
Workbook

Aim: The aim of this workbook is to explain the legal backing for tenant participation in Scotland and show how to approach making tenant participation gradually better.

Version: *for all tenants*

What You Will Learn in this Workbook

- ❑ Tenants legal rights to information and consultation
- ❑ Landlords' legal duties on tenant participation
- ❑ Why tenants' representative organisations should register
- ❑ How the principles of tenant participation learned in earlier workbooks can be consistently applied in a strategy
- ❑ How to work with your landlord to gradually improve tenant participation practice
- ❑ How to carry out a "health check" of how well tenant participation is currently working

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.
- Refer back to earlier workbooks you have completed on tenant participation
- 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.

SECTION 1

A Quick Reminder of Key Principles and Good Practice

Here is 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 start.

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.

Here is 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, decide on your 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.

Here is a quick reminder of key points from the workbook, Tenant Participation Part Three:

Often, a tenants' group can have more influence by linking up with other tenants' groups facing the same problems.

In some areas, tenants have established organisations called federations, whose members are mainly local groups.

Some important features of federations are:

- They cannot dictate to local groups, they have to try to achieve a consensus among them
- They can offer help to new or inexperienced groups
- They can help tenants achieve a stronger voice by uniting the efforts of more tenants
- They can be more difficult to run
- The most successful ones have staff back up in some form

Tenant's conferences can be a good way to broaden discussion of major issues among more tenants and show tenant support for the views tenants' representatives advance.

Most landlords conduct major reviews of services from time to time. This could happen because tenants have asked for it, or the landlord sees scope for improvement, or perhaps Communities Scotland, as regulator, has shown that certain improvements are needed. Tenants can have a major influence

on services reviewed if they know how to take part fully. This should include activities which give tenants a chance to express views about how they want services to operate.

Tenant participation needs resources for organisation, administration, learning, sharing experiences, independent advice and support. This helps tenants to be democratic and effective. At federated level, staff are usually needed to do administration and support the organisation's development.

Activity One

Looking back over the summary of the earlier workbooks, identify two important things which work well in your area and two which do not work very well. If possible, give reasons. Use the table here for your answers.

One thing which works well	Here's why
Another thing which works well	Here's why
One thing which does not work well	Here's why
Another thing which does not work well	Here's why

Activity Two

In the following list of principles of tenant participation, give a rating to each judged by how well they work with your landlord:

1 = the principle is not applied at all

2 = the principle is applied poorly

3 = the principle is sometimes applied and sometimes not

4 = the principle is applied well

5 = the principle is applied very well

LIST OF SOME PRINCIPLES	RATING
Tenants have meetings with decision makers rather than staff too junior to make the decisions needed	
The landlord has serious discussions with tenants about the issues which matter most to tenants	
The information needed to discuss issues fully with the landlord is given to tenants	
Before suggesting particular proposals, both tenants and landlord take time to understand each other's point of view about the problem(s) under consideration	
The landlord gives tenants enough time to become fully involved	

Activity Three

From the following list, which item would do most to improve tenant participation with your landlord? Underline your choice.

1	Tenants meeting themselves before meetings with their landlord
2	Take time to find out what more tenants think about issues being discussed with the landlord
3	More cooperation among tenants organisations
4	The landlord making more resources available for tenants' organisations
5	Tenants having access to independent advice or development support

This may be a good time to take a break. When you start again, have a quick look back over activities one to three, before going on to SECTION 2 and Activity Four.

SECTION 2

The Law on Information Rights, Consultation and Participation

Activity Four

Read the following paragraphs about the law and tenant participation.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 passed by the Scottish Parliament provides the tenants of councils and RSLs* with a "Scottish Secure Tenancy" and

- Rights to information, and
- Rights to be consulted on housing proposals likely to affect them.

The same Act requires the same types of landlord to have strategies for promoting tenant participation. These strategies must include how landlords will

- Take account of tenants' views
- Notify tenants of intentions to review policies or make new proposals, and
- Provide information to tenants.

The strategies must also show an assessment of the resources required for tenant participation, and the resources landlords propose to make available.

So that tenants' representative organisations can have rights to become involved, a registration scheme requires landlords to maintain a register of those tenants' organisations which apply and qualify.

A fuller explanation of the law is in the TIS guide, "Developing and Implementing your Tenant Participation Strategy" available free from TIS. You can also obtain copies of the sections of the 2001 Act applying to these legal measures free from TIS.

*(RSL = registered social landlord. These landlords are mainly housing associations and are registered with Communities Scotland)

Activity Five

In the table below, list 3 examples of some things you may want information from your landlord about,

- either to help you use their services, or
- while considering a need to change or improve their service in some way.

1	
2	
3	

Now check your examples to see if you have rights to that information under the 2001 Act. The table below shows what information rights you have.

Section Of Act	Topic	Explanation
23(1) And (6)	Tenancy rights	You should have these in your written tenancy agreement, which the law entitles you to have. On request you are entitled to information about the terms of your tenancy. This might include legal rights not mentioned in your tenancy agreement, but are legally binding anyway.
23(6) 25	Rent policy	On request, you have a right to information on how rents are set. Section 25 of the Act also gives you a right to be consulted about any proposed rent increases.

23(6)	How houses are allocated	On request you have a right to information about how applicants get on the waiting list, how priorities are set, how tenants can get transfers or exchanges to other houses the landlord owns.
23(6)	Repairs and Maintenance	On request, you are entitled to information about your landlord's policies and rules for carrying out repairs and maintenance. This is about planned maintenance contracts as well as day to day repairs.
23(6)	Complaints procedures	Your landlord must advise you of how it handles complaints from tenants.
23(4) 23(6)	Right to buy	People about to take up a tenancy must be informed about their right to buy and the obligations which go with becoming the owner of the property. On request, tenants must be given information about their right to buy.
23(6)	Tenant participation	On request, you are entitled to get a copy of your landlord's tenant participation strategy.
23(6)	Decision making	On request, you are entitled to know how your landlord takes decisions which may affect you. If you know this, it may help you work out the tenant participation you want.

Even although this list seems quite general, it covers almost everything a landlord does which may affect tenants. Note: most rights to information are rights "on request".

Activity Six

Read the following passages about tenant consultation.

Tenants have a right to be consulted about a change proposed to any aspect of their landlord's housing policies and service standards, if they are likely to be affected by them. (Section 54 of the 2001 Act)

The Act does not specify how all tenants are notified, although it is likely to be by a notice in a local newspaper or in a newsletter circulated by your landlord. Each registered tenants' organisation (RTO) must be notified. The time allowed for consultation must be mentioned and it must be "reasonable". Your landlord is then obliged to "have regard" to any representations tenants and RTOs make before making its decision.

Note that your landlord cannot use these procedures to change your tenancy agreement. This can only be done, either with your written agreement, or by a sheriff court allowing it. It cannot change the right to buy rules because they are stated in acts of parliament and regulations linked to them, passed by parliament.

When your landlord develops or changes its tenant participation strategy, it must consult tenants before making decisions.

Activity Seven

It has long been the case that tenants have been entitled to 4 weeks notice of any rent increase. Your rights have been extended as regards rent increase proposals. Which of the statements in the following table describes correctly what your rights now are? Circle the number beside the correct statement. All the others are false.

1	Landlords cannot increase rents unless a majority of tenants agree
2	Landlords are free to increase rents, but they must consult tenants about proposed rent increases beforehand.
	Continued over the page

3	The level of rent increases imposed by landlords are restricted by the Scottish Executive
4	It doesn't matter what your tenancy agreement says about rent being increased, landlords can increase them anyway.

There are no restrictions placed on landlords increasing rents by the Scottish Executive. However, if it believes a landlord is increasing rents too much to pay for large increases in new borrowing to improve or maintain its houses, the Scottish Executive may limit the amount of borrowing taking place. This is part of the new prudential borrowing regime introduced in April 2004.

Otherwise landlords are free to increase rents to meet costs. Before doing so, they must consult all affected tenants and consider the views they get from tenants. After this, they must give four weeks notice to each tenant of the increase they will get. There is an exception to this. In a few cases, tenancy agreements do limit the size of rent increases. A landlord which has given tenants a tenancy agreement like this, must honour its terms. These cases are usually where stock transfers have just taken place.

This may be a good time to take a break.

Activity Eight

We will now look at landlords' legal duties as far as tenant participation is concerned.

The 2001 Act states that landlords must operate a strategy for tenant participation. We will look at what must, by law, be in that strategy and compare it to some principles we came across in earlier workbooks.

Those principles were:

1	Tenants' organisations	Tenants being represented by independent tenants' organisations
2	Meeting decision makers	Tenants' representatives having a chance to discuss issues with the people in the landlord's operation who make the decisions tenants want to influence
3	Jointly agreeing the participation agenda	Both tenants and the landlord putting up topics or issues for discussion between them.
4	Sharing information and understandings of the problems being discussed	Information about a problem being shared and its basis in fact agreed before debating the problem. Spending time debating and trying to agree jointly the nature of the problem being considered, before considering possible solutions
5	Tenants being in at the start of discussions	Avoiding the situation in which landlords have really made up their minds before discussions with tenants
6	Enough time to allow tenants to take part	Taking the time needed to allow tenants to take on new information, have discussions among themselves and having time for full discussions with the landlord

7	Providing resources	Landlords providing resources for tenants to help them be well organised, well informed and well skilled
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The Act does not require landlords to have all of these things in their strategies. The first thing the Act requires is arrangements for getting tenants' views on issues. With which of the seven principles does this correspond?

Put your answer here. (Clue: Consider putting in more than one of the principles)

The second thing the Act requires is finding out what things tenants want the landlord to consider, or reconsider and take part in deciding. And the third thing the Act requires in a landlord's strategies is notifying RTOs and tenants on issues the landlord wants to consider or reconsider. With which of the seven principles do these aspects correspond?

Put your answer here.

The fourth thing the Act requires is about providing information on things being discussed between tenants' representatives and the landlord. With which of the seven principles does this concern?

Put your answer here.

Finally, the Act requires landlords to assess the resources required for tenant participation and describe what resources they will make available. Which principle does this apply to?

Put your answer here.

Looking back on your answers, which of the seven principles are not covered by the Act?

Put your answer here.

You can see from this that the Act covers many important aspects of tenant participation, but does not cover everything. Perhaps you have only listed that principle 1 is not covered by the Act. But you are likely to have deduced that the Act does not cover many of the principles fully. For example, it does not state that enough time should be given for tenant participation; it just says the arrangements for getting tenants views should be covered. It's up to tenants to see that the full requirements of the principles are included in their landlords' strategies.

Activity Nine

Read these passages about registering tenants' organisations.

Let's go back to the first principle in our list - see page 13 . This is about independent tenants organisations. Here independent means tenants associations, residents associations, federations and so on, which have their own democratic constitutions to make them accountable to the people they represent and no one else. There is no place for the landlord to interfere with the constitution, or dictate how the organisation should operate, what area it should cover and so on.

On the other hand, if landlords are to spend a lot of time discussing issues with tenants' organisations and providing grants to help with their operating costs, they want to be sure the organisations are genuinely democratic and accountable to their members.

The Act provides for this with a registration scheme. To register with their landlord (or landlords), an organisation must submit copies of its constitution, area of operation, a list of office bearers and contact information. It must also explain briefly how members can take part in the organisation's affairs. Once registered, the organisation, now an RTO, has rights to become involved in tenant participation activity, to receive information and to be consulted. Registration does not compromise a tenants' organisation's independence.

If you don't already know this, find out how to apply for registration with your landlord. If you have any difficulty with this, contact TIS.

This may be a good time to take a break.

SECTION 3

Planning to Improve Participation

Activity Ten

In this section, you will see that there is a lot more to a good tenant participation strategy than what is required by the 2001 Act. It is useful to think of the Act as providing some key steps, with the gaps to be filled by landlords and tenants having full discussions about what is needed for tenant participation to work well.

Here is a list of ways some tenants and landlords are trying to improve tenant participation. Browse through the list then do the task set at the end of it.

1	A landlord has set up a young peoples' forum to give young people a chance to have a say on housing issues. A series of events were held around the landlord's area. Presentations were given by different agencies, but mainly the young people were given opportunities to voice their concerns, and if minded volunteer to take part in the Forum	A, C
2	A co-op's management committee involved a local association for deaf people while devising their tenant participation strategy	
3	As well as encouraging tenants' associations, a council covering rural as well as urban areas has set up a consultation register, a volunteers register and an interested persons' register. People on these registers are regularly invited to take part in the same things the tenants associations take part in.	
4	A council and tenants' federation have set up links with the local community care forum to consider how to involve tenants with care needs	
5	A council has trained tenants to form teams which inspect housing services. The council responds to their	

	recommendations with action plans for change.	
6	A council serving a rural area has set up email and web site methods for gathering tenant opinion	
7	A housing association has helped tenants set up a street representative scheme. Anyone can volunteer to be a street rep as long as others living in the street don't object to them having that role. The street reps have formed a committee which has regular discussions with the housing association.	
8	A well established tenants' federation has produced a complete guide to setting up residents associations and employs a member of staff to go out and help new groups form.	
9	A council uses postcards in different languages to encourage tenants from ethnic minorities to become involved in tenant participation activities.	

Three more principles of good tenant participation practice are illustrated by some of these examples. They are

- A.** Promoting equal opportunities for all types of tenants to take part, particularly trying to involve groups often excluded or under-represented
- B.** Using methods in rural areas to take account of tenants living in widely spread out very small communities
- C.** While tenants' representatives will often be the most actively involved in tenant participation activities, trying to give increasing numbers of tenants a chance to have a say and become more involved

Put an **A**, **B** or **C** in the right hand column of the table of examples starting on page 16 to show which of these three principles applies to each example. Maybe more than one of the principles is being applied in some of the examples. The first one has been done for you.

Examples 5 and 7 are probably not examples of any of the three additional principles given here. Nevertheless, they are examples of positive ways to involve tenants.

Activity Eleven

In any tenant participation strategy, tenants should have the chance to take part in major reviews of policy or practice in the housing service, including financial matters.

Here is an example of some tenant participation taking place at this strategic level.

In the area in question, there is a tenants' federation and many local associations who are members of it. They have gradually built up experience of how to plan and hold discussions with their council landlord on many subjects. These include discussions each year about rent increases. Rent increase proposals are typically put before a conference of tenants to which tenants' organisations and all other interested tenants are invited.

With the new prudential borrowing regime, this council wanted to plan ahead its future rent levels and borrowing intentions to ensure it had sufficient resources to invest in the housing standards tenants want. In other words it wanted to develop a business plan.

A working group was set up with staff and tenants' representatives. The council provided background information on the financial situation. Active tenants already knew a lot about this from earlier things they were involved in. However, tenants' representatives decided they wanted training on business plans before the discussions started and brought in independent trainers to do this training.

During the time the working group was meeting, a council newsletter briefed all tenants about the business plan and sought views and gave invitations to take part in local meetings and a council-wide tenants' conference.

In the working group, discussions about finances went much deeper than the annual rent setting conferences ever did. A consensus on the way forward was reached by the council and the tenants' federation. This was put to a full tenants' conference, and was backed by it.

Tick each good practice feature listed below, if you think it was included in the example just given. Leave blank, if don't think the feature was present.

		Tick
1	The landlord worked with independent tenants' representative organisations	
2	Tenants' representatives had time to learn and take part fully	
3	Tenant participation was being improved compared to the past	
4	All tenants had a chance to become involved in some way	
5	Resources were available to enable all the activity to happen	

Activity Twelve

It the last example, it certainly appeared that all the good practice points listed in Activity Ten were included in the process. The example also illustrates that good tenant participation activities need to be forward planned. In our example, the way things were done was not imposed by the landlord, but was worked out jointly between tenants and the landlord. Involvement in the business plan was a priority for the tenants' federation, and the landlord respected that. It was a good example of tenant participation in action. Although, we haven't named the council area, the example was a real one.

Activity Thirteen

Have a quick look back at Activity Eleven on page 18 . This was an example of tenants taking part in producing a business plan and influencing rents. It is not difficult to see that a lot of planning went into that particular tenant participation activity.

Tenants increasingly have the chance to be in at the start of major reviews of how things are done. Maybe the repairs service needs an overhaul.

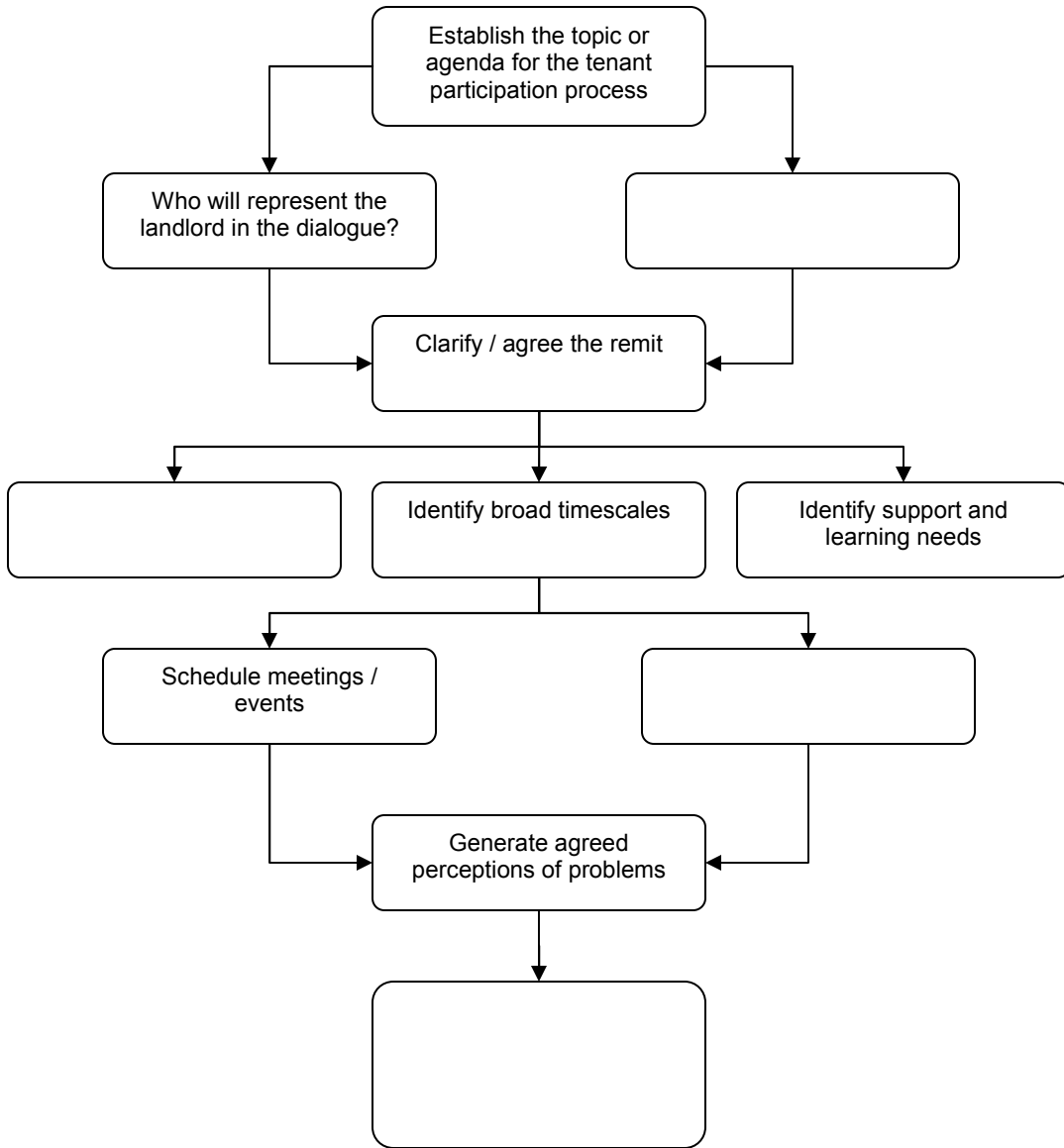
Maybe more attention needs to be given to dealing with antisocial behaviour. Maybe lots of tenants complain about how major contracts are run. Whatever it is, if tenants and landlord are to work together to review part of the housing service, they must make a plan of how to do it. On the next page, there is a flow chart showing how to do this. Some of the steps have been removed from their boxes. Can you place the steps listed here in their correct boxes over the page?

Identify information needs

Who will represent tenants
in the dialogue?

Decide when and how to
consult more tenants

Generate possible solutions
and make recommendations from them;
and try to reach agreement.
Report back results to tenants.



When your flow chart is complete, you can use it to plan any major tenant participation activity with your landlord.

SECTION 4

Using a Tenant Participation Strategy to Improve Participation

Activity Fourteen

Making improvements to tenant participation in a systematic way needs a strategy. This is nothing more than looking at a series of things tenants and landlords can do together to improve participation. The ideas listed on pages 18 and 19 are just a few of the possible things being tried out in some places. In each case, the tenant participation activity is part of the landlord's strategy. And tenants were involved in every case in helping decide the contents of the strategy. Not everything you might try to advance tenant participation will work. There is always a certain amount of trial and error. The main thing is to learn from the experience gained. In this way tenant participation can gradually get better.

Later we will look at the kind of things which may appear in a tenant participation strategy. For now, which of the following definitions seems to you like the best definition of a tenant participation strategy? Underline your choice.

A tenant participation strategy is a document the landlord produces to show the Government it is committed to tenant participation.

A tenant participation strategy is when the landlord tells tenants when they can get involved and when they can't.

A tenant participation strategy is a properly thought out plan of action to make tenant participation better. It is worked out in discussion between the landlord and representatives of tenants.

Activity Fifteen

In TIS, we recommend using our "Health Check" to take stock of how well tenant participation is working with your landlord. The Health Check is a set of useful questions covering the whole range of tenant participation activity. Copies are available free from TIS. It is also featured in the TIS Guide "Developing and Implementing your Tenant Participation Strategy".

This and the next **Activity** is a shortened version to help you get the idea of how to use the full Health Check.

Here is a table to use to help you form a balanced judgement about tenant participation with your landlord.

	VERY GOOD	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	VERY POOR
1. The commitment to tenant participation among most of the landlord's staff and governing body					
2. Arrangements for representing tenants					
3. The knowledge, skills and experience of tenants' representatives					
4. Track record of joint tenant / landlord discussions, leading to real tenant influence with the landlord					
5. The way agreement is reached about the main agenda for tenant participation					

6. The adequacy of resources for tenant participation					
7. Efforts made to continually involve more tenants					

In Scotland, it would be surprising if you could honestly say "VERY GOOD" to each and every one of these statements.

Which 2 of the seven points in the last table MOST NEED IMPROVED?

Put the numbers here

Activity Sixteen

In **Activity Fifteen**, you chose two areas for improvement in tenant participation in your area. Now can you suggest some possible ways to make some improvement. Think of practical steps, not too ambitious, but realistically achievable.

	First Practical Step	Second Practical Step
Your first chosen area for improvement		
Your second chosen area for improvement		

Maybe more things are needed than you have entered here to improve tenant participation with your landlord. However, the idea is to set

priorities, try to achieve them, AND THEN, go on to take more practical steps to improve tenant participation as time goes on.

Activity Seventeen

When a document describing a tenant participation strategy is prepared, it should describe what happens now in tenant participation AND describe what practical steps are agreed to make improvements.

Get a copy of your landlord's tenant participation strategy. By law, your landlord MUST have one. Now check, does it have the following in it?

Items in a Tenant Participation Strategy	Tick here if it is covered in the strategy	Tick here if it is NOT covered in the strategy	Tick here if this item is a priority for improvement
1. Spreading commitment to tenant participation among the landlord's personnel			
2. Providing opportunities for tenants and tenants organisations to be well informed, well skilled and well supported			
3. Providing various means for discussions between landlord and tenants so that tenants can exert influence			
4. Providing ways for tenants/ information needs to be met			
5. Describing how the agenda of topics for tenant			

participation activity will be agreed between landlord and tenants' representatives			
6. How RTOs can take part			
7. How all tenants, as well as RTOs will be consulted on proposals			
8. An assessment of the resources needed for tenant participation and a statement of what resources will be made available by the landlord			
9. A system for maintaining a register of tenants' organisations			
10. Arrangements for how tenant participation will be monitored and reviewed			

You can see from that long list, a good strategy has to cover many important things. In your landlord's tenant participation strategy, there should always be something in the right hand column of that table. In other words, there should always be something you and your landlord are trying to do better.

Activity Eighteen

While the strict wording of the law requires landlords to have tenant participation strategies, the strategies need to be jointly devised and implemented WITH tenants. It is a crucial part of any strategy to say how efforts will be made to improve the capacity of tenants to be well represented.

In the table below on the LEFT, you will see a list of features usually present when tenants are well represented. In the table below on the RIGHT, you will see a list of some things which could help tenants to be well organised and represented. Put numbers in the column provided in the LEFT hand table, corresponding to the items in the right hand table which could help. For example, item A in the LEFT hand table can be helped by the first five items in the Right hand table. What numbers could you put for items B, C and D?

		PUT NUMBERS BELOW
A	One or more well run tenants' organisations in existence	1, 2, 3,4,5
B	Tenants' representatives are knowledgeable on the issues and know how to put a case well	
C	Consistent efforts are made to gather wider tenant opinion and encourage more tenants to get involved	
D	In rural areas, forms of tenant representation where formal organisations are impractical	

1	Grant aid for running costs
2	Information sessions and training courses to learn about issues and develop skills
3	Premises equipped for administering the tenants' organisation(s) and holding meetings
4	Information mailings or newsletters to tenants
5	Staff support to help with running the organisation(s) and encouraging more tenant involvement
6	Independent advice when major issues are being reviewed
7	Running occasional conferences to encourage maximum tenant debate

Even in areas with reasonably long standing record of good tenant representation, there is usually scope to improve tenant representation. Try to make sure that your landlord includes in the tenant participation strategy measures which will help build capacity among tenants to represent them well and resources these measures.

That was the last activity in this workbook!

Summary

Here is a summary of key points from this workbook.

Section 1

The following are important principles in 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.

In discussions with your landlord, try to

- Take the time needed to agree the facts, compare views of the problem and try to merge this into one view, and then consider possible solutions
- Show you have support for your view among tenants.

Link up with other tenants organisations on common issues and form federated bodies to improve unity and clout.

Tenant participation needs well resourced to aid good tenant organisation, learning, skills sharing, independent advice and support/

To improve tenant participation, it is necessary to identify

- What works well and does not work well at present
- Which principles are properly applied and which not, and
- Practical steps to make improvements.

Section 2

The law gives tenants rights to information about their housing service. Usually the information has to be requested,

Tenants and RTOs have a right to be consulted about any change to housing services the landlord is contemplating. This includes increasing rents.

Landlords have an obligation to implement tenant participation strategies which include

- How they will take account of tenants' views
- How they will notify tenants and RTOs of intentions to review policies or practices
- How they will provide information to tenants to assist participation to work
- An assessment of the resources needed for participation and the resources to be made available.

These are not the only elements of a good tenant participation strategy, but they help ensure the landlord considers tenant participation fully.

These laws are in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. This Act also provides for the registration of tenants organisations to ensure they are recognised as long as they run democratically.

Section 3

There are many different ways to make improvements to tenant participation. The right ones for your situation depend on how well participation works at present, and what things most need improved about it.

The principles of good tenant participation extend to ensuring all tenants have a chance to take part. This means

- Doing things to involve more tenants
- Consider ethnic minority needs
- Consider the needs of tenants in rural areas.

Tenants can be involved in major reviews of housing services. Potentially, this can give tenants lots of influence. These reviews need to be carefully planned. A flow chart with the necessary steps is given on page 21 and in the answers checklist below.

Section 4

Tenant participation strategies are needed by law. They should be used to identify current shortcomings in tenant participation and practical steps to deal with them.

TIS recommends its "Health Check" as a thorough way to review current practice.

If many aspects of tenant participation need improved, set priorities.

A tenant participation strategy will include coverage of the following:

- Commitment
- Opportunities for tenants to be well organised, skilled and supported
- Provide various means for tenant/landlord dialogue
- Describe how information needs will be met
- Describe how the tenant participation agenda will be set
- Describe how RTOs can take part
- Describe resources needed and being made available
- How the RTO register will be maintained
- How tenant participation will be monitored and reviewed

Good tenant participation is not just about how a landlord implements a tenant participation strategy, it is about how tenants gear up to improve their organisations, knowledge, skills and representation.

Check Up Time

In this part of the workbook, you can check up on the answers to some of the activities. How did these answers compare with yours?

Activity Seven (page 11)

The correct statement is

Landlords are free to increase rents, but they must consult tenants about proposed rent increases beforehand.

The other three statements are false.

Activity Eight (page 13)

(This was a difficult task!)

The first thing the Act requires is arrangements for getting tenants' views on issues. With which of the seven principles does this correspond?

This has to do with principles 2, 4 and 5, but does not cover them fully.

The second thing the Act requires is finding out what things tenants want the landlord to consider, or reconsider and take part in deciding. And the third thing the Act requires in a landlord's strategies is notifying RTOs and tenants on issues the landlord wants to consider or reconsider

With which of the seven principles do these aspects correspond?

3

The fourth thing the Act requires is about providing information on things being discussed between tenants' representatives and the landlord. With which of the seven principles does this concern?

4, but doesn't cover it fully

Finally, the Act requires landlords to assess the resources required for tenant participation and describe what resources they will make available. Which principle does this apply to?

7, but note there is no actual right to resources.

Looking back on your answers, which of the seven principles are not covered by the Act?

1 is not covered, but the Act does support tenants' organisations by having a registration scheme
6 is not covered. However, in the consultation rights section of the Act, reference is made to having a reasonable time to be consulted

Activity Ten (on page 16)

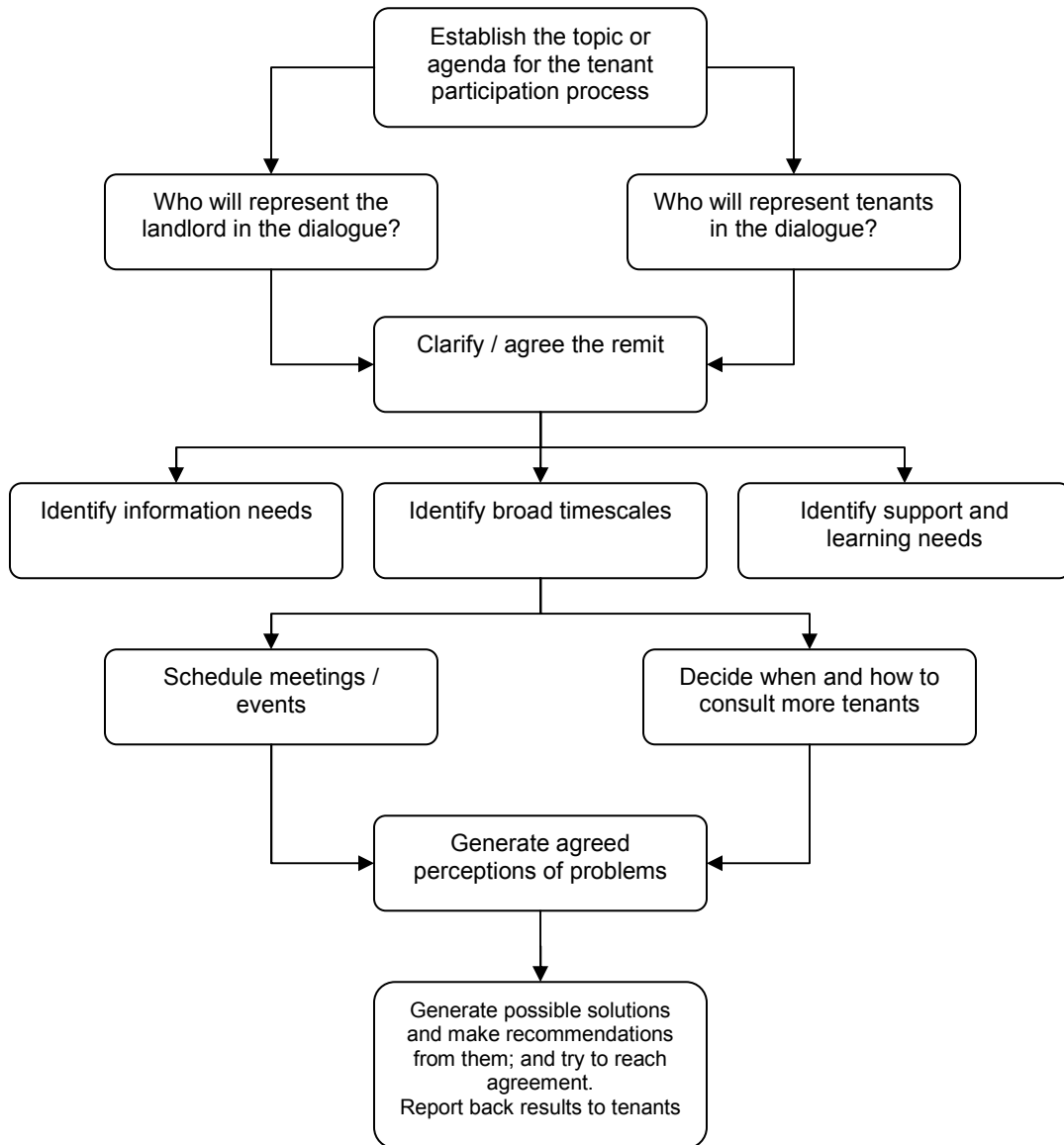
1	A landlord has set up a young peoples' forum to give young people a chance to have a say on housing issues. A series of events were held around the landlord's area. Presentations were given by different agencies, but mainly the young people were given opportunities to voice their concerns, and if minded volunteer to take part in the Forum	A, C
2	A co-op's management committee involved a local association for deaf people while devising their tenant participation strategy	A
3	As well as encouraging tenants' associations, a council covering rural as well as urban areas has set up a consultation register, a volunteers register and an interested persons' register. People on these registers are regularly invited to take part in the same things the tenants associations take part in.	C
4	A council and tenants' federation have set up links with the local community care forum to consider how to involve tenants with care needs	A
5	A council has trained tenants to form teams which inspect housing services. The council responds to their recommendations with action plans for change.	
6	A council serving a rural area has set up email and web site	B, C

	methods for gathering tenant opinion	
7	A housing association has helped tenants set up a street representative scheme. Anyone can volunteer to be a street rep as long as others living in the street don't object to them having that role. The street reps have formed a committee which has regular discussions with the housing association.	
8	A well established tenants' federation has produced a complete guide to setting up residents associations and employs a member of staff to go out and help new groups form.	C
9	A council uses postcards in different languages to encourage tenants from ethnic minorities to become involved in tenant participation activities.	A

Activity Eleven (on page 18)

All of the good practice features should be ticked, since they were all present in the example given.

Activity Thirteen (on pages 19 - 21)



Activity Fourteen (on page 22)

The correct statement defining a tenant participation strategy is:

A tenant participation strategy is a properly thought out plan of action to make tenant participation better. It is worked out in discussion between the landlord and representatives of tenants.

Activity Eighteen (on page 27)

		PUT NUMBERS BELOW
A	One or more well run tenants' organisations in existence	1, 2, 3,4,5
B	Tenants' representatives are knowledgeable on the issues and know how to put a case well	2, 6
C	Consistent efforts are made to gather wider tenant opinion and encourage more tenants to get involved	4, 5, 7
D	In rural areas, forms of tenant representation where formal organisations are impractical	2, 4, 5, 7

1	Grant aid for running costs
2	Information sessions and training courses to learn about issues and develop skills
3	Premises equipped for administering the tenants' organisation(s) and holding meetings
4	Information mailings or newsletters to tenants
5	Staff support to help with running the organisation(s) and encouraging more tenant involvement
6	Independent advice when major issues are being reviewed
7	Running occasional conferences to encourage maximum tenant debate

That is the end of the answers section. Contact TIS if you want to discuss any of the answers.

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. Better tenant participation is likely to come from following its key principles		
2. Tenants have no rights which would help ensure their voice can be heard		
3. Only Registered Tenants Organisations can take part in tenant participation activities.		
4. Landlords must give tenants information about complaints procedures, whether they ask for it or not.		
5. When a landlord is proposing to make a change that affects all its tenants, it must write to them all to explain the proposals.		
6. Tenants must be consulted about landlords' tenant participation strategies.		
7. Tenants organisations become registered by applying to their landlord.		
8. Major reviews of policy or practice will take time. Tenant involvement in them is best planned ahead.		
9. Tenant participation strategies should focus mainly on the priorities for improving it.		
10. Good tenant participation requires knowledgeable and well skilled tenants' representatives.		

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.

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