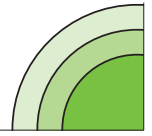


The Westlea Involvement Guidelines

Make your voice heard!



Foreword



Involving people is key to what we do at Westlea and to the way we choose to work to meet our objectives.

The people who use our services and live in the homes and neighbourhoods we manage are best placed to help us continue to improve everything we do.



For these reasons we are delighted to publish details of how we provide and support opportunities for consultation participation and involvement in all our activities.

We believe everyone should have the right to get involved in a way that suits them. This document describes how this will be achieved and we commend it to you in a genuine spirit of partnership and co-operation.



David Ashmore

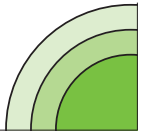
Chief Executive

Alison Cross-Jones

Chair, District Forum

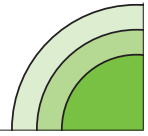
David Line

Board Member with
resident involvement portfolio



What are Westlea’s Involvement Guidelines?	...04
10 reasons to get involved	...05
How to get involved	...06
Suggestion cards; surveys; estate inspections	...07
Village voice or street representative; tenant and resident conferences; focus groups	...08
Specialist forums; magazine editorial group; social committee	...09
Mystery shopping; working groups; information groups	...10
Service user groups; setting up an estate agreement	...11
Area groups; local tenants’ and residents’ groups	...12
Running your own business; District Forum	...13
Tenant board membership; being a shareholder	...14
More about getting involved	...15
Checking our performance	...17
How to contact us	...19

What are Westlea's Involvement Guidelines?



Involvement and **participation** are words we use to talk about how you, as one of our tenants or residents, can have your say on what we are doing and play a part in helping us to make decisions.

The Westlea Involvement Guidelines are to tell you how you can play a part in running Westlea if you want to. They:

- give you a “menu” of ways to get involved, so that you can participate as much or as little as you want;
- show you how you can work with other local residents and organisations to improve your neighbourhood; and
- tell you how you can help make decisions about our services, set standards and check how well we are doing.

The guidelines also show that we are committed to involving you. They also show that we are committed to following the government's guidance, which can be found in the:

- Housing Corporation's involvement policy; and
- Audit Commission's resident involvement key line of enquiry.

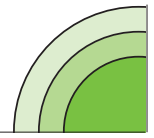
10 reasons to get involved



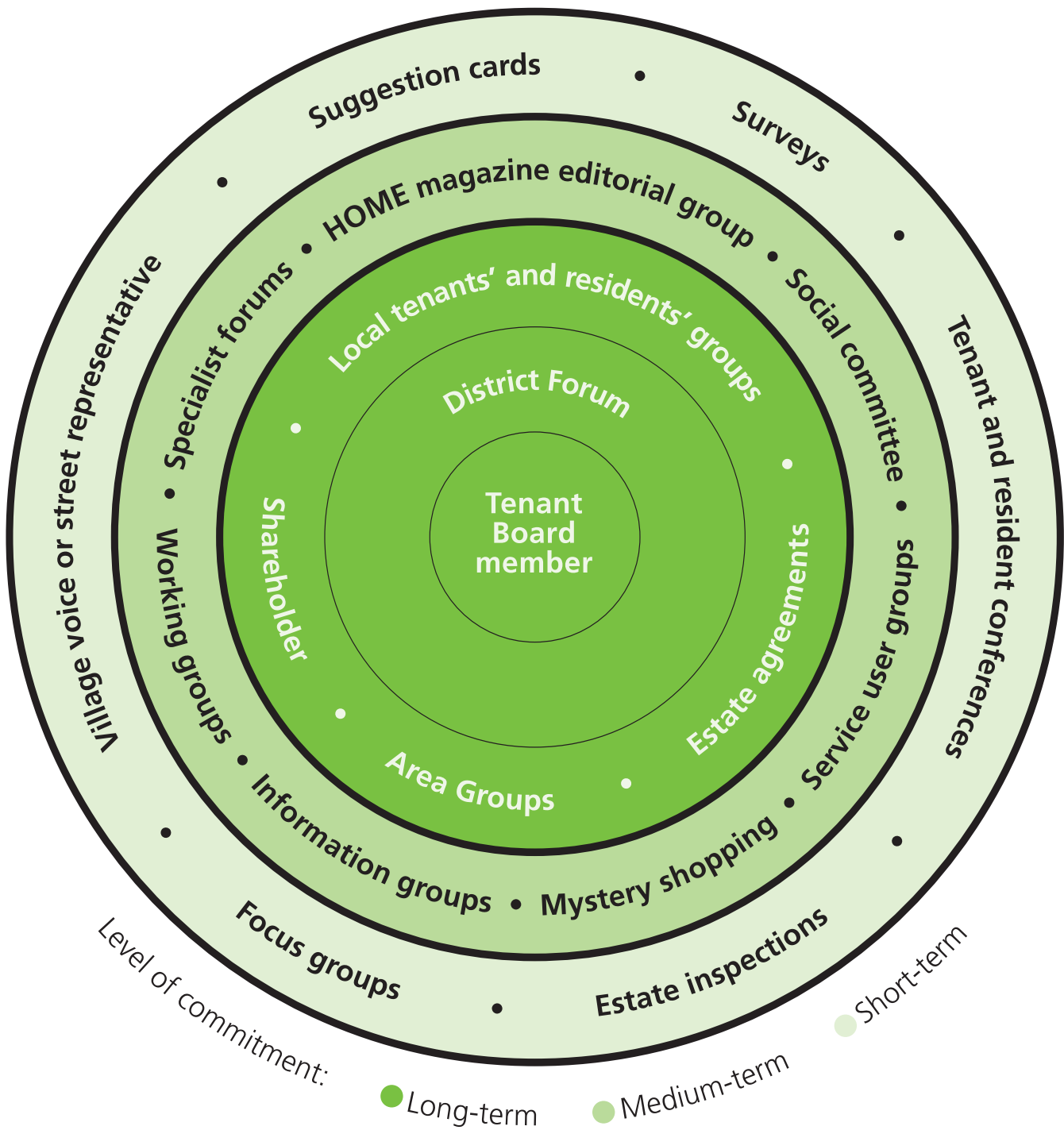
If you get involved, you can:

1. Help us to provide a better service for all our tenants and residents by having your say on the changes and improvements that we need to make – we do listen to what you tell us.
2. Find a way to take part that suits you. There are lots of different ways to get involved that take as much or little time as you want.
3. Help make decisions that affect your neighbourhood, work with other local organisations and play a part in improving our services and the area where you live.
4. Meet lots of new people and increase your knowledge and understanding of housing issues.
5. Go to groups and meetings where you will meet a wide range of people with different experiences and interests, so that you can share your ideas.
6. Build good working relationships with our staff at local meetings and find out exactly who does what.
7. Talk to our staff about the things that are important in your local area.
8. Attend free information sessions, conferences and training sessions around the country.
9. Get free, independent advice from the Tenant Advisory and Participation Service (TPAS) if you are a registered tenant group. You can phone 0161 863 3500, e-mail info@tpas.org.uk or go to www.tpas.org.uk on the internet.
10. See the results of your involvement in better neighbourhoods and improved services.

How to get involved



This section tells you about the different ways to get involved, and how much time you will need.



How to get involved



= long-term commitment

= medium-term commitment

= short-term commitment

Suggestion cards

Commitment: Short term – occasionally

Level: Information

Suggestion cards are a good option if you don't have much free time. You can collect comment or suggestion cards from reception; or we sometimes send them out to get feedback to improve a specific service.

Surveys

Commitment: Short term – throughout the year

Level: Information and consultation

If you only have a little bit of time to spare, taking part in surveys is a good way of giving us useful information. If you tell us you are happy to fill in surveys we will put your details on our database. We might ask you to fill in small surveys on specific topics or our annual survey; or sometimes phone, text or email you if you have told us that we can. You can also tell us if there are particular topics (for example repairs) that you are interested in.

Estate inspections

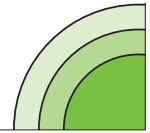
Commitment: Short term – an inspection takes about 30 minutes

Level: Information and consultation

We hold estate inspections in your area every quarter. You can find out when the next one is by looking in HOME magazine or by contacting us. You are welcome to come along to meet your local neighbourhood housing officer and talk to him or her about any issues in the area and what needs to be improved.

This could lead to you forming a local group or an estate agreement.

How to get involved (continued)



Village voice or street representative



Commitment: Short term – when it's convenient for you
Level: Information and consultation

If you live in an area that is too small for a formal tenant and resident group, or your neighbours do not want to take part, you can still get involved by becoming a Village Voice or Street Rep. This means that you talk to your neighbours and pass their views on to your neighbourhood housing officer. You could do this as part of the estate inspections, which might encourage more people to be involved in a bigger group.

Tenant and resident conferences



Commitment: Short term – twice a year
Level: Information and consultation

Why not come along to one of the two tenant and residents conferences we hold every year? We agree the theme with the District Forum - but the Neighbourhood Development team are always looking for new ideas, so please get in touch.

The conferences are a great way to meet other tenants and residents and our staff in an informal setting.

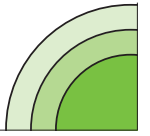
Focus groups



Commitment: Short term – one to three meetings
Level: Information and commitment

Sometimes we want to look at a specific topic in more detail, and might ask if you want to join a focus group to give us your views. This is a group of people who might be particularly relevant to the subject (for example, older people if we were discussing sheltered accommodation).

How to get involved (continued)



Specialist forums



Commitment: Medium term – depending on the group
Level: Information and consultation

We want to hear all your views and try to meet your needs. We have special groups for people who may find it difficult to make their voices heard:

- the Disability Forum, which meets four times per year; and
- the Older Persons' Forum, which meets three times per year.

Different guest speakers give presentations to the groups on things that might interest them, and people who attend can tell us what they think about our services and how we can improve them. Both groups also have their own newsletter.

HOME magazine editorial group



*Commitment: Medium term – three meetings a year
(or short term – send in an article)*
Level: Consultation and decision-making

HOME magazine is our main newsletter, which we produce three times a year. We are looking for new tenants and residents to join the editorial panel to help us decide what should go in it. If you are a creative person who likes coming up with good ideas, then give us a call. We will pay your travel, childcare and other care costs.

Social committee



Commitment: Medium term – meetings when required
Level: Decision-making

We work with the social committee to set up social events to promote and increase involvement. The committee welcomes new members and would love to see you at any of their activities, which are advertised in HOME.

How to get involved (continued)



Mystery shopping

Commitment: Medium term – One to three sessions per year
Level: Information

A mystery shopper is someone who tests our services and answers questions about them on a form. An example of this is GEMs (Grounds and Estate Monitoring). This is a group of mystery shoppers who check out the standard of grounds maintenance in their area and write their comments on a form before sending it in. The grounds maintenance team do not know who the members of GEMs are. We hope to extend this in the future to have “tenant inspectors” who regularly check a whole range of our services.

Working groups

Commitment: Medium term – one to three meetings a year
Level: Information and consultation

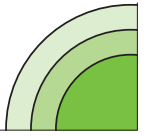
Sometimes we want to look at a topic in a different way to a focus group. For example, we might set up a group to look at anti-social behaviour, by finding out about local people’s views; meeting the police or other agencies; or researching how other landlords deal with this. We look for volunteers who have an interest in the topic and are willing to give up some time to explore it further. Working groups often develop from information groups (see below).

Information groups

Commitment: Medium term
Level: Information and Consultation

An information group is where you give us your views on a particular topic that interests you, perhaps by e-mail, survey or telephone conference. If you have more time to give, it can lead on to joining a working party. If there are topics that interest you or that you feel strongly about and you would like to take part in this sort of event, please contact Neighbourhood Development.

How to get involved (continued)



Service user groups

Commitment: Medium term – three to six meetings a year
Level: Information, consultation and decision making

There are currently three service user groups who look at different areas of our business:

1. Neighbourhood Services (housing services);
2. Neighbourhood Development (resident involvement and community development); and
3. Asset Management (repairs and maintenance).

Service User Groups are groups of 6 to 12 members. They are partnerships between residents, contractors and staff. Usually, 60 to 70% of the group are residents. All members have an equal role, and staff and tenants take it in turns to chair the meetings. The groups can ask for:

- surveys;
- focus groups; and
- working groups

to be carried out to look at a topic in more depth.

Setting up an estate agreement

Commitment: Long term - 2 hours per month (less as improvements take place)
Level: Information, consultation and decision making

An estate agreement is a partnership agreement which explains how different agencies (for example, schools, health visitors, police and waste disposal companies) will work together to improve your neighbourhood.

The first step is for you, your neighbours and your neighbourhood housing officer to decide what needs improving in the local area and which agencies should be involved. The next step is to talk to the agencies themselves, and develop an action plan for improvement. This can be linked with estate inspections and local tenant and resident groups.

How to get involved (continued)



Area groups



Commitment: Long term – maximum of twelve meetings a year

Level: Information, consultation and decision making

These groups look at bigger local housing issues in each area, such as the maintenance programme or how we are dealing with anti-social behaviour. They invite smaller local groups to events to meet up and swap information.

Area groups can claim annual grants and have access to other sources of funding. They are also members of TPAS and can get independent information through this organisation.

Area groups meet monthly or every other month. Please contact the Neighbourhood Development team if you would like to go to one.

Local tenants' and residents' groups



Commitment: Long-term

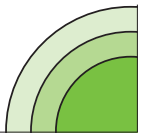
Level: Information, consultation and local decision-making

There may already be a local tenants' and residents' group in your area. If not, your neighbourhood housing officer can help you set one up. These groups can have a dramatic effect in improving neighbourhoods and community spirit. You can invite tenants of other landlords and local homeowners as well.

The groups usually have a constitution (a document that explains who you are, what you want to achieve and how you will do this) and have named members who run them. If you have a constitution and have had training to run a group successfully you can apply for a start-up grant of £200 to help the group get going. Your neighbourhood housing officer will help you get set up, create a performance plan and apply for a grant.

You can then apply for an annual grant to keep the group running. The amount you can apply for is linked to your performance plan, which says what you are going to do to achieve the aims in your constitution. The District Forum will help to set the maximum amount of grant available every year, and your neighbourhood housing officer can tell you how much you are likely to get. They can also help you find funding from other sources.

How to get involved (continued)



If this seems too formal and you just want to get together with a few friends and your neighbourhood housing officer to solve local problems, and you don't need funding, then you can do this. Your neighbourhood housing officer will help you develop terms of reference (a less detailed version of a constitution). You can become a more formal group at a later date if you want. All groups with a formal constitution can join TPAS to get independent advice and support. We can put you in touch with other organisations for further support.

Running your own business ('social enterprise')



Commitment: Long term – it's a business
Level: Decision-making

A social enterprise is a business which benefits the local community. An example might be a local handy man service which carries out repairs for older people. As well as helping people, this makes the neighbourhood look better, and gives local people employment. We are keen to support this type of business.

District Forum



Commitment: Long term – minimum of ten meetings a year
Level: Information, consultation and decision making

The District Forum is a decision-making panel, with 18 tenant and resident members who, at the moment, serve for three years. You can elect new members at the Annual General Meeting which is part of our tenant and resident conference.

The District Forum focuses on policy and strategy, and makes sure we consult you on important decisions. They look at all Board papers, consider major decisions and can attend Board meetings to give their comments. They can recommend more extensive consultation before commenting themselves.

The role of the forum is to:

- represent the residents' views and work with us in a positive way to make services better for everyone;
- be consulted on all changes to policies and procedures, including the Business Plan, corporate objectives and service delivery;
- decide how you should be involved in all major projects and decisions; and
- Σ monitor our performance.

How to get involved (continued)



You can attend a District Forum meeting as an observer. To do this or find out more about the work of the District Forum, please contact the Neighbourhood Development team.

Tenant board membership



Commitment: Long term – a minimum of ten meetings a year

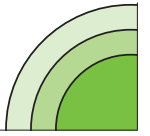
Level: Information, consultation and decision-making at highest level

You can become a member of the Board of Management. A selection panel recommends who can become a Board member, and shareholders vote on this at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Board works together to make major decisions on how to run Westlea. This includes the approving the Business Plan and all our major strategies.

Being a shareholder

Anyone can apply to be a shareholder. If you would like to know more about this or would like an application form, please contact Corporate Services. The Board decide who will be accepted. They look for applicants who have an interest in how Westlea is run. If you are accepted, you have to pay £1 for your “share” but there is no other cost involved.

More about getting involved



Your right to be involved

You have the right to be involved in how we run Westlea, from helping us to develop policy and strategy to deciding how we should provide services to improve your neighbourhoods and quality of life. To show our commitment to making these improvements, we have fully signed up to the National Housing Federation's "iN Business for Neighbourhoods" initiative.

What does this mean for me?

Our involvement guidelines give you the power to:

- give your neighbourhood its own voice;
- create a community spirit in your area;
- tackle local issues and problems;
- make sure we give everyone in the area the same opportunities and treat them fairly; and
- find out how our housing services work and help us run them better.

How can I get involved, and how does this work?

You can get involved at a level that suits you. There are lots of opportunities, with something to suit even the busiest person.

What support and training is available to help me get involved?

Our neighbourhood development team and neighbourhood housing officers will give you the help you need to get involved, from getting started to sorting out any problems along the way. We have a support package to make sure that being involved does not cost you anything.

We will pay for:

- your travel costs (at 40p per mile);
- your care costs, for example if you need someone to look after a disabled relative so that you can come to meetings (paid at same level as Social Services);
- the cost of hiring rooms (we must agree to this in advance, and you must check that people with disabilities can access the room); and
- you to attend national and regional conferences.

You can also use our:

- meeting rooms (these rooms have a hearing loop for people who use hearing aids);
- photocopiers;

More about getting involved



- equipment such as overhead projectors, a microphone and flipcharts; and
- Community Improvement Fund (money for special projects in the community).

We will give you:

- a start-up pack of tea, coffee, squash and biscuits; plus pens, paper, stamps and envelopes;
- support, information and advice; including attending meetings and giving presentations if you want us to;
- help to produce posters and flyers;
- a computer and printer, computer software (Microsoft Works and anti-virus protection), up to six sets of ink and paper per year, and help from our IT staff (depending on their availability);
- mentoring and shadowing opportunities (the chance to work closely with our staff, experienced tenants and residents and board members); and
- information in different languages, large print or on audio tape if you need it.

If you want to be involved, you can get free training in many things from setting up a group and applying for funds to how to write a newsletter and get on the internet! The sessions are always fun and relaxed, and give you the chance to gain new skills and experience.

There is no charge for any of this.

How can getting involved help make my neighbourhood a better place to live?

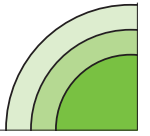
A key part of our business is improving neighbourhoods. We help tenant and resident groups apply for money from our Community Improvement Fund to make their neighbourhoods better. The District Forum approve how this money is shared out.

Recently, we have given groups money to develop a children's play area and support youth work. We also support health projects; sports/arts projects; and anything which builds the skills and confidence of local people.

How will we know if these guidelines are working, and how will you keep them up to date?

This is a "living" document – this means it will keep on changing and growing over time. We will ask you to help us review it every year and tell us what will make it better.

Checking our performance



We will set targets for the following areas:

- how your involvement has changed;
- our policies and procedures;
- how we make decisions;
- how we offer services (looking at reports that have gone to the Management Board asking to change things);
- how we set priorities and allocate resources (money, staff time etc);
- how training has made a difference;
- involving more people, in more ways, in more areas of the business; and
- spending less or offering better services by working with partners or asking other organisations to provide services for us.

We will produce an impact statement every year that shows how your involvement has made a difference to the decisions we have made and how well we have performed.

Equality and diversity

We will treat everyone fairly and equally. However, we also know that everyone is different and has different needs. We welcome these differences (diversity) and will do everything we can to respect and encourage them. This means:

- everyone should have equal access to our services and decision-making processes;
- our staff and board members should represent the local community;
- our contractors, consultants and partners also treat people fairly and equally;
- we do not discriminate against anyone, whatever their race; colour; ethnic or national origin; sex; sexuality; marital status; disability or illness; appearance; age; religion; or belief; and
- we will help you get involved if you have particular needs (for example, wheelchair access).

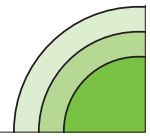
We expect our residents' groups to work in the same way.

What information can I get about what you are doing?

We will give you clear information, written in plain English, about all our services. This includes:

- HOME magazine. We send this to all households three times per year. It tells you what's happening in different neighbourhoods, how we have changed services, why

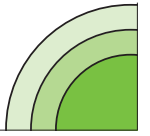
Checking our performance continued



we have made certain decisions, and how you have made a difference. It also includes tenant survey results, dates of estate walkabouts and dates of meetings.

- Our website, at www.westlea.co.uk.
- Various leaflets and newsletters, dealing with specific issues and what is happening in different neighbourhoods.
- Tenancy book. If you move into one of our homes, you will receive a welcome pack including a tenancy book, which tells you about your rights and responsibilities.
- Repairs book. This is also included in the welcome pack and has pictures of repair problems you might have to make it simple for you to report repairs to us.
- Annual Report. This includes performance statistics, financial information and data to show how our performance compares to other local landlords.
- Information packs for anyone interested in setting up a residents' group or joining a service user group.

How to contact us



Westlea Housing Association
Methuen Park
Chippenham SN14 0GU

tel 01249 465465
fax 01249 461136
text 07768 733755
enquiries@westlea.co.uk
www.westlea.co.uk



Methuen Park
Chippenham SN14 0GU
tel 01249 465465
fax 01249 461136
text 07768 733755
enquiries@westlea.co.uk
www.westlea.co.uk

If you would like to have any part of this document explained or translated, or in a different format such as in larger print, braille or on audio tape, please contact Westlea on 01249 465465 to discuss your needs.



1 إذا أردت شرحاً أو ترجمة لأي جزء من هذه الوثيقة، أو رغبت الحصول عليها بأشكال أخرى كالأحرف المطبوعة الكبيرة أو على شريط سمعي، فالرجاء الاتصال بـ Westlea "ويستلا" على الهاتف رقم 01249 465465 لمناقشة احتياجاتك.

2 এই ডকুমেন্টের কোন অংশ যদি আপনি ব্যাখ্যা করা অবস্থায় বা অনুবাদিত আকারে, অথবা অন্য কোন ফরম্যাটে পেতে চান যেমন বড় আকারের প্রিন্ট বা অডিও টেপ, তাহলে দয়া করে "ওয়েস্টলি" এর সাথে 01249 465 465 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করে আপনার প্রয়োজনীয়তা নিয়ে আলোচনা করুন।

3 你若希望有人給你解釋此份文件的任何內容，或想要索取翻譯本、大字印刷本或錄音帶等其他形式的文件，敬請聯絡 Westlea 以告知你的需求，電話號碼是：01249 465465。

4 Falls Sie für Teile dieses Dokuments eine Erläuterung oder Übersetzung benötigen oder es in einem anderen Format, z. B. mit größerem Schriftsatz oder auf Audiokassette, wünschen, wenden Sie sich bitte unter 01249 465465 an Westlea.

5 જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજના કોઈ પણ ભાગનો ખુલાસો અથવા તરજૂમો અથવા કોઈ જુદી રચનામાં જેમકે મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરોમાં અથવા ઓડિઓ ટેપ ઉપર જોઈતો હોય તો, કૃપા કરી 01249 465465 ઉપર તમારી જરૂરિયાતોની ચર્ચા કરવા Westlea નો સંપર્ક સાથે.

6 इस दस्तावेज़ का कोई सा भी अंश यदि आपको समझना हो या इसका अनुवाद अपनी भाषा में चाहिये, या किसी अन्य रूप में, जैसे बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई या सुनने वाली कसेट पर चाहिये तो अपनी आवश्यकताओं के बारे में बताने के लिये कृपया वेस्टली से फोन नंबर 01249 465465 पर संपर्क करें।

7 Jeśli potrzebuja Pan/Pani wyjaśnienia lub przetłumaczenia dowolnej części niniejszego dokumentu lub otrzymania go w innym formacie – np. w powiększonym druku albo w formie zapisu dźwiękowego, prosimy o skontaktowanie się z Westlea pod numerem: 01249 465465 w celu określenia Pana/Pani potrzeb.

8 ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਬਾਰੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਥੋਲੀ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਜਾਂ ਇਹਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਆਪਣੀ ਥੋਲੀ ਵਿਚ ਕਰਵਾਉਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਜਾਂ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਵੈਸਟਲੀਅ ਨੂੰ ਨੰਬਰ 01249 465465 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਲੋੜਾਂ ਦੱਸੋ।

9 Haddii aad jeceshahay in qayb walba ee dokumentigaan lagu sharxo ama lagu turjimo, ama aad ku rabtid hab nooc kale ah sida qoraal far waawayn ama jacal la dhageysto, fadlan la xiriir Westlea lambarka 01249 465465 sida aad uguula hadashid baahidaada.

10 اس دستاویز کا کوئی سا بھی حصہ اگر آپ کو اپنی زبان میں سمجھنے ہو یا تحریری ترجمہ درکار ہو، یا کسی دیگر شکل میں چاہئے جیسے بڑے حروف کی چھپائی یا شہدہ والی کسٹ وغیرہ پر تو اپنی ضرورتوں کے بارے میں بتانے کے لیے ہر اسے مریاتی "ویسٹ لی" سے فون نمبر 01249 465465 پر رابطہ کیجئے۔