

## The Tenants Information Service wishes you a Happy New Year

“Welcome to our newsletter which looks at the interesting work tenants and landlords are involved in all over Scotland. The last year has been a busy one for TIS working with tenants and staff to see improvements to their housing services and communities.

The Tenants Information Service has been represented on the Scottish Government Sounding Board on the development of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. We have also held a series of excellent events for staff, tenants and RSL Board members to introduce the Charter and raise awareness of the issues associated with setting local and national outcomes.

The range of informative and useful TIS resources has been expanded to include an information note on the changes to Housing Benefit and comprehensive case studies working with Margaret Blackwood Housing Association and Paisley South Housing Association to showcase the impact of community capacity building in developing tenant participation.



Over the next few months we will continue working with tenants and landlords to develop the Scottish Social Housing Charter and to look at how tenants can be involved in the self assessment of landlord performance. TIS has a packed programme of training events and conferences to look forward to. Thank you for your support and we look forward to working with you throughout the year.

**Ilene Campbell** Director of TIS

## TIS Mission Statement

“TIS is the leading organisation promoting and inspiring innovative tenant participation practice in Scotland. TIS practitioners provide high quality independent advice, training and support services which empower tenants, local communities and landlords to exchange information, develop good practice and influence change throughout Scotland.”



## Supporting tenants & landlords to develop the Scottish Social Housing Charter....

### Getting Involved in the Charter – Working Together for Better Outcomes Tenant Participation Workers Conference

In September 2010, TIS hosted a successful one day conference for tenant participation workers and support staff. The conference enabled delegates to find out more about the proposed Social Housing Charter, how to support tenants and colleagues to get involved in its development and consider the process of setting outcomes for housing services.

William Fleming, Head of the Tenant Priorities Team in the Scottish Government informed delegates about feedback received to date and progress in developing the Charter and the plans for further consultation during 2011.

Delegates also considered the Government's proposals contained in its new consultation paper "Housing: Fresh Thinking, New Ideas".

The conference highlighted that many landlords and their staff have a long way to go in understanding the issues associated with the Charter development and have a number of concerns regarding its implementation.



*Tenant Participation Staff enjoy a workshop discussion*

**Forthcoming TIS events on the Scottish Social Housing Charter are listed throughout this newsletter or "at a glance" on the back page of this newsletter.**

## TIS carries out exciting and informative discussion with hard to reach groups...

During October and November 2010, TIS carried out focus group sessions with young tenants, tenants living in supported housing and homeless people and their support staff.

These sessions aimed to raise awareness of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and provided the opportunity to discuss what aspects of the housing service are important and what outcomes should be delivered by landlords as part of the Charter. The issues raised and feedback received helped to inform the Scottish Government Charter discussion paper due to be issued in early 2011.

Many of the issues and concerns raised by the people from these "hard to reach" groups are exactly the same as those identified by representatives of tenants and residents groups across Scotland, such as the availability of good quality housing in safe and secure communities, a quality repairs service, effective estate and tenancy management and quick and efficient ways of dealing with antisocial behaviour.

However in addition, the people who attended the focus groups advised TIS that to meet their specific needs consideration must be given to: finding out specifically what tenants need from their housing service, easy to understand information and advice, effective tenancy support services, especially at the start and early months of tenancies and providing enough staff to ensure personal contact with and for tenants.

**Please contact TIS, for further information or a copy of the focus groups reports.**



## Future Scottish Social Housing Charter Events

### Registered Social Landlord Board Members Information Seminar

Improving Social Housing through the Development of the Social Housing Charter - Understanding the Charter and Developing Outcomes

Thursday 24th February 2011 from 4.30pm - 7.00pm  
Hillcrest Housing Association Headquarters  
1 Explorer Road, Dundee, DD2 1EG

Following the success of three events held in Glasgow and Edinburgh, a further event has been planned for RSL board members on the development of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

The first three events were attended by sixty delegates and generated a great deal of discussion around the need for the Charter, understanding outcomes and how it would affect the normal work of RSLs.

Glasgow delegates commented that “the event was highly participative and interactive – everyone was involved” and “the charter is a difficult subject to tackle but it was well explained”.

**To find out more or book a place log on to our website at [www.tis.org.uk/events.html](http://www.tis.org.uk/events.html) complete the booking form and email to us at [info@tis.org.uk](mailto:info@tis.org.uk) or telephone 0141 248 1242.**

**The delegate rate for the seminar is £25.00 including light refreshments.**



## TIS Tenant Participation Workers Conference

Opportunity Knocks in 2011: Implementing the Charter and Involving Tenants in Self-Assessment

Thursday 31st March 2011, The Dundee Hilton Hotel, Earl Grey Place, Dundee, DD1 4DE

Following the successful TIS Conference for housing and tenant participation staff in September 2010, this one day event will focus on the discussion paper to be issued by the Scottish Government in the New Year, outlining the Charter in more detail.

Throughout the day, there will be the opportunity for discussion around the proposed contents of the Charter. There will also be a debate on to how to involve tenants in the self-assessment evaluation required by the new Scottish Housing Regulator.

This event will provide excellent networking opportunities and will result in an interesting and challenging day for delegates.

The delegate rate for the day is £185.00 including lunch and refreshments.

PRICE FREEZE – this is the same price as our events for tenant participation staff in 2009 and 2010.

**To find out more or book a place log on to our website at [www.tis.org.uk/events.html](http://www.tis.org.uk/events.html) complete the booking form and email to us at [info@tis.org.uk](mailto:info@tis.org.uk) or telephone 0141 248 1242.**

## Housing Benefit Reform – TIS Information Note

With the Westminster Government proposing to make changes to Housing Benefit, it is no surprise that many tenants across the country have concerns about what this will mean for them.... and that housing associations and councils are concerned about the impact this will have on their finances, comments TIS has received include:

*“I don't know how I will afford to pay my rent, council tax and fuel bills if my housing benefit is cut in any way”*

*“I have a small pension and receive some housing benefit - will these changes mean I will have to pay all of the rent in future?”*

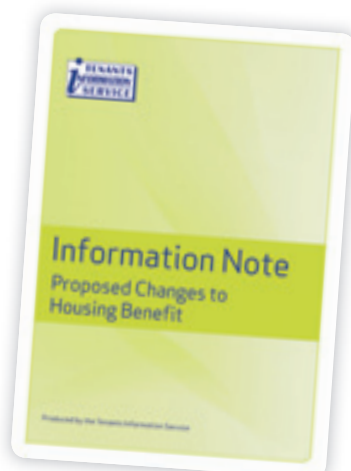
*“I live on my own in a two bedroom house - will the changes to housing benefit mean I'll be forced to move to a smaller house or flat?”*

The Government's proposed changes aim to reduce the amount that the Department of Works and Pensions spends on housing support through housing benefit, with the hope of saving a projected £1.82 million by 2014/2015. The Information Note provides details of 3 proposed changes that could impact on council and housing association tenants, including:

- » Increasing non dependent deductions
- » Reduction in Housing Benefit to tenants in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance for more than one year
- » Limiting housing benefit payable to working age tenants by property size

**Copies of the Information Note - Proposed Changes to Housing Benefit are available free from our website [www.tis.org.uk](http://www.tis.org.uk)**

**Or you can request a copy by email from [info@tis.org.uk](mailto:info@tis.org.uk) or by post from Toni Muirhead on telephone 0141 248 1242.**



## Supporting Owners and Private Landlords to develop Owners Associations

Over recent months, TIS have been supporting the Glenrothes Area Residents Federation to support private owners and landlords within the privately owned blocks in a regeneration area in Fife.

An owners association is a “formal arrangement (with a constitution) between owners / landlords of a block of flats to meet regularly to discuss repair and maintenance work in communal areas”. Home owners have a responsibility to proactively maintain and repair their building and protect their homes as an investment.

Councils and communities recognise the benefits of developing effective owners associations which result in improved communication and decision making particularly in relation to planned repairs and environmental improvements. A successful owners association improves the conditions of common areas and increases satisfaction of owners, landlords, their tenants and the surrounding communities. In many cases serious disrepair and statutory action have been avoided through the work of an owners association.

TIS is able to provide support and assistance to local authorities, tenants and residents federations or private owners/landlords who wish to develop an owners association (s) to address common ownership issues and interests.

TIS would provide information, advice, facilitation and support to enable interested individuals to manage common ownership issues and interests together. Staff are skilled in project management, group development and facilitation and legislation associated with Tenement (Scotland) Acts and the common law of tenements.

In establishing owners associations, TIS staff work with interested people to develop constitutions, set up and inform committees to deal with the business of an association, establish financial arrangements to pay for service and maintenance costs and agree priorities for repairs and improvements eg stair lighting, cleaning, environmental improvements and dealing with antisocial behaviour.

**For further information please contact Tenants Information Service Glasgow Office**

# TIS Annual Conference & AGM

Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th June 2011,  
Dunblane Hydro Hotel

**Book now – Don't miss out on the biggest tenants conference of the year**

With the announcement of Scotland's Housing Budget the year ahead will be a challenging one for tenants and landlords. This year's conference will provide an opportunity to discuss some of the key housing issues facing the social rented sector. What will this mean for housing services and standards? What impact will housing benefit reform have? What are the prospects for the development of new affordable housing for rent? This conference will also look at the role that tenants can play in the self assessment of landlord performance and how tenants can influence the Social Housing Charter for Scotland.

Over the course of this conference delegates can look forward to an interesting line up of keynote and panel speakers and informed workshop facilitators.

- » Hearing from the Scottish Government on it's plans for social rented housing;
- » A "Question Time" session - "Investing in Social Housing- the impact of spending cuts" with representatives from the Scottish Government, tenants and landlord sector;
- » A range of topical and skills based workshops and
- » Meeting delegates from all over Scotland.

The TIS conference has something to offer everyone - whether you are new to a group, or a long established member of a tenants and residents group. The conference is also aimed at Tenant Participation staff, Community Workers and other staff working with tenants and communities.

**Price Freeze - Conference delegate rates are the same as 2009 & 2010!!!!**

**To book your place at conference, all you need to do is request a booking form and return it to TIS, or you can book on our website [www.tis.org.uk/events.html](http://www.tis.org.uk/events.html).**

**If you require any further information regarding the conference please contact Toni Muirhead on 0141 248 1242.**



# TIS Local Development Support Projects

TIS local development support projects provide independent advice and assistance to tenants and residents organisations within the four local authority areas of East Lothian, South Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire and East Ayrshire. These projects are delivered by TIS in partnership with the local authority housing services and tenants representative organisations. Locally based TIS Development Officers, Outreach Officers and Admin Officers work with tenants and landlords to:

- » promote and encourage the further development of tenant participation activity;
- » strengthen local tenants groups and umbrella organisations;
- » assist landlords and tenant representatives implement and review their tenant participation strategies;
- » provide training and information to tenants and members of tenants and residents groups to assist them to influence housing policy both locally and nationally;
- » and much, much more.....

**To contact or find out more about the work of these projects check out our web-site [www.tis.org.uk](http://www.tis.org.uk)**



east lothian tenants and residents panel



South Lanarkshire Tenants Development Support Project



Tenants' and Residents' Participation Project



East Ayrshire Tenants & Residents Federation

## The Frances Nelson MBE Award

The Tenants Information Service (TIS) introduced the Frances Nelson MBE award in 2009 to commemorate the contribution which Frances made to the tenants' movement in Dundee and throughout Scotland. Frances Nelson MBE was a founding member and Chair of the Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations (DFTA) and served on the TIS Executive Council as a committee member and Convenor until she sadly passed away in February 2009. Frances was totally committed to improving tenant participation throughout Scotland.

### The 2010 winners

#### Edinburgh Tenants Federation - Umbrella Organisation Category.

The Federation were successful in achieving change within Edinburgh City Council by improving mental health services for tenants living in high rise flats in the city and addressing the taboo subject of suicide.

#### East Gauchalland Tenants and Residents Association – Local Organisation Award.

The group developed a successful gardening project which involved leasing various pieces of vacant land from East Ayrshire Council and transforming them into community gardens involving the whole community including young people and people attending the local day care centre.

The Onthank Tenants and Residents Association, Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire received a highly commended award for their work to address the issue of temporary homeless accommodation in their area whereby some tenants were associated with increasing antisocial behaviour problems and deteriorating estate management issues.

The group came up with a proposal to demolish the flats which in turn would release a land locked site for development by a local housing association and the proposal is now being considered by East Ayrshire Council.

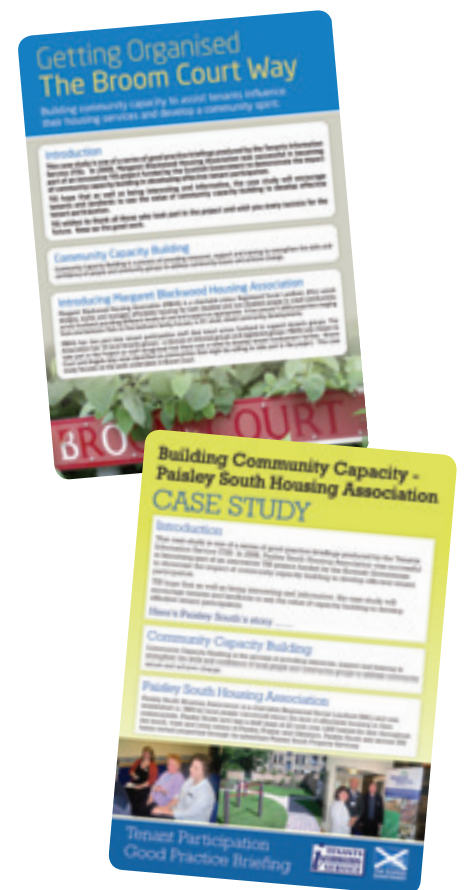
**TIS will be inviting nominations for the Frances Nelson Award 2011 in March, so please look out for further details. Tell us and we will tell everyone else about the great work of your group. Nominations will have to be returned to TIS by 29th April 2011.**



*The Management Committee of Edinburgh Tenants Federation*

## Tenant Participation - Good Practice News!

In 2008, Margaret Blackwood Housing Association and Paisley South Housing Association were successful in becoming part of the TIS Scottish Government funded innovative project to showcase the impact of community capacity building in developing tenant participation.



The results of this fantastic work are detailed in our new Good Practice Briefings, which are available to download free from our website [www.tis.org.uk](http://www.tis.org.uk) or you can request a copy by email from [info@tis.org.uk](mailto:info@tis.org.uk) or by post from Toni Muirhead on telephone 0141 248 1242

# TIS Services

TIS provides independent information, advice and training to individuals, tenants and residents organisations, Landlords and communities throughout Scotland.

**The range of services we can offer includes;**

## Information and Training Sessions

Courses are run in various locations throughout Scotland offering tenants the chance to learn more about housing issues and develop skills. Courses can be brought to your area at a time chosen to suit you. Our most popular courses include Effective Organisation, Negotiating Skills and Improving the Repairs Service.

## TIS Publications

TIS have a range of basic guides, information notes and home study packs on topical housing issues. These are free of charge to tenants and landlords.

## Reviewing Practice and Delivery

In addition to supporting tenants and residents organisations throughout Scotland., TIS also works with landlords and tenants to review practice and service delivery.

## Developing and Reviewing your Tenant Participation Strategy

TIS can support tenants and landlords to develop and implement their tenant participation strategies. TIS produced the Good Practice Framework for Tenant Participation in Scotland funded by Communities Scotland, which is now in an easy to use guide. We have worked with tenants and local authorities and Registered Social Landlords throughout the country to improve participation and involve more tenants. TIS have produced a useful checklist you can use to review how well your tenant participation is working.

## Independent Advice in Stock Transfers and Option Appraisals

TIS have over 20 years experience providing independent advice to tenants in area regeneration, option appraisals and stock transfers. This has seen us work in over 35 different adviser contracts ranging in size from a few 100 tenants to over 35,000.

## Independent Advice in Service Reviews

A key area of our work is supporting tenants and landlords to review housing services and standards to improve delivery. TIS have extensive experience in providing independent advice to tenants in major service reviews (for example review of repairs service) and reviewing and implementing tenant participation strategies.

## Development and Support

TIS staff can provide development support to assist tenants to build their skills and knowledge to participate. Development support we can offer includes;

- » Help to set up and support new groups
- » Support existing groups
- » Support to individual office bearers and committee members to be more effective
- » Provide training and information
- » Facilitate networking with other tenants groups and agencies
- » To find out more about the development support we can offer contact us

**For further information on TIS services please contact us (details on the back page).**

# At a glance

## A Brighter Future for Tenant Participation

The Tenants Information Service provides independent advice, support & training benefiting tenants and landlords throughout Scotland. As the leading contributor in this field we can support you to get the most from tenant participation and improve service delivery. Contact TIS for a brighter future for tenant participation.

### Dates for your diary, 2011

Registered Social Landlords Board Members – Scottish Social Housing Charter Seminar  
Thursday 24th February 2011, 4.30-7.00pm, Hillcrest Housing Association Headquarters,  
1 Explorer Road, Dundee, DD2 1EG. (Page 3)

### Tenant Participation Workers Conference

Implementing the Charter and Involving Tenants in Self-Assessment  
Thursday 31st March 2011, The Dundee Hilton Hotel, Earl Grey Place, Dundee. (Page 3)

### Frances Nelson Award 2011 Nominations Closing Date

Friday 29th April 2011. (Page 6)

### TIS Annual Conference and AGM

Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th June 2011, Dunblane Hydro Hotel. (Page 5)

## How to contact TIS.....

### Head Office Glasgow

Tel: 0141 248 1242 Email: [info@tis.org.uk](mailto:info@tis.org.uk)  
Suite 124 Baltic Chambers, 50 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 6HJ.

### East Lothian Development Support Project

Tel: 0131 665 9304 Email: [mcallachan@tis.org.uk](mailto:mcallachan@tis.org.uk)  
47 Bridge Street, Musselburgh EH21 6AA.

### South Lanarkshire Development Support Project

Tel: 01698 527 108 Email: [lmorrison@tis.org.uk](mailto:lmorrison@tis.org.uk)  
23 Brandon Street, Hamilton ML3 6DA.

### North Lanarkshire Development Support Project

Tel: 01236 435 844 Email: [jstevenson@tis.org.uk](mailto:jstevenson@tis.org.uk)  
Unit 66 Fountain Business Centre, Ellis Street, Coatbridge ML5 3AA.

### East Ayrshire Development Support Project

Tel: 01563 524073 Email: [charte@tis.org.uk](mailto:charte@tis.org.uk)  
East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation, 19 Portland Road, Kilmarnock, KA1 2BT.

[www.tis.org.uk](http://www.tis.org.uk)

