

---

## Workbook

---

**Aim:** The aim of this workbook is to show how to achieve real tenant participation when the issues affect large numbers of the tenants of your landlord, not just your own neighbourhood.

---

*Version: for all tenants*

---

### What You Will Learn in this Workbook

- ❑ Ways for tenants in different neighbourhoods to work together to influence wider issues
- ❑ The role of a federation of tenants associations
- ❑ How to influence major policies of your landlord
- ❑ What resources may be needed for tenant participation
- ❑ How to plan ahead tenant participation activity with your landlord

### How to Use This Workbook

Go through it at your own pace. Stop for a break whenever you want. When you start up again, look back at what you had just completed.

As you go through the workbook, you are sometimes asked to carry out tasks. Sometimes you read short passages of text.

DO NOT look ahead in the book for answers. These are given in the correct place in the workbook. You will come to them at the correct stage.

If you get stuck on something, try the following:

- ❑ Leave aside and try again later
- ❑ Turn back pages in the workbook looking for clues / ideas.
- ❑ Phone TIS for help [freephone or reverse charges]
- ❑ DO NOT look ahead in the workbook for answers. It is important to do the tasks and reading in the order given.

## **BEFORE YOU START.....**

### **A Quick Reminder of the key points from the Workbook, Tenant Participation Part One**

Landlords and the people working for them take many important decisions affecting the lives and housing circumstances of tenants.

Decisions are made by many different staff, as well as the people on your landlord's governing body.

Tenant participation is about tenants getting an opportunity to INFLUENCE the decisions landlords take.

Tenant consultation means having a chance to comment on proposals already worked out by the landlord. Tenant participation means taking part in working out the proposals from the outset.

The following are important principles behind tenant participation:

- ❑ Tenants being represented by independent tenants' organisations
- ❑ Tenants' representatives have a chance to discuss issues with the people in the landlord's operation who make the decisions tenants want to influence
- ❑ Both tenants and the landlord can put up topics or issues for discussion between them. This is sometimes called the agenda for tenant participation.

- Information about a problem should be shared and its basis in fact agreed before debating the problem
- It is worth spending time debating and trying to agree jointly the nature of the problem being considered, before considering possible solutions
- Enough time has to be allowed for tenant participation to work well.

**And**

### **A Quick Reminder of the key points from the Workbook, Tenant Participation Part Two**

When fairly tricky issues are being discussed between tenants' representatives and their landlord, a series of face to face meetings is usually the best way to work together constructively to agree on solutions to the problems identified.

In these meetings, you should always prepare by identifying what views you want to put and what you hope to get from a meeting, rather than just turning up to see what happens. You will rarely gain much influence, if you are always just reacting to what your landlords says. After meetings, reflect together on what you and your colleagues have achieved and report back to your full committee for their reaction.

It helps you to gain influence if you can demonstrate that there is good support among tenants for the views you are running.

How much time you spend on an issue depends on how important it is to you. If there are competing demands on your time, take time to set priorities.

Discussions with your landlord should be thought of in three main stages:

- Get the facts, and sort out any disputed information
- Compare views about the problem, and try to reach agreement about the problem, or problems, you are trying to find solutions for.
- Consider possible solutions and try to agree the one(s) to adopt.

## SECTION 1

### Linking Up With Other Tenants' Groups

---

#### Activity 1

Let's look at an example of two tenants associations concerned about the same problems, using a **case study**.

Doreen from the Dundonald estate was visiting her sister, Kate, who lived in the Kilmore area on the other side of town. While chatting, they started discussing a problem Corry had with a problem of water coming in her living room window. Corry explained that she had reported it twice. Nothing happened after the first time. The second time, they said they would be out to sort it within three weeks, but no one came and only after a further call to the housing office, did someone eventually come out. Doreen also heard Corry tell of some of her neighbours having problems with the repairs service like hers.

As secretary of her local tenants association, Doreen knew of lots of cases of problems in the Dundonald area as well. At the next committee meeting, she asked committee members to recount any problems with repairs they had heard about recently. There were lots of examples of problems. Typically, people were waiting in a long time expecting a tradesman to call. Sometimes, the tradesman called when people were out, and a card was left asking them to contact the housing office again. Generally in the committee, it was felt repairs took a long time and sometimes it seemed to take ages before they worked out what was really wrong before eventually fixing it.

The Dundonald Tenants Association committee decided to take up their concerns with the housing office.

Note in this box, what complaints about the repairs service, the Dundonald TA should pursue:

### Activity 2

Doreen knew from Corrie that there was a residents association in Kilmore. She thought about the problems in Kilmore possibly being similar to those in Dundonald. After all, it was the same landlord, even if different housing offices served the two areas.

She contacted the secretary of the Kilmore RA, Kate, who said that her committee had been discussing repairs issues recently. They were concerned with their housing office denying that tenants had reported repairs, when nothing happened after first reporting them. They were also concerned that work was often left incomplete or work was of a poor standard.

In their discussion, Doreen and Kate also agreed there was a problem of tenants not knowing what was going to happen when you reported a repair, and not being confident that they did anything much if you phoned to chase progress.

Look back at Activity 1 and your answers in the box. Now make up a similar list, in this box, with the concerns of both the Dundonald and Kilmore areas included in your list:

### Activity 3

The main concerns of the two areas included:

1. Tenants had no proof they had reported repairs.
2. Tenants didn't know when tradesmen were coming, and sometimes they didn't get into the house when they came to do the repair. This was inconvenient for tenants and wasted money on abortive calls.
3. Tenants had no confidence that action would be taken when they phoned to complain about lack of action.
4. Repairs were sometimes done to a poor standard or the work was left unfinished.
5. Quite often, more difficult repairs seemed wrongly diagnosed, at first.

Doreen contacted Kate to explore with her the possibility of the two Associations working together on the common raft of repairs issues. Kate advised Doreen that her Association had already tabled repairs issues on their next regular meeting with their local housing manager. She felt it best to see what happened at that meeting before doing anything else.

Doreen was still keen on joint working. She raised this when Dundonald TA's committee next met and received its enthusiastic support. However they recognised Kilmore's position.

The following table shows some of the options for what the Dundonald committee could decide. Fill in what you think are the pros and cons of each of the courses of action:

	PROS	CONS
1. Take up the issue with their own local housing manager in Dundonald, whom they know quite well		
2. Await the outcome of the Kilmore meeting with their local housing manager		
3. Advise Kilmore that Dundonald wants to work with them on the repairs issues they have in common		
4. Take up the issue with their own local housing manager AND advise Kilmore that they want to work together on the repairs issues they have in common		

#### **Activity 4**

In the end, Dundonald TA's committee agreed to option 4 in the table above. After both sets of meetings between the local Associations and their local housing managers, each Association committee concluded that the fundamental issues they were raising about the repairs service needed contact with the director of housing, who might have more say in how the service is designed to operate. Office bearers from both Associations met and it was agreed Doreen would write to the director of housing asking that she meet both Associations together.

In her letter, which of the following options should she choose?

1. Ask for the meeting and say nothing of what it is to be about
2. Ask for the meeting and just say the groups have some concerns about the repairs service, but give no details
3. Ask for the meeting and give a brief list of the specific concerns they have.

Put your choice here (1,2 or 3):

### **Activity 5**

A meeting did eventually take place involving the director of housing, the repairs service manager and office bearers from both Associations. The outcome was that the director agreed to review the repairs service starting in two months time.

What important steps could the two Associations take during those two months?

We will continue with this case study in **Section 3, Activity 16** of this Workbook, which starts on page 16. Meantime, it may be a good time for you to take a break, before starting **Section 2**.

## SECTION 2

### How a Federation of Tenants Associations can Take Part

---

#### Activity 6

Section 1 introduced the idea of tenants from different areas working together on concerns they have in common. In the last case study, it was quite likely that more tenants associations would have been interested in the repairs issues Dundonald and Kilmore Associations took up. After all, the repairs service was designed to operate in the same way across all of the landlord's houses, not just those two areas.

Here is a table listing different aspects of a typical landlord's housing service. Which of the aspects listed affect most or all tenants and which affect mainly the tenants of a particular area?

	MOST/ALL TENANTS	TENANTS OF A PARTICULAR AREA
Rules for allocating houses		
Trespass problems		
Anti-social behaviour policy		
Annual rent increases		
Pockets of difficult to let houses		
Deciding in what order to do the kitchen replacement programme		
Frequent lift breakdowns in a particular high rise block		

#### Activity 7

It's not difficult to see how many issues affecting tenants affect large numbers of the tenants of a landlord. This is one of the main reasons why tenants and residents associations in many parts of Scotland join together in federations.

The meaning of the word, *federation*, includes the idea of it being an organisation made up of other organisations, not just individuals. Usually upwards of about five local associations are involved when federations are set up. Federations can also have individual members from areas without local associations.

It is also important to understand that a federation has no authority over its member local associations. They are still free to represent their own local communities as they see fit. However, a federation can help unite the views of a very wide range of tenants to give more strength and credibility to tenants' views on the issues affecting them.

Federations have regular general meetings of members to find out their views and to report back on work done. Like a local association, a small committee will run the day to day affairs of a federation.

List some pros and cons of local associations federating:

PROS	CONS

### **Activity 8**

#### **Another Case Study**

The director of housing of a large landlord has written to all local tenants and residents associations (there are 10 of them) and to the Forgan Tenants Federation (FTF). Eight of the ten local associations are members of FTF. He explained in his letter that the landlord has decided to have a complete review of its allocations policy. He is suggesting setting up a working group

with four senior housing officials, including himself and the senior allocations officer. And he wants to know if any tenants want to take part in the working group. Its remit is to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the current policy and make recommendations. These recommendations would be considered by the landlord's governing body.

How should tenants respond to this letter? Of the following possible ways to respond, which one do you think will give tenants most influence and which one, least influence:

	<b>MOST</b>	<b>LEAST</b>
No tenants sitting on the working group, and the opinions of local associations be sought once recommendation are made		
No tenants sitting on the working group, and the opinion of the Federation be sought once recommendations are made		
A tenant from each local association sitting on the working group		
A small number of tenants from the Federation sitting on the working group		

### **Activity 9**

At the next general meeting of the Federation, it was agreed to nominate four tenants from FTF to sit on the working group. However, FTF asked for 5 tenant places on the working group. This was so that it could invite the two non-member associations to nominate a tenant to the working group between them.

Imagine the working group meeting quite regularly over several months, gradually considering how points should be allocated for housing need, how preferences for the more popular areas should be handled, how lettings in the less popular areas could be improved, and so on. One of the four housing officers on the working group sent out agendas two weeks before each meeting.

What should the tenant delegates to the working group do before they go to working group meetings? Try to think of three things here:

1	
2	
3	

What should the tenant delegates do after each of the working group meetings? Try to think of two things here:

1	
2	

Based on what you have entered in the boxes above, how democratic is the tenant input to the working group so far?

If you are satisfied that things are democratic enough, go on to the next activity. If you are not completely convinced things are democratic enough, re-do Activity 9 and consider what else the tenant delegates could do before and after the working group meetings.

### **Activity 10**

When the working group was about half way through its work, it produced a discussion paper highlighting some of the more controversial issues about the allocations review. This was circulated quite widely among the landlord's staff as well as the tenants' representative organisations. Two particular issues were included in this paper. One was increasing the points for housing need and decreasing the points for waiting time. The other was limiting the number of offers made to applicants to two.

Round the table at FTF's next general meeting, it was clear tenants' views were mixed about these matters. There was a big agenda to get through that evening and so little time was spent on the allocations discussion paper.

What might FTF do, or suggest the landlord does to widen the discussions among tenants and see if a consensus could be reached? Try to list at least two different ideas in this table, more if you can:

1	
2	
3	
4	

### **Activity 11**

Since time was short, FTF decided to ask each local association to consider the issues and have their delegates to the next regular Federation general meeting report their views. This worked quite well, although some of the local associations did not have a meeting before the next general meeting of FTF was held.

At the general meeting, a consensus was eventually reached as follows:

- Keep waiting time points, but reduce the number of points awarded for this a little
- Oppose a rule restricting offers to two only. Be willing to compromise on a three-offer restriction, but argue that the landlord should be finding out why applicants are refusing offers.
- Indicate that these views are provisional, until FTF gets a chance to gather tenant opinion more thoroughly.

At the next meeting of the working group, what should the tenant delegates do? Choose from among the following 5 possibilities, by placing a tick:

Wait and see if the two issues come up, and if they do, listen to what the officers say about them	
Wait and see if the two issues come up, and if they do, put their own personal point of view	
Wait and see if the two issues come up, and if they do, put forward the consensus view reached in the FTF general meeting	
Identify to the working group chair that they want the two issues discussed, and when they are, put the same view they were putting at the FTF general meeting	
Identify to the working group chair that they want the two issues discussed, and when they are, put the consensus view reached at the FTF general meeting	

**Activity 12**

The activities in this section help illustrate that a federation can help gather up tenant opinion and try to present a united tenants' view. However, they also illustrate that there is no perfect way to achieve this.

The activities have also tried to show that it is better for tenants attending working groups or other meetings with the landlord's representatives, to put ideas and views forward. This is likely to give tenants much more influence than waiting to see what officers say all the time, then reacting to that. Then the working group has the benefit of all the ideas and views of all parties to consider, rather than be dominated by officers' views alone.

**Activity 13**

When an issue being debated between tenants' representatives and landlords' representatives is as complex as allocations policy, tenants can feel at a disadvantage. You can relate well to your own experiences on the subject. You may or may not be familiar with the experiences of other tenants. (It is certainly important to try to find out more about these.)

But it is quite common for tenants to feel officers "baffle them with science and jargon", making it hard for tenants to contribute effectively. Can you think of any ways to deal with this problem? Note your ideas in this box:

This is the end of Section 2. It may be a good time to take a break.

### **SECTION 3**

## **Influencing the Major Policies of Your Landlord**

The first case study in this workbook illustrated the way that some specific local concerns about the repairs service could be traced back to some shortcomings on the policy and procedures governing how the repairs service should operate. It is quite common for this to happen across all housing services. It makes it difficult for local tenants' associations to get good results when taking up many types of issues. The challenge for tenants is to find ways to influence the overall policies and procedures, so that they work better in all localities. This section will consider how to do this.

### **Activity 14**

What kind of difficulties do you feel you could face when taking part in a major review of one of your landlord's major policies? Note them here:

## **Activity 15**

Opportunities for tenants to take part in major policy reviews can come about in two main ways:

1. Your landlord may invite tenants to take part in a major review it has decided will take place
2. Tenants may identify the need for something major to be reviewed because tenants keep finding similar problems coming up and they're not dealt with well. Calling for a policy review is an approach more experienced tenants' representatives find necessary, rather than just keep complaining each time a problem arises.

Looking back at the second case study in this workbook (the one involving a federation, in Section 2 starting on page 9), which of these two ways brought about the major review?

1. Landlord invites tenants		2. Tenants identify the need for one	
-----------------------------	--	--------------------------------------	--

In the first case study (in Section 1), relating to problems with the repairs service, the review came about because tenants identified a range of problems, that weren't just local problems.

## **Activity 16**

Look back at Activity 5 on page 8. In this case study about reviewing the repairs service, the director of housing agreed to have a review and the two associations decided on the following immediate action:

*Find out what other tenants associations existed in their landlord's area of operation and see if they wanted to meet to discuss the pending review.*

They found out that there were a total of ten associations, eight of whom wanted to come to a meeting to find out more about the proposed repairs service review. A meeting was held, hosted by the Dundonald and Kilmore Associations.

The two associations presented the list of issues they wanted addressed:

- 1. Tenants had no proof they had reported repairs.*
- 2. Tenants didn't know when tradesmen were coming, and sometimes they didn't get into the house when they came to do the repair. This was inconvenient for tenants and wasted money on abortive calls.*
- 3. Tenants had no confidence that action would be taken when they phoned to complain about lack of action.*
- 4. Repairs were sometimes done to a poor standard or the work was left unfinished.*
- 5. Quite often, more difficult repairs seemed wrongly diagnosed, at first.*

They also circulated to all the associations copies of the letter they had received from the director of housing confirming agreement to start a review soon.

All present were enthusiastic about taking part in a review, saying that there was more wrong with the repairs service than just these things.

What might the tenants at this meeting of local associations do next?  
 Consider the options below and indicate which of the possible actions you agree with (read them all before making your choice):

	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>DON'T AGREE</b>
1. Write to the director of housing to say that 8 associations want to take part and await the response		
2. Write to the director of housing to say that there are 8 local associations interested in the review and that they are discussing how they might take part, and will let her know		
3. Write to the director of housing to say that there are 8 local associations interested in the review and they will meet again to go over the Dundonald/Kilmore list of concerns and possibly add to the list		
4. A combination of 2 and 3		

### **Activity 17**

The meeting of the 8 tenants associations agreed two things

1. To write to the director of housing advising that tenants from 8 associations were wanting to be involved in the review and explaining to her that there will be more concerns about the repairs service to raise. Therefore, a way to list all of tenants concerns has to be found at the outset of the review.
  
2. To elect a committee of four tenants (one from each of four different associations) to liaise with the director of housing about how the review would be handled.

This means no one from the other four local tenants associations will be represented. How should they be kept informed about developments?

### **Activity 18**

The review of the repairs service proceeded along the following lines:

- a) The eight tenants associations met again twice to firm up their list of issues. We might call this list the tenants "agenda" of issues.
  
- b) The four nominated tenants representatives attended a series of meetings with the senior housing officials over 6 months.
  
- c) Three times during that 6 month period representatives of all eight tenants associations met to get reports back from their four representatives and work out their attitude to the issues being considered. The four were then able to take views to the officials which all eight associations shared.
  
- d) The officer/tenant meetings produced a set of recommendations for changes to the repairs service.

- e) These recommendations went to the landlord's governing body and also to a tenants' conference. The eight tenants associations felt it was necessary to hold a conference to involve a lot more tenants in the discussions, to ensure that tenant opinion was based on a chance for many more tenants to put forward views.
- f) Most recommendations were supported by the tenants' conference, but a few were altered and added to.
- g) The landlord's governing body adopted the revised recommendations.
- h) The option of setting up a federation was discussed at the conference as well, and support for the idea was good.

What do you think were the pros and cons of holding a tenants conference, as was done in this case?

PROS	CONS

## SECTION 4

### The Resources Needed For Tenant Participation

---

#### Activity 19

What kinds of things do you think local tenants associations need money for?

#### Activity 20

Which of the things you listed in Activity 19 are essential to the local association running democratically?

The main source of funds for those types of activities will usually come from the landlord. Residents associations, who have members in the community in addition to local tenants may have to seek funds from elsewhere as well. Most local councils give grants to community organisations.

## Activity 21

Federations are larger organisations than local tenants and residents associations. They will usually have a membership from a much larger area.

What extra costs might this involve in addition to the ones a local association may face?

Most federations will reimburse the fares or petrol tenants use getting to their meetings. They almost always set up their own offices. Some even employ staff, or have staff working for them, seconded from the landlord or supplied by an organisation, such as TIS.

## Activity 22

Here is an example budget for a federation. It is not meant to be typical. Needs vary from organisation to organisation. Many of the headings will also apply to local associations, although the amounts will be much lower.

	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>INCOME</b>	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>
1	Grant from landlord	£15,400	
2	Social fund income	£1,250	
	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£16,650</b>	
3	Rent of premises		£400
4	Postage		£750
5	Stationery		£500
6	Photocopier lease		£1,200
7	Computer maintenance		£400
8	Affiliations		£85
9	Travel and subsistence		£1,800
10	Training courses		£2,800
11	AGM and conference		£800
12	Crèche expenses		£450
13	Independent advice		£2,500
14	Newsletter compile and print		£2,750
15	Catering for training and AGM		£200
16	Bus hire and catering for social activities		£1,000
17	Contingency		£1,000
	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>£16,635</b>

Which of the spending items in this budget are important for democratic working? Enter their numbers in this box:

Which of the spending items in this budget are important for tenants' representatives learning more to be effective? Enter their numbers in this box:

### Activity 23

What might staff be used for in federations? Put your ideas in this box:

I'm sure your answer will have included ideas about helping do the admin round minutes and agendas for meetings, mailing for members, publicity for events, and so on. If they didn't, give this some thought and go back to the box and put in some admin tasks you think staff would be useful for.

Many federations have the use of part time administrative staff. Occasionally, they are employees of the federation. They could also be seconded staff from the landlord, or TIS employees working in the area.

For federations, it is important to help establish and support the local associations, which are its main members. Because a federation could be discussing complex policy issues with their landlord, some research on the issues could be needed. Plain language explanations and briefing papers may be helpful. Running a federation is quite complex and help may be needed in how best to go about things. All of those types of task can be carried out by development staff.

Many federations have the use of development staff to do such tasks. Like admin staff, they could be federation employees, secondees, or employed by TIS in a local contract. They don't replace the contributions of active tenants' representatives, they help your efforts go further. If you want to know more about federations using staff, contact TIS and we'll suggest a federation near you to get in touch with.

This completes Section 4. You may want to take a break before continuing with Section 5.

## Section 5

### Planning Tenant Participation Activity

---

#### Activity 24

Here is a list of many of the activities of your landlord:

- Setting rents
- Collecting rent
- Collecting rent arrears
- Enforcing tenancy conditions
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour
- Running a repairs service
- Making estate improvements
- Planning major repairs and replacement contracts
- Planning improvement contracts
- Allocating houses which become vacant.

We have seen in this workbook that influencing the landlord's policy and procedures could be necessary to improve the way your landlord operates and delivers a good service for you and other tenants.

Landlords will usually want to review one or two of those areas of the service at a time. It's too big a task to review lots of things at once. Choose one of the following ways to decide what should be reviewed next (place a tick next to your choice):

	Tick Below
The landlord tells you what they intend to review	
Tenants' representatives tell the landlord what should be reviewed	
Some change in the law or directive from the Scottish executive may make a particular thing a priority	
Tenants' representatives and the landlord discuss possible aspects of the service for review, and try to reach agreement on the priorities for review	

You and other tenants' representatives may feel strongly about parts of the service, where the landlord could do much better. Officers of the landlord may be experiencing difficulties with particular things. Politicians may be putting on pressure for particular improvements. The Regulator, Communities Scotland, may be highlighting weaknesses in the landlord's operation. Only by full and frank joint tenant/landlord dialogue can the most important subjects for review be settled. It is a mark of a landlord positive about tenant participation, when this type of dialogue takes place.

## **Activity 25**

### **Case Study**

In preparation for a discussion with their landlord about priorities for the next policy review, the committee of the Bandwell Tenants Federation (BTF) met. They influenced the review of Bandwell Housing Association's (BHA) allocations policy last year, but felt their case for special letting rules had not really been taken on board by BHA. Some felt this should be pursued now. Some felt the investment programme and rents should be discussed, because the landlord has been able to increase the amount it borrows each year. The Federation's members currently produce more complaints about anti-social behaviour than anything else.

If you were on BTF's Committee, which of these options would you support?

Last month, the landlord received a critical report from Communities Scotland about the increasing level of rent arrears. Arrears had increased 20% over the last 2 years. BHA came to the joint meeting with BTF to decide the priorities for service review arguing that rent arrears should be given priority for review. What view do you think BTF should take into this meeting? Describe it briefly here:

Note the importance of tenants' representatives discussing the options before meeting the landlord.

## **Activity 26**

### **Continuing the Case Study ...**

The joint meeting decided to have a full review of the investment programme during the year, so that a revised programme could be put in place the following year. A working group with officers and tenants' representatives was set up to co-ordinate the review. BTF decided to call in TIS for training on rents and investment.

BHA said it would conduct a short and sharp review of rent arrears and share draft findings with BTF, before making any decisions. BTF agreed to this. They wanted the efforts of their active members to go on the investment programme review.

List some things BTF could do to ensure wider tenant opinion could be brought into the investment programme review:

This was the last Activity in this workbook

## Summary

---

Here is a summary of the key points from this workbook.

### Section 1 - Linking Up With Other Tenants' Groups

- Some of the problems you experience in your own area are experienced by tenants in other areas
- Finding ways to work together on common issues improves your chances of success

### Section 2 - Federating

---

- A federation is an organisation whose members are mainly local organisations
- Federations cannot dictate to local associations what their views or activities should be. Working together needs a consensus.
- Local organisations federate to work together on shared concerns and influence the policies and procedures of their landlord
- Federations give tenants a stronger voice, allow local organisations to help each other, and usually mean you can get access to more senior officers
- Running a federation is more difficult than a local association. For example, it takes time and effort to ensure it represents tenant opinion well
- Federations often appoint tenants to take part in working groups with their landlords. When doing this, it is important for those tenants to take wider tenant opinion into the working group, and feedback what's happening.
- Tenants conferences could be an excellent way of broadening discussion among tenants, and demonstrating that views advanced are well thought out and supported.

### **Section 3- Influencing the Major Policies of Your Landlord**

- Taking part in major reviews of policy can be difficult. Not being taken seriously, trying to involve enough tenants, uniting the views of tenants, and avoiding being "baffled with science" are all possible problems.
- As against that, tenant influence can help achieve major improvements to the housing service.
- You need to take time to gather up tenant opinion, and feedback progress as the review unfolds. Reviews can take many months. Tenant involvement may require a review to take a little longer.
- It is important to develop a tenant's agenda, namely a list of the service improvements tenants want to see, or the issues you want to raise. This gets far better results than only reacting to proposals from the landlord.

### **Section 4 - The Resources Needed for Tenant Participation**

- Tenants need resources for organisation, administration, learning, sharing experiences, independent advice and support.
- Landlords will usually be the main suppliers of the resources.
- Federations require more resources than local groups.
- Resources are important for democracy in tenants' organisations
- Many federations find staff support for admin and development support indispensable.

## Section 5 - Planning Tenant Participation Activity

- Only a few aspects of a landlord's service can be reviewed at a time; so priorities must be set.
- Tenants achieve more influence on matters important to them if they can negotiate an agreement with their landlord on the priorities for reviews. A landlord's willingness to do this is a mark of a landlord serious about tenant participation.

## Check Up Time

---

In this part of the workbook, you can check up on the answers to the various activities, where the text did not supply these. How do these answers compare with yours?

### Activity 3

	PROS	CONS
1. Take up the issue with their own local housing manager in Dundonald, whom they know quite well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Action right away</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Familiar with meeting local housing manager</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Doesn't prevent joint working later</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local housing manager may not have the clout to do anything to improve the repairs service</li> </ul>
2. Await the outcome of the Kilmore meeting with their local housing manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Could be interesting to see how they got on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nothing happening immediately for Dundonald</li> </ul>
3. Advise Kilmore that Dundonald wants to work with them on the repairs issues they have in common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Recognises the possible added clout of two Associations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Could lead to contacting more senior housing staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nothing happening immediately for Dundonald</li> </ul>
4. Take up the issue with their own local housing manager AND advise Kilmore that they want to work together on the repairs issues they have in common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This option has the advantages of options 1 and 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Possibly more time and effort by tenants' representatives</li> </ul>

### Activity 4

3

This is the more serious and business-like way to behave. It is also more likely to help you build up a good working relationship with your landlord.

## Activity 5

The Associations could:

- Find out if other Associations exist and are interested in getting involved as well
- Work out how they want to take part in the review of the repairs service, rather than leave it to the officers
- Write again to the director of housing reminding her of the concerns that the review should address

## Activity 6

	MOST/ALL TENANTS	TENANTS OF A PARTICULAR AREA
Rules for allocating houses	✓	
Trespass problems		✓
Anti-social behaviour policy	✓	
Annual rent increases	✓	
Pockets of difficult to let houses		✓
Deciding in what order to do the kitchen replacement programme	✓	✓
Frequent lift breakdowns in a particular high rise block		✓

## Activity 7

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stronger tenants' voice</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Weaker associations might be helped by stronger ones</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Experiences can be shared more widely</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More access to the most senior decision makers in the landlord</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More work for the more experienced tenants' representatives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More skills needed to run a more complex organisation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Work at local association level could get neglected</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Genuine democracy can be quite difficult</li> </ul>

## Activity 8

	MOST	LEAST
No tenants sitting on the working group, and the opinions of local associations be sought once recommendation are made		✓
No tenants sitting on the working group, and the opinion of the Federation be sought once recommendations are made		
A tenant from each local association sitting on the working group		
A small number of tenants from the Federation sitting on the working group	✓	

Using federation representatives is the best way, provided they always report back and discuss issues with more tenants before the next meeting.

Local groups will usually be less effective working on their own, and if their various opinions differ, it is easier for the landlord to turn tenants' views down.

## Activity 9

Before they go to working group meetings, the tenant delegates to the working group should:

1	Have a good look at the agenda and any other papers circulated with it
2	Try to get views from some of the tenants they represent before the meeting
3	Prepare with other tenant delegates, say by having a pre-meeting, to try to judge what issues will come up and what outcomes you would like

After each of the working group meetings, the tenant delegates should:

1	Reflect on what happened at the working group, and what tenants have achieved so far
2	Report back to others on their committee(s)

## Activity 10

1	Ask each local association to consider the two issues and feed views into FTF
2	Hold a tenants' conference for all committee members of the local associations. Invitations could also be extended to all interested tenants.
3	Do what's said in both 1 and 2 above
4	Prepare and circulate a questionnaire

## Activity 11

Wait and see if the two issues come up, and if they do, listen to what the officers say about them	
Wait and see if the two issues come up, and if they do, put their own personal point of view	
Wait and see if the two issues come up, and if they do, put forward the consensus view reached in the FTF general meeting	
Identify to the working group chair that they want the two issues discussed, and when they are, put the same view they were putting at the FTF general meeting	
Identify to the working group chair that they want the two issues discussed, and when they are, put the consensus view reached at the FTF general meeting	✓

## Activity 13

- ✓ Ask for jargon free explanations and documents from officers
- ✓ Get training (e.g. from TIS)
- ✓ Get independent advice (e.g. from TIS)

## Activity 14

- ❑ Landlord's representatives not taking tenant opinion seriously
- ❑ Getting enough tenants to take part in the discussions and advance views
- ❑ Having a dialogue with landlords' representatives on an equal basis
- ❑ Tenants might have such a wide range of views, it's hard to know what view to put on their behalf
- ❑ Avoiding being baffled with science and jargon

### Activity 15

1. The Landlord invited the tenants (see Activity 8 on page 10)

### Activity 16

	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>DON'T AGREE</b>
1. Write to the director of housing to say that 8 associations want to take part and await the response		<u>Don't agree</u> , because this leaves it to the landlord to decide how tenants might take part
2. Write to the director of housing to say that there are 8 local associations interested in the review and that they are discussing how they might take part, and will let her know	<u>Agree</u> , because this clarifies that tenants will have a view about how to take part	
3. Write to the director of housing to say that there are 8 local associations interested in the review and they will meet again to go over the Dundonald/Kilmore list of concerns and possibly add to the list	<u>Agree</u> , because this clarifies that the list of issues should come from all 8 associations	
4. A combination of 2 and 3	<u>Agree. This is the best course of action</u>	

### Activity 17

A good way to keep all local associations informed would be for the eight associations to agree to meet fairly regularly to get reports back from their four representatives, and to decide on the views the four should pursue next.

## **Activity 18**

The pros and cons of holding a tenants conference included:

<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ With more tenants opinions available, it was demonstrated that the tenants representatives did represent tenants' views well</li><li>❑ A forum for active discussion among tenants gives them a chance to influence each other's views and reach a consensus, so that a united view can be put to the landlord.</li><li>❑ More tenants see how to influence their landlord</li><li>❑ Perhaps more tenants will get involved in other activities in their local associations, having whetted their appetites at this conference.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Organising a conference takes quite a lot of work, which needs to be shared out.</li><li>❑ Even a well attended conference will not give <u>all</u> tenants a say.</li></ul>

## **Activity 19**

Local tenants associations may need money for

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Hiring a place in which the committee can meet, or in which the committee can hold meetings of members</li><li>❑ Sending out information to members</li><li>❑ Circulating agendas and minutes of meetings</li><li>❑ Circulating newsletters to members</li><li>❑ Affiliation fees to other relevant organisations</li><li>❑ Attending meetings with the landlord's representatives</li><li>❑ Attending meetings with other tenants' organisations</li><li>❑ Attending or putting on training events and conferences</li><li>❑ Providing crèche facilities when holding meetings or events</li></ul>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## **Activity 20**

All of the things listed in Activity 19 are important to the local association running democratically.

### **Activity 21**

The extra costs of a federation may include:

- Transport to meetings
- A permanent office base and meeting place

### **Activity 22**

The spending items important for democratic working are:

4, 5, 6, 7, possibly 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 15

The spending items which are important for tenants' learning needs are:

8, 10, 11, and 13

### **Activity 24**

You should have ticked the box suggesting tenants' representatives and the landlord discuss options for review and try to agree on what to make a priority (namely the 4<sup>th</sup> box).

### **Activity 25**

There is no "right" answer here. It's a matter of weighing up the options, and considering what might benefit tenants best.

### **Activity 26**

- Seek the views of local associations
- Hold a tenants' conference, inviting members of local associations, but advertising it publicly to attract other interested tenants.
- Work with the landlord, BHA, to do a questionnaire for circulation among a large sample of tenants. (Note: a questionnaire is only as good as the thought given to the questions asked. There is also the issue of tenants having enough information, upon which to make a judgement. So a fact sheet might be good to go out with the questionnaire.

**And now to Round off the course ...**

This part of the course gives you a chance to check your understanding of the main points presented. It takes the form of a TRUE/FALSE quiz. All you do is place a tick in the correct column to indicate whether you think each statement is TRUE or FALSE.

Statement	TRUE	FALSE
1. When you take up a problem in your own area, it's always best to "go it alone".		
2. If you link up with other tenants' groups in other areas, tenants have more chance of getting the attention of the most senior officials.		
3. A federation is an organisation whose members are mainly other local organisations, but it could have individuals as members as well.		
4. Having a federation automatically means a united tenants' view can be presented to the landlord.		
5. Taking part in a working group with the landlord's officers usually means the officers get it all their own way.		
6. When tenants take part in working groups with the landlord's officers, it is important to prepare by having pre-meetings on the tenants only.		
7. The only way to find out tenant opinion beyond the active tenants' representatives is using a questionnaire.		
8. Tenants' conferences can have the added benefit of getting more tenants interested in taking part.		
9. When trying to influence major policies of your landlord, it is important for tenants to prepare their own agenda (list) of issues.		
10. The main reasons for tenants' organisations requiring resources is for administration, democracy and learning opportunities.		

## What Next?

Phone or write to TIS to ask for the Checkback Pack for this course. We'll send it on to you straight away.

In it you will get

- the answers to the TRUE/FALSE quiz
- a list of sources of further information about tenant participation
- a list of other courses in TIS' **Home Study for Tenants** series
- a questionnaire to enable you to give use feedback on how well this course worked for you (or how badly)
- a course completion certificate to prove you have completed the course successfully.

## **For Now....**

**WELL DONE FOR COMPLETING THIS COURSE.** We hope you enjoyed studying this way and will ask for more Home Study courses to be sent to you.

Tenants Information Service  
Freepost SCO 4863  
Glasgow G2 6BR

Freephone number 0800 731 3772  
e-mail info@tis.org.uk