does that mean the organisations will all merge as well?</p>
<p>A</p>	<p>No, they will all remain separate organisations. We have said however that we will look at that as an option in the future. It's not possible now because of the difficult economic climate but we may wish to see whether it would offer a better solution in the future. If we have any plans to do that we would consult with all our residents and other stakeholders at that time and your views would be taken into account. That is not however what is being proposed here.</p>
<p>Q</p>	<p>Will some board members be on more than one board?</p>
<p>A</p>	<p>Yes part of the proposal is that on each board of the four landlords there would be ten board members. Of those ten board members, eight would be common to all four boards. Each board would have two others who are not common to all boards, one of whom would be the chair of the organisation. That means that when they meet together there would be 4 boards of ten people, but only sixteen present in the room as eight are on all four boards.</p> <p>The diagram below might help to explain:</p>



Q	Will there still be residents on the board?
A	Yes, there are a guaranteed three of the ten board places reserved for residents. They will be part of the eight that are common to all boards so will be looking to have one from Medina, one from Western Challenge and one from Signpost HA or Care Partnerships.
Q	How will residents get on the board?
A	To start with as we go through these changes we will be recruiting the three residents on the boards from within the existing residents who have already been appointed to the four boards. We will then start to work on a new process for selecting residents on the board and that should come into effect for 2011. The new Spectrum Residents Group will work on that process with us and we will consult with all residents in due course.
Q	Is there a resident on the group board?
A	Yes, for the first time we will have a resident on the group board. They will be selected alongside all other board members on the group board. We will be looking for someone who can work at that level dealing with the bigger picture across the group.

Q	How will this new board structure make decisions?
A	We have had to give this a lot of thought. In order to manage the joint meetings we will be appointing a moderator. They are not a chair but they do manage the meetings. They will talk with the four chairs and agree the agendas, they will work with the senior staff to make sure the reports are written and presented, and they will work with the four chairs in the meeting to make sure all the decisions taken by each organisation are clear and properly recorded.
Q	Is there a moderator on the group board as well?
A	No but they will sit on the group board member as well and will provide a very important link between the four landlord boards and the group board. The group board will be managed by the group chair. We are recruiting a new group chair as David Wells is retiring from the group in September 2010. A resident is on the selection panel for the new chair and during the interview day the candidates will be meeting members of the Spectrum Residents Group.
Q	Why are board members going to be paid?
A	Lots of other organisations similar to Spectrum do pay their board members. Whilst that is not a reason to do it, it does make it harder for us to recruit people with the skills and experience that we need if we don't pay. Board members do have to commit to a lot of days over the course of the year, they have to read and contribute to the meetings and carry out a range of other duties as well. They carry a lot of responsibility and we feel it is right for them to be paid for the time that they give up.
Q	How much will they be paid?
A	It varies but the base fee for a board member on one of the four landlord board will be £3,000 a year. If they also sit on a committee they could get an extra £1000 a year. The chairs will be paid more because of the extra duties and responsibilities that they have. The chair of one of the four landlord boards would be paid an extra £3,000 a year on top of their base fee.

Q	Does it affect people's benefits?
A	<p>If a board member is receiving benefits or other forms of credits or allowances then yes receiving payment for being a board member <u>may</u> affect their entitlement. Because of the way that the benefits system works they may lose more benefits that they gain in payment, which is unfortunate but is the same problem that affects a lot of people who move from benefits onto low incomes.</p> <p>We have weighed this up very carefully and note that it will most probably affect residents more than other sorts of board members. We feel that we will still be able to recruit residents to be board members and the experience in other organisations shows this to be the case. There are other ways that people can get involved. Our new community forums and the Spectrum Residents Group are not paid and there may well be opportunities there for anyone who feels they would lose out financially if they stayed on or became a board member in the future.</p>
Q	What are these new community forums?
A	<p>That is the name which has been given to the new bodies of residents that will work at a local level and ensure that we remain and become more accountable to you as our residents. The community forums will have 8-12 members and the aim is to recruit them from within existing resident groups initially but there will be opportunities for others to get involved in the future and lots of other ways to get involved in any event.</p> <p>The structure for the community forums and the way they will work was developed by a group of residents, staff and board members early in 2010.</p>
Q	Where are these community forums based?
A	<p>There will be one for each of our 6 operating areas. They will be based in Blandford, Christchurch, Chippenham, Newport (Isle of Wight), Exeter and Southampton.</p> <p>The existing Tenant Consultative Committee (TCC) at Medina, the Tenant Forums at Signpost, and the Resident Panels at Western Challenge, will evolve into the new community forums.</p>

Q	What will the community forums do?
A	<p>They will have a lot of responsibility working with us on the way we deliver services, the standards we work to, and monitoring the quality of what we do all at a local level. They will have a say on the way that local budgets are made up and we plan that they will be able to manage some budgets as well such as the 'community fund' to support local initiatives. They will get involved in plans for new homes at a local level and have a say in the plans for how homes are let.</p> <p>We hope that as they develop with support and training they will be able to take on more responsibility. We want the community forums to form strong links with the boards and to be able to monitor and challenge the standards that are delivered and be actively consulted on the decisions that are made.</p>
Q	What will happen to the existing residents associations and groups?
	<p>Your local resident associations and groups will continue to exist and will have links to the community forums.</p> <p>However, we will increasingly be dealing with the community forums on issues so it is important that the community forums develop linkages to all existing residents associations and groups. Their meetings will be open to any residents to come along and see how it works, but only forum members will be able to make decisions.</p>
Q	Who is the Spectrum Residents Group?
A	<p>The SRG was set up in 2009 to bring a group of residents together to work on the bigger issues that affect the whole of Spectrum Housing Group. They deal with the plans and policies that affect all organisations. They also monitor performance across the whole group and identify areas where we need to focus our attention to improve services. They will carry on working as they do now and will develop strong links with the community forums.</p>