# Guide to successful tenant participation

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# 1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION
### 1.1 Who is this guide for?
#### Tenant groups and tenants

This guide will be useful to tenant groups and individual tenants. Many demands are placed on tenant groups and tenants' representatives, including the need to be able to represent their members effectively, to negotiate and work in partnership with their landlord, and to provide good feedback to those they represent.

The information and practical advice featured within this guide may be of interest to you if you wish to increase your own or other tenants' involvement in housing and housing related services. It provides information on the legal framework for tenant participation and practical advice for successful tenant participation.

The good practice briefings at the back of this guide are examples of where tenants have successfully engaged with their landlord to directly influence decision making and service delivery and improve participation.

#### Local authorities and housing association staff

This guide provides employees of local authorities and registered social landlords (RSLs) with practical guidelines and examples of good practice in tenant participation, and outlines the legal requirements placed upon landlords.

As tenant participation develops across organisations, a range of staff will spend more time consulting with and involving tenants in a range of activities. While some landlords might employ dedicated tenant participation staff, good tenant participation should involve all staff throughout the organisation. This guide is designed for all staff and will be of particular use to front line staff who work with tenants and those that have decision making authority.

The guide contains details of techniques and methods to help landlords improve their ability to engage with tenants. Many of these are well known and tested.

Others build on recent innovations in the use of information and communications technology.

#### Elected members and committee members

While the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 sets out the statutory framework for tenant participation, its success very much depends upon landlords embracing tenant participation at the most senior level. Within some landlord organisations this still requires a major 'culture change'.

Elected members and committee members have a responsibility to lead the way, promoting and supporting the principles and processes that enable tenants to get involved in the management of their own homes and in wider community issues.

This guide sets out the legal framework for tenant participation, highlights how important it is that the principles of tenant participation are adopted throughout the organisation, and shows how successful tenant participation requires commitment from the top. The case studies at the end of this guide demonstrate how effective tenant participation can improve housing service delivery.

## 1.2 How to use this guide

This guide has been produced in loose leaf format so that additional copies can easily be made available and circulated to elected members, committee members, staff and tenant groups. Each section can also be used as training material for those who want to develop their knowledge further and for those who are new to tenant participation.

The ring binder is designed to allow users to add future good practice briefings and information particular to their own area. The guide has also been provided on a CD.

This guide has five main sections:

1. Introduction: Outlines what tenant participation is, the benefits it can bring, the legal framework for tenant participation and the importance of ensuring equal opportunities.

2. Tenant involvement: Provides information on varying aspects of tenant participation which can be used to increase the user's understanding of tenant participation and support the process of engaging with tenants, including tenants in traditionally excluded groups. Many of these techniques can also be used by tenant groups to encourage more active involvement by their members.

3. Tenant participation checklists: A number of checklists are provided which are designed to help landlords and tenants assess where they are in terms of tenant participation practice, and identify areas that need development and improvement.

4. Practical advice: Information on practical techniques that can be used to promote and improve the process of tenant participation.

5. Good practice briefings: A series of case studies demonstrating different approaches that tenants and landlords have taken together to improve and support tenant participation in their area. These can be found at the back of this guide. As good practice continues to be identified, The Scottish Governments Tenant Participation Development Team will publish and circulate more briefings which can be added to this guide.

## 1.3 What is tenant participation?

"Tenant participation is about tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies; housing conditions; and housing (and related) services. It is a two way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and service" National Strategy for Tenant Participation – Partners in Participation (1999).

The right to participate comes from a reasonable expectation on the part of tenants that housing services and policies should meet their needs and preferences, as far as possible within available resources. Effective participation leads to better and more responsive management and this helps inform decisions about improving service delivery and providing value for money.

## 1.4 The benefits of tenant participation

When working well, tenant participation delivers clear benefits for tenants, staff and landlords alike.

The benefits of effective tenant participation for everyone include:

- better service delivery and improved value for money;
- opportunities to develop new knowledge and skills;
- better communication between staff and tenants;

- better links between the community and landlords;
- informed and knowledgeable tenants who have the skills and confidence to influence decisions;
- staff and tenants being more aware of each other's perspectives and organisational and financial limitations;
- breaking down misunderstandings, helping to remove any mistrust between landlord and tenants, and building mutual respect and understanding;
- increased tenant satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood;
- increased job satisfaction for staff.

The benefits of tenant participation and improvements in service delivery will not happen overnight and will evolve over time as effective information, communication and participation structures strengthen.

## 1.5 The legal framework for tenant participation

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 ('the Act') introduced a legal framework for tenant participation. By virtue of having a Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) and a Short SST, tenants have rights to information and consultation (more information on SSTs and Short SSTs is available below). The aim of the legislation was to develop a platform on which successful and meaningful tenant participation can be built. The Act introduced new rights for tenants and placed new duties on landlords.

Landlords now have to:
- provide a range of information to their tenants;
- have in place a tenant participation strategy (see section 2.2);
- have a registration scheme for tenant organisations to register with them and keep a publicly available register of these registered tenant organisations (RTOs);
- consult with tenants and registered tenant organisations on a range of housing and related services (see section 2.6).

Section 54 of the Act introduced provisions to enable both individual tenants and registered tenant groups to be consulted by their landlord on issues affecting them. Landlords have to take account of the views of tenants and RTOs within a reasonable timescale.

For further information on registered tenant organisations see section 4.3.

If you would like further information about the tenant participation requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 go to www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2001/20010010.htm.

## Scottish Secure Tenancies and Short Scottish Secure Tenancies

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 also introduced a single form of tenancy for all tenants within the social rented sector. From 30 September 2002, all tenants of local authorities, housing associations (including tenants who are members of fully mutual co-operative housing associations), and water and sewerage authorities, transferred to a Scottish Secure Tenancy. There are some exceptions to this, for example, tied houses (where tenants live because of their job). If you are not sure about what type of tenancy you have, you should contact your landlord.

Under the SST, tenants have a number of rights including legal rights to succession in the event of death, the right to sublet a tenancy and apply for a joint tenancy. Landlords must agree to these applications unless there is a good reason for not doing so.

The Short SST includes the same rights as the full SST, except that there is no right to buy, your tenancy cannot be succeeded to when you die and your right to stay in your home is

more limited than with a full Scottish Secure Tenancy. If your landlord offers you a Short SST and you are not happy with it, you have the right to appeal.

For more information on SSTs and Short SSTs see the Scottish Government's website at www.scotland.gov.uk.

## 1.6 Ensuring equal opportunities

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 was a major landmark in re-enforcing and promoting equal opportunities in Scottish housing. The Act requires landlords to approach tenant participation in a manner that encourages equal opportunities and observes equal opportunity requirements laid out in other legislation (section 106). Other relevant legislation includes the:

- Equal Pay Act 1970;
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975;
- Race Relations Act 1976;
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

The Act introduced specific responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities and tenant participation, and landlords are required to:

- ensure barriers to participation such as language, accessibility, timing, costs for tenants and childcare have been considered;
- consider the needs of equalities groups and proactively involve traditionally excluded groups in the participation process (see section 2.7 & 2.8); and
- ensure registered tenant organisations promote equal opportunities and are open and accessible to all tenants through the criteria for registration.

Registered tenant organisations (RTOs) are also required to promote equal opportunities for those in the communities they represent and their commitment to do so should be included in their constitution. Landlords should ensure, through support and encouragement, that equal opportunities are at the centre of their activities. RTOs should proactively seek the participation of excluded groups in their own organisation. See sections 2.7 & 2.8. More information on how some landlords have involved excluded groups is provided in the good practice briefings at Section 5.

## 1.7 Role of the regulator

The Scottish Government has the role of regulating and inspecting social landlords through its Scottish Housing Regulator. In relation to tenant participation, all landlords inspected by the Scottish Housing Regulator will have to demonstrate that they are achieving the following Performance Standard: "We have published and are implementing a sound strategy for encouraging and supporting tenants, residents and service users to participate actively in all areas of our work. We support tenants who take an active interest in managing their homes." The inspection process will examine how well the landlord's participation strategy is being put into practice and the views of tenants, tenant groups and staff will be considered.

Guidance on the inspection process can be found on the Scottish Housing Regulators website:www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk.

## 2.0 TENANT INVOLVEMENT
## 2.1 Landlords' approach to tenant participation

While all landlords are required to meet the statutory requirements relating to tenant participation, tenant participation has been most effective where landlords have gone beyond

the requirements of the law. Partnership working between landlords and tenants achieves value for money and results in significant improvements to the quality of service delivery. Successful tenant participation depends upon landlords being committed and open to influence, and tenants having the information, support and confidence to get involved. All those concerned, including tenants, elected members, governing bodies and housing staff, must be willing and committed to share power and work in partnership. It is essential that commitment to tenant participation is driven throughout a landlord organisation from the top. It is important that senior staff have strategic responsibility for tenant participation and that tenant participation is not seen in isolation, but as an integral part of the way the organisation operates.

Political commitment to tenant involvement is also crucial. In some cases elected members or governing body members may feel that their role could be undermined by meaningful tenant participation. Where this is the case, work needs to be undertaken to promote the benefits, legal obligations and partnership principles of fully effective participation. Similarly some members of staff may feel that tenant participation makes their job more difficult and again training and awareness-raising will be required to promote tenant participation and change attitudes towards involving tenants in decision making. See section 2.5 for more information on training.

Landlords should ensure that, as far as possible, staff who work with tenants and tenant groups have the delegated authority to make decisions and be able to respond to tenants' requests. This will not only speed up the process, but will also strengthen the relationship between landlords and their tenants and promote a culture of trust and mutual respect.

## 2.2 Tenant participation strategies

The term 'tenant participation strategy' comes from the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. Under the Act, landlords must publish a tenant participation strategy in consultation with their tenants and registered tenant organisations. The strategy should be reviewed and monitored regularly to ensure that it is working.

A strategy is a flexible action plan that:
- outlines the landlord's commitment to involving tenants and tenant organisations in decisions about their homes and communities;
- says how this will be carried out;
- details the resources available;
- sets out a range of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) targets.

Implementing an effective tenant participation strategy or reviewing an existing strategy requires landlords and tenants to review their current participation arrangements and progress against targets. Reviewing tenant participation will help landlords and tenants to determine:
- where they are starting from;
- what progress has been made;
- if effective participation is taking place 'on the ground';
- what factors are limiting tenant participation;
- what needs to be changed or built upon;
- training and support needs;
- adjustments to the resources required.

You might find it useful when carrying out a review to undertake an audit of what you are doing well and what needs to be improved. You may decide to use the checklists at Section 3 or enlist the support of a specialist organisation to help you review your tenant participation strategy.

The review process must involve staff at all levels, elected members and governing bodies and of course tenants and tenant groups. We recommend that the implementation of the strategy is subject to ongoing monitoring and is reviewed at least every three years. These timescales however should be agreed with tenants.

A comprehensive and robust strategy will include:

- an introduction/foreword;
- the strategy's background (including the legal framework);
- aims and objectives;
- how the strategy was developed and who was involved;
- why the strategy is in place and the benefits of tenant participation;
- links to other strategies and services;
- how tenants will be kept informed;
- consultation;
- giving tenants feedback;
- how the strategy will be monitored and reviewed;
- working with registered tenant organisations (RTOs);
- resources;
- timescales;
- training;
- equal opportunities;
- action plan.

Looking at these headings in more detail, the following information should be included:

## Introduction/foreword
This should be from the convenor of housing, the chair of the management committee, chief executive or director of housing. This shows the organisation's commitment at the most senior level.

The introduction should demonstrate from the outset that the landlord recognises that tenants are at the heart of its business and that tenant participation is a continuous process which must be constantly reviewed.

## Background
It is useful to provide an outline of the duties and responsibilities that the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places on landlords and the rights tenants have to be involved in housing and related matters. This section can also highlight previous commitments and achievements in tenant participation and give details of current tenant participation structures and activity.

## Aims and objectives
This section should set out the aims of the organisation in developing the strategy. It should recognise the benefits and importance of involving tenants in decision-making processes, and of committing to continuous improvement in tenant participation, not simply meeting the minimum legal requirements.

## How the strategy was developed and who was involved
The Act says that landlords have to gather and take account of the views of registered tenant organisations and tenants in matters that affect them, including the tenant participation strategy. Within this section you could give examples of how tenants and registered groups were involved in developing the strategy and how this consultation has helped to influence decisions and outcomes.

It is also useful to specify members of staff who tenants can contact about tenant participation and to give contact details for local tenant groups.

## Why the strategy is in place and the benefits of tenant participation

This section can be used to highlight and promote the benefits of tenant participation to tenants, staff and the wider community. If tenants have a meaningful role in making decisions and understand the processes, greater trust and a better working relationship will develop. Ultimately, this will increase the levels of satisfaction with the services landlords provide.

## Links to other strategies and services

When reviewing a tenant participation strategy, think about how it links with other strategies, for example, the local housing strategy, the community plan and equal opportunities policy. By making links with other strategies you can make the most of opportunities to consult people and increase tenants' awareness of local issues. Tenant participation should not be seen in isolation, but as an integral part of the way landlords operate.

## How tenants will be kept informed

This section should set out the range of methods that will be used to keep tenants informed. It should show that tenants have been asked how they want to be kept informed and what information they want. Tenants' preferences, circumstances and priorities may change over time and how they want to be kept informed will depend on the particular issue. When consulting with tenants, regularly review how they want to be kept informed. Consider using a mix of:

- newsletters and information leaflets;
- a tenants' handbook;
- open days and conferences;
- road shows;
- consultation registers;
- website and IT developments;
- focus groups;
- text messages;
- email bulletins; and
- village voices or street representatives (see section 2.9 for more details).

## Consultation

This section should set out what issues landlords will consult tenants on and what methods they have decided, with tenants, to use. Landlords have to show that they have asked tenants what housing and related issues they want to be consulted on. Some organisations may have little or no formal history of asking for tenants' views, so this may require a change in the organisation's culture. This may be a gradual process which will have to be developed and strengthened over time. However, supporting and encouraging tenants to get involved can mean that information, ideas and power are shared successfully.

Effective consultation is not just a one-off process. It encompasses a wide range of methods so tenants can become fully involved if and when they choose.

Consultation methods need to be reviewed regularly to make sure that they are working and that they meet the needs of all groups of people. You can use different methods including:

- focus and working groups;
- postal, phone and door-to-door surveys;
- house visits;

- conferences;
- road shows;
- tenants' forums; and
- consultation registers.

Scottish Governments 'Community Engagement How To Guide' features information on these practical techniques and others. You can find this guide on the Scottish Governments website at http://sh45inta/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/engage/guide

Many tenants often do not want to be involved in formal forums or meetings, so a useful way of getting people's views is to set up a consultation register of interested tenants. Landlords could invite every tenant to be included on a register so they can be contacted when their specific area of interest arises. This allows people with a genuine interest in a topic to be involved and provides a database of interested people for landlords to use in the future.

## Giving tenants feedback

This is one of the most important areas in the participation process and often one which is forgotten. You must carefully consider how you will give feedback following all consultation processes, and the method of feedback should be agreed with tenants themselves. This section should clearly set out how you will let tenants know how their opinions helped shape policy and service delivery, and where it hasn't explained the reasons for this. Tenants take the time to respond to a questionnaire or attend a meeting but are not often made aware of the outcome of their involvement. By keeping tenants informed of how their contribution has influenced an issue, they may be more willing to continue being involved. Tenants should decide how they want to receive feedback, whether it is in the form of:

- individual letters;
- newsletters and information leaflets;
- open days;
- a website;
- text messages; and
- follow-up meetings or focus groups.

## How the strategy will be monitored and reviewed

This section should set out the arrangements to monitor and review the strategy on a continuous basis against objectives. Landlords should develop and agree these arrangements in consultation with tenants and tenant organisations. They should also develop ways to test how the strategy is working and involve tenants and tenant organisations in this. One way of showing that the strategy is working would be to include examples of how and on what issues tenants were involved and the outcome of that involvement. This may also encourage others to get involved, if they see tenants making a difference to policies and practices.

An annual review could include:

- progress with the annual action plan;
- tenant and staff training (what training they have had and what they need);
- reviewing minutes from tenants' and residents' meetings to monitor progress;
- feedback and follow up on surveys; and
- the number of events held and the numbers attending.
- For more information on monitoring and evaluation see section 2.3.

## Working with registered tenant organisations (RTOs)

The Act gives tenant organisations who register with their landlord a recognised role in the tenant participation process. A registered tenant organisation is an independent organisation set up to represent tenants' interests on housing and related issues. Tenant organisations can register with more than one landlord if they represent tenants from different landlords. Landlords must have a scheme in place for registering tenant groups and maintain a public register of RTOs that is available for inspection at reasonable times (for example, during office hours). The register should contain:

- the name of the organisation;
- the area it covers;
- a contact address; and
- any other relevant information (for example, when meetings are held).

This section should set out the ways in which landlords will work with and support new, developing and established tenant organisations in terms of staff and financial resources (for example, training, administration support and making premises available to hold meetings). The strategy should set out the arrangements for registering tenant organisations. It should also set out the procedure for an organisation appealing against not being registered or being removed from the register. For more information see section 4.3.

### Resources

The strategy should set out the resources to be given to tenant participation.
This will include:

- training requirements (for tenants, staff, elected members and committee members);
- hiring meeting rooms;
- the cost of providing lunch, teas and coffee;
- providing crèche facilities;
- out of pocket expenses;
- consultation costs;
- travelling expenses for tenants going to meetings;
- printing and posting newsletters and other information;
- grants to help new, developing and established tenant organisations;
- access to IT and support networks;
- staff time;
- going to conferences and seminars.

For more information on resourcing tenant participation see section 2.4.

### Timescales

It is essential to plan and include enough time to consult tenants and RTOs, so that they have sufficient time to debate and discuss issues with the tenants they represent, and have a real opportunity to influence the landlord's service and performance. Tenants need enough time to consider options fully. The time required will vary depending on the issue and RTOs should be involved in setting acceptable timescales. Tenants should also be involved in agreeing priorities for services and issues they are consulted on. One effective way of doing this is to produce a yearly action plan or a participation calendar that clearly sets out achievable priorities for the year ahead. These should reflect both the landlord's and tenants' priorities.

### Training

This section should set out the landlord's commitment to make sure that tenants, staff, elected members and committee members have the necessary skills to allow them to get involved. Tenants and landlords together should assess training needs and make the appropriate training

courses available. An effective way of breaking down barriers and building positive relationships is to hold joint training sessions that bring together tenants, staff and elected members and committee members. This also gives everyone involved the opportunity to hear the views and perspectives of others. Regularly monitor and review training needs as these will change over time. The learners' resource pack developed by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration (SCR) will help everyone to regularly monitor and review training needs. Details are available on the centre's website at http://sh45inta/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/scr

## Equal opportunities

Under the Act, landlords must assess the needs of equalities groups living in the area and ensure tenant participation is accessible to all. Everyone has a responsibility to break down barriers and to involve as many people as possible.

The SST sign up stage is a good opportunity to find out any needs of new tenants and from there put in place procedures to meet these needs. Landlords should proactively encourage participation from particular groups as they may have specific housing needs and concerns. The strategy should be a framework that allows everyone involved in delivering and receiving housing and associated services to work towards continuously improving these services.

More information on equal opportunities is provided in section 1.6.

## Action plan

Within the strategy should be an action plan that sets out what policies and practices are to be reviewed and/or introduced, what events are being held and how tenants will be involved in the process. Broad information, support and learning needs should be outlined and realistic timescales should be set.

## Beyond the strategy

Having a strategy document is only the start of the process to develop and improve tenant participation. Organisations, including directors, managers, frontline staff, elected members and management committee members, need to support tenants to be involved in the decision making process. The commitments and actions in the strategy should support the organisation's commitment to work in partnership with its tenants.

## 2.3 Monitoring and evaluating tenant participation

Tenant participation is an ongoing and evolving process that will lead to benefits for tenants, landlords and local communities. Monitoring and evaluating tenant participation is important to find out if agreed objectives have been met, to recognise which activities are working well and those which are not so effective and to adapt participation structures to meet changing circumstances and priorities.

Monitoring and evaluation is however the least developed area of tenant participation. This section of the guide therefore provides the basis of an approach that landlords and tenants can use to develop their monitoring and evaluation processes. It is important that landlords and tenants experiment to find ways of evaluating participation that are realistic, practical and focus on the outcomes that matter the most to those involved.

## What is monitoring and evaluation?

Monitoring enables landlords and tenants to check progress in implementing their tenant participation strategy as it develops and evolves.

Evaluation enables landlords and tenants to measure the effectiveness of the tenant participation strategy by assessing the success of the outcomes of tenant participation. Although the nature of monitoring and evaluation may itself change over time it is important that there is sufficient consistency to enable progress to be measured.

## Planning for monitoring and evaluation

Landlords and tenants should be involved in developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks and this should be detailed in the tenant participation strategy. Development should involve tenants' representatives, other tenants, staff at all levels, elected and committee members and in some cases local agencies and organisations.

It is important to focus monitoring and evaluation on issues that are important to the participants involved and to be realistic about the time and resources that are required for monitoring and evaluation.

A checklist to help you plan for monitoring and evaluation is provided in section 3.2.

## What do you monitor and evaluate?

The evaluation of tenant participation can be complex, as many of the outcomes cannot be measured simply in terms of numbers or financial figures. The views, opinions and perceptions of tenants and staff all need to be taken into account to assess the level of influence tenants have had, and whether this has resulted in an improvement in housing policy and standards.

Before jumping into monitoring and evaluation be clear what the aims and objectives of tenant participation for your organisation and local area are.

For example they could be:

- ☐an improvement in housing services and standards;
- ☐an increase in tenant involvement in decision making;
- ☐increased tenant satisfaction with housing services, standards and living conditions;
- ☐promoting tenant participation among equalities groups;
- ☐improved communication and better working relationships between tenants, staff, elected members and committee members.

## Options for measuring tenant participation

In evaluating tenant participation, local performance indicators should be developed and examined under the following categories: inputs, outputs and outcomes.

Measure inputs by examining:

- staff time;
- budget to support tenant participation;
- premises available to tenant groups and representatives;
- office facilities available to tenant groups, for instance, photocopying, mail, IT;
- support to attend meetings, for instance, transport, crèches, out of pocket expenses;
- provision of information, including leaflets and newsletters;
- training for staff, tenants and governing body;
- type of training available to tenants, staff and governing body;
- access to independent advice.
- 

Measure outputs by examining:

- areas that tenants have influenced, such as policy development;
- range of decisions in which tenants are involved;
- variety of tenant participation structures and mechanisms;

- actual and committed expenditure on tenant participation compared with budget provision;
- representation of tenant group membership, for instance, area coverage, age, gender, ethnicity, and how this has changed over time;
- number of registered and non-registered groups as a proportion of housing stock and how this has changed over time;
- number of individuals participating as a proportion of housing stock;
- number, variety and frequency of different methods of communication and engagement;
- number of tenants and staff receiving training;
- percentage of tenants responding to consultation.

Measure outcomes by examining:
- the influence tenants have had in decision-making;
- increase in tenants' ability to get involved;
- improvements in housing services due to more effective contribution by tenants;
- increases in representation of tenants in the local community;
- views of tenants, staff and governing body members about the difference tenant participation has made; and
- success in reaching new people.

These measures should not be viewed in isolation but as part of a package for assessing the impact and effectiveness of tenant participation. Tenant participation develops differently in different areas and depends on local circumstances, and practices will change over time. Before trying to measure the success of tenant participation in your area be clear about what success would look like in your area and base your evaluation on that model.

## 2.4 Resourcing tenant participation

Local authorities and RSLs are legally required to carry out an assessment of the resources required to implement tenant participation. The tenant participation strategy should set out the resources that will be made available to implement and support tenant participation. Resourcing tenant participation is about more than money. It also includes things like staff support and access to meeting venues. This section outlines why resources are essential for successful tenant participation and provides a framework to help landlords and tenants carry out an assessment of how they resource participation.

Neither the legislation nor associated guidance specifically states what activities landlords should resource. This is because resource requirements will differ significantly from area to area. However, resources should be negotiated and agreed with tenants and reviewed regularly.

Below is a list and explanation of the key activities that will require resources.

### Types of activity
### Staff time

To help tenant groups to set up, support existing groups as their activities broaden and develop, and support consultation with the wider community. This can be done in a number of ways, for example through employing specialist tenant participation staff, support from generic housing staff, commissioning independent specialist organisations, seconding staff to work directly with tenant organisations and providing funding to enable groups and federations to employ staff. Staff time will also be required at a strategic level to ensure the strategy is working.

### Staff training

Training programmes to increase knowledge and understanding of tenant participation and enable all staff to develop the skills required to develop tenant participation practice. Training can be provided both internally and externally. The Scottish Centre for Regeneration's learners' resource pack can help individuals identify all their learning needs and help them to identify suitable learning programmes.

### Tenants'

Training programme developed with tenants to meet their individual and collective needs and enable them to fully participate. This may include attendance at seminars and conferences, training to increase knowledge and understanding, to effectively organise a tenants' group (for instance, minute taking and committee skills), to negotiate and consult effectively with the wider community and to access

### Development

It is essential that tenants can access staff who will support them to build their skills, knowledge and confidence to enable them to participate. Development support can include:

- help to set up and support new groups;
- supporting existing groups;
- supporting individual office bearers and committee members to be more effective;
- providing training to increase knowledge of the landlord organisation and on housing and community issues;
- providing relevant and accurate information;
- facilitating networking with other tenant organisations and agencies.

Training and briefing to keep members informed of good practice and the development of tenant participation.

### Consultation

Consultation can be carried out in a number of ways, for example, through focus groups, working groups, monitoring groups and policy review. For more information on consultation see Section 2.6.

### Information

Tenants require good information to participate effectively. This will include providing information about tenants' rights; rent policy and procedures; allocations policy; right to buy; housing management policies; modernisation and regeneration proposals; the landlord's decision-making structures; the tenant participation strategy etc.

For more information on providing information see section 2.6.

### Direct grants

This will include start up grants and annual running cost grants to cover, for example, stationery, mailings, venue hire, telephone costs, office costs and attendance at conferences. Funding should be realistically based on the group's planned activities. Some groups will require larger grants than others based on the maturity and level of activity of the organisation.

There should not be financial barriers to tenants participating and funding should be available to cover travel expenses, child care and other care costs, communication aids and to provide suitable transport where required. Expenses should be refunded promptly and where possible paid on the day.

### Communication

Communication with tenants and groups should be clear, timely and done in a variety of ways, for example: organising public meetings, open days, conferences, publicity materials, information and communication technology. Communication should be a two way process.

### Independent

To provide tenants with impartial information and advice where tenants think this would be useful.

Generally used where issues are complex and tenants would benefit from a full understanding of service delivery issues and service user issues.

### How much should landlords spend?

This is a common question! The findings of research into resourcing tenant participation across the UK have been mixed. Some studies have indicated the level of resources has a significant impact on the success of tenant participation, while others have not found this to be the case. What is clear is that it is crucial that landlords agree with tenants the level of resources that should be allocated to tenant participation and that tenants are involved in agreeing the priorities for the tenant participation budget. Resources also need to be regularly reviewed as participation structures improve and develop.

### Where does the money come from?

The majority of funding for tenant participation comes from tenant rental income. However, many groups represent all tenants and other residents in their area. In these circumstances, local authorities should consider using general funds to part-fund engagement activities, instead of all the money coming out of tenants' rents.

Where a tenants' group represents more than one landlord, landlords should provide funding and support in proportion to the number of tenants represented by the group.

Many landlords are now pooling their resources to meet the costs of participation or jointly employing a tenant participation officer. This is particularly effective among smaller landlords.

External sources of funding can also be accessed by tenant groups to provide facilities for the community that otherwise would not be made available. Sources of funding include the National Lottery, European Social Fund, Scottish Government, and charitable organisations. However, it is the responsibility of the landlord to meet the development support, administration and organisational needs of tenant groups.

### Grants to tenant groups

The majority of landlords fund tenant groups by providing them with a start up grant to get established, purchase essential equipment and raise awareness of their group. Groups are then usually given an administration grant, which is paid annually to cover the running costs of the group. One approach to determining the level of administration grant is to have a fixed sum plus a per-house quota, with the option to apply for additional funding for specific purposes. Another approach is for groups to plan their activities for the coming year and present a business plan to their landlord detailing their aims, planned activities and resource requirements. This gives tenants' groups more control over their funding and how they choose to spend it. Where possible, landlords should allow tenant organisations to be in control of their finances provided proper accountability arrangements are in place and tenants receive training in managing and accounting resources.

The level of grants and means of awarding grants should be negotiated between landlords and tenant groups. Clearly landlords do not have an unlimited budget and resources need to be prioritised and allocated accordingly. The resources for tenant participation should be determined with tenants in the rent setting process. Tenant groups have a responsibility to plan their activities in advance and spend their grant funding appropriately.

### Fundraising

Many groups across the country organise their own fundraising events to raise money to assist with running costs and the purchase of equipment for their group. Local fundraising events such as coffee mornings and bingo nights not only bring in additional income, but also raise tenant and community awareness about the group and can encourage more people to get involved.

## Accessing external funding

Going beyond the issue of 'core funding', many tenant groups would like to undertake community projects that improve their local area, such as environmental projects, providing facilities for local children and so on. Clearly landlords have a limited budget and they may be unable to finance such projects or cannot carry them out for a number of years. However, there are lots of organisations who offer grant funding for community projects and many tenant organisations across Scotland have been successful in tapping into these resources. FunderFinder is an excellent software package that helps not-for-profit organisations in the UK to identify charitable trusts that might give them money. It also gives advice on filling out funding application forms to ensure that your application has the best chance of being successful. Your landlord might have this software or be able to direct you to a local organisation that has it.

## 2.5 Training and support for staff and tenants

## Training for staff

Staff need to be clear about their roles in relation to consulting and working with tenants and tenant groups. As tenant participation develops a range of staff will spend more time working with tenants. While some landlords may employ specialist tenant participation staff to oversee tenant participation, good tenant participation is the responsibility of all staff. Tenant participation therefore has time implications for all staff.

The staff most involved in working with tenants and tenant groups will be front line staff who meet tenants and managers who have decision making authority.

It is essential that all staff who meet with tenants understand the legal duties regarding tenant participation and consultation. Senior managers need to ensure that staff are properly trained and supported to work with tenants, as well as having appropriate delegated authority to make decisions and respond to requests from tenants.

Tenant participation can no longer be viewed as a specialist area – all staff have a role to play. All departments within a landlord organisation will be involved at one time or another in planning, assisting or delivering information or consultation events to tenants and should therefore be aware of good practice.

## Training for tenants

To be able to fully participate, tenants need access to information, training and development support. They will require some or all of the following:

- training and the opportunity to meet with other tenants and learn from their experiences;
- funds to cover administration costs;
- access to suitable premises;
- support to gradually develop their group;
- access to wider tenant opinion;
- attendance at seminars and conferences;
- encouragement and support to form representative organisations;
- independent advice.

Training needs should be assessed and agreed with individual groups.

## Development support

It is important that tenants have access to staff who are able to help them build their skills, knowledge and organisational ability to participate, when they want it. Development support includes:

- support and advice for tenants who want to form a group;
- supporting the growth of existing groups;
  supporting individual office bearers and committee members to be effective;
- helping tenants identify their needs through use of approaches such as the Scottish Centre for Regeneration's skills framework and learners' resource pack;
- providing training to increase organisational skills and knowledge of housing issues;
- providing relevant and timely information;
- enabling groups to network with other tenant organisations and agencies;
- independent advice.

For more information on working with tenant groups see section 4.4.

## Joint training

It is beneficial, and often more cost effective, to hold joint training sessions for staff and tenants. Joint training reinforces the message that tenants are equal partners and can strengthen relations between tenant representatives and staff.

## Accessing training

Training for staff and tenants can be delivered in different ways. Depending on the issue, landlords may have the skills and capacity to deliver tenant and staff training themselves 'in house'. In some cases external trainers will be invited to the organisation to give training to staff and tenants on a particular subject. The delivery of training sessions such as these is useful because they are usually focused on issues or needs specific to your particular area and local circumstances.

Remember that training comes in a number of formats, including shadowing an individual, and visiting another tenants' group, tenants' federation or landlord. It is up to you to think about your own and your group's training needs, and to find the appropriate training available to meet those needs.

More general training in a number of areas is available through the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), Tenants Information Service (TIS) and TIGHRA. The Scottish Centre for Regeneration runs a number of free events across the country throughout the year on a wide range of areas related to community regeneration.

## Independent advice

Organisations such as TIS, TPAS and TIGHRA provide impartial information and advice to tenants. The role of independent advisors is well established in the community ownership process and they are also frequently used to advise tenants on carrying out policy reviews and developing and reviewing tenant participation strategies. Contact details for these organisations are available at Appendix 2.

## 2.6 Levels of tenant participation

There are a range of ways that landlords and tenants can exchange information and views on housing issues and make decisions together. Different processes for different issues should be commonplace. For participation to work, tenants must see the value of getting involved, decide the level of participation they wish to be involved at, and decide how they wish to be represented.

Research carried out by TIS and Glasgow University ('A Good Practice Framework for Tenant Participation in Scotland') highlighted three different levels of tenant participation:

- consultation;
- deciding together;
- acting together.

In order to participate effectively at any of these levels, information and support is essential. Tenants need to have all the information necessary to consider issues properly. In order to do this landlords and tenants should jointly agree on an information strategy. This would set out how information will be communicated between all participants. It is important that information is:

- easily understandable;
- made available with sufficient time for tenants to fully participate, consult with others and give their views;
- accurate;
- relevant;
- made available in formats that suit the user, such as Braille, audio tape and community languages.

Within the limits of confidentiality all participants should have equal access to information that is relevant to tenant participation. Where information is sensitive it should be made clear why it is restricted and that participants are bound by confidentiality.

Tenants must have the opportunity to identify what support they need to participate. There should not be practical or financial barriers to tenant involvement. Where appropriate landlords should ensure that:

- meeting venues are accessible;
- meetings are held at times that suit tenants;
- funding is available to cover crèche or care costs;
- transport and out of pocket expenses are reimbursed promptly;
- communication aids (loop systems, interpreting) are available;
- relevant training is provided.

Tenants will need access to equipment such as photocopiers, computers and internet access and these costs should be met by the landlord. Staff support should be available to groups to assist them in the day-to-day running of their group

## Consultation

Landlords are legally required to consult with RTOs and individual tenants on a range of housing and related issues, which may affect them under Section 54 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Consultation provides tenants with an opportunity to give their views, but does not give the opportunity to develop their own ideas or participate in putting the plans into action. Consultation involves asking for tenants' views in order to consider them before reaching decisions, with sufficient time for tenants to formulate their views and landlords to consider them, and agree to the outcome together.

There are a range of consultation methods that can be used, including:

- focus groups and working groups;
- postal, phone and door-to-door surveys;
- house visits;
- conferences;
- road shows;
- tenants' forums;

- consultation registers.

Whatever method is used, it is essential to provide tenants with sufficient time to respond. Where possible it is also sensible to avoid carrying out a consultation exercise at times of the year where tenants are less likely to be able to get involved, such as over Christmas and New Year or the summer holiday period. The timing of religious festivals should be considered. Most importantly, consultation should be carried out before proposals are formulated, although there will be occasions (involving legal requirements, for instance) where the outline proposals are already formulated and are not negotiable.

It is vital to feed back to tenants the results and outcomes of a consultation exercise. This is often the missing link and can lead to misunderstanding, break down of trust and disillusionment.

Where feedback is not given tenants may be reluctant to get involved in the future. Feedback should include the options that have been considered, and the decisions and actions agreed, along with any future activity. The feedback should be provided within an agreed timescale and format.

## Deciding together

Negotiation between tenant representatives and landlords suggests that both parties have an interest in reaching a mutually satisfactory outcome. This type of negotiating relationship often takes time to develop but is the most positive working relationship tenants and landlords can have.

This involves tenants contributing ideas and options at the outset in deciding the best way forward. This process is likely to involve tenants' representatives and groups rather than individuals. Most of the common structures set up to achieve joint decision making are established over a period of months or years. These structures could be long-term forums that cover a number of areas or short life working groups set up to tackle a specific issue. In reaching a joint decision, the process tends to be smoother where tenants have been involved at the start of the process and have been involved in actually defining the nature and scale of issue. If a shared perception of the issue emerges it tends to be easier to reach agreements about solutions.

Research indicates that it is often landlords who stop short before the 'deciding together' stage, because they underestimate the potential of tenant groups to get involved. Sharing power may require a fundamental change in an organisation's culture, and staff are more likely to take participation seriously if there is commitment from the top.

## Acting together

This involves tenants and landlords working together to develop plans and ideas and put them into action. Examples of tenants and landlords working effectively together are provided in the good practice briefings in Section 5.

At all levels of participation the National Standards for Community Engagement should be adopted. The standards are a practical tool to help all participants involved in community engagement to achieve the highest quality of process and results. The standards can be used in both formal and informal community engagement. For more information see the standards at www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk.

## Planning tenant participation activities

There is no blueprint for planning tenant participation. Different ways suit different circumstances. Approaches should be flexible to suit the particular issues and the level at which tenants wish to get involved. When agreeing the best tenant participation approach for particular issues, there are a number of key steps to consider. The flow chart (figure 1), taken

from the 'Good Practice Framework for Tenant Participation in Scotland', outlines the key steps that tenants and landlords need to consider when planning tenant participation activities.

## Figure 1.Process for planning tenant participation

Identify the topic or issue that needs to be examined by tenants and landlord Who will represent tenants in the process? Who will represent the landlord in the process? Clarify and agree the matter for consideration Identify broad timescales Identify support and learning needs Identify information needs Schedule meetings and events Decide when and how to consult more tenants Examine possible solutions and make recommendations; reach agreement. Report on Agree perceptions of areas that need to be addressed outcomes.

## 2.7 Involving traditionally excluded groups

It is important that every tenant has the opportunity to participate. However there are particular groups that are under-represented in mainstream participation structures, for example minority ethnic communities, young people, tenants with support needs, and older tenants in supported accommodation.

Identifying and engaging with these groups is crucial to successful tenant participation. Landlords and tenant groups need to be proactive and put arrangements in place specifically to involve traditionally excluded groups. Case study examples of involving excluded groups are in Section 5 of this guide and more general advice is given below and in the Community Engagement How To Guide.

## Identifying the needs of excluded groups

Research has highlighted the importance of developing links between excluded tenants. Making these links can be very important in building the confidence of isolated individuals and in strengthening the position of traditionally excluded groups in participation processes. This may involve tapping into networks beyond the immediate local area. These include advocacy organisations, religious and cultural groups.

Working with organisations that act as advocates for particular groups enables landlords to:

- identify and address issues likely to impact on the participation of excluded groups;
- work with organisations who have established the trust of excluded groups;
- use existing structures to contact excluded individuals;
- help to make links between particular groups and individual tenants.

Landlords can also use their own methods to build up data about the needs of their tenants who have traditionally been excluded. For example, when new tenants sign their Scottish Secure Tenancy this can be used as an opportunity to gather equalities information, and details about their preferred means of communication and involvement.

## Removing barriers

Many of the barriers facing excluded individuals are the same as those facing other tenants, for example access to information, self-confidence, time or location of meetings. However some tenants face additional barriers. Steps can be taken to remove these barriers to participation, and many landlords across Scotland have undertaken some or all of the following basic measures:

- where required, making information available in appropriate formats, including Braille, audio and videotape, CD-rom and community languages;
- holding events in venues that are accessible to those with physical disabilities;
- providing transport to and from events;

- ☐using venues that are used by community organisations working with excluded groups;
  ☐tapping into cultural events;
- ☐holding meetings and events at suitable times*;
- ☐using information technology to communicate with those living in remote areas or those with mobility difficulties;
- ☐providing crèche facilities and offering carer allowances.

*This includes holding events at different times to get around varying schedules (including shift work and full-time work) and preferences (for example some individuals may not like going out in the evenings). It's important that you also take into account religious festivals when planning events.

An equally important barrier to the participation of traditionally excluded groups is the feeling of isolation and lack of confidence often felt by individuals. These barriers can be addressed through the development of trusting and supportive relationships between staff and individual tenants, and between existing tenant groups and individual tenants.

## Separate but integrated participation structures

It is essential that equal opportunities are promoted within all 'mainstream' participation structures and activities. However, minority or excluded groups may feel isolated and lack confidence, and in some cases this may be made worse by the attitudes of other members of the community towards them. One way that landlords can get help is to establish specific participation initiatives aimed at these groups. These can include one-off events, such as social events and outings for young or older tenants, or establishing longer-lasting structures for participation.

Traditionally excluded groups may wish to establish a distinctive collective voice through alternative forms of participation and landlords should seek to facilitate this. But it is equally important that careful thought is given to how this fits with wider participation structures, to ensure that excluded groups do not become structurally isolated.

For further advice and information on involving traditionally excluded groups please see the case studies at the back of this guide. For further advice on involving minority ethnic individuals see also section 2.8.

## 2.8 Engaging with minority ethnic communities

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, landlords have a specific requirement to consider the needs of equalities groups in tenant participation. Almost every part of Scotland, including the most isolated rural communities, now has a multiethnic population and this has major implications for the relevance and appropriateness of mainstream services.

Although many landlords are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of consulting with minority ethnic tenants and service users, traditional methods of engagement are not always suitable for cultural, religious or social reasons.

The usual standards for engagement are still broadly applicable, but these principles need to be applied sensitively and appropriately to the ethnic group being consulted.

Successful tenant participation requires a positive, respectful and non discriminatory approach. Engagement must always be well-planned with specific consideration given to cultural, historical, religious, social and communication issues.

It is also important that everyone involved is respectful of each other's cultural, religious and language differences.

## Getting started

Tapping into established networks, community organisations and cultural events can be particularly effective, and it is important to use channels of communication which are already credible in the eyes of each community. This will most often mean using existing community groups of cultural or religious affiliation, and groups that have a wide reach across the community or among a particular section of it, such as women, young people or older people. The involvement of established, credible groups can dispel a lot of scepticism and doubt about taking part.

Initially it can sometimes be challenging to reach beyond senior members or leaders of an organisation and engage with the wider membership, and it will take time, patience and perseverance to develop relationships. Working with black and minority ethnic communities in their own environment and respecting their rules and decision-making processes is the most successful approach.

## Information

Everyone needs to have equal access to information, and it should be provided in English and other relevant languages. Interpretation support in understanding information may also be required.

There are also likely to be a wide variety of reading skills, both in English and in the relevant minority ethnic language, and some people may not be fully literate in the ethnic language of their community. Getting it right at this stage will have a direct influence on the effectiveness of information, and on responses where required.

## Consultation

The concept of consultation itself may be unclear to some black and minority ethnic communities and it is therefore particularly important to provide clearly written information on the purpose of the consultation, and what it will involve.

Methods of consultation that involve travelling away from the local area or writing are less likely to be successful across minority ethnic communities.

Like all communities, a range of consultation methods should be put in place.

Face to face methods such as small focus groups, where everyone can have a chance to make their views clear and be listened to, often work best. These also provide a more relaxed context for those less confident in speaking English. Try organising a relaxed culturally appropriate social event in consultation with the black and minority ethnic community.

## Planning consultation events

When planning an event, make sure that you consider:

## Location

Where possible, hold events in the local area, as some people will not be confident travelling to an event outside their immediate community. Organising events through existing black and minority ethnic groups and holding the consultation at the same time and place as the group normally meets can be the more successful approach.

## Timing

Time events to avoid meal times (unless food is being provided), religious holidays, and observances.

## Cultural traditions

As some cultures have specific traditions regarding the social interaction of men and women it may be necessary to hold separate events. At gender-specific events facilitators should be the same gender as the participants. You also need to be aware of inter-generational issues where, for example, young people in a group of older people may not contribute to the discussion out of respect.

### Interpretation and translation

Interpretation and translation services should always be available where required. These may be available from family members, friends or staff from community groups. Take the time to discuss the format and content of the consultation with interpreters before participants arrive so that they have a clear idea of what is going on and can provide as high a quality of interpretation as possible. Interpreters may also have to act as scribes if the consultation requires writing, as reading and writing skills may not be as good as spoken language skills. And remember that time for translation can also make events run longer than usual.

### Catering

Food has an important role in many black and minority ethnic communities and organising events around food has proven to be very successful in attracting people to get involved, increasing participants' enthusiasm and involvement in an event, and for ongoing consultation. In planning events you should find out participants' dietary requirements and provide a suitable range of food that complies with religious requirements.

### Communication styles

Recognise that different communities have different styles of communicating and everyone involved in engagement needs to adapt to this. For example, what a facilitator perceives as being a hostile and aggressive atmosphere may, to those participating in the consultation, simply be an open discussion.

### Training and support

Like all forms of participation, the training and support needs of individuals and groups need to be considered and agreed with them. Effective routine support such as providing grants to groups, training, IT support, use of appropriate languages and providing dedicated staff from the community's ethnic background can strengthen the ability of minority ethnic organisations to engage.

Support is also a key issue in the successful engagement of individuals from ethnic minorities whose culture or religion may make certain factors, which may not seem significant to others, critical in determining their attendance. For those women for whom childcare is an express responsibility, access to crèche facilities can greatly increase the extent of their involvement. The provision of childcare by those outside the family unit may be a new concept, and encouragement may be needed to make use of this facility.

### Giving feedback

As in mainstream participation, it is all too often the case that those who participate do not receive any form of feedback. This generates resentment and frustration, as it is unclear whether their contribution has been heeded and if progress has been made as a result. As most participants attach great importance to being involved in consultations in order to improve services or change how things are currently done, lack of feedback is particularly discouraging to this group. Ask participants how they want to get feedback and ensure that written feedback is given in understandable and appropriate language.

### 2.9 Involving tenants in rural areas

In many respects, the aspirations of tenants living in rural or remote areas are no different to those of tenants in large urban areas. In terms of the diversity of population too, our rural communities mirror Scotland at large. Rural communities include, among others, the young, the elderly, those with disabilities and those from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. It is the geography of our rural communities that creates some particular challenges for those enabling tenant participation. The more remote a community is from the large urban centre

which provides its essential services and facilities (such as housing administration), the more challenging it becomes for tenants and landlords alike to facilitate effective consultation and involvement. This is especially true where the number of tenants is small and the community itself dispersed. Communities may be more than twenty or thirty miles from an urban centre and those travelling to meetings face long, expensive journeys through areas which often see the worst of weather conditions and where public transport is not always readily accessible. It is inevitable that, per person, effective participation in rural communities will cost more than in urban areas. 'Going the extra mile' means just that! Costs of staff time, additional venues for meetings, travel and subsistence expenses and the provision of information technology equipment will all influence the resources required.

## Engaging with all tenants

In developing and implementing rural tenant participation strategies, emphasis must be placed on examining and resourcing solutions which make it convenient for tenants to get involved. Some ideas to consider are:

- Maintaining information in libraries, mobile libraries or service vans, surgeries, local schools and other local access points.
- Maximising the use of local housing scheme facilities (for instance, sheltered housing lounges).
- Holding occasional road-shows or stands at supermarkets and local shows.
- Using local community radio services, community websites and newspapers.
- Holding meetings at a range of venues and times to meet all needs.
- Taking management committee meetings out to rural communities and allowing time for discussions with tenants at the end of the meeting.
- Providing transport and ensuring that expenses are reimbursed promptly.
- Maximising the value of staff who, for whatever reason, will be visiting tenants in their own home. The culture of the organisation should direct and enable all staff to promote participation and deliver feedback from tenants.
- Join forces! If there are several landlords operating in one community then consider how joint working can help all tenants get better consultation opportunities.

## Engaging with groups and individuals

For geographical reasons, rural residents are less likely to develop and sustain local and formal tenant groups than those living in towns.

Armed with this information, those involved in tenant participation should examine whether other structures for participation can be adopted to fill gaps in communications with, and representation of, rural communities.

The tenant participation strategy should offer rural tenants a range of structures to get engaged in consultation: Local groups Where there are rural communities which are not represented or are underrepresented in consultation, an appropriate first step is to promote the development of a local tenant or resident group.

Hold a local promotional event to inform and advise about forming a group and about the benefits a group can bring to rural community projects and issues. Invite someone from an existing, successful group which operates in a similar rural area to talk to participants. Recognise that there may be additional resources needed to support the development of a rural group, including financial, staff time, administration and information technology resources.

If there are several landlords involved in the local community, suggest a joint group for residents, including tenants (or their advocates, if appropriate) of any supported projects.

Ensure that an emerging group would have a comfortable and accessible venue to meet in within their community and that all potential members have an equal and appropriate access to the group activities.

Representative volunteers (sometimes known as 'village voices') Many rural and remote communities decide that it is not possible or appropriate for them to be represented through a local group. If this is the case then a second option could be for them to elect a representative volunteer from their community to take local issues and concerns to the landlord, engage in consultations and feed-back to the community. Representative volunteers can also be part of more formal structures which are in place. For example, a landlord-wide tenants' forum. Developing structures, recruitment, support and monitoring arrangements for representative volunteers requires commitment and planning from staff and tenant representatives. Failure to address these issues pro-actively may result in the system falling apart with communities and volunteers becoming disillusioned. Steps in developing a scheme could be as follows:

- Identify communities which are under-represented in consultation.
- Agree draft proposals for a representative volunteer scheme.
- Promote various options for representation to tenants in the community and survey tenants as to their preference.
- If a representative volunteer scheme is selected, agree detailed proposals, including duties, recruitment, support, monitoring and training arrangements.
- Seek nominations.
- Support nominees to give a short presentation and/or narrative in tenant newsletter.
- Arrange a ballot to elect one or more representative volunteers. A ballot could be held even if there is only one nominee; in this instance the majority of those participating in the ballot should agree to the election of the specific individual.
- Hold elections regularly at a minimum of every three years.

Where there are representatives elected in several communities, these individuals could meet together as a team which is constituted to enable their recognition as a registered tenant organisation. Such a structure would enable the scheme to be self-supported and regulated.

Individual volunteers

Where tenants, as a community, indicate no inclination to have representation through a formal tenant group, individual tenants may be prepared to come forward to take part in consultation matters within focus groups, forums or panels. Some may also be prepared to transfer information to and from their community. These individuals make a valuable contribution to tenant participation even though they cannot be assumed to play a role as a representative of their respective community, without proper election. The volunteers should understand their role and be provided with advice, guidance and any essential training to participate fully in the processes.

A lack of involvement from rural communities can sometimes be interpreted by the landlord as an indication that tenants are either quite content or apathetic about their housing service. This is quite often not the case and tenants may not wish to be involved due to particular barriers related to rural participation. It does take extra commitment from all parties and adequate resources to ensure that informal comment in the community can develop into sustained and positive partnership working.

Diversity

In the recruitment of volunteers, efforts should be made to get a cross-section of the community involved, as minority groups may be more hidden in dispersed rural areas than in large urban areas. Special efforts may need to be made to reach and engage with young tenants, those with disabilities and those with language or cultural differences. Those involved in delivering and supporting tenant participation should take steps to ensure that

they understand the diversity issues in individual rural communities, as there may be significant variations from one community to another.

<span style="color:green">Using information technology</span>

Whatever consultation structures are put in place, there are a number of ways in which information technology can assist with rural participation. It may be worth considering the following:

☐Supplying computers and associated training to volunteers in their own home or community should reduce the need for meetings and be particularly beneficial for those who find it difficult to travel. Also, young tenants may find this a preferable option for participating. Setting up email and interactive sites for volunteers and tenant representatives would allow them to communicate with each other and with officers, reducing any feeling of isolation. Video-conferencing could be useful for enabling remote communities to share in centralised tenant events or conferences as equipment is available at many local schools, universities and other public buildings.

Those enabling tenant participation in rural communities should be aware of the importance of getting the right structures in place to engage with a diverse range of individuals and representatives. They must also be prepared to be innovative in the use of new technologies and systems which have considerable potential for future rural development.


## 3.0 TENANT PARTICIPATION CHECKLISTS

This section contains a series of checklists designed to help landlords and tenants assess where they are in terms of tenant participation, and identify further measures they could take to improve practice. These checklists are closely linked to the information and advice given in Section 2 of this guide, and so it may be helpful to use them in conjunction with the relevant parts of Section 2.

### 3.1 Strategy for effective tenant participation

This checklist has been drawn up to assist landlords and tenants to review and develop their tenant participation strategy. If you answer 'No' to any of the questions below please see section 1.5 and section 2 for advice on how to improve practice in this area.

YES NO

**Review of current tenant participation practice**

1. Are tenants fully involved in reviewing tenant participation policy and practice?
2. Have the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy been identified by tenants, landlords, committee members and elected members?
3. Does the strategy set out how traditionally excluded groups are encouraged to participate?
4. Has an assessment of the resources currently put into tenant participation and the resource gaps been made?
5. Have any shortfalls identified in the last review of tenant participation been addressed?
6. Have gaps been prioritised for further development?


**Landlord's commitment and capacity**

7. Does the tenant participation strategy fit in with other plans and statutory requirements?
8. Are tenants aware that a review of tenant participation is underway and do they know how they can get involved?
9. Is ongoing training and briefing in place to ensure the commitment of staff, committee members and elected members to tenant participation?
10. Do staff, committee members and elected members know about the participation parts of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and good practice guidance?
11. Are all staff kept up to date on tenant participation developments?

12. Do front line staff who work with tenants have training on equal opportunities, customer care and the skills required to carry out their job effectively?

## Decision making
13. Are processes of decision making open, clear and accountable?
14. Do tenants have access to decision makers?
15. Is consultation with tenants and groups carried out before decisions are made? Are decisions made together?
16. Are tenants' views taken into account before decisions are made?
17. Are tenants and groups given adequate time to consider and respond to issues?
18. Are tenants involved in the review of service standards, best value reviews and monitoring of landlord performance?
19. Are methods in place to feedback to tenants and RTOs following a consultation exercise?

## Tenant representatives
20. Has the landlord consulted tenant groups or other networks of tenants to find out what their key housing issues are and what level of involvement they want?
21. Has work been undertaken to stimulate tenant participation in areas where there is little or no tenant involvement?
22. Is there an up-to-date register of registered tenant groups in place?
23. Are mechanisms in place to enable tenants at a local level to influence housing management?
24. In the case of registered social landlords, do tenants have a place or places on the governing body?
25. Are mechanisms in place to enable tenants to contribute to the reviews of service standards, policies, investment priorities and performance monitoring?

## Setting the agenda
26. Is the main agenda for tenant participation planned in advance?
27. Is the agenda jointly agreed with tenants?
28. Are processes in place to enable tenants at a local level to influence local housing management services?

## 3.2 Planning for monitoring and evaluation
The following checklist can be used prior to embarking on a monitoring and evaluation exercise of tenant participation. If you answer 'No' to any of these questions please see section 2.3.

## YES NO
1. Does your tenant participation strategy sets out processes for reviewing, monitoring and evaluating tenant participation?
2. Were these processes jointly agreed with tenants?
3. Have time and resources for monitoring and evaluating tenant participation been allocated within the strategy?
4. Have tenants and landlords agreed what information needs to be collected, and how, when and by whom the evaluation will be carried out?
5. Is the information being collected relevant to monitoring and evaluating tenant participation?
6. Is the information accurate and presented in a user-friendly format?

## 3.3 Accessing resources

This section can be used to identify the level of resources being invested in tenant participation and any gaps in provision. If you answer 'No' to any of these questions please see sections 2.2, 2.4 and 2.5.

YES NO

1. Are staff with specific responsibility for tenant participation in place to provide support to new groups, develop existing groups, promote tenant participation and consult with the wider community?
2. Is a training programme for all staff in place to provide skills and knowledge to develop participation practice?
3. Can staff access external training events on tenant participation?
4. Is training and briefing provided to keep committee members and elected members informed of tenant participation practice and developments?
5. Is a joint agreement in place between landlords and tenants, setting out what information tenants will receive and how they will receive it?
6. Is information for tenants easily accessible, in plain English, provided in different formats where required, relevant and accurate?
7. Is information made available with sufficient time for tenant groups to consider and consult their members?
8. Is training available for individuals and tenant groups to develop their ability to participate?
9. Can tenants access external tenant participation training and events?
10. Are start up grants and annual running costs available to tenant groups to cover the group's costs?
11. Are these grants reviewed regularly with tenant groups to ensure they get enough funding to carry out their activities?
12. Is funding available to ensure that there are no financial barriers to tenants participating, ie expenses, care costs are met?
13. Is 'in kind' support, such as access to premises or photocopying, available to groups?
14. Do tenants have access to independent advice?

## 3.4 Building, supporting and sustaining tenant groups

This checklist can be used to evaluate how well groups are being supported and identify areas for action. If you answer 'No' to any of the above questions see sections 2.1, 2.4, 2.5 and 3.4.

YES NO

1. Does the landlord recognise and welcome the rights of tenant and resident groups and umbrella organisations to represent the views and interests of their local community?
2. Is the independence of tenant groups recognised by the landlord?
3. Are tenant and resident groups adequately supported financially and 'in kind'?
4. Does the landlord work to ensure that tenant organisations are well informed, resourced and given adequate support so that they are able to influence decisions?
5. Is there a range of opportunities and mechanisms in place for tenant groups to access and input to the decision making process?
6. Are tenant groups regularly invited to meetings with their landlord to discuss housing and community issues?
7. Have the landlord and tenant groups agreed a timescale for receiving and considering information?
8. Are tenant groups given the opportunity to meet and discuss joint issues and prepare their points of view before meeting the landlord?
9. Do tenant groups have the opportunity to contribute to the agenda?

10. Are perceptions of problems and issues shared between tenants and the landlord before potential solutions are discussed?
11. Are tenants' views considered before decisions are taken?
12. Is feedback provided to groups following consultation exercises?
13. Is tenant participation seen by the landlord as an ongoing process?
14. Are different ways to maintain communications with groups used?
15. Is the relationship between the groups and the landlord a respectful one?
16. Are staff in place to help new groups, provide development support to existing groups, and promote tenant participation across the organisation?

## 3.5 Involving excluded groups
YES NO
1. Are equal opportunities build into both mainstream housing services and tenant participation strategies?
2. Has a training needs assessment been carried out in relation to equal opportunities?
3. Have staff and tenant representatives been provided with training on equal opportunities in relation to participation?
4. Are equal opportunities and proactive attempts to involve excluded groups built into the tenant participation activities of the landlord and groups?
5. Are representatives from excluded groups involved in monitoring and reviewing the tenant participation strategy?
6. Have the individual needs of excluded groups been identified and met? 7. Have links been established between local representatives and community organisations working to support excluded groups?
8. Has action been taken to remove barriers to accessing participation, such as language barriers and child care?
9. Have opportunities to take part in a range of participation methods been provided to excluded groups?
10. Are traditionally excluded groups given the opportunity to participate in specific events and forums e.g. young persons forum?
11. Are networking opportunities provided to enable individual tenants to meet representatives of tenant groups and staff?
If you have answered 'No' to any of the above questions see sections 1.6, 2.2, 2.7 2.8 and 2.9.

## 4.0 PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR TENANTS AND STAFF
### 4.1 Setting up a tenant group
Where there is a particular issue of concern within a community, or where tenants and residents want to get more involved in the management of their homes and estates, they often consider forming a group. Groups of people acting together are usually more effective than individuals. This section of the guide outlines some of the main points to bear in mind if you are involved in supporting tenants and residents to set up a group, or you are an individual who feels that establishing a group would be beneficial for your community.

### Getting people's views
You probably already have a clear idea of why a group is needed, but you need to make sure that other residents in the area feel the same. You need to talk to as many people as possible before you can do anything else. Consider getting the support of your landlord or local councillor. Your landlord will be able to provide support at this early stage and help you through the next stages.
You can get people's views by:

- sending out a newsletter with an attached questionnaire;
- door to door visits;
- holding a public meeting.

Some people will want to give their views and opinions and other people may not make any suggestions at all. No matter how people respond to you, be friendly. Don't be put off, and respect people's right not to get involved.

If you have found support for your idea then get together with the other people that are interested. At this stage, there will usually be a small number of people interested in the idea, so get together informally in someone's home or in a local community facility.

At the informal get together think about:
- what are the issues of concern?
- what streets or areas are affected?
- what you would like to achieve; and
- what the group would do.

If you all agree that it would be a good idea to form a group, you then need to get as many people as possible together at a public meeting to discuss the issues and agree on forming a group.

## Support from landlords

At this stage it is important to determine how much involvement and support you want from staff. This will depend on the discussions with tenants and residents and how much assistance they require. Some groups may want more intensive support from their landlord while others may prefer not to have any landlord involvement at all. Sometimes groups prefer an independent organisation to provide assistance. This often depends on the existing relationship between tenants and staff. Landlords will be able to provide support at every stage. Landlords should consider preparing a guide on setting up a group that can be given out when a group of people are considering this.

## Planning a first meeting

To organise the meeting you may wish to:
- use the contacts you have already made;
- put adverts in local shops, schools and libraries;
- produce a leaflet advertising the meeting and deliver it to everyone in the area;
- get help from your local housing officer;
- invite speakers such as housing staff;
- consider the timing of the meeting;
- consider what arrangements will be required to encourage people to come along, for example having a crèche may encourage families with children to attend.

## Where to hold the meeting

Find a suitable place to hold the meeting and always try to ensure that you use a meeting place that is accessible, so that people with disabilities can attend.

This could be:
- a room in a community centre, school, church hall or sheltered housing complex, as long as it is easy for people to get to; or
- a meeting room in your landlord's offices.

## Running the first meeting
- Be clear about what the group wants to achieve at the first meeting.
- Be friendly and welcoming.

- Introduce one another. This is very important if people do not know each other already.
- Make sure someone chairs the meeting or ensures the discussion focuses on the issues to be discussed.
- Take a note of who attended, the main points of discussion and any further actions that are decided.
- Ask for volunteers to form a steering group to work out how the group will be organised. Usually about six people will be required
- ☐Agree who is responsible for future actions.

## Steering group

Once a steering group has been formed it needs to consider:
- ☐the aims of the group;
- ☐what issues are important;
- ☐how often it should meet;
- ☐what officers and committee members it should have;
- ☐what the officers and committee members should do;
- ☐what resources the group will need and how money will be managed;
- ☐the name of the group and what geographical area it will cover.

All of these things need to be carefully thought out and set out in a formal constitution for the group (see section 4.2).

## Holding the next public meeting and forming the group

The same general principles should be followed for public meetings. Usually this meeting will have two main purposes: to discuss the issues of concern to residents and to formalise the group.

At the meeting the office bearers and committee members should be elected.

These should include a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer and any other officers required.

The constitution developed by the steering group should also be discussed and approved.

Once the committee has been elected and the constitution approved you will have a formal tenants' group.

## Responsibilities of committee members

Committee members should be nominated because they are committed to the aims of the group and have the time and interest to devote to the committee.

They will have experience or skills that will be beneficial to the group. The roles and responsibilities of key committee members are summarised below.

Committee members should be offered training by their landlord to help them develop the skills they need to undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively.

## Chairperson

The chair directs the group's activities and guides the committee meetings.

The chair has a clear understanding of the group's interests, lets everyone have their say and makes sure the constitution is upheld. The chair is responsible for making sure agreed tasks are carried out, and making decisions between meetings if necessary.

Before meetings the chair should plan and understand the agenda and ensure all necessary information is available. At meetings the chair should welcome everyone, introduce new members and visitors, ask for any apologies and check the minutes of the previous meeting with the group to make sure everyone is happy that the minutes are an accurate record of the

previous meeting. During meetings the chair should introduce each item and its purpose, request contributions, encourage participation, ensure others do not dominate the meeting, delegate tasks, record votes if necessary, and make sure the meeting keeps to time.

At the end of each meeting the chair should allow time for 'any other business', confirm the time, date and location of the next meeting, close the meeting and thank everyone for attending.

## Secretary

The group secretary is responsible for taking and circulating minutes, preparing agendas for meetings, organising the paperwork and correspondence, distributing information to members, and keeping members up-to-date about dates for meetings and other events.

## Treasurer

The treasurer looks after the group's income and expenditure by keeping the finances up-to-date, keeping track of receipts and bank statements and compiling financial reports detailing income and expenditure. The treasurer is responsible for budgeting for the group and preparing annual financial accounts that must be checked by an independent person.

## 4.2 Developing a constitution

This section provides advice for tenants on developing a constitution and for staff who are helping them. At this stage it useful to consider the criteria that the group will have to meet in the future if it wants to register with its landlord as a registered tenant organisation and work towards meeting these criteria.

Registering with landlords as a registered tenant organisation gives groups a legal right to be informed, consulted, involved in decision making by the landlord, and to access other funding.

Groups must have a written, publicly available constitution which details;

- who can be a member;
- the purpose of the organisation;
- how funds will be managed and accounted for;
- the minimum number of members who need to be in attendance for general meetings and committee meetings to take place – this is called a quorum;
- how the group will inform, consult, get views and feedback to all tenants and residents living within the area where it operates.
- how the group will ensure its members are involved in making decisions;
- the group's commitment to equal opportunities and how this will be met;
- procedures for electing the committee, rules of conduct and how it will reach decisions democratically;
- what geographical area of operation the group will cover.

A well thought out constitution will ensure that the organisation has an effective operating structure for electing office bearers and committee members, getting members' views and feeding back to them, handling resources and sorting out any problems that may arise within the group in the future.

Landlords who are working proactively to promote tenant participation will have a model constitution available, which groups can use to develop their own, if they wish.

There is a sample constitution at Appendix 3.

## 4.3 Becoming a registered tenant organisation

The concept of registered tenant organisations (RTOs) was introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and gives important rights to groups who register with their landlord.

RTOs are independent organisations set up primarily to represent tenants' housing and related interests. Registration gives groups a recognised role in the decision making process. Landlords should help guide groups through the registration process.

## Basic features of registration

Every landlord must keep a register of tenant groups in their area, which is open to public inspection at reasonable times.

Criteria for registration is set by Scottish Ministers.

Tenants' groups can register with the landlord, provided they meet the criteria set by Ministers about being democratic and accountable.

To receive the full benefit of the legislation, tenants' organisations should register with every landlord whose tenants they represent.

Tenants' groups can appeal to Scottish Ministers if they are unhappy about a decision reached about registration.

Landlords are responsible for ensuring that registered groups meet the registration criteria and that this is regularly reviewed.

All groups wanting to become registered must provide their landlord with:

- a copy of their constitution;
- a list of office bearers and committee members;
- a contact address for correspondence which can be made public (this could be c/o the landlord);
- a description of the area the group operates in;
- details of other landlords they are registered with or applying to become registered with

## Registration criteria

There is a range of criteria groups have to meet.

The group must have a written constitution that is available for inspection and which details:

- the group's objectives;
- the area in which it operates;
- the membership process;
- how the committee operates and is elected;
- how business is conducted;
- how funds are managed;
- when meetings are held, including the Annual General Meeting;
- how the constitution can be amended;
- the group's commitment to equal opportunities;
- how the group intends to promote housing and housing related matters.

The group must have a committee that:

- is elected annually and committee members must be required to stand down after a certain period (this period should be included in the constitution);
- consists of at least three members who can co-opt other members on;
- reaches decisions democratically (the decision making process should be included in the constitution).

The group must operate within a defined area that includes the landlord's housing stock, and it must be open to all tenants within that area.

The group must have proper accounting records showing income and expenditure, assets and liabilities. The constitution must require an annual audited financial statement to be presented at the Annual General Meeting.

The group must be able to demonstrate how it plans to represent the views of its members and how it will keep them informed.

## Tenant federations

The criteria for the registration of tenant federations will be the same as for individual tenant organisations.

## Groups who do not wish to register

Not all tenant groups will wish to register. If this is the case, individuals still have a right to be consulted. Landlords should encourage groups to register by providing training, information and support.

## Changes made by registered tenant organisations

If a tenants' organisation changes its constitution, office bearers, membership or area of operation, they are required to inform their landlord. Providing the changes mean that the registration criteria are still met, landlords will amend the register of tenant organisations accordingly. The failure of a registered group to meet the criteria for registration would constitute grounds for deregistration.

Where groups no longer meet the registration criteria, landlords should provide support to help them meet the criteria again, but should not shy away from deregistering them if need be.

## Rights of registered tenant organisations

Registered tenant organisations should work with their landlord in a variety of ways, in addition to any specific consultation with tenants as a whole. Landlords and RTOs should work together to identify policies and practices that they think should be revised. RTOs should be notified by the landlord of their intention to review policies and practices at the planning stage, and should not be presented with proposals as a fait accompli. Areas that are likely to be subject to review, or new proposals that landlords should involve RTOs in, include housing services, housing standards, tenant participation strategies and stock transfers. RTOs should be given information on the background to proposals and reviews, and given a reasonable timescale, that has been agreed between the RTO and landlord, to consider the issues and give their own views and suggestions.

Landlords should take these views into account and provide feedback to RTOs on the outcome of the review and proposals.

RTOs should also be involved in Scottish Government inspections and be kept involved at every stage by their landlord.

## Appeals procedure

A tenant's organisation may appeal against the landlord's decision:
- not to register the organisation; or
- to remove the organisation from the register; or
- not to remove the organisation from the register.

The appeals process will be considered by the Scottish Housing Regulator , on behalf of Scottish Ministers. It is important to note, however, that an appeal should be presented only after the landlord's internal appeal procedures have been exhausted. The internal appeals procedure should be initiated without delay and should be completed within three months of the appeal being made, or as otherwise agreed between the landlord and the RTO.

## 4.4 Working with groups

Supportive staff Frontline staff working in tenant participation often spend a good deal of time helping people come together as an effective tenants group, and working with and supporting the development of existing groups. The time spent will vary from group to group, because it is down to each individual group to decide how much support from staff they require and are comfortable with. Staff working with groups will use a number of key skills to support and enable the development of tenant groups.

The role of members of staff working with groups is usually that of facilitator.

They help bring people together and help the group set out its aims and objectives. Staff can also play a vital role in helping make links between community groups.

Staff should encourage individuals within the group to give their views, and build the confidence of group members who feel uncomfortable expressing their opinions. Staff should also provide advice on activities such as how to chair a meeting, take minutes, set the agenda and the division of tasks within the group.

They should also help groups understand the landlord's decision-making structures, how they can negotiate and make their views known. Tenant groups should have access to and be able to negotiate with decision makers. Staff can help tenant groups develop the confidence and skills to do this.

Staff are likely to be a valuable resource to established groups and may provide assistance in a number of ways, including helping with advertising and publicity, attracting new members, assisting them access external funding and directing them to other organisations.

It will vary from group to group, but it is likely that staff involvement will be more intensive when a group is starting out. At this stage staff may be required to take the initiative in coming up with aims and suggestions. As the groups develop, however, they will start coming up with their own ideas and suggestions and should be encouraged to do this. As time goes on, staff are likely to find that groups require their advice and support less. However, it is crucial that groups determine the level of support they receive at all stages of development, and landlords must respect this. It is also up to groups to decide whether they wish staff to attend their meetings.

## Successful tenant groups

Like any successful group, a successful tenants group will have the following characteristics:

- members respect each other;
- different views and opinions are welcome and encouraged;
- ☐individuality is encouraged;
- aims and objectives are agreed but can be discussed and changed;
- aims and objectives are realistic and achievable;
- groups members co-operate, rather than compete, to achieve goals;
- feelings can be expressed accurately and openly;
- positive feedback is given and valued;
- negative feedback is delivered in a constructive way;
- each member's contribution is recognised and valued;
- problems are seen as normal and dealt with constructively;
- consensus is looked for in important decisions.

The roles and responsibilities of the group's members may change on an annual basis or at a time period the group agrees, to enable individuals to develop new skills and take ownership of different activities.

Groups evaluate their progress and effectiveness and continually look for ways to improve and develop.

Successful groups do not emerge overnight. They take time to develop, encounter teething problems, learn from experience and stay focused on their overall aims and objectives, while working with day-to-day issues.

Landlords play a crucial role in helping develop and support successful groups.

Sections 2.1 to 2.6 provide general advice on supporting and developing groups.

## 4.5 Managing conflict

In any situation where a group of people get together there is always the potential for conflict. Conflict may arise within groups, between groups and between groups and their landlord. This section provides advice on ways of resolving conflict.

When tenants and landlords are working together it is crucial that the ground rules for engagement are clearly agreed at the outset. This will help to reduce the potential for conflict as the partnership develops. You should adopt the 10 Standards for Community Engagement. It will not always be possible for every idea or solution to a problem to be implemented and the scope and influence that tenants can have needs to be clearly agreed.

Conflict arises when differences can't be satisfactorily dealt with, where people may be unwilling to accept different values and points of view, or where rivalry emerges between groups for example, where resources are perceived to be unfairly distributed. Individuals may be resistant to changing their views and agreeing a consensus, people may want to hold onto their power and position and there may not be clear procedures for exploring differences and reaching consensus before they develop into conflict.

Where conflict arises there are three approaches to the situation. First, those concerned can ignore the problem. This will often mean that the problem doesn't go away, but emerges in the future in ways unrelated to the real problem.

Ignoring the conflict can have a very negative effect on trust and relationships and can undermine months and even years of good joint working.

The second approach is where a solution is imposed by a third party in a forceful way without considering the sensitivities surrounding the source of conflict. If those involved in the conflict accept the solution this approach can work, however, they will have less motivation to implement the solution than if they had been involved in resolving the conflict themselves. Often this approach does not get to the root of the problem and it re-emerges in the future.

The third approach is where those involved in conflict find their own solution.

This can be done with or without a third party. It is usually better for the people involved to come up with their own solutions, either through compromise or consensus by problem solving, as they are more likely to stick to the agreement reached and have a better understanding of the position of the person/ group/ organisation that they were in conflict with.


## Some steps for resolving conflict

Conflict resolution means discussing, negotiating and coming to a joint solution through compromise or consensus. In order to successfully resolve conflict, everyone involved has to want to overcome disagreements and be willing to take part. Mediation is an effective way to resolve conflict, and taking the following steps should increase the chances of resolving problems.

Everyone involved should mutually agree a time and place to meet.

Ground rules/guidelines should be agreed for the meeting (for example, no interrupting when someone is speaking, agreeing to listen to each other, not using bad language or name calling, and being willing to listen to others' points of view and explore a range of solutions).

At the start, everyone involved should have the opportunity to clarify and define the issues of concern as they see them, trying to separate facts, opinions and values.

Individuals should have the opportunity to clarify why they wish or need to resolve the conflict and agree shared goals.

The key issues and concerns that those involved need to agree about should be clearly defined.

It can be helpful to brainstorm positive ways and suggestions for the resolution of each issue which would be acceptable to those involved. Those involved should try to generate as many ideas as possible.

Everyone involved should agree a specific solution for each issue of concern and the steps to implement it, either by consensus or compromise. This may take time, however, it is important that the process is not rushed.

Everyone should agree that they are willing to implement the solutions, even if they don't fully agree with them. Those involved should explore what support and assistance they may need.

A procedure for reviewing the situation, to be sure that the solution is working out and/or dealing with those who do not do what they committed to, should be agreed.

## Involving a third party to help resolve conflict

A third party from within or outside the group may be able to help the people in conflict move from their fixed positions and work towards an agreed solution.

These people must not be directly involved in the conflict and must be given permission to help solve the conflict by all parties. They must be clear about their role (for instance, to help the parties to resolve their conflict) and must not get caught up in the conflict or misuse their position.

Organisations such as TPAS, TIS and TIGHRA have experience of acting as third party mediators to resolve conflict situations, both within tenant organisations and between tenant organisations and a landlord. There are also specialist mediation services who can help. Staff from a landlord may be asked by a tenants' group to act as a third party when there are internal problems within their group.

A person in this position should try to be:
- committed to finding a solution acceptable to all parties;
- able to recognise and build on points of agreement;
- aware of their own values, views and opinions in relation to the conflict and to keep them separate from the process of conflict resolution;
- committed to equalising the power as much as possible between the two parties;
- committed to finding out the underlying causes of the conflict with those involved;
- aware of the affect of people's background and composition in relation to their presentation and perception of the conflict;
- committed to focusing on the problem rather than the personalities concerned;
- committed to encouraging open communication, honesty and expression of feelings.

## 4.6 Organising tenant events

Tenant conferences and events are becoming increasingly popular with both staff and tenants and are a good way of providing information and getting people's views. Tenants should be involved in the planning group for the event. The following is a list of some ideas to think about if you are involved in planning an event.
- Decide what kind of event you want to create (for example, informal or formal) and what you want to achieve (for instance, give information, or get more people involved in tenant participation).

- Consider the best time to hold an event so that the maximum number of people can attend (this could be evenings or weekends).
- Avoid religious holidays and other times of the year that will stop some people coming along.
- Check if there is anything else on in your local area the day you propose to have that event, to ensure it doesn't clash.
- Advertise the event in a variety of ways (for instance, with posters, leaflets left at different venues, individual letters or a newsletter).
- Are you going to provide a meal for those who come along? Plan the menu and look into the most suitable catering arrangements. Don't forget people with special dietary needs.
- Make sure people know what expenses will be reimbursed.
- Do you want to target people who have a specific interest, or is it to be open to all tenants?
- Design the programme and decide who is going to meet guests, make introductions and start the event off.
- Are you going to have any speakers/workshop facilitators? Who is the best person for the job?
- Decide on a venue. Will it comfortably hold the number of people you are proposing to invite? Is it accessible? Does it have a loop system?
- Arrange to see the venue in advance if you are not already familiar with it, and check all the details and arrangements and that it is fully accessible.
- Are exhibition materials needed which will explain your group or organisation's work and activities?
- Will transport be needed? What special arrangements will you make for people with disabilities?
- Will you need name badges? Prepare these in advance and lay them out in alphabetical order.
- Will you need a delegate pack? What do you think it should contain (for instance, programme, copy of presentations, evaluation form and leaflets)?
- What IT equipment do you need? Arrange it and test it before the event.
- Do you need to provide a crèche and/or entertainment for children?
- Have fun!
- Review the success or otherwise of the event/conference. This will help in future planning.

## 4.7 Producing a newsletter

Most landlords and many tenant groups produce newsletters to keep tenants up to date with the latest news. This section gives pointers to help landlords and groups make sure their newsletter is reader-friendly, relevant and interesting.

Providing good information to tenants can develop their interest in housing and related matters and inspire them to participate. As a matter of course, tenants should be on the editorial committee.

Before putting pen to paper, the editorial committee need to decide what the newsletter will be about. Ask tenant groups and representatives what they would like to know about. Producing the newsletter should be the responsibility of a named person and realistic timescales should be set. The budget also needs to be agreed. This will help decide the format and design of the newsletter.

### Writing your newsletter

Plan what articles you would like to include, gather information and decide on essential information. Use everyday, informal language (but not slang) and keep it simple. Sentences should be short (around 15-20 words), but vary that number to keep readers' interest. Write as if the person reading it has no knowledge of the subject and is sitting opposite you. Emphasise crucial points by making sentences shorter. Edit out all unnecessary words. Jargon hinders understanding and puts people off. Avoid it! Don't say 'void property' when it's an empty house. If you feel you must use jargon, explain what it means.

Make your writing immediate and your tone friendly. Don't refer to 'the tenant' when you can talk to your reader directly by using 'you'. It's friendlier and informal.

Decide on a headline for each article that will grab your readers' attention. Add a sentence underneath if necessary to explain what the information is about.

The first paragraph should get people's attention and explain the purpose of the information. Keep it short – no longer than 40 words. Aim for two or three sentence paragraphs – no more than four. The font size should be 12 points or more. Smaller print is difficult to read.

You should also use a regular font such as Arial, Times New Roman or Comic Sans; this is because these are easy to read.

The design of newsletters should be well thought out and eye-catching. Try to convey information in different ways to keep your readers' interest. Use pictures, clip-art, diagrams and bullet points. Avoid complicated tables and charts.

## Signposting

Increase your print size to signpost information in headings and subheadings.

Use bold highlighting, capital letters and bullet points for emphasis. Colour adds interest to the page and can draw attention to important points. Formatting text in columns helps present information in more manageable chunks and takes up less space.

Photographs look best if you can print out in colour. Give consideration to your choice of colours. People with colour blindness commonly confuse green and red and yellow does not photocopy well.

## Making Your newsletter useful

It's helpful to add a paragraph or section that explains how the information will be useful to tenants. Try to spell out the benefits of keeping the group informed.

## Testing your newsletter

When you have finished writing and designing your newsletter ask:

- ☐ Is it accurate?
- ☐ Is it readable?
- ☐ Is the tone friendly?
- ☐ Does it meet its objectives?
- ☐ Does it meet tenants' needs?

☐ Is it attractive? Licensing and copyright laws Generally permission must be obtained before photographs or other information from the Internet is reproduced in publications. If you are using Microsoft to word process your newsletter you must have a licensed copy of the software. Landlords will be able to advise tenant groups if they are uncertain about these issues. In addition, if you are using pictures of anyone of 17 years old and under, permission to include the picture must be obtained from parents or legal guardians.

APPENDIX 1 Further reading General tenant participation good practice guides and examples Backfired, J., Douglas, A., Millard, L., Reid, B. (2003) Encouraging Participation: A Toolkit for Tenants and Social Landlords (York: JRF/CIH) Blewett, H. and Garratt, C. (1995) Making it Work: Case Studies of Tenant Participation in Housing Associations (London: Community Development Foundation, TPAS and the Housing Corporation) Carter, S. (1999) What Works: The Tenants' Compact and Successful Participation (London: London Housing Unit) Chartered Institute of Housing, (1999) Good Practice Briefing 15:

Resident Involvement in Housing Services (Coventry: CIH) Cole, I., Hickman, P., Millward, L. and Reid, B. (1999) Developing Good Practice in Tenant Participation (London: Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions) Communities Scotland Research Report No 43, (2004) A Good Practice Framework for Tenant Participation in Scotland, Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (1999) National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts (London: Department of the Environment, Transport and the regions) Harris, V. (1997) Community Work Skills Manual (Association of Community Workers) Housing Corporation (2001) A Study of Tenant Participation in Registered Social Landlords (London: Housing Corporation) National Housing Federation (2000) Resident Involvement Strategies: A Handbook for Registered Social Landlords (NHF) Organisational Development and Support Ltd (1998) Assessing Tenants' Satisfaction: Resource Pack (Edinburgh: Scottish Homes and SFHA) Scottish Executive (2000) Code of Practice for Tenant Participation in Best Value (Edinburgh: Scottish Executive) Scottish Executive (2001) Code of Practice for Tenant Participation in Rural Areas (Edinburgh: Scottish Executive) Scottish Executive (2001) Code of Practice for Tenant Participation in Stock Transfer (Edinburgh: Scottish Executive) Scottish Executive, (2002) Good Practice Guidance – Consultation with Equalities Groups (Edinburgh: Scottish Executive) Scottish Executive (2001) Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 – Guidance on Tenant Participation (Edinburgh: Scottish Executive) Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (2000) Raising Standards in Housing: Tenant Participation (Edinburgh: Scottish Federation of Housing Associations) Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (2000), Raising Standards Manual Version 2.5 (Edinburgh: Chartered Institute of Housing) Scottish Housing Best Value Network (2003) Good Practice in Tenant Participation (Edinburgh SCBVN) Scottish Office (1999) Partners in Participation: A National Strategy for Tenant Participation (Edinburgh: Scottish Office) Taylor,M. (1995) Unleashing the potential: Bringing residents to the centre of regeneration (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation) Tenants Information Service (2002) Developing and Implementing Your Tenant Participation Strategy (Glasgow: TIS) Tenants Information Service (2002) Tenant Participation Healthcheck (Glasgow:TIS) Tenants Information Service (2000) Involving Tenants in Regeneration (Glasgow:TIS) Tenants Information Service (2000) Feasibility Study – A Statutory Right to Tenant Participation (Edinburgh: Scottish Executive) Tenants Information Service (2002) Basic Guide to Starting a Tenants/Residents Association (Glasgow: TIS) Tenant Participation Advisory Service (1998) Count us in (Glasgow: TPAS) 71                 Tenant Participation Advisory Service/ Chartered Institute of Housing CIH (1989) Tenant Participation in Housing Management (CIH/TPAS) Research studies and reviews Brown, M. (2003) Open House? A Study of Tenants' Organisations in Scotland (Glasgow: Scottish Consumer Council) Cole, I., Hickman, P. and Reid, B. (1999) Accounting for the Uncountable: Tenant Participation in Housing Modernisation (York: JRF/CIH) Cole, I., Hickman, P., Millward, L., Reid, B., Slocombe, L. and White, S. (2000) Tenant Participation in England: A Stock Take (Sheffield: Centre for Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University) Flint, J. (2004) 'Reconfiguring Agency and Responsibility in Social Housing in Scotland', Urban Studies, 41(1) Gaster, L. and Crossley, R. (2000) Community Development: Making a Difference in Social Housing (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation) Housing Corporation (2001) A Study of Tenant Participation in Registered Social Landlords (London: Housing Corporation) Nicolson, L. (2003) Analysis of the baseline study of tenant participation: Communities Scotland Research Report 25 (Edinburgh: Communities Scotland) Scott, S. (ed.) (2001) Good Practice in Housing Management: A Review of the Literature (Edinburgh: Scottish Executive) Innovative consultation methods Sinclair, F. (1999) The Active Community: Innovative Consultation and Participation Methods for Housing (London: London Housing Unit) Involving excluded groups Fitzpartick, S., Hastings, A. and Kintrea, K. (1998)

Including Young People in Urban Regeneration: A Lot to Learn? (Bristol: Policy Press) Merthyr Mind (1996) Tenant Participation in Supported Housing – Making itWork (Merthyr Mind) Positive Action in Housing (2002) Promoting Inclusion of Minority Ethnic Communities: A Best Practice and Training Guide for Scottish Tenants' Groups (PAIH) Riseborough, M. (1996) Listening to and involving older tenants (Anchor Trust) Simons, K. (1997) Whose home is it? Tenant participation in supported housing (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation) Tenants Information Service (2004) Basic Guide to Tenant Participation in Supported Accommodation (TIS) TPAS (1995), All Together Now: Involving Black Tenants in Housing Management (TPAS) TPAS Scotland (1998), Equalising Opportunities: Tenant Participation and Involvement for People with Housing and Support Needs (Glasgow: TPAS Scotland) TPAS Wales (2003), DIY Training Pack for Supported Housing (TPAS Wales) TPAS Wales (1998) Equalising Opportunities: Tenant Participation and Involvement for People with Housing Support Needs (TPAS Wales)

## APPENDIX 2
### Useful sources of advice
For further information, advice or services relating to tenant participation the following organisations can be contacted.

**Scottish Government** Tenant Participation Development Team Anne Cook, Team Manager, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ.
Tel: 0131 244 0710 Email anne.cook@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
Ann Marie Stanley (West of Scotland) Scottish Government, Highlander House 58 Waterloo Street Glasgow G2 7DA.
Tel: 0141 305 4138 Email: annmarie.stanley@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
Michael Boal (East of Scotland) Scottish Government, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ.
Tel: 0131 244 0643 Email: michael.boal@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
**Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)** 74-78 The Saltmarket Glasgow G1 5LD Tel: 0141 552 3633 Email: enquiries@tpasscotland.org.uk www.tpasscotland.org.uk **Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)** 6 Palmerston Place Edinburgh EH12 5AA Tel: 0131 225 4544 Email: scotland@cih.org **Tenants Information Service (TIS)** Suite 335 Baltic Chambers 50 Wellington Street Glasgow G2 6HJ Tel: 0141 248 1242 Email: jmiller@tis.org.uk **TIGHRA** Fairfax House 64 Market Place Inverurie Aberdeenshire AB51 3XN Tel: 01467 672 233 Email: info@tighra.org **Shelter** 4th Floor, Scotia Bank House 6 South Charlotte Street Edinburgh EH2 4AW Tel: 0131 473 7170 Email: sheltersco@shelter.org.uk **Positive Action in Housing** 98 West George Street Glasgow G2 1PJ Tel: 0141 353 2220 Email: home@paih.org **Legal Services Agency** 3rd Floor, Fleming House 134 Renfrew Street Cowcaddens Glasgow G3 6ST Tel: 0141 353 3354 Email: lsa@btconnect.com

## APPENDIX 3
### Sample tenant group constitution

### 1. NAME
The name of the Association shall be

### 2. OBJECTIVES
To improve the living conditions, community facilities and services for tenants and residents living in the area covered by the attached map and marked.
The Association will at all times operate on an equal opportunities basis.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP

A. Membership shall be open to all members of the community.

B. All members shall have an equal vote.

C. All members should actively seek to represent the various needs of the area and must not discriminate of the grounds of nationality, political opinion, race, religious opinion, gender, sexuality or disability.

D. Members shall at all times conduct themselves in a reasonable manner when attending meetings or any other function in connection with the group.

## 4. COMMITTEE

A. A Committee shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Association and shall serve for 12 months.

B. The Committee shall consist of at least five members, who shall have the power to co-opt other members on to the Committee, during the course of the year. All members will have voting rights.

C. The Committee shall elect from within their number a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. No committee member shall fill more than one position.

D. The Committee shall make and carry out decisions in accordance with the objectives of the Association.

E. Meetings of the Committee shall be open to any member of the Association who wishes to attend.

F. There must be at least two-thirds of the Committee members present for decisions to be made at a Committee meeting.

G. Non-voting members may be co-opted onto the Committee from landlords, staff, Councillors etc.

H. Voting members may be co-opted amongst other tenants to fill casual vacancies throughout the year.

I. Committee members can be voted off if: They have not attended number of meetings Or Have terminated their tenancy.

Committee members must declare any interest they may have in the topic under discussion and the Committee will decide if they need to forfeit their right to vote on this occasion.

## 5. CONDUCT OF BUSINESS OR STANDING ORDERS

A. Members may speak only through the chair.

B. Decisions will be made by a simple majority, voted in through a show of hands or a secret ballot.

C. Meetings will end at a time agreed by the Committee.

D. Any offensive behaviour, including racist, ageist, sexist or inflammatory remarks will not be permitted.

E. Any member who consistently brings the group into disrepute or refuses to comply with the constitution shall be expelled on a two-thirds majority vote of the full Committee.

F. Any such member will have the right to appeal within 28 days of the expulsion. The appeal shall be heard by the membership at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose.

G. The secretary shall deal with all correspondence.

H. Agendas will be distributed to the membership at least seven days before a meeting. Items should be forwarded to the Secretary and Chair 14 days before the meeting.

I. Minutes will be distributed to the membership at least seven days after a meeting.

## 6. FINANCES

A. The Association may raise funds by obtaining grants from other bodies or by fundraising schemes.

B. All funds shall be kept in a bank account, which shall be opened in the name of the Association.

C. The Secretary, Treasurer and the Chairperson shall be the signatories on the account and all cheques shall require two of these signatures.

D. Accounts shall be kept by the Treasurer, and brought to every Committee meeting where they may be inspected. Failure to bring the books to a meeting on three consecutive occasions will mean the Treasurer will be asked to resign.

E. All expenditure shall be agreed and controlled by the Committee.

F. All payments over ten pounds shall be made by cheque, not cash. Any exception to this rule shall be discussed and agreed by the Committee.

G. No officer shall sign a blank cheque – all cheques to be filled in before signatures are added.

H. Once a year, the accounts will be audited and presented to the Annual General Meeting of the Association. The Auditors will be either: - An Officer or Councillor, Committee member, Landlord or: - The Committee of another local community organisation.

I. All correspondence of the organisation, including the bank statement, shall be addressed to the Secretary.

## 7. PUBLIC MEETINGS

A. Public meetings of the members shall be regularly held to discuss matters of importance and to keep the members fully informed of the Association's activities.

B. Members shall be given 14 days notice of a public meeting.

C. All votes shall be decided by a simple majority of the members present. This applies to all meetings of the Association.

D. Any member, having the written support of 10 other members, may request the Committee to call a special Public Meeting of the Association. The Committee shall call the meeting within 21 days of this written request.

## 8. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A. An Annual General Meeting shall be held every year to discuss the activities of the Residents' group, to receive the audited accounts and to elect the Committee.

B. The Annual General Meeting shall be held at a suitable venue to accommodate as many members as possible.

C. Quorum shall be % of members.

D. days notice needs to be given to members of the Annual General Meeting.

## 9. CHANGES TO CONSTITUTION

A. This constitution shall only be changed at a Special Public Meeting of the Association, or at an Annual General Meeting.

B. For decisions to be taken there must be a quorum of at least 10 people.
The voting shall be by a simple majority of those present.

C. All members shall be given 14 days notice of the meeting and proposed changes.

## 10. DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION

A. If the Committee or any member wishes to dissolve the Association, a special Public Meeting shall be called.

B. If two-thirds of voting members present at the Special Public Meeting agree to dissolve the Association, any remaining funds shall be donated to a relevant charity, after returning unused grants to the Landlord.