

A Good Practice Framework for Tenant Participation in Scotland

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by

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Executive summary

Introduction

The principle of tenant participation has been given renewed emphasis with the introduction of statutory duties for local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to involve tenants, as part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The Tenant Participation Development Team (TPDT) of Communities Scotland works to assist landlords in implementing the tenant participation provisions of the Act. The TPDT commissioned this research project to identify examples of good practice in tenant participation. This research is practically based and will also be produced in a more accessible version to provide a good practice framework and evaluation toolkit that landlords, tenants and support agencies can use.

Background and policy context

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced new duties for local authorities and RSLs in relation to tenant participation. Landlords now have statutory duties to inform, consult and involve tenants in all aspects of housing and related issues to produce a tenant participation strategy and to have in place a scheme for the registration of tenant's organisations. In September 2002 the Tenant Participation Development Team (TPDT) was established within Communities Scotland to provide support to landlords in implementing the provisions of the Housing Act (2001). Grant funding has also been provided to landlords. In 2003 the TPDT undertook a baseline survey of progress towards implementing tenant participation strategies. One of the findings of this survey was landlords' desire for more guidance on good practice in tenant participation and advice on monitoring and evaluating tenant participation. The National Strategy on Tenant Participation (1999) set out the key principles for effective participation and a number of organisations have published good practice guides.

About the study

The TPDT commissioned this research to further evaluate the progress being made, and the issues facing landlords, in implementing tenant participation; to provide examples of good practice and to develop a framework for good practice in tenant participation. This research utilised further analysis of the baseline surveys, a review of existing good practice literature and a series of case studies of individual landlords throughout Scotland.

The research was carried out by the Tenants Information Service (TIS) and the Department of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow, between October 2003 and February 2004.

Key findings

- Whilst landlords have tenant participation strategies and procedures in place, the success of these strategies will depend on how actual processes are developed, implemented and supported.

- Good practice in tenant participation depends upon the willingness and commitment of all those concerned to share information, ideas and power, and work towards common understandings of problems and an agreement on the best way forward.
- There are general principles of good practice which are applicable to all landlords, but there are also specific aspects of good practice that need to be developed, for example working in rural areas and encouraging the involvement of excluded groups.
- The level and quality of tenant participation varies considerably throughout Scotland. Some areas are very much at the early stages, whilst others have well organised tenants groups who are working with landlords to improve housing services and standards. Tenant participation is a continuous process and it will take time to raise the baseline of participation in Scotland.
- There are many examples of good practice amongst landlords in Scotland, and several examples of new and innovative techniques, which may usefully be adapted and employed by other landlords.
- There is a clear relationship between the amount of resources spent on tenant participation and its effectiveness.
- It is important to ensure that proactive and innovative attempts to involve tenants in under-represented groups are integrated into wider participation processes.
- Good practice in tenant participation requires tenants to be involved at all stages of what is an on-going and evolving process, from initial planning through to monitoring and evaluation.
- Monitoring and evaluation is the least developed element of tenant participation strategies. Effective monitoring and evaluation requires explicit aims and objectives to be identified from the outset, careful consideration to be given to which indicators will be used in measurement and clarity about inputs, outputs and outcomes.

General findings from the case studies

Six case studies of landlords and tenants were undertaken. The studies were selected to provide a range of landlord types and a diversity of local contexts. The case studies focused on three broad themes: participation in a rural context; tenants influencing housing services; and involving traditionally excluded groups. The case studies revealed the issues and barriers involved in facilitating tenant participation, examined the processes undertaken by landlords and highlighted examples of good practice. The key findings included:

- Tenants are making a difference in the case study areas, both to local developments and also to the landlord's policies and practice. It is important to involve tenants from the beginning of the process as they have a major role to play, bring knowledge and expertise, and their involvement increases the likelihood of success.
- There is no blueprint to develop effective tenant participation – different ways suit different circumstances. It is better to be flexible to establish participation processes, designed to suit the particular

issue, take account of tenants' interest in the issue and tenants capacity to be involved.

- There is a requirement to both provide specific tenant participation initiatives, but also to ensure participation runs through the landlord's entire ethos and practice.
- The case studies highlighted the importance of having dedicated, trained staff and access to independent advice to support the development of tenants groups' organisational skills. Dedicated resources are essential to successful participation.
- Participation is most effective where tenants are involved from the outset of any initiative, have a continuing role, which is supported by flexible participation structures, and are engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of initiatives. It is also important that mechanisms are in place for sustaining tenant participation beyond the time frame of individual initiatives.
- Tenants and staff need access to concise and clear information if they are to contribute fully. Adequate time is required at all stages to give tenants groups time to consider the issue and prepare their points of view during the consultation process.
- The process of developing participation is both complex and long-term. The case study landlords have faced difficulties and encountered setbacks. The commitment to participation at an organisational and individual level, and the determination to find flexible and innovative ways to overcome barriers were important in sustaining the momentum of the participation strategies. In a dynamic process, the benefits of participation tended to grow and become self-reinforcing as time went on, suggesting that perseverance at an early stage when challenges may appear daunting is rewarded in the longer term.
- Participation processes have to meet the needs of diverse sections of local communities. This requires landlords to be clear about their priorities and balancing the interests of various groups. Partnership working with other organisations is an important element of ensuring that tenant participation is linked into wider community engagement strategies in local communities.

Participation in a rural context

There are a number of barriers facing landlords in rural areas, including geographical isolation, dispersed tenant populations and the relatively high costs of facilitating participation processes and events. The case study landlords implemented several approaches to addressing these issues. These included involving non-tenants in participation strategies, holding meetings throughout their areas of operation and meeting tenants' travel and accommodation costs and utilising informal contacts and 'village voices' where more formal structures are less feasible.

Tenants influencing housing services

Landlords have a legal duty to involve tenants in the wide range of housing issues that affect them. The case study landlords had attempted to strengthen the participation of tenants in the improvement of housing services in a

number of ways, including: involving tenants in comprehensive reviews of strategic policies and operations providing adequate resources for tenant training and support; and ensuring continuing tenant involvement in on-going monitoring and evaluation of new systems.

Involving traditionally excluded groups

Landlords face a particular challenge in engaging with groups, such as ethnic minorities, young people and older tenants, who are traditionally under-represented in mainstream participation structures. The case study landlords had sought to increase the involvement of particular groups by: identifying the location and needs of excluded groups and proactively responding to these needs; recognising the diversity within these groups; providing specific mechanisms for these groups to participate which are integrated into wider participation strategies; providing on-going support to participants; and encouraging networking opportunities for excluded individuals and groups.

The good practice framework

The good practice framework sets out a series of key principles, checklists and examples of good practice for landlords and tenants in developing tenant participation in three key stages:

Involving Tenants

This section of the framework discusses what is actually meant by tenant participation and the different levels at which landlords may support tenant involvement. The key steps in planning participation activities are then set out, including deciding who will be involved and how the agenda will be developed. Guidance is then provided on getting started, identifying and contacting tenants, including advice on how to facilitate participation where there is little or no existing tenant activity. The section continues by setting out good practice principles and examples relating to building and supporting tenant organisations and involving traditionally excluded groups. Examples of innovative methods and structures for facilitating engagement are provided, along with checklists and points to consider.

Strategy for effective participation

This section outlines practical steps involved in planning and implementing meaningful participation. It discusses the key stages in this process including reviewing current practices, landlords organising for participation, assessing tenants resources and support needs and agreeing a joint strategy and action plan. The implications and resource requirements of this process for landlords and tenants are discussed and good practice checklists are provided.

Monitoring and evaluation

Although it is vital that tenant participation is monitored and evaluated, the research highlights that this is the least developed element of tenant participation strategies. This section of the framework sets out how landlords should plan for monitoring and evaluation and how tenant participation may be monitored in terms of inputs, outputs and outcomes. Good practice guidance is also provided on measuring equal opportunities within tenant participation strategies.

The framework also provides helpful checklists and a list of useful references and contact details.

1 Introduction

Background

Tenant participation is about tenants influencing decisions that landlords take about their housing services and conditions. When working well, tenant participation is at the cutting edge of addressing service failure and facilitating service improvement. Tenants have a major role to play and bring knowledge and expertise. Their involvement also increases the likelihood of successful housing management. It is therefore important to involve tenants as early as possible in strategies to improve housing services and standards.

This report provides a good practice framework and evaluation toolkit that landlords, tenants and support agencies can use to improve the effectiveness of their tenant participation practice, in line with the legislative requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The Tenant Participation Development Team (TPDT) within Communities Scotland commissioned this guide. It aims to build upon the baseline study of tenant participation in Scotland conducted by the TPDT (Communities Scotland Research Report 25, 2003).

The policy context

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced new duties for local authorities and registered social landlords (RSLs) in relation to tenant participation. Landlords now have statutory duties to inform, consult and involve tenants in all aspects of housing management, to produce a tenant participation strategy and to have in place a scheme for the registration of tenants' organisations. These new provisions were introduced in line with the new Scottish Secure and short Scottish Secure Tenancy arrangements. In 2002, the Tenant Participation Development Team (TPDT) was established within Communities Scotland to provide support to landlords in implementing the provisions of the Housing Act. Grant funding was provided to landlords to facilitate the implementation of these requirements, linked to outcomes to be achieved within specific timescales.

Another piece of important legislation is the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, which introduced legal duties for local authorities to involve communities in the planning process. Community planning is the process for public service planning and delivery and the umbrella for planning structures. Tenant participation strategies and activities can strengthen support to the community planning process. In developing tenant participation strategies it is important to consider how this relates to the community planning process.

Whilst tenant participation has a relatively strong history in Scotland, experience has shown that the level and quality of practice varies considerably across the country. The 1990s witnessed both the process of enshrining more formal rights for tenants to participate and an increasing focus on a national framework for tenant participation to agree guiding principles and facilitate the dissemination of good practice.

The National Strategy on Tenant Participation – “Partners in Participation”, was published in 1999, sets out the key principles for effective participation. The Scottish Executive also produced codes of practice for tenant participation in a number of key areas, including best value, stock transfers and tenant participation in rural areas. A number of research reports have also identified examples of good practice, and organisations including Tenants Information Service (TIS), Tenant Involvement in Islands, Grampian and Highland Rural Areas (TIGHRA) and Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) have produced their own good practice guides. The findings from the recent baseline study included:

- A request from landlords for more guidance on practical aspects of tenant participation;
- The sharing of achievements;
- “Concrete’ examples of successful or innovative initiatives and sources of further information.

This good practice guide seeks to address this need.

Key principles for good tenant participation

As part of the National Strategy on Tenant Participation – “Partners in Participation”, the following key principles have been endorsed by tenants’ organisations, landlords, housing agencies and the Government to promote a consensus about good tenant participation practice:

- Tenant participation requires a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, elected and committee/board members, and housing officers at all levels, working towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services;
- Tenant participation practice should be seen as a continuous process where information, ideas and power are shared, common understandings of problems are strived for and a consensus on solutions is worked out;
- Good tenant participation allows all parties to contribute to the agenda. All participants require to have all the information needed to consider issues properly; that information requires to be clear, timely and accessible and to take account of equal opportunities concerns;
- Processes of decision making should be open, clear and accountable;
- Adequate time should be given to tenant representatives to consider the issues properly. Tenants should have the opportunity to work out a common view in advance of meeting landlord’s representatives;
- Good tenant participation requires the landlord to recognise the independence of tenants’ organisations;
- Good working relationships evolve gradually and are flexible to adapt to local circumstances;
- Tenants’ organisations require adequate resources for organisation, training and support;

- Tenant participation in rural areas must be tailored to suit the particular circumstances and needs of tenants in such communities;
- Tenant participation must meet the requirements of the legislation surrounding equal opportunities. Good practice in participation removes barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, geographical location, special needs, language difficulties, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

Research methodology – How to use this guide

The Tenants Information Service (TIS) and the Department of Urban Studies, at the University of Glasgow, conducted this research. A Research Project Advisory Group made up of representatives from the Scottish Executive, COSLA, SFHA and Communities Scotland oversaw the research project. The following framework for good practice in tenant participation is based upon an analysis of the baseline study surveys, detailed case studies of six landlords, and a literature review of existing research. Details of the methodology for the research are given in Appendix A.

This report provides landlords and tenants with a good practice framework to develop and evaluate their tenant participation practice. There are lists of good practice points and useful checklists contained within each chapter.

Chapter 2 – Presents six case studies of tenant participation initiatives in a variety of local contexts, to highlight examples of good practice and to outline practical solutions landlords have taken to overcome some of the challenges faced.

Chapter 3 – Looks at practical ways to get tenants involved, the steps involved in designing and delivering participation activities, building and sustaining tenants' organisations and engaging with traditionally excluded groups.

Chapter 4 – Outlines how to review and develop tenant participation strategies. Information is provided on how to assess the resources required and the training and support needs of tenants and staff.

Chapter 5 – Provides the basis of an approach for landlords and tenants to develop the monitoring and evaluation of tenant participation.

2 Case studies

Introduction

This chapter highlights examples of tenant participation practice, based on case studies of six landlords. The case studies include both local authorities and RSLs, located in urban, rural and mixed urban/rural parts of Scotland. Each of the case study landlords operates in a particular context and their tenant participation activities address different housing issues. The case studies identify ideas and approaches that have proved successful in other areas. The case studies include:

Participation in a rural context

1. Developing a participation strategy: *Orkney Housing Association*
2. Participation in a rural context: *Orkney Islands Council*

Tenants influencing housing services

3. Improving the housing repairs service: *Dundee City Council*
4. Rent setting and business planning exercise: *Perth and Kinross Council*

Involving traditionally excluded groups

5. Engaging with and involving black and minority ethnic communities: *Southside Housing Association*
6. Working with Older People: *Bield Housing Association*

Participation in a rural context

There are a number of barriers to tenant participation existing in urban areas, which become even more acute in rural locations, for example;

- Larger geographical areas;
- Lack of adequate public transport;
- Dispersed communities/isolated location of tenants;
- Identification with the village rather than the landlord.

The next two case studies outline how Orkney Housing Association and Orkney Islands Council approached developing a tenant participation strategy to involve tenants in dispersed rural communities.

Case Study 1 – Developing a participation strategy: Orkney Housing Association

Background

Orkney Housing Association was established in 1985. It has a housing stock of 379 rented and 84 shared ownership properties, dispersed throughout the

mainland and islands of Orkney and provides one percent of the total housing in the islands. It is a charity with an open membership policy. The association has 156 shareholding members, a third of whom are also residents of the association.

Prior to the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Orkney Housing Association was typical of many small, rural landlords, in that it worked with a small number of informal resident groups and had resident members on its Management Committee, but did not have a formal participation strategy. The association's officers wished to develop a more structured approach to participation, and sought to involve as many residents as possible in the development of a participation strategy.

Orkney Housing Association recognised that developing a more formal approach to participation would require a cultural change that would have logistical and financial implications for the organisation. The association's staff and tenants were keen that the move towards more formal working practices did not diminish the strength of informal networks and good personal working relationships, which they regarded as a crucially important element of successful participation.

Developing the strategy

Developing the participation strategy initially involved a two-stage process.

Stage one

The first stage was to ensure that residents understood their rights to be consulted and to get involved in decision-making processes. The association recognised that it had a small and dispersed tenant base. From the outset, it broadened its approach to include all local residents and not only tenants. The association found that made participation more sustainable, by increasing the numbers of people involved and enabled participation to focus on issues facing all residents in these small communities. Working in the early stages in close partnership with Orkney Council was also reported to have increased the likely success of the participation strategy.

Orkney Housing Association held a series of consultation meetings about the Scottish Secure Tenancy and the participation provisions of the Housing Act. The association recognised that it was difficult to get residents to attend these sessions on relatively 'dry' issues, and therefore complimented this approach with a series of open days and fun events to maximise involvement. In order to build both staff and resident capacity further, a series of training session courses were delivered by TIGHRA, who have particular expertise in addressing issues of participation in rural areas.

Stage two

The second stage of the process identified issues affecting residents and how residents wished to become involved. Newsletters and postal surveys were sent out to every household seeking feedback on key housing issues and whether individuals wished to become involved in further participation. This information helped the association to maximise tenant involvement by focusing on issues of most importance to residents and identifying which methods of participation were likely to be most popular.

Local consultation meetings

Following the consultation meetings, the association produced a draft strategy as a starting point to get residents' views. This stage of the strategy was taken forward at a series of nine local consultation meetings, facilitated by TPAS. According to both staff and tenants "Employing an independent facilitator was very helpful in assisting residents and the association to move things forward". Having nine meetings in a number of locations throughout the islands ensured that residents in more isolated or outlying areas were given the opportunity to participate. The association still faced logistical problems, for example in co-ordinating events with ferry times and meeting the high costs of tenants' travel. The association provided funding to cover residents travel and child-care costs, which increased the numbers of tenants and residents attending the meetings, but imposed a significant financial burden on the association. Housing officers were concerned that these proportionately high costs would impact on the sustainability of participation initiatives in the longer term.

Residents Panel

The consultation events identified 16 residents who expressed an interest in forming a group to discuss housing services and standards. It was agreed that the best way to take this forward was through the establishment of a Residents Panel. A housing association staff member commented that the Panel had arisen from "something that started as nothing...the association was encouraged by the response." At the time of the research, the Panel was in its early stages. The Panel will work with the association to develop an action plan to put the Participation Strategy into practice. The Panel is important because it aims to give residents a collective voice. This more formal mechanism complements the more informal individualised relationships between the association and its tenants. The Panel also has a wide remit, covering housing but also other community issues. The Panel will be supported financially by the association and will also receive support from association staff as well as access to training. Building the capacity of the Panel is regarded as crucial to ensuring that it is able to influence decision-making effectively, but again it places extra resource burdens on the association. The association is also committed to supporting the establishment of resident groups in local communities, but as well as resource implications, it faces the problem that local residents, in small groups and used to informal ways of working, see the registration process as bureaucratic and time consuming.

Using a range of participation mechanisms

One strength of Orkney Housing Association's approach has been the development of a range of complimentary participation mechanisms. These include;

- Working groups on specific issues, which enable small numbers of residents to focus upon certain local concerns and to develop action plans;
- 'Village voice' volunteers, which enables a two-way relationship between the association and more isolated communities;
- Random sample surveys to target residents not involved in other processes;
- Home visits and estate walkabouts.

This personal approach has also been reinforced by the association's restructuring, which has given staff smaller geographical areas of responsibility in order to facilitate closer working relationships between staff and tenants and to enable more time to be dedicated to resident involvement. As with many other aspects of this case study, such an approach involves additional resourcing which the association is concerned may prove difficult to sustain in the longer term.

Conclusions

Orkney Housing Association has recognised that it is essential to develop proactive and innovative ways to get residents involved by tackling challenges to participation arising from its rural location. As one staff member said: "We can't assume how tenants want to get involved...you have to develop participation that suits the needs of tenants." Despite this, the association has faced the common problem of getting residents involved on particular housing issues, where attendance at meetings has often been small. Involving young people has also proved difficult.

It is apparent that some momentum has been built up in tenant participation in the Orkney Islands, but the key is to maintain this approach and to keep participation on the agenda. The association faces particular difficulties in this because its small size makes participation relatively expensive, and the lack of a dedicated tenant participation officer means that additional attempts to involve residents fall on already busy staff members. The gains from greater resident involvement are already evident (one play area is reported to have been developed largely because of the local communities' involvement). Therefore some of the costs of tenant participation are likely to be offset by further improvements to the housing and community services the association delivers.

Good practice points:

- Reflect your local communities by broadening tenant participation to allow opportunities for all local people (tenants and others) to become involved;
- Tackle the issue of geographical isolation and small communities by holding large numbers of meetings in different locations and paying travel and care costs;
- Utilise a range of consultation methods, including "village voices", that maximise the opportunities for involvement in dispersed populations with small numbers of tenants;
- Seek to build upon, rather than replace, the beneficial impacts of good personal and informal working relationships;
- Provide tenants with an outline document to develop, focusing on the specific key issues, rather than requiring them to start from a blank piece of paper;
- Be prepared to build on the momentum generated through the initial development of tenant participation strategies by providing flexible opportunities for tenants to remain involved in the longer term.

Case Study 2 – Participation in a rural context: Orkney Islands Council

Background

Orkney Islands Council is an island and rural local authority with a housing stock of 1,088, representing 12 per cent of the housing stock in the islands. There are two tenants and residents groups operating within Orkney, neither of which are registered with the council (at the time of the research).

The council developed a Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan for the period April 2003 to April 2005. With a relatively small tenant base, the council has traditionally found involving individuals easier to co-ordinate than establishing and sustaining tenant organisations, which has proved more difficult to achieve.

Building on the existing strategy

The council recognised the need to respond to its particular geographic context through providing a role for homeowners as well as its tenants in developing the strategy. It also built upon existing participation structures by providing opportunities for representatives of the two already established residents associations and several community councils, as well as interested tenants, to become involved in forming the strategy. This was achieved through the setting up of a working group, which also includes housing officers. The council also worked closely with Orkney Housing Association.

Comprehensive audit

The council realised that a substantial amount of development work had to be undertaken before the process of producing the strategy began. A comprehensive audit of existing arrangements was undertaken which enabled particular issues to be identified for further action. Training was provided by TIGHRA and TPAS to both council staff and tenants on the legal context, participation approaches and generic skills. Briefing sessions were also provided to tenants and residents groups, and this training was reported by staff and tenants to have been very beneficial.

Orkney Islands Council recognised that individual tenants would continue to play a very important role in participation processes. It continued to involve and provide briefing and training sessions to individual tenants where no formal groups exist, and operated a network of 'village voices' whereby individual volunteers provide a link between the council and other residents. The council is creating a register of individual tenants expressing an interest in participation in areas where no groups exist.

Importance of informal working relationships

The council continues to emphasise the importance of informal working and building good relations with tenants. (Such an approach is common amongst rural landlords: Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar also engages tenants on a personalised one to one basis). Positive individual relationships were reported by both staff and tenants, through which tenants were more than willing to approach staff about issues. However, one council officer identified why this could in itself make more formal working problematic: "This has actually hampered the development of tenant participation as there is a feeling

amongst tenants that we are making things more complicated than they need to be.”

The council tried to maximise the involvement of tenants by holding meetings in a variety of locations throughout the islands and by covering residents transport and overnight accommodation costs, despite the fact these costs are disproportionately high in this islands authority. The council was committed to improving its information dissemination, and developing its website.

Community planning

One strength of Orkney Islands Council's tenant participation strategy is the fact that it is closely linked to other strategic developments such as the community plan and the local housing strategy. This achieved a number of positive outcomes. Firstly, it contributed to a holistic 'joined up' approach to delivering services. Secondly, it linked housing issues to wider community issues in Orkney, which was regarded as very important by the council, given the small proportional size of the tenant population in the islands and the resulting need to involve other residents. Thirdly, it provided a degree of status and priority to participation, which became a central element of wider policy strategy rather than an isolated 'add-on' activity. Such an approach is further demonstrated through consultations with the wider community over changes to allocation policies and the housing strategy.

Importance of continuous improvement

A further strength of Orkney Islands Council's approach to participation was its emphasis on continuous improvement and review. The strategy will be reviewed annually. An audit of the challenges facing under-represented groups will also be undertaken. The council also identified the need to provide both short-term and long-term participation structures, and to provide opportunities for individual and collective participation. The council has also attempted to create a participation database, but it has proved difficult to maintain and update this.

One council representative stated “It is probably fair to say that the initiative has been slow in taking off”. It proved difficult to get tenants involved as strategy development was seen as rather abstract, as opposed to addressing specific issues facing local communities. Whilst tenant representatives felt that “There is a need to get people more involved”, they also recognised that this was partly because “They have been content to sit back and let the council get on with their work and not to get involved.” Both staff and tenants believed that changing this culture will be a long-term process.

The council is renewing efforts to strengthen existing groups and establish further groups. However, both council staff and tenants argued that the current criteria for registering tenant organisations was not always suitable for small clusters of properties in some of the smaller islands. The council also faced resource priority decisions because continuous consultation and involvement of individual tenants in policy reviews would reduce staff time spent on supporting existing groups and encouraging the formation of new organisations.

Conclusions

Orkney Islands Council has attempted to increase the role of resident participation in its housing policy processes. The fact that participation is

linked to wider strategic policy goals suggests that there is a commitment to sustaining resident involvement in the long term. The council has put a great deal of resources into building the foundations for a successful strategy, and has clearly considered strategic issues of reviewing, monitoring and developing mechanisms for involving residents. It has sought to reduce the challenges arising from its rural location, but faces an on-going balance between continuing to rely on the involvement of individual tenants and strengthening the role of collective tenants groups, whose development, as in other rural areas, has proved problematic for a range of reasons.

Good practice points:

- Link tenant participation strategies to other strategic policy developments for example, community planning;
- Provide opportunities for residents to influence strategic, as well as day-to-day housing management decisions;
- Take a comprehensive approach to developing tenant participation strategies by auditing existing practice, identifying short and long term methods for involving individual and groups;
- Build upon existing participation structures, including community organisations and community councils;
- Develop the use of information technology as a means of tackling some of the travel barriers tenants may face;
- Maintain a register of individual tenants expressing an interest to encourage more involvement.

Tenants influencing housing services

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, landlords have a legal duty to consult tenants and RTOs on a range of housing matters likely to affect them, including:

- Housing management;
- Repairs and maintenance;
- Stock transfer;
- Tenant participation strategy and rent setting.

The next two case studies provide practice examples of how tenant representatives and their landlord have worked together to improve service delivery.

Case study 3 – Improving the housing repairs service: Dundee City Council

Background

Dundee City Council serves a population of 142,000. The citywide average income is below the national average, but there is wide diversity in income levels between more affluent areas and the five postcode sectors of the city, which are amongst the most deprived 10 percent in Scotland. The council has approximately 17,000 properties (from a city total of 71, 600 households).

There are at least 25 tenants and residents groups in the city. The council funds the citywide Dundee Federation of Tenants Association (DFTA). The Federation has a full-time development worker and a part-time administrator. The council has a dedicated tenant participation team, comprising five officers.

Repairs service

Dundee City Council responded to a widespread recognition amongst officers and tenants that its repairs service could be provided more effectively and efficiently. One of the important considerations was the demise of the compulsory competitive tendering for repair services, which provided opportunities for new working practices. Tenants, represented by DFTA, also saw a need for better value for money from the repairs service. The council sought a joint approach to the problem from the outset and a working group was established comprising representatives from DFTA, the Housing Department, Dundee Contract Services, Trade Unions and Councillors. The remit of the group was to review the existing service, primarily by consulting tenants about their views of the service, and to develop proposals to improve the repairs service.

Appointing an independent tenants advisor

Early on in the review process, tenants recognised the need for an independent tenant's advisor to assist them in investigating some complex issues, to support them in consulting other tenants and to help them in representing wider tenants' views. TIS was appointed to this task, initially jointly funded by the Council and DFTA and subsequently by the council.

Getting tenants to participate

The review commenced with DFTA holding three sets of discussions with tenants about the current repair service. Tenants invited to take part included both individuals who were involved in, or had expressed an interest in, existing tenant participation processes and tenants who had used the repairs service in the last six months. This provided a useful combination of existing activists and tenants who had not previously been involved, but who had first-hand knowledge of the particular issues being reviewed. From these discussions a list of tenants' concerns and expectations were compiled and then formulated into a comprehensive description of the improvements tenants wished to see. An opportunity for other tenants to participate was provided through a tenants' conference, attended by almost 100 delegates, where the provisional agenda for improving the repairs service was endorsed with a few changes, adding to the legitimacy of the review process.

Influencing alternative contracting arrangements

At the time, the council was considering how a new computer system, a new partnership approach between the council and contractors and a contact centre with a 'trouble shooting' function could help address tenants' expectations. DFTA and the independent tenants advisor were involved in the options appraisal of alternative contracting methods, prior to a final decision being taken to pursue a partnering option. DFTA and the advisor also participated in the creation of the actual Partnership Agreement, a further example of tenant involvement in wider aspects of housing management. DFTA were represented in all the detailed discussions through several sub-groups to develop the final proposals, which were again considered at a larger tenants' conference that agreed the final recommendations put to councillors.

Once this participation process had established the actual proposals, these were put out to wider public consultation, including public adverts, information in a tenant newsletter, and an information leaflet (provided on request). Full information was also sent to registered tenant organisations (RTOs) and a consultation seminar for RTOs was also held.

The process took two years to complete. A Partnership Board comprising tenants, councillors and council officers was also established to monitor and review the new repairs service.

Involving tenants from the outset

A vital element of this review process was that tenants were involved from the very outset, including the review of the existing service, and that they contributed to all aspects of the service review, including quality control, cost, appointments and reporting system, rather than being involved in isolated aspects of the service. A clear commitment was given to empower tenants in this process. Adequate funding was provided, and tenant representatives were given the time and opportunity to gather the views of other tenants to ensure a comprehensive tenant contribution to the process. Consensus was reached on all aspects of the review process, allowing the different perspectives of service providers and users to be reconciled. All of these measures resulted in a long process. Whilst it was recognised that it was important to establish an improved service as swiftly as possible, the opinions of both officers and tenants were that these delays were worthwhile in order to achieve the most beneficial outcomes, and the fact that adequate time had been allowed for a comprehensive landlord-tenant dialogue was identified as a major contributory factor to the success and legitimacy of the review process. Another factor in this success was the careful consideration at all stages of the process of how registered groups, non-registered groups and individual tenants could contribute to the review.

The newly created Partnership Agreement was based largely on tenants, rather than officers, requirements and expectations, including the explicit definition of required service outcomes and how these will be measured to provide a framework for tenants to evaluate the new service and to contribute to the continual monitoring of the system. The monitoring and review groups will ensure that there is continuing tenant involvement in the evaluation of the new service, providing opportunities for maintaining the momentum of tenant participation in an evolving long-term process.

Building a flexible and responsive process

Another positive characteristic of the process was the degree to which it proved flexible and responsive. For example, a number of sub-groups were established to consider specific issues as the review proceeded. This enabled the involvement of a larger number of individuals, and ensured that tenants contributed to every detailed aspect of the new repairs service.

Conclusion

Facilitating such comprehensive tenant involvement requires a large resource commitment from landlords. This issue is compounded by one positive outcome of the process being raised tenant expectations and their desire to become involved in other aspects of council service delivery in housing and beyond. Both tenants and the council highlighted that while this process was resource intensive, it provided “good value” in terms of the outcome of the

review process. This particular example also highlights the need to consider how tenant participation approaches may be developed amongst partner agencies, in this case the contractors delivering the repairs service.

Good practice points:

- Increase the empowerment of tenants by involving them from the outset and facilitating their participation in all aspects of a policy review;
- Provide adequate funding and tenant access to independent advice;
- Enable tenants to proactively take forward a review agenda;
- Consider how participation structures will evolve over the life of the review, including opportunities for individual, registered and non-registered tenant groups to contribute;
- Ensure that detailed action plans developed by a relatively small number of individuals are linked into opportunities for a larger number of tenants to influence them (for example through larger consultation conferences);
- Facilitate continuing tenant involvement in the on-going monitoring and evaluation of a service;
- Build sufficient time into a process to enable a comprehensive dialogue between the landlord and tenants and to maximise the involvement of as many tenants as possible.

Case study 4 – Rent setting and business planning: Perth and Kinross Council

Background

Perth and Kinross Council operates in a mix of rural and urban communities, including the city of Perth and the smaller towns of Blairgowrie, Crieff, Kinross and Pitlochry and many smaller villages and outlying settlements. The Housing Service has 8890 tenancies. The Housing Service is decentralised, with three area offices based in Perth, area offices in the larger towns and a further five sub-offices in other locations. There are 13 registered tenant organisations, including the Perth and Kinross Tenants and Residents Federation (PKTRF). There are nine unregistered tenants and residents groups in contact with the council.

For a number of years the council had conducted an annual rent setting conference with the PKTRF and representatives of tenants and residents groups. Initially the conference was primarily an information-providing exercise, with council officers presenting details of proposed rent levels to participants. Although this was useful, there was a growing recognition amongst council officers and tenants, that tenants should be given a greater and more proactive role in the actual process of rent setting itself.

Increasing tenant participation in business planning

In November 2001, the council carried out a Stock Options Appraisal Study. Tenants were involved in this process from the outset, and were involved in appointing an independent tenant advisor and influencing the appointment of the council's consultants in the appraisal study. The study resulted in the

decision being made for the council to retain its housing stock. At this point, it was agreed that tenant involvement in wider strategic housing decisions should be further developed. The annual rent setting conference therefore expanded its agenda to include increased tenant participation in business planning.

Establishing a Business Planning Working Group

The 2003 annual rent setting conference established the links between rent setting and business planning. A Business Planning Working Group, comprising council staff and tenant representatives was established to develop the business plan and to co-ordinate the annual tenant conference. Tenant delegates were provided with a briefing note on the issues prior to the event. Tenant representatives on the Working Group received training from the TIS on rent setting and business planning, including issues such as housing debt, rent affordability and stock improvement needs, as well as the assumptions and projections underpinning the development of the business plan. Both housing officers and tenants felt that this initiative had provided positive outcomes, both in delivering improved housing services and in further strengthening relations between staff and tenants. It was argued that the involvement of tenants had resulted in a more in-depth exploration of a wide range of housing-related issues and produced a large degree of consensus between tenants and the council on the way forward. Tenants believed that “The council is listening to tenants’ views” and “the council make more of an effort to use jargon free language and deliver more interesting presentations to tenants.” A senior housing official stated that “There is now an understanding that in delivering a housing service today and for the future that there needs to be a balance between housing standards, service delivery standards, the finances and affordability.”

A key element in the success of this initiative is that the actual participation process for the rent review and business planning exercise was carefully considered at the outset. Agreement was reached between the PKTRF and the council about how the process should progress, enabling a consensual approach to develop and sustain the initiative. A key element of this approach was the desire of tenants to expand participation from information provision to the active engagement of tenants, and the willingness of council staff to facilitate this development.

Building tenants capacity

The initiative benefited from a clear understanding amongst all parties at the outset that the capacity of tenants to make an influential and meaningful contribution to rent setting was dependent upon tenants being provided with adequate and appropriate knowledge and understanding of the issues involved. A wide range of mechanisms were used to build tenants capacity on this issue including; training sessions, seminars, briefing papers, meetings and newsletters. The use of an independent advisor to provide impartial information and advice to the PKTRF and to increase tenants’ awareness of rent setting and business planning was central to this process, and equally important was the advisors role in supporting tenants in influencing the rent setting process.

Attempts were also made to engage as many tenants as possible in this initiative, both individually and collectively, through the provision of training throughout the council area, and the distribution of briefings, newsletters and individual invitations to events to all tenants. A balance was also sought

between the intensive involvement of a small number of representatives and the requirement to involve a wider range of tenants and other residents through conferences and feedback slips.

Increasing tenants expectations

The initiative was understood to be a dynamic and evolving process. Tenant involvement was further developed as the initiative progressed and tenants capacity grew. Careful consideration was given to how tenants could be involved in the next stages of the process. The process was also flexible and responsive, demonstrated through the establishment of a number of sub-groups to consider particular issues as the review proceeded. One result of this capacity building was the desire and expectation of tenants to become more engaged in other aspects of housing services, and extending their participation into wider business planning areas. These tenant participation principles are now being applied to other council activities such as council tax setting.

Conclusions

It is clear that this initiative required a great deal of commitment on the part of both tenants and housing officers. It is also apparent that part of the success of this initiative was built on the foundations of groundwork undertaken over a number of years. A further challenge for Perth and Kinross Council and their tenants is to consider how tenants may participate in the implementation, monitoring and review of the business plan, which provides opportunities to consolidate and build upon the growing tenant involvement in service provision.

Good practice points:

- Provide a clear commitment to building the capacity of tenants to make a meaningful and influential contribution to the participation process;
- Facilitate tenants wider engagement in a range of strategic housing issues as participation processes develop;
- Consider how tenants may participate both individually and collectively at all stages of a process;
- Review and adapt mechanisms for tenant involvement over the course of an initiative;
- Be prepared to respond positively to increasing tenant expectations about the extent and scope of their involvement in delivering housing services.

The active involvement of tenants in the review and evaluation of housing services, beyond the completion of tenant satisfaction surveys, and providing tenants with a form of redress, offers a further means of increasing the empowerment and participation of tenants. West Lothian Council has introduced all-tenant inspection teams. Several teams of approximately six tenants, supported and provided with training have evaluated a number of aspects of housing services. These inspections include site visits, analysis of documentation and interviews with staff and other tenants. The inspection team then prepares a report with recommendations, which the council responds to through a detailed action plan (Flint, 2003).

Involving excluded groups

It is important that every tenant has the opportunity to participate. However, it is well known that particular groups are under-represented in mainstream participation structures. Landlords have now to take full account of Equalities Legislation. Facilitating the engagement of excluded groups is vital to successful participation, but is not always easy to achieve. The following case studies highlight how two landlords have sought to engage with particular groups. There are of course other groups to be considered including young people and people with disabilities. More guidance on facilitating their involvement is provided in section three of the guide.

In some areas of Scotland, there are relatively large Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) populations. In these areas, some landlords have introduced particular methods to ensure that these groups are included in participation processes. The case study of Southside Housing Association in Glasgow outlines these processes. Although many landlords will have very small BME populations, good practice principles applied here are likely to be equally relevant.

Some older tenants are likely to be particularly affected by many of the general challenges to participation, including:

- Poor physical accessibility;
- Inappropriate forms of communication.

Many landlords provide specific housing services to older tenants. The case study of Bield Housing Association is one such example, but again, many of the principles of practice described are applicable to 'mainstream' landlords with older tenants.

Case study 5 – Engaging with and involving black and minority ethnic communities: Southside Housing Association

Background

Southside Housing Association is a small community-based registered social landlord (RSL) operating in the Pollokshields area of Glasgow, managing just over 500 properties. The Pollokshields community has a high proportion of black and minority ethnic residents, with the BME community comprising half of the East Pollokshields ward, the largest BME population in Scotland. Over 30 percent of the housing association's tenants are from the BME community, and a quarter of the association's new members last year were from this community.

Positive action in employment and recruitment

One of the priorities of the Southside Housing Association was to ensure that it both equitably served the needs of its BME communities and encouraged greater participation by local BME residents. The association attempted to ensure that its workforce was representative of its community by pursuing positive action in its employment and training practices to recruit BME employees. The employment of a number of staff from BME backgrounds including reception staff who are multi-lingual was reported to provide a welcoming point of contact for residents and had also generated wider trust in the association within local BME communities.

The association also sought to build the needs of BME communities into its mainstream housing services through ensuring larger family homes were provided in its new developments, expanding provision for young homeless individuals and improving access to sheltered housing for Asian elders. The association resourced a cultural and language support service to improve the access of BME groups to sheltered housing. The association's staff argued that meeting the needs of BME communities in mainstream housing was a prerequisite to building the trust and confidence required for these groups to become involved in tenant participation structures. In a dynamic process, this participation led to a more accurate identification of housing needs, which the association could then address more effectively. Southside Housing Association employs a community development officer to progress a number of wider action initiatives. The association also works closely with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation as part of a wider neighbourhood regeneration programme.

Developing trust

It was apparent that the development of trust between the association and BME residents had been a long-term, and at times difficult process. The dual approach of facilitating the involvement of BME individuals and groups in participation structures and addressing their needs both through housing and wider community development activities reinforced the commitment of the association to its BME residents.

The association was involved in a community profiling exercise to establish the different needs and priorities within its local areas. Surveys of tenants were conducted in a number of languages, aimed at gaining their views on the housing services provided and to identify how they wished to participate in the association's activities. (Such an approach may be of use to other landlords with smaller BME populations who have highlighted the difficulty in identifying where BME individuals actually live and what their particular needs are). Central to Southside Housing Association's approach was engaging with residents on an individual basis, recognising that attempts to pitch participation methods to an idea of an 'average' tenant simply did not work.

Southside Housing Association faces similar issues to other landlords in ensuring that the involvement of excluded groups does not alienate existing participants or groups. This was a difficult process and there was recognition amongst the association's staff that there was still some way to go in reconciling these aims. A community development officer is funded to raise equality issues for BME and other populations in the area and equality training is provided to all association staff. The association attempted to facilitate the education and cultural awareness of different groups in all its communities, but recognised that this was a difficult and sensitive process that requires long-term commitment.

Providing tailored forms of participation

This study revealed that specifically tailored forms of participation, developed through consultation with excluded groups are required to ensure their involvement. Slightly amending traditional approaches was not sufficient to facilitate their participation. The association operated a tenants' forum and area-based tenants meetings to ensure that both area-wide and specific local concerns are identified within participation structures.

A BME forum was established and separate meetings were held with BME tenants in a particular locality to counter the fears and concerns of BME individuals about crime and anti-social behaviour and to address the reluctance of BME individuals to voice their opinions at open public meetings. However, the association only used this forum when appropriate in order to prevent participation structures becoming polarised between different local groups.

Southside Housing Association worked very closely with BME representative organisations, and regarded this partnership approach as vital to encouraging participation. Not only did such groups enable the association to identify individuals who wished to participate, they provided a network of support for local BME residents. This support helped to build the confidence and wider empowerment of BME groups in local decision-making processes. The association regarded providing opportunities for members of excluded groups to network to be a key element of involving these individuals.

Conclusions

Southside Housing Association operates in a particular local context. However, the lessons from this case study are applicable to all landlords attempting to further the participation of excluded groups. Such a process requires a substantial commitment, in which equal opportunities become enshrined in every aspect of the organisation's practice, as well as a willingness to try innovative ways of getting people involved, which go beyond traditional methods. This case study shows that significant progress can be made, bringing benefits to both local residents and landlords, but that such progress is likely to be difficult and long term. Reconciling the needs of different tenants is a sensitive and complex issue, by providing a range of specific, but linked participation opportunities provides a means for ensuring that individuals are given opportunities to influence and become involved in their housing provision.

Good practice points:

- Landlords should embed engagement with a wide range of communities and individuals in all aspects of their culture and practice;
- Introduce a comprehensive range of proactive measures to facilitate the engagement of excluded groups;
- Recognise the diversity of needs and priorities within excluded groups;
- Identify, contact and ascertain the needs of individuals who may be excluded from other existing forms of participation;
- Link specific forms of participation aimed at specific groups to wider decision-making structures;
- Ensure that specific attempts to include particular groups do not preclude the involvement of individuals from these groups in wider decision-making processes.

Many landlords in Scotland with small Black and Minority Ethnic populations have attempted to facilitate their participation through ensuring that language challenges are tackled. For landlords with small or isolated BME populations, identifying individuals and establishing their requirements is an important first step.

Lister Co-op in Edinburgh proactively produces special editions of its newsletter in different languages and delivers them to the relevant households, who do not need to make special requests for translated copies.

Fife Council's community language postcards

Fife Council has distributed a series of postcards in a range of languages to identify BME individuals and to encourage them to become engaged in wider tenant participation initiatives.

Good practice points:

- This enables landlords to contact BME individuals even when they are relatively dispersed in the local community;
- Proactive commitment- translation already undertaken rather than offer to translate existing leaflets;
- Offer of free translation of information on a variety of housing topics;
- Freepost facility provided;
- Distributed through local organisations representing BME groups.

One important finding in the good practice literature on involving excluded groups is the importance of developing networks between excluded individuals, and this may mean plugging into networks beyond the immediate local area. These include advocacy organisations and enabling tenants to participate in wider representative bodies.

Case study 6 – Working with older people: Bield Housing Association Partnership Forum

Background

Bield is a charitable-status registered social landlord, who provides services to older people across Scotland through supported accommodation, care housing, private retirement housing and home and day care services. It has approximately 4,000 tenancies. One tenant organisation is registered with Bield and a number of tenants and residents groups, are in contact with the housing association, are not registered.

As a national organisation providing housing and related services for older people, Bield faced particular issues in implementing tenant participation provisions. Although tenant participation had been successful at an individual and local level, the association recognised that it needed to further develop participation at a national and strategic level.

Partnership Forum Steering Group

The 21 tenant members of the association were contacted by letter and asked if they would be interested in becoming involved in tenant participation at a strategic level. Seven individuals responded and were invited to form a Partnership Forum Steering Group along with senior Bield staff. The steering group then contacted over 4,000 tenants by letter throughout four geographical regions of Scotland. Four places in each area were allocated to membership of the national Partnership Forum. A good level of response was received, resulting in elections being held in three of these areas. Approximately, 3,500 tenants in these three areas were contacted with details of the ballot. A 50 per cent ballot response rate was achieved and members were duly elected. The electoral basis of the tenant representatives, and the relatively high turn out amongst tenants provided the tenant representatives with a strong mandate and a high level of legitimacy within the decision-making process.

The elected tenant members of the Forum hold a rotating three-year term of office, although this will be subject to review when the Partnership constitution is drawn up. The Forum is currently developing a constitution, but the following aims and objectives have been provisionally identified:

- To consider the legislative requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001;
- To identify and address issues at a national and strategic level affecting tenants and the association;
- To review policies;
- To network and share experience with other tenants;
- To raise awareness of Bield tenant activity throughout Scotland.

Although the Forum is not a registered tenant organisation, Bield will treat it as such.

Developing the Forum

Recognising the particular needs of its tenants, Bield ensured that the development of the Forum was at a pace largely determined by the needs of tenants and staff, including considerable time being spent preparing the initial background and raising awareness of the key issues and purpose of the Forum amongst tenants. Careful consideration was given to the health requirements of these tenants, for example through ensuring that individuals are not over-burdened with work.

Bield sought to empower tenants throughout the process. Tenants were provided with opportunities to meet on their own, without staff present to discuss issues. An informal first name basis was used alongside the encouragement of tenants to voice their opinions in order to build up trust and the confidence of tenants. One to one meetings with tenants were also provided so that issues may be discussed confidentially. Tenants have been involved in developing the constitution and working practice of the Forum from the outset. The senior management representation on the Forum ensured that tenants are heard directly and the relevant decisions were actually taken at the Forum and subsequently acted upon swiftly.

Links between the Forum and wider tenant population

In order to ensure strong links between the Forum and the wider tenant population, tenant newsletters detailed the work of the Forum were distributed three times a year, keeping other tenants informed and ensuring the accountability of their representatives. This reflected the strong emphasis that Bield placed on facilitating communication and networking between its tenants in its many locations in Scotland. Bield also sought to strengthen links between its own tenants and other tenant groups and organisations. The association staff reported that addressing the feelings of isolation experienced by some older tenants was an important first step in facilitating their participation. Bield staff regarded providing networking opportunities and a range of social events as one way of achieving this.

Conclusions

Bield sought to ensure that the work of the Forum on strategic issues was placed within a wider structure, which recognised that many other tenants may wish to become involved in specific local issues. The Forum was aimed at complimenting, rather than displacing these local participation initiatives.

The Forum required a high level of organisational commitment and dedicated allocation of staff time and resources. This case study provides one example of how a national landlord serving a very widely dispersed tenant base can aim to provide opportunities for tenants to influence its strategies at a national level, whilst promoting local involvement. It also demonstrates the importance of responding to particular tenant's needs by creating the appropriate working environment and allowing tenants to determine the scope and pace of the participation process.

Good practice points:

- Develop tenant participation at a pace determined by the needs of tenants and staff;
- Use the particular needs of tenants as a basis for determining all aspects of the participation process;
- Maximise the legitimacy and accountability of tenant representatives through involving and informing all tenants;
- Provide opportunities for tenants in a variety of locations to network and share information at a local and national level;
- Provide opportunities for tenants to participate at a range of levels through integrating local and strategic structures.

In **Lewisham**, the Dialogue Project has used an internet-linked computerised database to discuss the needs of elderly residents. Local users are able to link up with other national and international participants, with the results feeding into council strategy (Sinclair, 1999).

Overall conclusions

The research has shown that the level and quality of tenant participation practice varies considerably throughout Scotland. Some areas are very much at the early stages, while others have organised tenant groups who are working with landlords to improve housing services and standards. Tenant participation is a continuous process, and it will take time to raise the baseline of tenant participation in Scotland.

These case studies provide accounts of some early initiatives to involve tenants and offer examples where landlords and tenants have worked together to improve housing services and standards. Although they are grouped within three themes and represent the approaches taken by individual landlords in their own operational contexts, they provide general points of good practice that are likely to be applicable to landlords across Scotland. These points have already been set out above.

What is clear is that tenants are making a difference in the case study areas, both to local developments and also to the landlords' policies. The case studies highlight the importance of:

- Involving tenants from an early stage;
- Tenants having an opportunity to contribute to the agenda;
- Tenants identifying their issues;
- Tenants and landlords working towards common understandings of problems and agreement on the best way forward.

What emerges from these studies is that tenant participation requires a clear commitment from landlords. All of the case studies share the common feature of significant resources being dedicated to participation. Often, particularly at the outset, the challenges are daunting, and initial progress is slow. What these studies show however is that gradually participation becomes stronger and begins to develop, and that landlords as well as tenants begin to see the benefits of their commitment.

Participation is a dynamic process and momentum is a key element in this. Whilst it is often very difficult to instigate, once the process has been established it becomes stronger and in many cases sustains itself and indeed expands.

The first challenge for landlords and tenants is to persevere at early stages, building on what is already in place. The second, later, challenge is for landlords to facilitate the growing expectations and willingness of tenants to become more intensively involved in a wider range of housing issues. The case studies suggest that such an approach does bring beneficial outcomes to housing providers.

Whilst these studies were selected to highlight innovative initiatives and focus on elements of good practice, they should not be read as presenting tenant participation as anything other than a complex and long-term process. It is apparent that these landlords faced a number of difficulties at various stages of their participation strategies. They share this experience with all landlords in

Scotland. The fact that these case studies demonstrate that challenges to participation may be addressed and overcome should similarly provide encouragement to all landlords.

3 How to involve tenants

Introduction

In the baseline study carried out by the Tenant Participation Development Team (TPDT) in 2003, landlords identified the need for more guidance on how to involve tenants. Landlords highlighted that they are sometimes uncertain about how to make contact with tenants, how to get them involved and how to encourage their participation. This section identifies practical steps to involve tenants and examples of successful practice elsewhere that can be adapted and used. This section looks at:

- Different levels of participation;
- Key steps in planning tenant participation activities;
- Getting started (in areas where there is little or no tenant activity);
- How to build, support and sustain tenants organisations;
- Involving traditionally excluded groups.

A checklist is given at the end of each section to assist landlords and tenants develop their tenant participation practice.

In addition to the information contained in this section you may also want to refer to Communities Scotland's draft Standards for Community Engagement (www.standards.communitiesscotland.gov.uk) and Community Engagement "how to guide" (www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk). The Standards may be helpful in developing tenant participation and the "how to guide" contains more case studies and techniques for engaging tenants and the wider community in decision-making processes.

What do we mean by tenant participation?

"Tenant participation is about tenants taking part in the 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" *National Strategy for Tenant Participation – "Partners in Participation" (1999).*

The right to participation stems 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. This expectation sits in a context in which service providers have the formal decision making authority and service users have little or none. Effective participation leads to better and more responsive management and this helps inform decisions about improving service delivery and providing value for money.

Different levels of participation

There are a range of ways that landlords and tenants can exchange information and views on housing issues. Different processes for different issues should be commonplace. Rushing in to set up formal participation structures can often make tenants ill prepared. To have participation that works, tenants themselves must see the value of getting involved, decide the level of participation they wish and decide how they want to be represented. The terms of consultation and participation are often used loosely when discussing issues around tenant involvement. Drawing on the research of Willcox (1994), there are different levels of tenant involvement ranging from receiving information, to being consulted, to deciding and acting together.



Information and support

Information and support is a necessary pre-requisite to the processes of consultation, joint decision-making and joint action. Tenants require to have all the information needed to consider issues properly. It is important to develop a joint information strategy, in which agreement is reached about how information will be communicated between all the participants. That information should be:

- Clear and understandable, with key points summarised;
- Made available with time for tenants to fully participate and consult others;
- Relevant and accurate;
- Available in appropriate formats for its users for example; in Braille, audio tape and in community languages;
- All participants identify and explain when they are bound by confidentiality and why access to such information is restricted;
- Within the limits of confidentiality, all participants have equal access to information that is relevant to tenant participation.

Tenants groups should have the opportunity to identify what support they need to participate. There should be no practical or financial barriers to tenants getting involved. Where needed, there should be:

- Accessible venues for meeting, at times suited to tenants;
- Suitable transport;
- Funding to cover crèche or care costs;
- Out of pocket expenses;
- Communication aids (loop systems, interpreting, advocacy).

Tenants may require access to equipment they need (for example; computers, telephone, photocopying). Staff development support should be available to groups to assist them to get organised, to increase their housing skills and knowledge to participate.

Consultation

Landlords are legally required to consult with RTOs and 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 to put 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.

There are a range of consultation methods that can be used for example; face-to-face at meetings; open days; surveys and questionnaires etc. A wide range of consultation methods for housing are discussed in Frauke Sinclair's useful study "The Active Community: Innovative consultation and participation methods for housing" (1999). Whatever method is used, it is essential to provide tenants with sufficient time to respond. A common complaint from tenants is that they never hear from their landlord about the result of a consultation exercise. It is therefore crucial that the results of the consultation exercise are fed back to tenants and tenant groups. This feedback should include the options that have been considered, the decisions and actions agreed along with any future activity. The feedback should be done within an agreed timescale and to an agreed format.

Deciding together

This involves tenants contributing ideas and options in deciding the best way forward. This process is likely to involve tenants' representatives and groups rather than individuals. Most of the common structures intended to achieve dialogue are established for a period of months or years. Tenants are involved at the problem-defining phase of dealing with an issue. If a shared perception of the problem can emerge, it will be much easier to reach agreements about solutions. Dialogue allows for negotiations to take place in relation to specific issues and implies that both parties have an interest in reaching mutually satisfactory conclusions. The most developed and positive working relationship tenants' representatives and a landlord can have is a negotiating one. This type of relationship requires deeper understandings of and respect for each other's points of view.

The research suggests that it is often landlords who stop short before the "deciding together" stage, because they underestimate the potential of tenants groups to get involved and find it difficult to work in support of tenants and to a community framework. Sharing power requires fundamental changes 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 put plans into action.

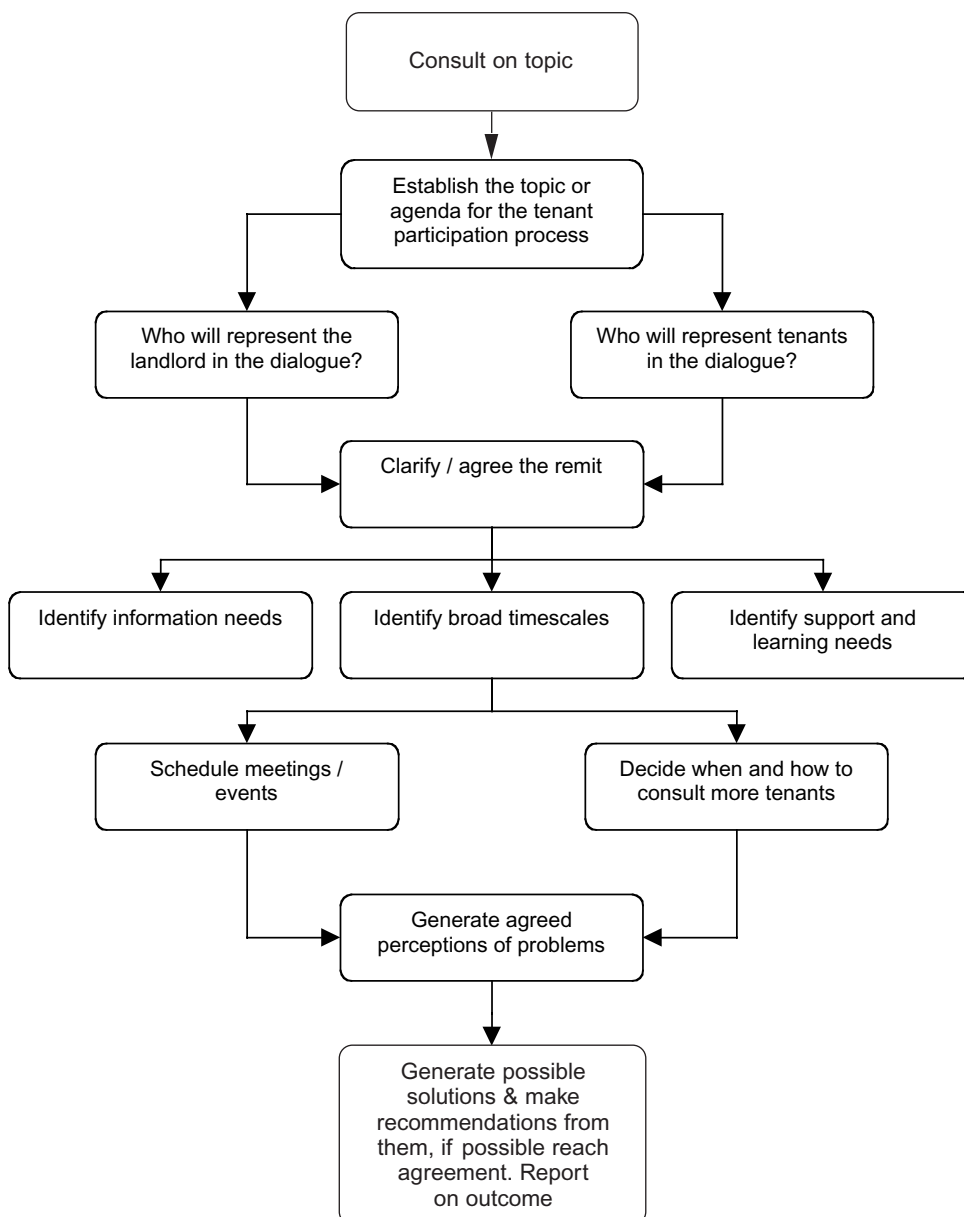
Key steps in planning tenant participation activities

There is no blueprint for developing tenant participation – different ways suit different circumstances. It is better to be flexible, to establish tenant participation processes, which are designed to:

- Suit the particular issue(s);
- Take account of tenants interest in them;
- Take account of tenants capacity to be involved.

There are a number of key steps to consider in planning tenant participation activities (These are illustrated in the flowchart- Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. Planning tenant participation processes



Agreeing the agenda

The starting point for devising a participation process will come from either tenants and/or the landlord having identified some problem(s) or some opportunities for a new approach to delivering housing services. When tenant participation processes happen some form of dialogue is taking place. Landlords and tenants often come to the table with very different agendas and expectations. Their different perceptions of problems could draw them in the direction of different solutions. It is important to work towards a shared understanding of the problem, as a mutually acceptable solution is more likely when problems are understood in the same way. There is a need for a clear agenda that is jointly agreed with tenants and the landlord. To influence the agenda, tenants need to be involved and supported in the process from the beginning.

Who will be involved?

In planning tenant participation a decision needs to be taken about who will be involved in working on the issue from the landlord organisation and who will represent tenants. From the landlord organisation it is likely to be staff members with some responsibility for that area. If there are established tenants' representative arrangements, tenants should decide how they get involved. Where there is little tenant activity, extra steps are needed to encourage tenants to get involved (information on getting started can be found in the next part of this section). Good practice examples have shown that landlords must avoid, and be seen to avoid, choosing the tenants who take part and imposing tenant representative arrangements. "Top-down" initiatives rarely work.

Once tenants and landlord have agreed the issue, the tenant participation process can be designed in more detail. A checklist of questions are provided below to assist this process:

Planning tenant participation activities – Checklist

- What outcomes are required, and so, what remit is appropriate?
- Who will represent the landlord in the dialogue? And who will represent tenants?
- How much time is needed and is available?
- How much time can the main participants contribute?
- What information is required? Is independent external advice required?
- What support and learning needs are there? Is independent external advice required?
- How frequently should the main participants meet; where should they meet; who should chair the meetings; who should take minutes and prepare agendas?
- Are there other places where experience may be worth tapping into?
- What ways will be used to involve tenants more widely?
- During the process, do the landlord's representatives have to check views at a more senior level?
- How can the need for statutory consultation on proposals be integrated into the process?
- How is the process linked to the landlord's normal decision making arrangements?
- How will feedback be given to tenants and to RTOs and groups?

Getting started

In areas where there is little or no tenant activity the question often asked is “*where do we start?*”.

The first step is to find out which groups already exist and to build up a picture of tenants’ issues. Generating knowledge about which tenants wish to be involved, and in what ways, and maintaining this data, is therefore an essential component of successful tenant participation. In making initial contact with tenants it is a risky strategy to bypass existing groups because they are not deemed by the landlord to be fully “representative”. If there is an existing network of tenant organisations and interested tenants, then these tenants should have an opportunity to be involved in looking at ways to involve more tenants from the beginning of the process. It is useful to find out from existing groups what is the best way to seek tenants’ views and what are the best ways to do this. Support should be given to existing groups to assist them to consult with the wider community and to increase tenant involvement.

Making contact

If there are no tenants and residents groups in the area, make contact with people who are involved in the local community to find out what they see as the key housing issues and to get contacts of tenants who may want to take part. You need to gather information and views from as wide a range of sources as possible. These might include official surveys and reports, talking to other agencies and local projects to share information about local housing issues. It is also useful to make contact with other local community groups such as Community Councils, Elderly Forums, Mums and Toddler Groups etc, to find out views of the local community. Informal working is a key element of tenant participation, particularly for smaller landlords, where personal contact with most tenants is more feasible.

For example, **Outlook Housing Association** in Edinburgh individually consulted each of its tenants and residents about its tenant participation strategy at a series of small group meetings.

Feedback cards: Fife Council

Fife Council used a feedback card to identify tenants who were willing to be added to their Consultation Register. The A5 card was inserted within an edition of the council’s tenant newsletter. One side consisted of a crossword, the other side consisted of four questions; asking about the content of the tenant newsletter, what housing issues tenants would attend a local meeting about, whether tenants would attend an open day and asking tenants to add their name and address details to the consultation register. Returning the card entitled the tenant to enter a free prize draw. The card made it clear how tenants would be contacted for future involvement and provided a freepost address so that tenants did not have to pay postage.

The Council now have a database of approximately 500 tenants on their Consultation Register.

Consultation Registers: Perth and Kinross Council

Perth and Kinross Council have a range of mechanisms through which registered and non-registered groups and individuals have been identified and included in participation processes.

In addition to having a *Tenant Consultation Register*, Perth and Kinross Council also operate two further registers. *The Tenant Participation Volunteers Register*, comprises individual tenants who live in an area where there are no active tenant groups, but have indicated to the council that they are interested in becoming involved in housing issues. They provide a local tenant information contact point, acting as channels of information between the council and their neighbours. The Tenant Participation Volunteer Register, enables the Council to engage with tenants where no formal group exists.

The Interested Persons Register includes tenants who have indicated they are interested in housing issues and are included in communications between the council, the Tenant and Residents Federation and others. These individuals are also given invitations to seminars, conferences and consultation exercises.

Identifying tenants issues

In areas where there is little tenant activity there are ranges of consultation methods that can be used to identify tenants' issues. These methods could include:

- Door-to-door surveys;
- Postal questionnaires;
- Open days/Community conferences;
- Newsletters;
- Drop in surgeries;
- Social events;
- Public meetings/ street meetings.

A wide range of consultation methods was identified during the research and include:

Street rep scheme: Dunbritton Housing Association

Dunbritton Housing Association has established a Street Rep Scheme. The scheme was partly a response to the recognition that whilst tenants wished their viewpoints to be heard, they may not wish to directly communicate with landlords, nor to form a tenants group. The Street Rep scheme provides a forum for tenants and residents to raise their concerns and for Dunbritton to feedback information to tenants and residents. Tenants are encouraged to be involved in developing the final nature of each individual scheme. Each street has a number of representatives. These representatives are part of an informal Committee, which communicates directly with the association, and this Committee may call a meeting of the street representatives to discuss particular issues. The representatives raise concerns of tenants and residents and inform tenants and residents about the outcome of any particular enquiry they have raised. Anyone living in a designated street may become a street rep. In order to ensure that representatives have the broad support of other residents in their street, when individuals are nominated the association writes to all relevant households asking if they have any objections to these individuals becoming representative. If there are no objections, the Street Reps form their Committee. The scheme includes an expenses policy to reimburse individuals for any costs they incur whilst being Reps. The Reps hold meetings with local area staff in order to build up good day-to-day working relationships, but may also request meetings with senior staff when required. Reps may also arrange a meeting with the housing association's Management Committee.

Other methods identified in the research include:

Study visits

Study visits to other areas is a popular and useful way to provide an opportunity to meet new people, see what can be done when communities get organised, provide new ideas and contacts that tenants can go back to. Through activities like this tenants can see the value of organising collectively.

Use of IT

Several landlords are utilising information technology to expand their tenant participation structures. For example, **Eildon Housing Association** increasingly use e-mail in consultation exercises and **Canmore Housing Association** is one of many landlords to develop an interactive tenant participation section on its website. **Hjaltland Housing Association** in the Shetland Islands also uses its website to develop participation and attracts users through acting as a public Internet access site.

Arts

Using the arts is one way of stimulating increased interest in participation events. For example, **Cordale Housing Association** staged a play about the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, which generated a great deal of interest. The Association has built upon this by having a high profile at community civic weeks and other cultural events. A number of landlords including **East Ayrshire Council**, **Angus Housing Association** and **Parkhead Housing Association** now produce their tenant's handbook in the form of a wall calendar. This has proved popular with tenants and the calendars highlight important participation events and dates.

Getting more people involved means breaking down the barriers to involvement such as problems with childcare especially for evening meetings, lack of knowledge, low self-esteem, fear of going out, and meetings in accessible or intimidating buildings. Whatever method is used to get tenants involved the following key principles should apply:

Getting started – Checklist

- Are there tenant organisations or informal networks of tenants in your area? If so, have you contacted them to find out what they see as the key housing issues affecting them and the level of involvement they wish?
- Has support been made available to existing tenants groups to get more people involved? (Groups can have good local knowledge of the area and have useful contacts).
- In areas where there is little or no tenant activity what work has been done to identify tenants who wish to be involved and to encourage them to participate?
- Have tenants issues been identified? (To develop participation it is essential to start with issues tenants see as a priority)
- Are tenants views being listened to and being taken into consideration before decisions are made?
- Are there opportunities for tenants to participate at the level they choose, on their issues of concern?
- Have tenants been involved in defining the problems and priorities?
- Has adequate time been given to find out tenants' views?
- How will tenants be informed of the results of the consultation? (A common complaint from tenants is that they never hear the result of a consultation exercise by their landlord).
- What is being done to enable tenants to get the information they need to influence the decision-making process?
- Do tenants have the administrative and development support and resources to develop their capacity to get involved?

Landlords should avoid imposing participation arrangements, even in situations where tenants are very new to participation. It is important to recognise that housing areas, particularly large housing areas contain many different "communities". Participation initiatives imposed from above without recognising

this can simply expose the differences and hinder tenant involvement. The challenge of tenant participation is to emphasise common interests across the many different “communities” in any area. But people may need to organise separately first, before they get the confidence and trust to work together.

Building, supporting and sustaining tenant organisations

The research has shown that there is a wide range of tenants and residents organisations throughout Scotland. The challenge for tenants is to continue to build their organisations to influence housing services and standards. It is a landlord’s job to ensure that tenant groups have adequate information, support and resources to develop the capacity of their organisations.

Tenant representative groups draw their strength from debating issues collectively, and coming up with ideas together to represent tenants’ interests. Organising collectively can sometimes be seen as a threat by landlords and elected /governing body members, and often a response is to challenge if the group is “representative”. What is important for groups is that they are genuinely open and aim to be inclusive. The credibility of the views advanced by tenants’ representatives improves if they can demonstrate wider tenant support for them. In order that groups can be representative they need the opportunity to gather the views of their members, and this requires groups having access to resources and skilled development support staff.

Tenants panels

A number of landlords across Scotland have developed tenants panels and forums as a mechanism to bring tenant representatives from different areas together, to meet with the landlord to identify issues of concern about housing service provision.

Customer panel: Grampian Housing Association

Grampian Housing Association has established a Customer Panel to bring tenants together to seek their views on how the housing service is delivered. Membership of the Panel is representative of the area and tenure profile of the association (Grampian HA has a sizeable number of tenants, sharing owners and owners in its areas). The Panel also aims for membership that reflects age, gender and other equalities issues. An independent consultant was commissioned to establish and support the Panel. The Panel has been established for a three-year period and will be subject to review. The Panel seek to replace members who drop out, thus ensuring that new individuals have the opportunity to participate. Panel members receive regular (postal) surveys on a range of services and issues. A number of Panel members are also invited to form limited life working groups to examine the findings from the larger surveys and to agree an action plan and recommendations. The Customer Panel provides the opportunity for a sustainable long-term participative approach in which members can be involved both actively and more passively.

The main difference between a tenants association and forums or panels is that members of the panels are not expected to seek and represent the views of other tenants, but rather they attend and give their views as individuals.

Forums can be a useful springboard to working towards the establishment of tenant representative organisations to work towards a common view of the wider issues under discussion.

Tenant representative groups and federations

The traditional model for tenant involvement is to have local tenants and residents associations. There is a growing trend in Scotland of tenant groups federating in some way to co-ordinate and represent the local groups in dialogue with the landlord(s) on issues likely to affect all of the landlord's tenants. Umbrella organisations give tenants a collective voice and more strength to influence housing issues at a strategic level and are empowering for their members. The research for this guide has shown that having dedicated development staff to develop new groups and to support existing tenants groups is an essential ingredient for successful participation. The next two examples highlight the work of Federated organisations, both of whom have full-time dedicated development staff.

East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP)

Prior to 2000, there were only a few groups in East Lothian and no formal council-wide tenant representation. The council called a meeting to find out the level of involvement tenants wanted in the Options Appraisal Process. Interest from this meeting resulted in the formation of the East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP).

ELTRP decided that they wanted independent support to help them to develop their organisational skills to develop more local tenant groups and gradually work towards constituting formally. In 2001, TIS were appointed to provide a three-year development project to support the ELTRP. The contract is with East Lothian Council and is managed by a Project Monitoring Group made up of council and ELTRP reps.

The Panel went onto establish an Executive Committee; have negotiated part time administration support as part of development project; produced a Business Plan and negotiated a devolved budget of £19,000 per year; established a permanent office base; and four new tenant groups have been established. ELTRP are aiming to get an outreach worker to support the growing number of groups.

ELTRP has influenced many key issues and were involved from the outset in setting the agendas, consultation methods and timescales for the rent review process. ELTRP were involved in agreeing the method of rent setting, agreeing rent levels and phased introduction of new rents and the monitoring framework.

Tenants felt fully involved and informed and were equal partners throughout the review process which included:

- Holding special open events for tenants to contribute their views (independent from the council so tenants had space to discuss openly);
- Writing several special tenant newsletters explaining the process and inviting consultation at each step (written by tenants for tenants);
- Independent training at every stage to ensure tenants' capacity to be fully involved was optimum.

Edinburgh Tenants Federation

Edinburgh Tenants Federation, established in 1990, is an umbrella organisation, representing 59 local tenants and residents associations across Edinburgh. In addition, four area umbrella groups have been established locally in the four Social Inclusion Partnership areas of the city. The Federation is recognised by the City of Edinburgh Council as the citywide negotiating body for council tenants.

One of the key functions of the Federation is to provide support to local people who wish to establish new tenants or residents associations or to strengthen and expand existing groups. Support includes providing:

- Advice by phone/email;
- A comprehensive guide to setting up a residents group;
- Intensive face to face support;
- Production of a quarterly newsletter, monthly update briefings and annual reports on latest developments;
- Training and conferences for tenants.

Additional funding from the council has enabled the Tenants Federation to employ a dedicated outreach worker to proactively establish and support tenants groups in several areas of Edinburgh.

The Federation has established a number of citywide groups negotiating with the council on a number of issues including; Repairs, High Flats, Housing Management, Tenant Participation Strategy, Housing Strategy, Rent Review and Anti-Social Behaviour. These groups have regular contact with the wider membership and on a day-to-day basis with council officers. More recently a Housing Association Tenants Forum has been established to support tenants of other Registered Social Landlords.

The Federation's grant from the council is approximately £160,000 per year. The Federation employs four workers, and runs a central office. Unpaid volunteers carry out much of the work. There is no membership fee for groups to pay and services are delivered free of charge. The council operates a separate Tenants Association budget to provide grants to individual associations.

Building, supporting and sustaining tenants organisations – Checklist

- Is the role of tenants and residents organisations and umbrella organisations to represent views and interests of their local community recognised by the landlord?
- Is the independence of tenants organisations and networks recognised by the landlord and supported politically and financially?
- Do tenant organisations have an opportunity to meet to discuss joint issues and prepare their points of view in advance of meetings with the landlord?
- Do tenant organisations have an opportunity to contribute to the agenda?

- Are perceptions of problems shared with tenants before working on solutions to them?
- Is tenant participation seen as a continuous process?
- Are different ways to communicate and maintain a dialogue used?
- Is the working relationship a respectful one that continues even if there is a difference of opinion?
- Is there a commitment to ensure tenants organisations are well informed, resourced and given skilled support so that they are able to influence decisions?
- Is there a commitment to open up the decision making process to give tenants organisations an input?
- Is there dedicated development and outreach staff to develop new groups and support existing groups to be more effective and develop tenants' agenda?
- Is adequate time given to tenant organisations to consider issues properly?
- Does the landlord listen to tenant organisations and take their views into account before decisions are reached?
- Are methods in place to give tenants and RTOs feedback following a consultation exercise?

Role of market research

Many landlords have started to talk about tenants as “customers” and approach tenant participation with methods based on the idea of customers buying a service or a product. These methods including satisfaction surveys, mystery customers, and focus groups – have a place in improving services but should not be seen as a substitute for tenant participation. When combined with work with tenants' groups, market research techniques add a useful dimension and can broaden opportunities for tenants to have a say. Market research techniques can benefit from a joint approach by landlords and tenants' representatives to gather additional information on an issue. Joint discussion should take place about which methods might be used to seek wider tenant opinion.

Including traditionally excluded groups

It is important that every tenant has the opportunity to participate. However, it is well known that particular groups (for example ethnic minorities, young people, and tenants with support needs, older tenants) are under-represented in mainstream participation structures. Identifying and facilitating the engagement of these groups is vital to successful participation, but is not always easy to achieve. This section looks at specific examples of involving particular excluded groups in tenant participation (Case study examples of involving BME tenants and older people are presented in Section Two of the guide).

Identifying the needs of excluded groups

One important finding in the good practice literature on involving excluded groups is the importance of developing networks between excluded

individuals, and this may mean plugging into networks beyond the immediate local area. These include advocacy organisations and enabling tenants to participate in wider representative bodies. Working with organisations who act as advocates for particular groups enables landlords to:

- Identify and address issues likely to impact on the participation of excluded groups, including any local factors that may arise;
- Work with organisations who have established the trust of excluded groups;
- Utilise existing structures that may be used both as access routes to excluded individuals and as channels for building continuing opportunities for participation;
- Facilitate networks between excluded groups and individuals. Such networking is very important in building the confidence of isolated individuals and in strengthening the voice of excluded groups in participation processes.

Partnership working

Many landlords in Scotland are already engaged in partnerships with groups and organisations. One example of this is **Ormiston Co-op**, who worked closely with Tayside Association for the Deaf in developing a tenant participation strategy. A large number of other landlords reported working with similar organisations who are often able to provide advice and suggestions for engaging with traditionally excluded groups. **East Lothian Council** has built links between the East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel and the local Community Care Forum. Two committee members of **Larkfield Housing Association** are representatives on the council's disabilities group. **Castle Rock Housing Association**, responding to the suggestions of its tenants, has developed a sheltered and amenity tenants' forum.

Landlords have also used staff members to identify how the needs of equalities groups are addressed in housing provision.

Equalities in practice – Dunedin Housing Association

In addition to conducting a survey on how tenants wish to be consulted, a member of staff of Dunedin Housing Association carried out a thematic study of Equalities in Practice within the organisation. The in-depth report examined the association's processes in relation to statutory requirements and good practice guidance, and enabled the association to take stock of how equal opportunities were facilitated within its mainstream and specialist services and procedures.

It is important that landlords identify the particular needs of excluded groups. In addition to working with advocacy groups and existing community organisations, landlords may also use their own methods to build up data about the needs of excluded groups in their own areas and as a requirement of the 2001 Act.

A large number of landlords, including **Copperworks Co-op** used sign-ups for the new Scottish Secure Tenancy to generate information about the location and needs of equalities groups in their area. **Abrnhill Housing Association** used a questionnaire to establish the particular needs of individual tenants with regard to mobility, visual impairment etc. **Sanctuary Housing Association** surveyed its tenants about their preferred means of communication methods. Newsletters were identified as the most popular form of communication.

Facilitating participation: 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, the location of meetings etc. However, some tenants face additional barriers. Many landlords in Scotland have already implemented measures to remove these barriers and to encourage the participation of all tenants. These measures include:

- Holding events in suitable venues. This includes venues that are accessible to tenants with physical disabilities, including loop systems for the hard of hearing;
- Holding events in locations that are most suitable for local tenants;
- Holding events in different geographical locations to increase tenant involvement;
- Using premises used by other community organisations working with excluded groups;
- Providing transport to and from events;
- In rural communities, the use of information technology, “village voices” and street reps schemes outlined elsewhere in the guide are useful means of reducing some of the barriers to participation caused by isolated geographical locations;
- Holding meetings and events at suitable times. This includes holding events at different times to enable different groups to attend (for example, those who work different shifts, those with child-care responsibilities and those who may not wish to attend events in the evenings. It also involves being aware of, and sensitive to, local religious and cultural calendars);
- Providing crèche facilities, offering carer allowances, etc;
- Providing information in a range of media formats, including Braille, audio and videotape, CD-ROMs and in a range of languages.

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.

A number of landlords, including **Trust Housing Association (previously, KirkCare Housing Association)**, have encouraged their tenants to bring along family members, friends or support workers to meetings and other participation events.

Facilitating participation: separate but integrated structures

One key element of ensuring the involvement of traditionally excluded groups is to ensure that equal opportunities are promoted within all 'mainstream' tenant participation activities. However minority or excluded groups not only may have specific requirements, but may also adversely suffer from feelings of isolation and lack of confidence, and this may be exacerbated by latent or explicit hostility towards them from other sections of the local community. One method for landlords to address these issues, 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. For example, **Glasgow City Council** set up a working group for Black and Ethnic Minority tenants.

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

Facilitating participation: building community cohesion

It is vital that landlords build equal opportunities into all aspects of their participation (and other) practices. However, individuals are also liable to be informally excluded within local communities. Landlords can address this issue by:

- Undertaking educational work informing the wider community about the needs of particular groups and countering some of the fears of these groups;
- Ensuring that joint participation structures are in place so that different groups are working together;
- Ensuring that registered tenant organisations (RTOs) comply with equal opportunities requirements and are encouraged to proactively seek the participation of traditionally excluded groups in their own organisations.

The rest of this section looks at specific examples of involving particular excluded groups in tenant participation.

Involving young people

Encouraging the participation of young tenants is particularly important for tenants and landlords. Involving tenants who are likely to be the future of the area is obviously crucial to the long-term sustainability of tenant participation and the wider local area. Landlords should seek to establish the needs of young people, and to identify existing structures they may tap into to build communication with young people.

Glasgow City Council used focus groups to determine priorities for young people and their access to housing and support needs. The findings of these focus groups fed into the housing strategy (Sinclair, 1999).

Arun District Council in the south of England sought to increase the numbers of young people involved in its participation structures by working closely with local schools to link into school's as a source of both recruiting young people and using these young people to gather the views of their peers (Cole et al., 1999).

Engaging with young people may require outreach activities that use existing organisations and premises for holding consultation events, or including social activities within participation (for example, taking young people on outings after meetings) or utilising arts and music.

Establishing specific structures for young people to participate is another means of encouraging their involvement.

Renfrewshire Council's Young Person's Housing Forum

Renfrewshire Council has established a Young Person's Housing Forum. The aim of the Forum is to give young people the opportunity to be represented in housing consultation and decision-making processes and to enable young people to raise issues and concerns. The Forum was established through a series of events held in hotels, which attracted 80 young people aged 16-26. The young people were given a series of presentations by a range of agencies and then given the opportunity to voice their concerns and to question council housing officers. The scheme has a number of innovative features, including the use of alternative venues, prize draws, discount cards enabling participants to claim discounts from local shops and leisure facilities, presentations from local colleges and providing opportunities for young people to undertake training and to attend conferences.

It should also be recognised that many landlords may benefit from their wider contributions to providing good quality housing services and community facilities for young people. For example, landlords have been involved in multi-agency partnerships to establish youth cafes and other young person's facilities. Many of these initiatives are based upon giving decision-making and management powers to young people themselves, and such skills may equally be transferred into increasing young people's involvement in tenant participation.

Prince Arthur House in Camden, London, provides accommodation for young people aged 18 to 25. The organisation utilises positive action in allocations with targets for access for gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Fifty percent of the management committee consists of tenant managers with full voting rights. Other tenants nominate tenant managers. In addition, the committee is made up of nominated representation for targeted groups including minorities and groups advocating on behalf of excluded young people. An ongoing training programme and in depth induction for tenants is provided, and tenants are also involved in the recruitment of new staff. (Cole at al.,1999).

Involving tenants with support needs

Many landlords provide specific services and supported accommodation for tenants with particular housing and services needs. Two examples of such

landlords, drawn from other studies are provided below. For further information refer to the TIS Basic Guide on Developing Tenant Participation in Supported Accommodation (2004). A number of other useful and detailed advice guides relating to the participation of individuals with housing and support needs have been produced and are listed in the reference section.

The **Notting Hill Housing Trust** supports a large number of people with housing and support needs in mainstream and supported tenancies. In order to increase the engagement of vulnerable tenants, the Trust instigated its participation initiative, which involves a survey of tenants, user-led consultancies and the formation of a good practice group. The Trust recruited a local user-led informal co-operative of people (with or without learning difficulties), in order to include tenants likely to be excluded by traditional postal surveys. The initiative increased the proportion of supported tenants participating and identified the need for greater use of external advocacy organisations, access to senior management and greater training and support and information sharing between housing providers. (Cole et al., 1999).

Carr Gomm Housing Association provides housing and support services to single, vulnerable tenants, many of whom have a history of homelessness, hostel living or institutional care. The association has devoted targeted resources, including both grant funding and ring-fenced management time to develop tenant participation structures and processes, including the use of house meetings, working groups on specific issues and encouraging tenant involvement in other representative organisations. (Cole et al., 1999).

There are many other excluded groups within Scotland and individual landlords are already addressing their needs locally. For example **Perth and Kinross Council** is one of the local authorities, which has consulted with gypsy travellers about their housing needs and their wider access to council services.

Involving excluded groups – Checklist

- Are equal opportunities built into both mainstream housing services and tenant participation strategies?
- Have staff and tenant representatives been provided with training on equal opportunities in relation to participation?
- Are equal opportunities and proactive attempts to involve excluded groups built into the activities of registered tenant groups?
- Have excluded groups been involved in preparing the tenant participation strategy and identifying their own needs?
- Have individuals of excluded groups been identified and have their specific requirements been established?
- Has the likely diversity of needs and opinions within excluded groups been addressed?
- Have links been established with local representative and community organisations working with particular excluded groups?

- Have 'general' barriers to participation relating to accessibility, language, timing, child-care, etc. been addressed?
- Have opportunities to take part in a range of participation methods been provided to excluded groups?
- Are traditionally excluded groups given opportunities to participate in specific events and forums and 'mainstream' participation structures?
- What networking opportunities are provided to individual tenants?
- What opportunities for joint working are created for different groups?
- Is consideration given to how the landlords' wider community activities may contribute to participation opportunities for excluded groups?
- What activities are undertaken to build wider community cohesion and understanding?

4 Strategy for effective tenant participation

Introduction

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a duty on local authorities and RSLs to prepare and implement tenant participation strategies, jointly with tenants. The purpose of a strategy is to achieve continuous improvement in landlords' performance in supporting tenants to participate, by listing and prioritising the actions agreed with tenants, which would achieve improved practice. A realistic aim for a tenant participation strategy is a gradual improvement over a number of years.

This section provides information on what needs to be in place to develop a strategy for effective tenant participation. There are a number of key stages in this process:

1. Reviewing current practice.
2. Landlords getting organised – assessing staff resource, support and training needs.
3. Tenants having the capacity to influence – assessing tenants resource and support needs.
4. Landlords and tenants agreeing a joint tenant participation strategy and action plan.

A checklist is provided at the end of this section to help landlords and tenants to review and develop their tenant participation strategies.

Key points

- Tenants need to be involved in the process as equal partners right from the start;
- Take the opportunity to review how participation is working;
- It is important to talk to tenants to find out their views and what they want from participation processes;
- Tenants will want to participate if they are being listened too and their views are being taken into account;
- Landlords need to be committed to and be organised to participate;
- Tenants need to have access to information and be supported and resourced to participate;
- All parties have an opportunity to contribute to the participation;
- A Tenant Participation Strategy must have clear and realistic goals.

Reviewing current practice

Tenant participation is a continuous process, which evolves gradually, subject to regular review.

Review – Plan – Action – Evaluation

Whatever stage of development tenant participation is in your area, it is important to review current participation arrangements.

What is a Review? – This means reviewing progress being made in the tenant participation strategy and action plan to be agreed by the landlords and tenants. Carrying out a review of tenant participation will assist landlords and tenants to assess:

- Where they are starting from;
- What progress is being made with the strategy/action plan;
- How well participation is working “on the ground”;
- Identify and address emerging difficulties or problems;
- Identify what needs to be changed or improved.

The first stage is to establish a baseline of how tenant participation practice is progressing. There are a number of ways to do this, for example a tenant participation audit, carried out internally or by an externally appointed consultant. TIS have produced a Tenant Participation “Healthcheck” to assist landlords and tenants to review current tenant participation practice (TIS, 2002).

Tenant participation working groups

A number of landlords including **West of Scotland Housing Association** and **Partick Housing Association** have established Tenant Participation Working Groups consisting of housing staff, tenants and board members to review and develop their tenant participation strategies.

Successful tenant participation is the joint accomplishment of both landlords and tenants. A review of participation will involve ensuring that both tenants and landlords have the capacity, training and support to participate. Both tenants and elected members/governing body members, along with a wide range of staff, will need to be closely involved in every aspect of the review, and should be included from the outset as equal members of any working group.

Information gathered from the review process will assist in evaluating “*where we are now...and where we want to go.*” The review will help to shape and develop the tenant participation strategy. Further reviews should be carried out on a regular basis and the review process should be set out in the strategy and jointly agreed with tenants and RTOs.

Landlords getting organised

Successful tenant participation is dependent upon landlords being open to influence and tenants having the capacity to get involved. This section provides a checklist of issues landlords need to consider in forward planning participation activities to make sure that the right organisational structures, processes and resources for staff and tenants are in place.

Commitment

There is now a legal framework for participation to take place in Scotland, but the success of tenant participation will ultimately depend upon the willingness and commitment of all those concerned – tenants, elected members governing body members and housing staff – to share power and work in partnership.

The right to tenant participation stems from a reasonable expectation on the part of tenants that the services and policies meet their needs and expectations. As the case studies outlined in Section Two highlighted, it is important to involve tenants as early as possible in tenant participation processes as they are major stakeholders and bring enormous expertise.

Political commitment to tenant involvement is vital to success. Some officers, elected/governing body members and tenants may find this threatens their existing perceptions about their roles. It may require a cultural change within organisations on both sides and on all levels.

The same key issues were identified throughout the research and all concern the building of trust and honesty between landlord and tenant organisations. The landlords have to trust that the tenants they are dealing with are not just “in it for themselves.” The tenants have to trust that the landlord is not just “going through the motions”. Tenants are more likely to give up their time to get involved if they believe there is a real chance of making a difference – because the landlord is listening. Various measures may be required to establish that the landlord organisation’s culture is one of listening to and respecting the views of service users. Where there has been no history of the landlord listening to and taking tenants’ views into account, this process can be a difficult one and will take time to establish a good working relationship between all parties.

Decision making

In planning a tenant participation strategy, it is important to consider who represents the landlord in dialogue with tenants and tenant groups. Consideration should be given to the range of decisions that are needed and who are going to be involved in making them. The landlord/tenant dialogue is assisted if the appropriate decision-makers in the landlord organisation are involved. It is essential that staff who work with tenant groups be given the authority by senior managers to make decisions and to respond to tenants requests.

In developing a tenant participation strategy landlords should:

- Consider how a joint approach is taken to setting the policy development/review agenda;

- Reflect on how decision-making is distributed throughout the organisation and promote links with tenants' representatives at key decision-making levels;
- Consider whether decision-making authority is sufficiently devolved to allow meaningful participation in local areas;
- Change timescales for decision making to allow for participation dialogue;
- Take a joint approach with tenants' representatives to any market research used to compliment tenant participation.

Staff implications

Staff require to be consulted in the development and implementation of a tenant participation strategy, so that there is a shared understanding of the organisation's roles and the roles of individual staff members. Implications for staff time, reorganisation and training needs to be taken into account in assessing resources required for participation.

The research has shown that planning and delivering tenant participation can add time to the decision-making processes. There is general recognition that more time is needed for the process of reaching a decision, if tenants are to have a genuine and representative impact on policy. In developing a tenant participation strategy it is therefore essential to examine the capacity of the landlord organisation to develop participation.

Within a landlord organisation, staff need to be clear about their respective roles in relation to consulting with and working with tenant groups. Tenants require to know this too. Senior Managers need to ensure that staff who have participation responsibilities are properly trained and supported to work with groups, as well as having delegated powers to make decisions and respond to requests from tenants. There is a need to build a responsive and participative culture into all aspects of the housing organisation, including all policy documents, job descriptions and remits (Carter, 1999) This places participation centrally as an ongoing evolving process, rather than an ad hoc responsibility of individual staff (Cole et al, 1999).

In planning tenant participation strategies it is essential that enough time and resources are given to encourage tenant involvement.

Tenants capacity to influence

To be in a position to fully participate, tenants require to have access to information, training and development support. A tenant participation strategy should therefore include measures that a landlord has in place to stimulate tenants' capacity to influence decisions. Resources will be required for some or all of the following:

- Encouraging and assisting tenants to form representative organisations (at local or strategic levels);
- The basic administration of tenants' representative organisations;
- Communication by tenant organisations;
- Premises and equipment, if required;

- Training, information gathering, networking and other learning processes by tenants;
- Accessing independent advice, when required;
- Development support (assisting tenants develop gradually more effective and representative organisations);
- Accessing wider tenant opinion.

Development support

Evidence from the research shows the importance of tenants having dedicated staff to support them to build their skills, knowledge and organisational capacity to participate. Development support can include providing support to:

- Set up and support new groups;
- Support existing groups;
- Support to individual office bearers and committee members to be effective;
- Provide training to increase organisational skills and knowledge of housing issues;
- Information to assist tenants to participate;
- Support to network with other tenant organisations and agencies.

This could be provided by specialist tenant participation staff of the landlord or by independent tenant training agencies.

Independent advice

The role of independent advice is to provide impartial information and help to tenants. Independent advice is well established in stock transfer processes and is more frequently being used to advise tenants in policy reviews; developing tenant participation strategies; estate regeneration processes; setting service standards; developing tenant participation strategies. In general, where issues are complex and tenants would benefit from a full understanding of service delivery issues as well as service user issues, there may be merit in the use of independent advisers. Their input could be extended to general advice about good tenant participation practice applied to the specific situation, as well as facilitating wider tenant involvement and consideration of proposals.

Assessing the resources for tenant participation

As part of the requirements under the new legislative framework, local authorities and RSLs must carry out an assessment of resources required and outline in the tenant participation strategy, the resources that will be made available to implement tenant participation. The resourcing and capacity building of tenant organisations is a key issue. It is important that landlords and tenants identify what are the desired outcomes of tenant participation and identify the resources that are available, to plug the gaps and develop participation.

This part of the section outlines why resources are essential for successful tenant participation, gives examples of how landlords are funding and supporting participation across Scotland, and provides a framework to assist landlords and tenants carry out an assessment of resources for participation.

Why are resources important?

A recent review of good practice (*Joseph Rowntree Foundation- Encouraging Participation: A toolkit for tenants and social landlords*, June 2003) highlighted, that there appears to be a strong relationship between the amount of money, staff and other resources allocated to tenant participation, and its effectiveness. Those spending a higher proportion of their income on tenant participation appeared to be doing a wider variety of different participation activities, communicating better with tenants, involving a wider range of people and being more effective at incorporating tenant participation as standard practice. Research for this guide has shown that the most effective tenant participation initiatives were based on well-resourced and supported tenant groups. Support and resources for tenants to develop individual and organisational skills and capacity is an essential ingredient of successful participation. This is reflected in one of the key principles of the National Strategy for Tenant Participation “ that tenant organisations require adequate resources for organisation, training and support to fully participate.”

Edinburgh Tenant Organisations – resources and support

The City of Edinburgh Council has established a budget for direct tenant participation costs. This funding is to facilitate both the strategic citywide consultation function and the proactive support and outreach work of the Edinburgh Tenants Federation. Resources include both direct financial funding and indirect ‘in kind’ support, including staff support and premises. Resourcing information technology provision has been identified as a priority for the council and the Federation. Tenant Participation is also built into the council’s wider Customer Research Programme, including tenant satisfaction surveys, exit survey, mystery shopping and tenants’ panel.

A further element of the council’s resourcing of tenant participation is its grant award scheme. Local tenants and residents groups may apply for funding through an annual grant scheme and the Council also provides seed corn grants for emerging groups. The scheme also considers applications from groups who may not be majority council tenants but where housing is central to their remit.

What resources are needed?

Resources are about more than money, it can involve staff support or access to meeting venues etc. It is more difficult to measure costs, such as staff time given to participation, and even more difficult to measure any immediate or long-term benefits from the voluntary efforts of tenant activists. But an attempt should be made to take these into account when considering resources for participation.

The landlord and tenants groups should jointly negotiate the tenant participation budget. Landlords will need to ensure that the right organisational structures, procedures, and resources for staff and tenants capacity building

are included in the tenant participation policy. A useful starting point is to consider the type of resources that are required, the table below outlines a range of resources to help landlords and tenants decide their participation budgets.

Evidence from the research shows the extent to which the most developed forms of tenant organisation and representation exist in part because dedicated development staff are in place to support new and existing groups. This highlights the importance of having dedicated staff, who work to the tenants' agenda, to support tenants and tenants' representatives to build their skills, knowledge and organisational capacity.

Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations – seconded staff

The Federation has two seconded staff members from the council working specifically for the Federation. Dundee City Council employs a team of tenant participation officers who work with individual groups on housing related issues, and neighbourhood resource workers who work on issues such as community development, youth, leisure and education. The Federation and council have worked together to ensure that all groups are clear about who does what.

Edinburgh Tenants Federation – employing their own staff

The Federation has an annual budget of approximately £160,000. The Federation employs four staff to support the Federation and to develop new and existing tenant organisations across Edinburgh.

Other agencies providing development support

Landlords including **East Lothian Council, East Ayrshire Council, Home in Scotland, South Lanarkshire Council, and Stirling Council** have commissioned independent training organisations such as TIS and TPAS to provide development support to tenant organisations.

Assessing resources – Checklist

Landlord capacity	Type of resources
<i>Staffing costs</i>	To provide support to set up tenant groups, develop existing groups and consult with the wider community.
	This can be done in a number of ways, for example; By specialist in-house staff/teams; support from generic staff; by specialist independent organisations; direct funding for tenant groups/federations to employ staff; secondments of staff to work directly with tenant organisations.
<i>Staff training</i>	Training programme for all staff to provide skills and knowledge to develop participation practice. Briefings on tenant participation strategy development. Access to outside training events on tenant participation.

<i>Governing/ Elected members</i>	Training and briefing to keep members informed of good practice and development of tenant participation strategy.
<i>Consultation</i>	To fulfil consultation requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. This can be done in a number of ways for example; regular newsletters, consultation exercises on policy reviews/rent reviews, tenant satisfaction surveys. Using information technology e.g. website.
Tenants capacity	
<i>Information</i>	<p>To develop a joint information strategy, in which agreement is reached about how information will be communicated between all participants. Information may include: information about tenants' rights; rent policy and procedures; allocations rules; right to buy, housing management policies; modernisation/regeneration proposals; landlord's decision-making structures; and Tenant Participation Strategy etc. The strategy would outline the different methods of information provision for example, Tenants' Handbook and newsletters etc. All information provided for tenants should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Easily accessible; ● In plain English; ● Provided where the need is identified in a range of formats for example; in Braille, on audio tape or in community languages; ● Relevant and accurate; ● Made available with time for tenant organisations to consider and consult its members;
<i>Training</i>	Training programme to develop individual and collective capacity to participate. Individual skills, knowledge and confidence. Groups' skills and knowledge to organise, negotiate and consult with wider community. Access to local, regional and national training events.
<i>Development support</i>	<p>Development support can include providing support to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set up and support new groups; ● Support existing groups; ● Support to individual office bearers and committee members to be effective; ● Provide training to increase organisational skills and knowledge of housing issues; ● Information to assist tenants to participate; ● Support to network with other tenant organisations and agencies. <p>This could be provided by specialist tenant participation staff of the landlord or by independent tenant training agencies.</p>

<i>Grants to tenants groups</i>	Start up grants and annual running cost grants to cover for example, stationery, mailings, venue hire, telephone costs, office costs for example, Rents, rates, equipment, telephone and heating bills etc.
<i>Committee running costs</i>	<p>There should be no financial barriers to tenants participating and funding is required to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Out-of-pocket expenses; ● Cost of travel to and from meetings; ● Suitable transport; ● Child care and other care costs; ● Communication aids (loop systems, interpreting, advocates). <p>Costs should be refunded promptly, or paid in advance with minimal “red tape”.</p>
<i>“In kind” support</i>	Access to premises and office equipment, access to computers, access to administration support, and photocopying.
<i>Communication</i>	Organising public meetings, open days and conference events (for example, venue hire, catering, transport, and childcare). Printing costs for publicity materials for example, flyers, newsletters, calling notices.
<i>Independent advice</i>	The role of independent advice is to provide impartial information and advice to tenants. In general, where issues are complex and tenants would benefit from a full understanding of service delivery issues as well as service user issues, there may be merit in the use of independent advisers. Their input could be extended to general advice about good tenant participation practice applied to the specific situation, as well as facilitating wider tenant involvement and consideration of proposals.

How much and where does money come from?

The Scottish Executive Guidance on Tenant Participation does not advise on how much money should be spent on supporting tenants, but does require landlords and tenants to jointly agree tenant participation resources. The baseline study highlighted that landlords are at a variety of stages in progressing their assessments of resources. Where precise budgets were mentioned, figures of between £5,000 and £160,000 had been estimated as necessary to fund tenant participation in 2003/4.

A study of tenant organisations by the Scottish Consumer Council highlighted:

“That 20 per cent of groups who took part in the study received no financial assistance and the majority received less than £500 per year – which falls far short of what is required for effective tenant representation. The study concluded that in order for tenant groups to effectively represent tenants’ views they have to be properly funded and resourced” (Scottish Consumer Council 2002).

The first question often asked is how much money should be spent and where should this come from? Good practice research conducted by Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2003) found that large urban local authorities, smaller Councils and RSLs throughout Britain were spending approximately £8.00 plus per tenancy (per year) to develop tenant participation and these amounts of resources made a difference to what could be achieved. Local authorities and RSLs, in assessing resources for tenant participation should build in support to match good practice guidelines and meet the needs and types of support identified by tenants.

Currently, tenant participation is funded in a variety of ways and at different levels across the country. The majority of funding for participation comes from tenant rental income. However, it is very common now for local organisations to represent all residents and not just tenants. This points to the case for council's general funds to be a source of funding instead of all of the money coming out of tenants' rents.

It is crucial that tenants are involved in agreeing priorities for the tenant participation budget. Information and support should also be made available if there are other sources of funding available. Other sources may include for example, National Lottery, European Social Fund, Local Regeneration/Initiative funding, and charitable organisations etc. While fundraising by tenants groups is a common activity, it is the responsibility of landlords in discussion with tenants to meet the development support, organisational and administrative needs of tenant groups.

Where an RTO represents tenants of more than one landlord, then a formula should be devised to apportion resources from all the landlords involved to share the costs of participation. For smaller landlord organisations it may be more onerous to "buy in" or to have specialist tenant participation staff. It is now more common practice to share tenant participation resources.

Sharing costs...

Bield, and **Hanover Housing Association** and **Trust Housing Association (previously Kirkcare Housing Association)**, currently share an Equal Opportunities Officer and the cost of this post is met by the three organisations.

Clackmannanshire Council and **Paragon** and **Ochil View Housing Associations** pooled resources to provide joint training for staff and tenants and to host a series of roadshows to develop their tenant participation strategies.

Administration of funding

Consideration needs to be given as to how grants to groups are administered.

The research found two main types of grant:

A start up grant – usually with other kinds of support, to help a group get started. Amounts ranged from £50 to £200.

Administration grant – paid every year to cover the running costs of groups. Formulae for grant funding based on the number of houses in the area are too simplistic as activity levels can vary greatly between groups. One approach might be to have a fixed sum, plus a per house quota, with scope for applying for additional grant for specific purposes.

There are a growing number of tenant federated organisations in Scotland. Grants for a federated body should be considered on the basis of the group submitting a business plan or development plan. These plans would outline the group's aims, planned activities and resource needs. 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.

Monitoring

Landlords should publish information to tenant groups detailing the tenant participation budget, what funding is available, and how to apply for this. Support should be made available to assist groups to apply for funding. The information requires to be updated and communicated regularly. It is important to have an agreement between landlord and tenants about which party is responsible for authorising and accounting for the use of each resource. It is also vital that tenant participation spend on different activities can be separately identified and tenants are involved in reviewing this. The take up of resources should be monitored and evaluated with tenants, and this should inform future resource planning.

Tenant participation strategy and action plan

A Tenant Participation Strategy should set out the actions to be taken to improve tenant participation practice. The Scottish Executive requires landlords to involve tenants from the start of this process. Preparation of a strategy will firstly require a review of the current situation. The strategy should summarise the results of this review, so that the reasons for the actions are clear and accessible to everyone taking part in its implementation. The strategy should set out:

- Results of the review of existing practice;
- Clear and realistic aims;
- How tenants and RTOs will be consulted and involved in decision making processes;
- Assessment of resources and support to be made available;
- Information Strategy;
- Consultation Strategy;
- Prioritise issues;
- Actions with realistic timescales;
- How it will be monitored, reviewed, and evaluated.

The strategy process gives landlords and tenants a chance to reflect on where they are now, where they hope to go, and how they plan to get there. The drawing up of this strategy should be seen as a starting point, as policy and practice in relation to participation develops, tenant participation strategies will develop. Arrangements should be put in place to agree how the strategy is monitored, reviewed and evaluated (Chapter 5 provides information about monitoring and evaluation). Once the strategy is in place the next task is to put it into practice!

For further information on developing a tenant participation strategy there are two useful publications; "How Does your Tenant Participation Strategy Measure Up" TPDT (2003) and "Developing and Implementing your Tenant Participation Strategy" TIS (2003).

Strategy for effective tenant participation – Checklist

This checklist has been drawn up to assist landlords and tenants to review and develop their tenant participation strategy.

Review of current tenant participation practice

- Has a review of current policy and practice in tenant participation been carried out?
- Were tenants fully involved in the review?
- Have the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy been identified by tenants, landlord and members/governing body?
- Did the review look at whether traditionally excluded groups are able to participate?
- Has an assessment been made of resources for tenant participation: identifying where resources are currently used, where the gaps are and how resources can be used to better effect?
- What are the conclusions of the latest review of current tenant participation performance?
- Which gaps should be a priority for further development?

Landlords commitment and capacity

- Is there a tenant participation strategy and is this being put into practice?
- How does the tenant participation strategy fit in with other statutory requirements for example, Community Planning?
- Were tenants involved in developing the strategy? Has this been widely communicated to tenants?
- What has been done to ensure the full commitment of staff, elected/governing body members to tenant participation?
- Is the independence of tenant groups and federated organisations recognised?
- Do staff, elected members/governing body members have a good knowledge of the participation provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and associated good practice guidance?
- Is there a staff training programme to ensure all staff have a good knowledge of the participation parts of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and good practice guidance? Is the training programme based on a regular survey of staff's training needs?
- Are front-line staff included in internal information and participation structures so that they have the relevant information to pass onto tenants?

- Do the front-line staff that work with tenants have training on equal opportunities and customer care and the skills to carry out their consultation role effectively?

Decision making by the landlord

- Are processes of decision-making open, clear and accountable?
- What arrangements have been made to give tenants access to decision-makers?
- Are processes in place to allow consultation with tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) and to take into account their views before decisions are reached?
- Are tenants' views being listened to and being taken into account before decisions are made?
- Are tenants and RTOs given adequate time to consider and respond to issues?
- Are tenants involved in the review of service standards, best value reviews and monitoring of landlord performance?
- Are methods in place to feedback to tenants and RTOs following a consultation exercise?

Working with tenants representatives

- Are there tenant groups in the area or informal networks of tenants? If so, have you contacted them to find out what are their key housing issues and the level of involvement they wish?
- In areas where there is little or no tenant activity, what work has been done to identify tenants' issues and to get more people involved?
- What scheme is in place for the establishment and maintenance of a register of tenant organisations?
- What processes are in place to enable tenants at a local level to influence local housing management?
- Do tenants have a place(s) on the Governing Body?
- Are different ways to communicate and maintain a dialogue used?
- What processes are in place to enable tenants to contribute to the reviews of service standards, policies, investment priorities, and performance monitoring?

Setting the tenant participation agenda

- Is the main agenda for tenant participation planned in advance – is the agenda jointly agreed with tenants?
- What processes are in place to enable tenants at a local level to influence local housing management services?
- What processes are in place to allow agreed approaches between tenant representatives and landlords to gather wider tenant opinion?

Building tenants' capacity

- What has been done to advise tenants and RTOs of the consultation and participation parts of the Housing Act?
- Are there staff to support the establishment of new groups and support existing groups?
- Has the landlord assessed the resource needs of tenant participation – was this done jointly with tenants?
- Does the landlord encourage access to training and conference opportunities?
- Are resources in place to support the development of new groups and existing tenant groups/Federations?
- Is there an information strategy jointly agreed with tenants and RTOs?
- What is being done to ensure that traditionally excluded groups are being included in tenant participation processes?

Monitoring and evaluation

- Does the strategy include joint monitoring, review and evaluation by landlords and tenants?

5 Monitoring and evaluation

Introduction

Tenant participation is an on-going and evolving process. Developing a tenant participation strategy is merely the beginning of this process, and participation is of course, not simply an end in itself. Participation should lead to positive benefits for tenants, landlord organisations and local communities. It is important to monitor and evaluate tenant participation to find out if agreed objectives have been met, to recognise what has worked well and to identify areas that require further improvement.

Monitoring and evaluation, however, is the least developed element of tenant participation practice. The research found almost an absence of formal evaluation of participation initiatives throughout Scotland. There is room for more rigorous research in this area. 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. What is important is that landlords and tenants experiment to find ways of evaluating participation, which are realistic, practical and focus on the outcomes that matter the most to those involved.

This section of the guide provides background information about the role of Communities Scotland in regulating tenant participation. The section goes on to explain what monitoring and evaluation mean. A checklist is provided to assist in planning evaluation processes. A menu of options for measuring tenant participation is also provided. This section concludes with an example of how to monitor equal opportunities in tenant participation that can be adapted and used.

Regulation

The performance of landlords in relation to developing tenant participation will be regulated as part of Communities Scotland's inspection of landlords. Landlords are required to fulfil Guiding Standard GS2.2, which relates to tenant participation:

"We have published and are implementing a sound strategy for encouraging and supporting tenants, residents and service users to participate actively in all of our areas of work. We support tenants who take an active interest in managing their homes."

Further guidance on this standard can be found in the self assessment questions on Communities Scotland's website at:
www.inspection.communitiesscotland.gov.uk

What is monitoring and evaluation?

An effective monitoring and evaluation system enables landlords and tenants to measure progress, develop skills and refine practices. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements will gradually develop and evolve as the tenant participation strategy is reviewed and then refined.

Monitoring enables landlords and tenants to *check on the progress* of their tenant participation strategy as it develops.

Evaluation enables landlords and tenants to measure the effectiveness of the tenant participation strategy through assessing the *success of the outcomes* of tenant participation.

Because tenant participation is a dynamic process, the nature of monitoring and evaluation may itself change over time, although it is important that there is sufficient consistency to enable progress to be measured against 'baseline' indicators.

Planning for monitoring and evaluation

All relevant parties should be involved in developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks and this should be detailed in the tenant participation strategy. This will involve tenant representatives, other tenants, housing officers, Governing body members, and other residents and in some cases other local agencies and organisations. If monitoring and evaluation is not a feature of the tenant participation strategy this requires to be addressed.

It is unrealistic to monitor and evaluate everything to do with tenant participation. It is important to focus 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. Arrangements also need to be established to make available and collate the monitoring information required for evaluation.

Planning – Checklist

- Are systems for reviewing, monitoring and evaluation in place within the tenant participation strategy? Has this been agreed jointly with tenants?
- Have time and resources been allowed for monitoring and evaluation within the strategy?
- Progress is evaluated against the intended results and other changes – has this been identified by tenants and landlords?
- Have tenants and landlords agreed what information needs to be collected, how, when and by whom?
- Is the relevant information to carry out monitoring and evaluation being collected?
- Is the information presented in a user friendly and accurate way?
- Have tenants and landlord agreed the lessons to be drawn from the evidence of the results?
- Are the lessons learnt, taken into account in forward planning tenant participation?
- Are the results of the evaluation fed back to participants and the wider community?
- Is evidence of good practice recorded and shared with other agencies and communities?

What do you 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. What needs to be taken into account are the views, opinions and perceptions of tenants and staff to assess the level of influence tenants have had and if this has resulted in an improvement in housing policy and standards. There is a strong qualitative element to evaluating tenant participation outcomes.

Tenant participation may be monitored at different stages. Three main stages of tenant participation may be identified;

- The aims and objectives of participation (What it should achieve)
- The processes of participation (How it will achieve)
- The outcomes of participation (What it actually achieves)

This guide provides a menu of options for measuring tenant participation, which differentiates between aims and objectives, inputs, outputs and outcomes.

Aims and objectives	What tenant participation sets out to achieve.
Inputs	What has been put in place to develop tenant participation e.g. training, support, resources, staff time, commitment etc.
Outputs	What people have actually done, the actual outputs of the tenant participation strategy, e.g. the range of decisions in which tenants were involved; the numbers of tenants groups involved or receiving training and support.
Outcomes	What tenant participation has actually achieved? e.g. have tenants gained more influence? Have services and standards improved as a result of tenant involvement?

Tenant participation impacts on different groups, these include; tenants active in participation; tenants not active in participation; other residents; and housing staff.

Menu of options for measuring tenant participation;

In evaluating a tenant participation strategy local performance indicators could be selected and developed under the following categories:

Measuring aims and objectives

Aims and objectives could include the extent to which tenant participation has resulted in, for example:

- An improvement in housing services and standards;
- An increase in tenant involvement in decision making;
- An increase of tenant satisfaction with housing services, standards and living conditions;
- An increase of equal opportunities in participation;
- Improved communication and better working relationships between tenants, staff and governing body elected members.

Measuring inputs

Inputs, for example:

- Office facilities (photocopying, mail, IT);
- Staff time (including both generic staff and the employment of dedicated tenant participation officers/development staff);
- Budget to support tenant participation;
- Provision of premises;
- Support for meetings (premises, transport, crèches, out of pocket expenses etc);
- Provision of information (newsletters, leaflets etc.);
- Training budget for tenants; and for staff and members/governing body;
- Programme and type of training available for tenants, staff and elected/governing body members;
- Conference and seminar programmes;
- Independent advice.

Inputs (Related to Key Principles of Tenant Participation)

- Organisation is committed to implementing tenant participation within a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership;
- Tenants are involved in issues at the problem defining stage;
- Tenants views are taken into account and influence decisions;
- Both landlords and tenants contribute to setting the tenant participation agenda;
- The landlords' policies offer tenants a clear role in operational and strategic decision-making on housing policies;
- Tenants receive clear, timely, good quality information on all aspects of the housing service;
- Tenant participation is actively promoted, with funding, training and support for tenants and staff;
- Equal opportunities are encouraged in all aspects of tenant participation.

Measuring outputs

Outputs, for example:

- Areas of influence (e.g. policy development);
- Actual and committed expenditure on tenant participation compared with budget provision;
- Whether tenant group membership is representative (area coverage, age, gender, ethnicity) and how this has changed over time;
- Range of decisions in which tenants are involved, number and variety of tenant participation structures and mechanisms (and year on change);
- Number of tenant groups and groups that are registered;
- Number, variety and frequency of different methods of communication (e.g. newsletter) or methods of involvement;
- Numbers of tenants receiving training (type of training, issues raised at training, was this the first training session for tenants?);
- Number of tenants participating;
- Number of tenant groups;
- Percentage of tenants responding to consultation arrangements, responses to consultation;
- Number of joint staff/elected governing body/elected members/tenant conferences or training days in the year; number of training courses; and number of tenants and others attending, proportion of tenants' representatives who receive training;

Measuring outcomes

Outcomes, for example:

- Increased influence of tenants in the decision-making (landlord's decisions resulting from or changed by tenant participation);
- Increased tenant capacity;
- Improvement in housing services due to more effective contribution by tenants;
- Improved self-esteem and confidence;
- New/enhanced skills including negotiation, public speaking committee skills, financial management, publishing etc;
- Effective provision of information;
- Improved representation of tenant groups in the local community;
- Views of staff, tenants, governing body/elected members about the difference made by tenant participation;
- Range and profile of tenants actively engaged with the landlord (relative to profile of tenants generally);
- Success in reaching new people (for example; proportion of younger people, older people, ethnic minority tenants etc);
- Tenants' views on impact on quality of life in their area, satisfaction with their homes, sense of community etc;
- Quality and effectiveness of training and support.

Monitoring equal opportunities in tenant participation – an example

Landlords and tenants will wish to use monitoring and evaluation to determine if specific aims and objectives have been met in the tenant participation strategy. Here is an example of measurement indicators that could be used to evaluate equal opportunities in tenant participation.

Aims and objectives:

- To ensure equal opportunities in tenant participation;
- To increase the level of involvement and representation of traditionally excluded groups.

Inputs

- Are equal opportunities built into both mainstream housing services and tenant participation strategies?
- Have staff and tenant representatives been provided with training on equal opportunities related to tenant participation?
- Are equal opportunities and pro-active attempts to involve excluded groups built into the activities of registered groups?
- Have excluded groups been involved in preparing the tenant participation strategy and identifying their housing issues?
- Have individuals of excluded groups been identified and have their specific requirements been established?
- Has the likely diversity of needs and opinions within excluded groups been addressed?
- Have links been established with local representative and community organisations working with excluded groups?
- Have general barriers to participation relating to accessibility, language, timing and childcare etc. been addressed?
- Have opportunities to take part in a range of participation methods been provided to excluded groups?
- Are traditionally excluded groups given opportunities to participate in specific events and forums and “mainstream” participation structures?
- What networking opportunities are provided to individual tenants?
- Have resources been allocated for equal opportunities?

Outputs

- Number/range of traditionally excluded groups consulted, individually and collectively;
- Level of representation of excluded groups (numbers), individually and collectively;
- Provision of special structures and initiatives;
- Opportunities for excluded groups to network;
- Actual and committed expenditure on tenant participation compared with budget provision;
- Range of training/educational work informing the wider community about the needs of particular groups;
- Range of equalities training for staff, tenants and elected /governing body members.

Outcomes

- Is the influence of traditionally excluded groups growing?
- Are tenant groups improving representation of excluded groups?
- Is the landlord and Registered Tenant Groups (RTO) complying with equal opportunities legislation?
- Is equal opportunities checked (?) before funding given?
- Have excluded groups been consulted, individually and collectively?
- How has this been acted upon?
- How will new processes be evaluated?

References and further reading

General tenant participation good practice guides and examples

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Research studies and reviews

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Appendix A

Research methodology

The Tenants Information Service and the Department of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow, conducted this research, between October 2003 and February 2004. An Advisory Group consisting of representatives from the Scottish Executive, COSLA, SFHA and Communities Scotland oversaw the research.

The research comprised three main elements:

- A. Analysis of the baseline survey findings and tenant participation strategies;
- B. Case studies of individual landlords and tenants;
- C. Literature Review.

A Analysis of the baseline survey findings and tenant participation strategies

The first stage of the research involved an analysis of responses to the self-completion questionnaire survey issued by the Tenant Participation Development Team to every local authority and RSL in Scotland. The purpose of this survey was to establish a baseline with which to monitor the progress being made by landlords in implementing the tenant participation provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. A total of 143 (67%) completed responses were received. An analysis of these responses has been conducted by George Street Research on behalf of Communities Scotland, and this analysis has been published in *Communities Scotland Research Report 25: Analysis of the baseline study of tenant participation*.

The purpose of this further analysis was to:

- Focus on examples of good practice that were identified in the survey returns;
- To provide a basis for the selection of the case studies which comprised the second stage of the research;
- Address issues raised by landlords and tenants in putting tenant participation into practice;

B Case studies

The case studies were selected from the sample of landlords who submitted a returned questionnaire for the baseline study. The case studies had four aims:

- To provide detailed analysis of progress being made and the barriers faced with regard to tenant participation;
- To highlight examples of good practice identified within the case studies;

- To complement the views of landlords gathered through the self-completion baseline survey with the perceptions and experiences of tenants and housing practitioners;
- To facilitate an exploration of the actual processes involved in tenant participation, to complement existing evidence of inputs and structures, and to identify various mechanisms through which successful outcomes of tenant participation may be defined and measured.

The case studies were selected in order to provide a reflection of the diversity of local authorities and RSLs in terms of:

- Landlords' organisational characteristics;
- The context within which landlords operated, both in terms of their location (urban, rural and mixed) and the particular populations they serve;
- The extent of landlords' reported progress in developing and implementing tenant participation strategies;
- The existence of examples of good practice or specific initiatives.

Six case study landlords were selected. These were:

- Bield Housing Association
- Dundee City Council
- Orkney Islands Council
- Orkney Housing Association
- Perth and Kinross Council
- Southside Housing Association

The case studies were conducted between November 2003 and January 2004. Each case study comprised:

- Analysis of landlords' documents relating to tenant participation;
- Semi-structured interviews with senior managers, front-line and tenant participation officers, governing body/elected members and tenants (including individual tenants and representatives of both registered and unregistered groups).

C Literature review

A literature review was conducted of existing research evidence available about tenant participation. This review covered material relating to tenant participation in the UK, dating from 1990. The main aim of the literature review was to identify elements of good practice, including specific initiatives, which built on those, identified through the baseline survey and the case studies.

Appendix B Useful Contacts

Tenant Participation Development Team

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