



Department for
**Social
Development**

www.dsdni.gov.uk

Social Housing **Reform Programme**



ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document introduces the first in a series of important consultations over the next year as part of the Department for Social Development's (DSD) Social Housing Reform Programme (the Programme). It encloses *A Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland: 2015 to 2020*. This is the DSD's draft strategy for the development of tenant participation in the delivery of social housing.

ABOUT THE SOCIAL HOUSING REFORM PROGRAMME

The Programme was launched in January 2013 with a mandate from the Northern Ireland Executive, "to explore the potential for the reform of housing structures ... with a view to securing consensus on the way forward". The Programme's mandate was to look at:

- **Structural reform** of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), including its landlord functions (the management of NIHE properties) and regional functions (the strategic roles covering all housing in Northern Ireland, whether private or social);
- **Policy reform** of social housing rent, tenant participation, local government engagement, the regulation and inspection of social housing and the housing functions of DSD.

The Programme's vision is to establish:

"housing structures that support the provision of social and affordable homes, in thriving communities where people are proud to live".

To support this vision, the Programme has the following aims:

- to improve housing structures, making the system financially sustainable for tenants and the Northern Ireland Executive;
- to ensure delivery of well-maintained housing stock and increased investment in social housing more generally;
- to improve the focus on strategy and regional delivery of services; and
- to create space and freedom for social landlords to play a more proactive role in the communities they serve.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE IN SOCIAL HOUSING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Programme aims reflect the potential need for change in social housing delivery. There has been no fundamental reform of social housing since the creation of the NIHE in 1971. This need has been identified in numerous reports stretching back to 2007 ("The Ford Report"). It stems also from an update of the 2009 survey of Housing Executive homes which found that the cost of maintaining homes to an adequate standard could be approximately £204 m per year (£6.1 billion over 30 years). If the legitimate needs and aspirations of social housing tenants are to be met and the social and economic contribution of the sector is to be maximised, then change may be imperative.

The Programme examines this potential need for change critically, however, it does not assume change. It will consider options of “no change” and “minimal change” as it appraises options. If significant change options are to be preferred they will demonstrably have to deliver more effectively on the mandate and aims of the Programme.

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE: CONSULTATIONS IN 2015

The Programme has had three broad phases. The first two phases include research and the scoping and assessment of options. They will culminate with the identification of preferred options. The third phase will then deliver those options if different from the status quo.

The critical conclusion of Phase 2 – the identification of preferred options - will take place through 2015. Consultation will play a vital part in ensuring that we hear the views of stakeholders and that the identification of proposals for change is as thorough and considered as possible. The planned list of proposals on which we intend to consult on through 2015 is below:

	Consultation Topic/Title	What it is About
1	<i>A Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland: 2015 to 2020</i>	How government should develop tenant engagement and participation so tenants consistently play an active role in shaping the social housing services they receive.
2	<i>Social Housing Rent Policy for Northern Ireland</i>	How government can ensure that social housing rents: (1) are fair and affordable for the tenants who pay them; but also (2) bring in enough rental income to help maintain homes to a good standard.
3	Regulation and Inspection	How government should inspect, assess and hold social landlords to account.
4	Engagement with local government	How social housing structures engage effectively with the 11 new councils.
5	Future Structures for the delivery of Social Housing	What structures should deliver social housing? What should be the future role of DSD? Should the Housing Executive continue to provide strategic regional functions alongside the function of being Northern Ireland’s largest single social landlord? Should this responsibility and the ownership of the Housing Executive’s stock of social housing transfer, in whole or in part, to separate organisations? Should it transfer to Housing Associations so that their ability to access private borrowing may bring new sources of investment to social housing – and help address its significant investment need? Where should the function of regulation and inspection sit?

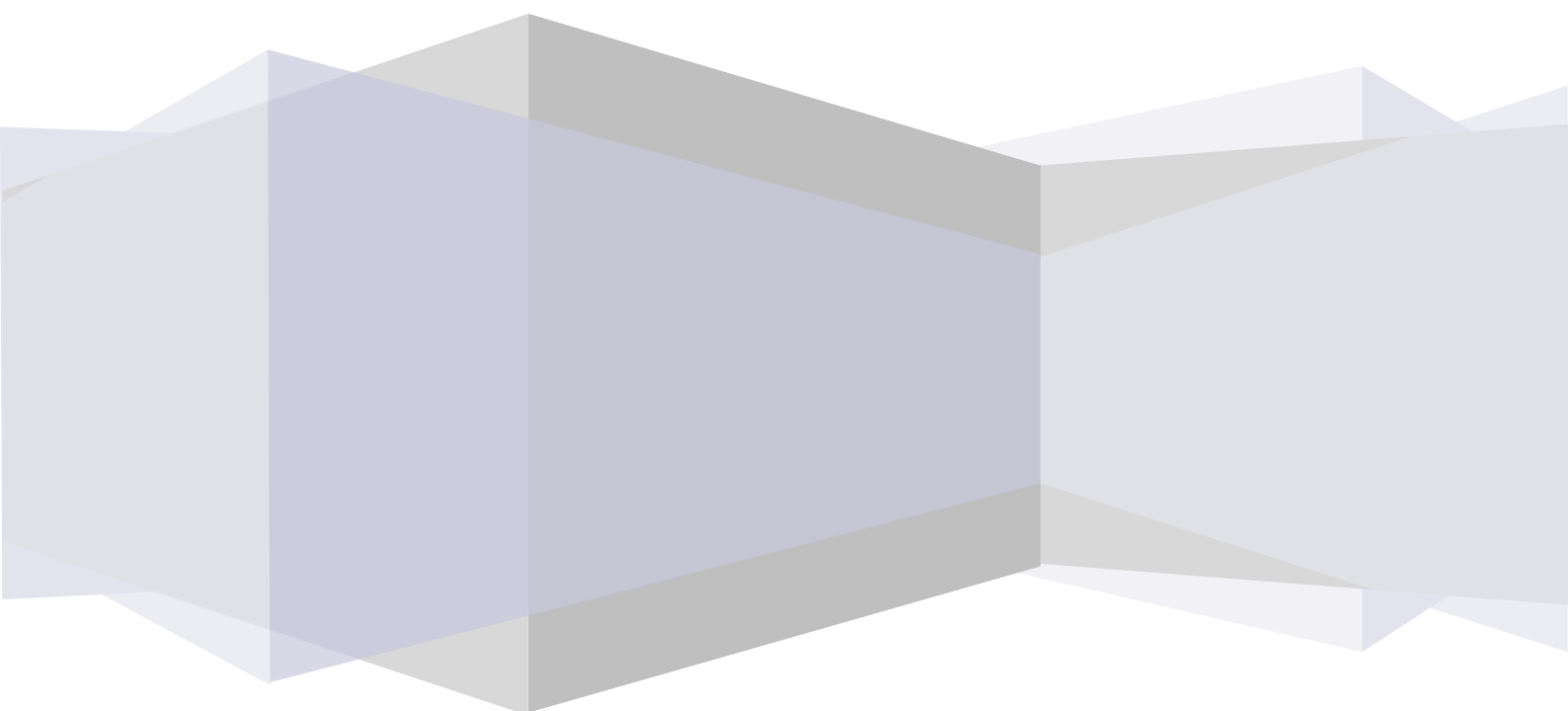
TENANT ENGAGEMENT

The consultation on the enclosed draft strategy, *A Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland: 2015 to 2020* is, therefore, the start of an extended process. As the attached draft strategy shows, there is much good practice in terms of tenant engagement and participation in Northern Ireland. Analysis of the picture across all social landlords, however, and comparison with some of the advances more consistently made in other parts of the UK, highlight that tenant engagement and participation has developed in Northern Ireland in a piecemeal and patchwork way. As a result, tenant empowerment – where tenants actually take responsibility from social landlords for the social housing services they receive, has not developed in Northern Ireland. An overarching contribution from government is needed. The enclosed draft strategy seeks to provide it.

A Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland: 2015 to 2020

A Draft for Consultation

Department for Social Development



Ministerial Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the tenant participation strategy for Northern Ireland. This strategy sets out ways in which the Department for Social Development and its partners will develop tenant participation services within Northern Ireland's social housing sector.



There are around 121,000 social homes in Northern Ireland managed by the Housing Executive and registered Housing Associations. These homes are at the heart of people's lives and contribute significantly to creating a safe, healthy and prosperous society. My vision for social housing is more than just providing a home to those in need, however; it is about creating communities with efficient services that respond to local needs.

As this document shows, using tenants' views to shape services delivers better, more responsive services. Developing services and business objectives around the needs and expectations of tenants should also provide reassurance to investors and lenders that resources are being directed at the priorities that matter most.

Tenants must be encouraged and supported to become involved at the level with which they feel comfortable. They should also be given the opportunity to develop their skills further to enable them to progress to a higher level of participation. Many social landlords in Northern Ireland already do this. Indeed there are many good examples of tenants participating at all levels throughout the social housing sector. We have benefited greatly from talking to and exchanging ideas with tenants, social landlords and others in the development of this strategy. It is not my intention to interfere with the good work already ongoing, but instead to learn from and build upon it.

What is missing is the overarching role that government can bring - a tenant participation strategy. I am publishing this draft strategy to set out what social landlords should do in order to give tenants the opportunity and choice to participate in the decisions that affect them and to set out also how government will help. I want this strategy to challenge all social housing landlords to increase the extent and effectiveness of tenant participation and empowerment in Northern Ireland and to encourage and support all social landlords to match the performance and commitment of the best.

Mervyn Storey MLA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mervyn Storey', written in a cursive style.

Minister for Social Development

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

What is a tenant participation strategy?

This is a plan to increase tenant involvement in the delivery of social housing services and the decisions that are made about these services. It is for social landlords - the Housing Executive and Housing Associations. It is for social housing tenants. It is also for others involved in the delivery of social housing. It aims to improve the quality of social housing services for tenants and landlords. Involving tenants will help landlords to give better service to their tenants and give better value for the money that landlords get from rents and from government.

How did we write the strategy?

Before writing the strategy we researched how tenants already get involved in social housing in Northern Ireland. We also found out about how this happens in England, Scotland and Wales. We looked at the different roles that governments, social landlords and tenants perform across the UK. We also met and heard from tenants and social landlords across Northern Ireland. We took all these things into account to write this strategy.

Why do we need a strategy?

The research we did showed us that there are strong examples of tenant-focused services and getting tenants involved in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, this is not consistent across all Housing Associations. Stakeholders told us that tenants and tenant groups are willing to have a greater say.

Looking at good examples from England, Scotland and Wales showed us that tenant engagement works best when the government provides leadership and support. We are publishing this strategy to help landlords have a consistent way of engaging tenants. This strategy will help all social housing tenants have opportunities to get involved in housing issues that affect them. We want Northern Ireland to have the best possible social housing. It is also important that the strategy works for tenants in both the current and any future models of social housing in Northern Ireland. We believe this strategy will give tenants a voice and help make their housing better.

This strategy considers:-

- How tenants can become more involved in shaping and reviewing the services they receive;
- How landlords should support tenants to participate meaningfully at all levels; and
- How we, DSD, can support landlords and tenants in this.

This tenant participation strategy for Northern Ireland, and the Action Plan that shall follow it, will run for five years. Progress will be reviewed towards the end of that period. The review will look at how well the strategy has worked and suggest improvements.

Many of the measures outlined in this strategy are primarily aimed at tenants and social landlords. They may also be relevant to other community members. These include other residents in an area (including home owners and private renters), local elected representatives, other government departments, voluntary and community sector and support organisations.

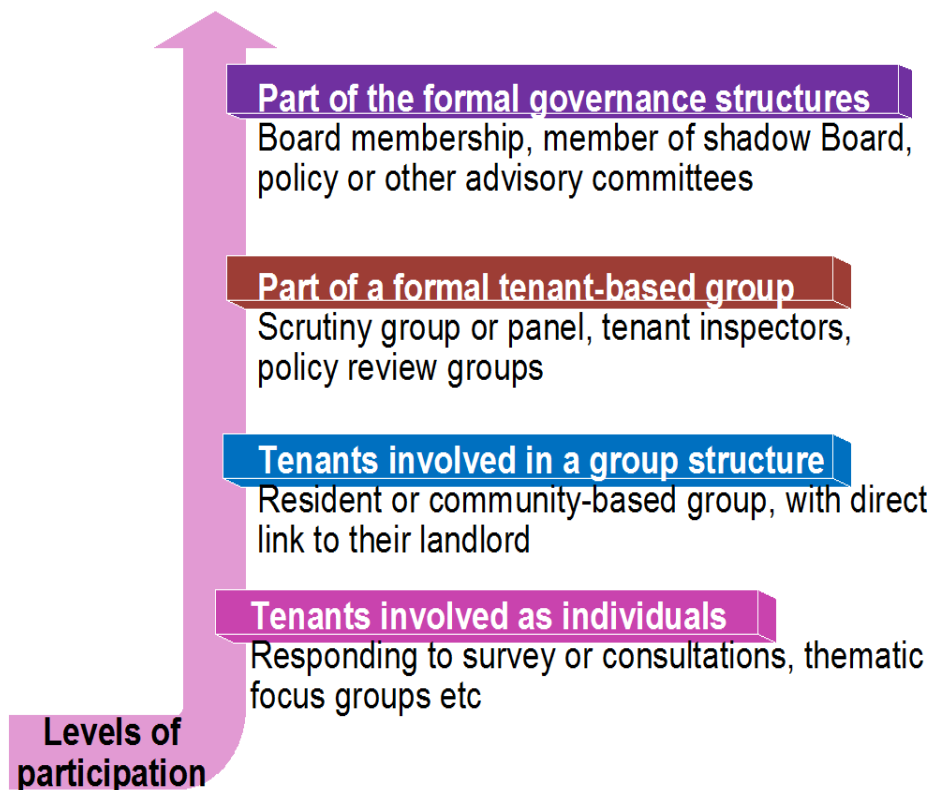
Beyond participation – towards tenant empowerment

This document also looks beyond tenant participation. Social housing tenants in England and Wales can do more than participate. They also have opportunities to take more control over how their services are provided. By law, Local Authority tenants (but not Housing Association tenants) have a *right to transfer* the ownership and management of their homes to a Housing Association, and via the *right to manage* legislation to take over the housing management services for their homes. All social housing tenants in England and Wales also have the option of the *community cashback* scheme to deliver specific services in relation to their homes. This kind of step beyond tenant participation is referred to in this document as '*tenant empowerment*'.

2. TENANT PARTICIPATION

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Tenant participation in social housing is about how tenants or others can have a voice in what a social landlord does. Involving tenants in running their homes and communities has been an accepted principle in social housing for many years.¹ Landlords have developed many different ways to ensure that tenants have a say in the services they receive. Tenants often have a choice about how they take part. The diagram below shows an example of the levels of participation, activities, or opportunities available to tenants who want to participate.



Tenant participation can take such a variety of forms. Work on this strategy has found a great range of different examples in Northern Ireland and across the UK. One example is described on the next page. Other examples can be found at the end of this document at Appendix A.

¹ Tenant Services Authority & Audit Commission (2010) *Tenant Involvement: Assessing Landlords' Progress* <http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org>

A Northern Ireland Housing Association with 3 ways for tenants to participate.

This Housing Association has both general needs homes and supported living homes for tenants. It has a resident participation and consultation policy. This aims to develop a meaningful relationship with residents. It also encourages involvement to help the association continuously improve its services.

Through this policy, the following opportunities for involvement are available to residents:

- **Residents forum** – this forum is made up of residents who have been elected to represent the schemes in which they live. The forum meets regularly and also meets with the Association’s staff at least three times a year. The forum helps the Housing Association decide how to deliver its services.
- **Armchair panels** – these are for residents who wish to be involved but not as much as on the residents forum. Armchair panel member tenants do not have to attend meetings. They only represent themselves or their household.
- **Housing management committee/board of management** – two resident representatives, the chair and vice chair of the residents forum, sit on the housing management committee and board of management. This ensures residents are involved in decision making at a very senior level of the organisation.

THE BENEFITS

Research shows that a relatively small investment in participation activities can bring significant benefits for tenants, the wider community and landlords.² Tenants who get involved can improve their skills. Neighbours can build stronger links helping communities to stick together. Neighbourhoods can become more settled places. Happier tenants and communities mean properties are not likely to lie empty for long and rents are more likely to be up-to-date.

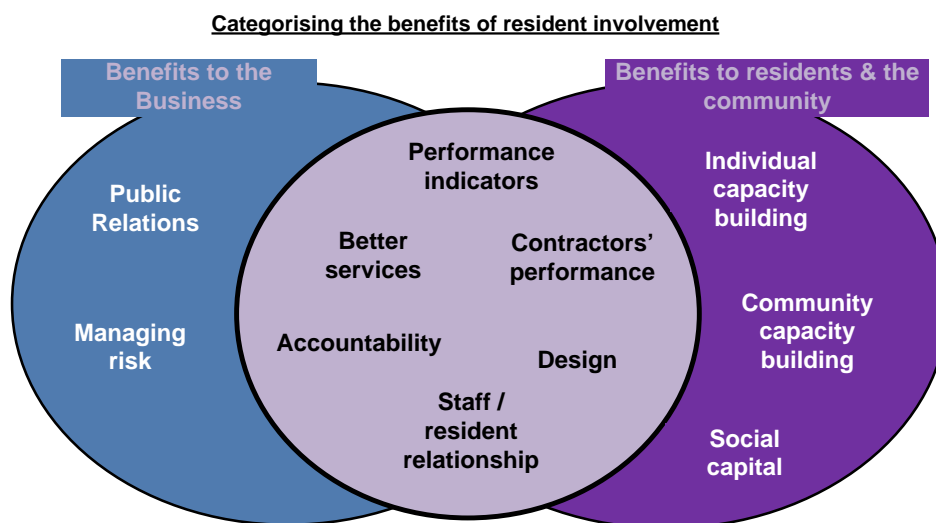
Housemark, a leading provider of data and analysis to landlords, published a report in 2010 looking at the business case for tenant involvement. The report, ‘value for money and tenant involvement’, identified the following as some of the benefits of tenant participation:-

- Tenant satisfaction means that properties do not lie empty for long;³
- Tenants working in partnerships has freed staff to tackle more difficult problems, this means a better service for tenants and a reduced need for legal or other interventions; and
- It attracts outside investment - in one study the Housing Association raised £6 for every £1 spent on tenant involvement.

²Tenant Services Authority & Audit Commission (2004 and 2010): Housing: improving services through resident involvement; *Tenant Involvement: Assessing Landlords’ Progress* <http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org>

³ Value for Money and Tenant Involvement, Marianne Hood, (2010), <http://www.housemark.co.uk>

These benefits can only last if landlord management boards and their staff focus on their tenants and always put the customer first. This has to be a real commitment to the principles of tenant participation and not just a desire to follow the rules. The diagram below shows the benefits identified by a range of research. The Welsh Government⁴, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁵ and the NI Commission into the Future of Social Housing⁶ all have produced research into the benefits of tenant participation.



WHAT HAPPENS IN ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES

England, Scotland and Wales have various forms of participation. They also have a variety of organisations involved in social housing with different roles to foster genuine and dynamic tenant engagement, participation and empowerment. They have structures to develop valuable tenant engagement. Government is effectively involved in these and in supporting tenant participation generally.

England

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has responsibility for social housing in England. The regulating authority is the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The HCA's '*tenant involvement and empowerment standard*' sets out social landlords' responsibilities. It requires that social landlords ensure that tenants have opportunities both to shape service delivery and hold boards and councillors to account. This standard applies to all registered social landlords i.e. Housing Associations and Local Authorities.

The standard sets out a number of requirements and expectations around:

- Customer service, choice and complaints;

⁴ National Tenants Participation Strategy for Wales, Welsh Government (2007), <http://wales.gov.uk>

⁵ The Impacts of Housing Stock Transfers in Urban Britain, Pawson, Davidson, Morgan, Smith & Edwards, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2009)

⁶ Independent Commission on the Future for Housing in Northern Ireland, CIH, 2010

- Involvement and empowerment; and
- Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants.

Social landlords must show:

- How they inform tenants about services, repairs, complaints, and arrangements for tenant involvement;
- How they involve tenants in decision making and scrutiny; and
- How they treat all tenants fairly, and that they understand equality and support needs.

There are many examples of tenant strategies and charters throughout England. These demonstrate how social landlords meet the DCLG standard. Tenants are involved on boards, scrutiny panels, youth committees, audit and risk committees, and as tenant inspectors. There are many community resident groups and panels. Many organisations have dedicated estate officers who have day-to-day contact with tenants. Officers provide support and encourage tenant involvement in the community.

Scotland

The Scottish Government requires all social landlords:

- To set up and maintain a register of tenant organisations; and
- To develop a tenant participation strategy.

The Minister for Communities and Housing also must ‘set out standards and outcomes for social landlords in the form of the ‘Scottish Social Housing Charter’.

The Scottish Regulator uses the Charter to hold Housing Associations and Local Authorities to account. The Charter is ‘to improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide’. The Charter sets standards for:

- The customer/landlord relationship;
- Housing quality and maintenance;
- Neighbourhood and community;
- Access to housing and support;
- Getting good value from rents and service charges; and
- Other customers.

Scottish tenants are present on Housing Association boards. They are also involved in the development of “customer focus reports”, open days and communications groups. Estate officers provide for day-to-day contact with tenants. Their role is to provide tenants and tenants groups with support and to encourage their involvement in the community.

Wales

The Welsh Government has introduced the national tenant participation strategy for Wales. This strategy sets out the policies for promoting and supporting tenant involvement. It also says how they expect social landlords to do this.

This national strategy aims to develop tenant participation services across Wales by:

- Promoting participation as a way to improve services;
- Setting out what it expects of social landlord tenant participation activities;
- Setting out how the government give social housing partners a say when developing housing policy; and
- Saying how it will monitor and review how well its approach to tenant engagement is working.

Tenants in Wales are on boards, tenant panels etc., and 15 social housing tenants from across Wales are also involved in the tenant advisory panel. This panel supports the work of the regulatory board for Wales. The board oversees the operation of the regulatory framework (the rules landlords must follow). The panel collects and represents the tenants' views, concerns and interests and these feed into the regulatory board's work.

Tenant support organisations in England, Scotland and Wales

These organisations are an important part of the advances made in tenant participation across the UK. There is, in each of the other UK jurisdictions a Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). These are national membership organisations for tenants and landlords in England, Scotland and Wales. Independent of government they grew from a number of smaller tenant focused organisations to become a major force in each jurisdiction. Each country's TPAS promotes tenant participation and empowerment and provides training to support the respective government's policies. Scotland also has a Tenant Information Service which aims to promote and inspire innovative tenant participation. It provides independent advice, support and training for tenants and landlords so that they can get the most from tenant participation and improve service delivery. England has four national tenant organisations which support and provide assistance and training to tenants.

There are other providers of training such as Tenants Wales, Housemark, etc. The governments in England, Scotland and Wales have provided funding to support tenant participation and empowerment activities and government departments have established small teams to promote tenant empowerment, maintain registers of tenant organisations and administer grant funding.

Beyond participation: tenant empowerment in England and Wales

Significant advances in tenant engagement can result in something beyond it - tenant empowerment. Tenant empowerment is when tenants take responsibility for the delivery of their social housing services.

Tenant empowerment has not been a term used widely within the social housing sectors in Northern Ireland and Scotland. However, England and Wales have had tenant empowerment rights for some time. Each government has provided funding to support and encourage tenant participation and empowerment and, in England, the regulatory standard includes a ‘tenant involvement and empowerment standard’.

English and Welsh social tenants have legal rights to support their potential empowerment. These are the “right to transfer” and the “right to manage”. Other initiatives such as “community cash-back” also provide opportunities for empowerment. These initiatives are explained below.

The right to manage

Local Authority tenants in England and Wales have, subject to qualifying criteria being met, a legal right to take over the housing management services of their homes from their landlord. This is called *right to manage*. It was first introduced in 1994. Tenants can form a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) or alternatively commission a managing agent to act on their behalf. The TMO or agent may represent a council estate or a number of estates that have decided to become self managing. This organisation makes the management decisions instead of the landlord. It can take over the landlord’s responsibility for managing housing services such as repairs, caretaking, rent collection and security. Members are unpaid volunteers who want to improve the quality of people’s lives by taking on responsibility for local services. There are now around 220 tenant management organisations in England.⁷ Some have performed better than Local Authorities in the provision of services.⁸

Right to Manage example

This Local Housing Authority has 11 tenant management organisations (TMO) who, between them, manage services for 4512 properties. The oldest TMO in the council area is over 30 years old. Today, it manages 138 properties.

The estate resident groups created the TMO to appoint and manage contracts themselves for a whole range of services. Since February 2004, the TMO has worked in partnership with one contractor to provide estate & office cleaning, light testing and litter picking on the estate. This contract is awarded on a one year rolling basis and depends on resident satisfaction. The contract has been renewed every year for five years because the contractor has done a good job.

The TMO housing manager works with the contractor to deliver the cleaning service. Both managers, along with interested residents, carry out a fortnightly site inspection. Surveys show that all residents are satisfied with the contractor’s overall performance. The TMO uses a gold, silver or bronze rating system, with silver indicating the service has met the contract’s required standard. The contractor’s performance across the services on the estate has always rated gold.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-rented-housing-sector--2/supporting-pages/tenant-empowerment-programme>

⁸ NFTMO http://www.nftmo.com/adapt/publisher.kc/TMO%20Docs/New%20Docs%20Sept09/NFTMO_Leaflet_Guides.pdf

The right to transfer

Local Authority tenants in England and Wales also have a legal right to group together to request the transfer of ownership and management of their homes from that Local Authority to another registered housing provider. This is the *right to transfer*. If the tenant group gives notice to the Local Authority, the authority must dispose of land to a registered landlord.

The community cashback initiative

Under the 'community cashback scheme', tenants (or other residents) using management and maintenance services from a social landlord can reach an agreement with their landlord to provide part of the service themselves.⁹ The landlord pays the residents' group what it would otherwise cost to run the service through staff or contractors. If residents make savings they can retain those savings to use for community purposes. Community cashback agreements can be for any services provided the total budget is under the procurement limit of the European Union (currently about £170,000). Community cashback can be offered by any social landlord (Councils and Housing Associations) or by their agents, such as arms length management organisations. More information on the requirements can be found at www.gov.uk or www.tpas.org.uk.

THE CURRENT POSITION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Four organisations are involved in helping and developing tenant engagement in Northern Ireland.

They are:

- DSD;
- The Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
- Housing Associations; and
- the Housing Community Network (supported by Supporting Communities NI).

Their roles and functions are below:

Department for Social Development (DSD)

DSD has responsibility for policy and the strategic development of all housing-related matters in Northern Ireland. Housing Associations and the Housing Executive provide the social landlord functions with DSD funding. DSD uses formal consultations to consult tenants about new policy direction and legislation. It also engages regularly with organisations concerned with tenant rights and community involvement e.g. Council for the Homeless, Supporting Communities NI, Housing Rights Service.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Social housing providers must provide effective and efficient services to all tenants and make sure that their rights are safeguarded. The Housing Executive must, by law, consult tenants on matters

⁹ TPAS article on first cashback agreement, notes to editor; <http://www.tpas.org.uk/Pages/Article.aspx?id=165&articleid=800>

affecting their tenancies. Since the 1980s it has developed and expanded its activities to encourage a more active and participative involvement from tenants and community groups in the delivery of housing services. Tenant participation is an integral part of the Housing Executive's structure. Its tenant's charter sets out the range of services it provides, from repairs to consultation on regeneration schemes. It recognises the significant benefits that are derived from working with communities in the delivery of their services.

Supporting Communities NI – incorporating Housing Community Network

Supporting Communities NI (SCNI) is a registered voluntary and community organisation that promotes best practice in community participation. It provides tailored support, advice, information and training to new and existing community groups and other statutory and voluntary organisations. It is funded by the Housing Executive. SCNI and the Housing Executive have set up a formal Housing Community Network (HCN) to involve residents and their local community associations. HCN discusses and develops their local services and deals with general housing issues.

Tenants have ongoing engagement with Housing Executive officials through the HCN structure at many levels. They have direct communication with district office staff and with the central network. The central network is the Housing Executive's central panel advising on policies and procedures. HCN member activities include estate inspections, community navigator initiatives for new tenants, pre-tenancy workshops and mystery shopper exercises. SCNI primarily support Housing Executive tenants. However, it has previously assisted some Housing Associations or provided mystery shopper exercises for them.

Housing Associations

Housing Associations must:

- Consult their tenants on issues affecting their tenancies;
- have a complaints procedure in place; and
- Survey tenants annually.

There is no central tenant network for all Housing Association tenant/resident groups. There are examples of tenant committees and groups for individual Housing Associations. For example, one Housing Association has set up tenant forums where tenants discuss issues, share best practice and consult on policy developments with the housing association. This Association has regional forums and a central forum.

Many other Housing Associations have tenant involvement activities and tenant services which are similar to those of the Housing Executive. Some have tenant strategies or charters and encourage tenant participation on audit and risk committees or as service inspectors. A number of Housing Associations have tenants on the boards.

A number of Housing Associations have noted that scale is an issue with the size of some of the social housing developments in Northern Ireland making the setting up of residents groups difficult. As an alternative they have instead entered partnership with existing local resident groups to support their tenants.

The approach is not uniform or consistent because each Housing Association is an independent organisation, accountable to its management boards. They are free to develop and run their business as long as they respect the rules set by government.

Summary – the case for a strategy

There are strong examples of landlords providing tenant-focused services and good tenant engagement in Northern Ireland. These are similar to what is done in other parts of the UK. There is, however, a lack of consistency within the Housing Association movement. Many tenants have few opportunities to get involved with their social landlords and their services. We have found tenants and tenant groups are willing to have more and better ways to engage. This is particularly true for scrutiny (checking things are done correctly) and governance (running organisations).

Looking at England, Scotland and Wales has shown the importance of government doing three key things to develop tenant participation:

- Defining the role and contribution to be made by social landlords;
- Developing and supporting tenants' capacity for greater participation; and
- Providing leadership and support more generally.

Government departments have taken the lead in tenant empowerment in Great Britain. This strategy brings that government-lead to Northern Ireland.

Looking beyond participation, we want Northern Ireland's social tenants to have empowerment rights similar to those in England and Wales. Stakeholders and tenants did not say 'taking control' or empowerment was a key priority. However, there are a small number of examples of community enterprise initiatives (grass cutting) and some examples where Housing Associations were considering how tenants could deliver services. Stakeholders told us that procurement guidelines were the main reason for not going forward with these initiatives.

Clearly, for all involved, empowerment should be the ambition for social housing tenants in Northern Ireland. Tenants can and should be powerful customers. This is the natural development of participation. This strategy is immediately focussed on making tenant participation a consistent and dynamic feature across social housing. Towards its close, however, it does also consider measures to establish tenant empowerment in Northern Ireland. It is a first step on that path.

3. DEVELOPING TENANT PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

This part of the strategy first sets out 10 principles of good tenant participation. These have guided our considerations of:

- What social landlords should do;
- How tenants' capacity for greater participation will be developed and supported; and
- What government will do further to lead this development.

Information on these three actions follows.

The measures outlined in this part of the strategy will apply to all social housing landlords and their tenants in Northern Ireland, but not landlords in the private sector. It does not replace any existing legal duties that apply to landlords.

PRINCIPLES FOR TENANT PARTICIPATION

All parties must be committed for tenant participation to work effectively. Everyone needs a clear understanding of what participation is trying to achieve. It should build meaningful relationships between landlords, tenants and the wider community. It must also promote good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

We have developed 10 principles for tenant participation.¹⁰ These set the context for the measures that follow.

Principles for tenant participation

- 1 Tenant participation comes from and promotes a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, board members and staff at all levels. It exists when all these interests work together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services.
- 2 Tenant participation is a continuous process. Participants share information, ideas and influence. They work towards a common understanding of problems and a consensus on solutions.
- 3 Good tenant participation is about sharing information. All participants need to have all the information available to consider issues properly. That information needs to be clear, timely and accessible. Information must be in a form that all participants can understand.
- 4 Decision-making processes should be open, clear and accountable.
- 5 Tenant representatives should have enough time to consider issues properly. They should have the opportunity to work out a common view before meeting landlord representatives.

¹⁰ Scottish Govt. Guidance on Tenant Participation, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/09/15487/11224>

6	The landlord must recognise the independence of tenants' organisations.
7	Good working relations evolve gradually so must be flexible to adapt to local circumstances.
8	Tenants' organisations need adequate resources for organisation, training and support.
9	Tenant participation in rural areas must suit the particular circumstances and needs of rural tenants.
10	Tenant participation must meet the requirements of legislation on equality and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Effective tenant participation methods, developed by landlords who have asked and listened to their tenants' needs, particularly where tenants are living with disabilities, will remove barriers arising from ethnicity, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, age, sexual orientation or disability.

WHAT SOCIAL LANDLORDS SHOULD DO

We do not want to interfere with existing good practice already in existence. We want instead to learn from it, build upon it and challenge all social housing landlords to increase the extent and effectiveness of tenant participation in Northern Ireland.

Our standards, recommendations and guidance will apply to both the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Housing Associations.

In general, social landlords should do three things to foster greater participation from their tenants:

- Develop and deliver a strategy for tenant participation;
- Have due regard for the information contained in this strategy, particularly the standards set out below and in Appendix B, when developing or reviewing their own strategy;
- Ensure that tenants and other users are made aware of and are clear about the participation activities and strategic approach to tenant participation.

Social landlords may decide to produce a specific tenant participation strategy to meet our expectations. Others may wish to put the relevant information into tenant handbooks or other documents. Either approach is valid. The important thing is that tenants and other users are made aware of opportunities for participation and encouraged to participate. Tenants should find it easy to access information so that they can decide in which participation activities they want to be involved.

The content of a social landlord's strategy for tenant participation should reflect our *10 principles for tenant participation* (above). It should also ensure that:

- Tenants and other services/users have a choice in:
 - The areas they want to participate in;
 - The level of participation; and
 - Whether to be involved as an individual or in groups.

- Tenants have an opportunity to influence:
 - Policy decisions that will affect them;
 - Decisions that will affect their area or community;
 - Services that they receive as an individual user; and
 - Their landlord organisation's business planning and identification of future priorities.

- Tenants and, in particular, under-represented groups are encouraged and supported to become involved through training and other support mechanisms

Many social landlords will already have policies or strategies which meet some or all of the expectations of the *A Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland: 2015 to 2020*. These should be tested against this strategy's expectations and:

- If existing approaches work and meet the strategy expectations, then landlords should of course continue to use them.
- Where they do not meet expectations, landlords should set out an action plan to meet the strategy expectations within a reasonable timeframe.

However, as the strategy challenges social landlords to improve on existing services, then social landlords should regularly consider what more they can do to promote and improve tenant participation.

Social landlords should have their strategies or methods in place to meet the standards by April 2016. Social landlords should fundamentally review their local tenant participation strategies or methods at least every three years.

Consultation Question No. 1

How do you feel the Department can challenge Social Landlords to increase the extent and effectiveness of tenant participation in Northern Ireland?

Consultation Question No. 2

Do you think the things we expect of a social landlord's strategic approach to tenant participation are appropriate and fair? Please explain.

HOW TENANTS WILL BE SUPPORTED TO PARTICIPATE

This strategy will not be successful simply by setting the role of social landlords and government. It must also look at how it can give tenants the skills, support and encouragement to be able to embrace opportunities to participate. Many tenants are already engaged in a variety of ways with their landlords. The objective of this strategy is to raise the levels of tenant engagement across the sector.

The guidance and regulation in this strategy will make sure that tenants are supported. Other measures, independent of the role of landlords and government, will also be important.

An independent body to support tenant participation

Northern Ireland has no sector wide organisation similar to the tenant participation advisory service (TPAS) which operates in England, Scotland and Wales with support from each country's government. The Housing Executive has shown the value of the Housing Community Network to support its tenants – but it does not cover tenants of Housing Associations although some Housing Associations have used its services for things like mystery shopping exercises. An organisation like TPAS should be available to all tenants in Northern Ireland. This organisation should be supported by government.

We will work with stakeholders to develop independent tenant support. It will support tenants in developing the skills needed. We will make a strong case for government funds to support this.

DSD will also provide guidance on:

- Setting up and maintaining tenant panels or community groups at a local level;
- Developing tenant participation strategies or activities;
- Effective tenant involvement in governance and board membership; and
- Developing tenant-based surveys.

DSD will explore funding requirements to support tenants or support organisations e.g. for training, to set up panels, to undertake projects and to develop a tenant participation and engagement support programme.

Consultation Question No. 3

Do you agree that the Department should support the development of independent tenant support in Northern Ireland? Please provide your reasons.

HOW GOVERNMENT CAN LEAD

DSD can and will act in various ways to support tenant participation directly. Regulation and legislation have helped tenant participation activities to grow in the rest of the UK.

DSD is required to “exercise supervision and control over Registered Housing Associations” (Article 4 (1) (c) of the Housing (NI) Order 1992) and has a key role in promoting “best value” in the delivery of social housing in Northern Ireland.

The Department has a regulatory responsibility for registered Housing Associations and it sets out its guidelines through the Regulatory Framework which in turn feeds into the Housing Association Guide (HAG). Registered Housing Associations are directly accountable to their board but must work within the rules and the requirements of this guide. The Department is responsible for grant funding, monitoring, regulation and issue of guidance and policy directives to Housing Associations and have a statutory duty to consult with its representatives.

DSD has a monitoring and oversight role of the Housing Associations. The oversight responsibilities are exercised via two key processes:

- The inspection process – Housing Associations are subject to a rolling programme of inspections which covers the five main activities of Finance, Property Management, Property Development, Housing Management and Governance. The inspection reports containing the findings and recommendations are published on the DSD website; and
- Ongoing monitoring – Housing Associations must provide regular information required by the Department. This includes monthly minutes of board meetings, internal audit reports, accounts etc. They must also complete an Annual Regulatory Return which provides the Department with details on housing management, maintenance and other statistical information. Key areas include rental income, voids, evictions, maintenance and supporting people activities.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is a non-Departmental Public Body and its board is accountable to the DSD Minister for delivery of his strategic priorities and to ensure these are reflected in the NIHE Corporate and Business Plans. Delivery of these strategy expectations will also apply to the NIHE.

We will bring in regulation to support this strategy.¹¹ Landlords will be assessed and inspected to make sure they are in line with the standard set out in regulation. This will help us make sure this strategy is working.

¹¹ Tenant Services Authority & Audit Commission (2010) *Tenant Involvement: Assessing Landlords' Progress*
<http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org>

The standard we will add to our regulatory framework is:

Regulatory Standard

Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with:

- Associations adopt a strategic approach to tenant participation in the development and review of housing and related services, or in response to service failure;
- Associations have due regard to the tenant participation strategy for Northern Ireland; and
- Associations ensure that tenants and other users are made aware of and are clear about the participation activities and strategic approach to tenant participation.

More specific standards and outcome measures will also be used by inspectors underneath this standard to make sure social tenants and landlords derive real benefits from tenant participation. You can read guidance that will assist with these in Appendix B.

This guidance describes what landlords should achieve by meeting their duties on tenant participation. It covers how social landlords can gather and take account of the views and priorities of their tenants; how they can shape their services to reflect these views; and how they can help tenants and other customers to become more capable of involvement by:

- Regularly seeking the views of tenants, being responsive to and considering those views;
- Offering tenants a menu of participation activities so that they can participate as individuals, within formal or informal group structures or as specialist posts;
- Providing opportunities for tenants to scrutinise the services they receive and the decisions that impact them;
- Providing the appropriate training and support to tenants and staff to encourage, promote and provide the skills required to make participation an integral part of the organisation; and
- Developing relationships and engagement opportunities for tenants and others within the community or those whose role has an impact on tenants e.g. other government departments or housing providers.

This new regulatory standard for tenant participation will apply to the Housing Executive in a way that it is different to its application to Housing Associations. The Board of Management of the Housing Executive will be accountable to Minister for ensuring delivery against the strategic expectations outlined in this strategy.

Alongside these efforts to make sure that social landlords provide their tenants with opportunities to work with them, the Department will also introduce new ways for tenants to work with it. The Department will establish an advocate for tenants. This advocate will monitor the delivery of this strategy. The Department will also work with the housing sector to establish a housing policy panel for Northern Ireland. This will represent social housing tenants in the development of departmental policies that are relevant to their interests.

TENANT EMPOWERMENT

The opportunity must be there for participation to lead to empowerment. Tenants should not just be able to be involved in their social landlord's management of services – they should be able to assume that management responsibility for themselves, where appropriate. Housing Executive tenants should be able to determine the transfer to a Housing Association of the ownership and management of their homes or the right to manage the services associated with their homes – if they make a sound case for it.¹² All social housing tenants (including housing association tenants) should be able to take advantage of a cashback scheme should one be introduced in Northern Ireland.

Two things will be necessary if these are soon to happen successfully in Northern Ireland:

- First, the establishment (with government support) of independent structures that can provide support, advice and guidance to tenants and tenants' local organisations. DSD will, at the appropriate point, produce guidance on how tenants should pursue management or transfer rights – but the best source of practical advice and support on such matters for such tenants will be their own organisation. Through this, tenants who have assumed management responsibilities or who have availed of their right to transfer will be able to advise others about the process; and
- Second, a change in the law. Currently, the law in Northern Ireland does not support a tenant's right to manage or transfer. New laws would be necessary.

This strategy has already committed the DSD to working with stakeholders to develop an independent tenant support organisation – and to developing with them a strong case for government funds to support this organisation. Alongside this, DSD will at the appropriate point in the implementation of this strategy for tenant participation bring forward proposals to introduce into Northern Ireland the “right to manage” and the “right to transfer” and an equivalent to the “community cashback” initiatives of England and Wales.

¹² As with England and Wales the *Right to Transfer* and the *Right to Manage* will not apply to housing associations in Northern Ireland as the properties they own and manage, while in part grant funded by government, are not owned by government. Further the tenants of housing associations will have, under the proposals contained in this strategy, the opportunity to influence decisions at board level in a way that housing executive tenants do not.

Consultation Question No. 4

Is the regulatory standard clear and understandable? If not, what more would you include?

Consultation Question No. 5

Do you agree that the Department should introduce legislation to support the introduction of tenant empowerment rights – i.e. right to manage and right to transfer or community cashback scheme? Please provide you reasons.

MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

In this strategy, the DSD has made the following commitments:

- We will work with stakeholders to develop independent tenant support. We will make a strong case for government funds to support this.
- We will also provide guidance on:
 - Setting up and maintaining tenant panels or community groups at a local level;
 - Developing tenant participation strategies or activities;
 - Effective tenant involvement in governance and board membership; and
 - Developing tenant-based surveys.
- We will seek funding to support local tenants organisations (e.g. for training, to set up panels, to undertake projects) and to develop a tenant participation support programme.
- We will bring in regulation to support this strategy. Landlords will be assessed and inspected to make sure they are in line with the standard set out in regulation.
- We will provide social landlords with guidance on the new regulatory standard for tenant participation.
- The Board of Management of the Housing Executive will be accountable to Minister for ensuring delivery against the strategic expectations outlined in this strategy.
- We will establish an advocate for tenants. This advocate will monitor the delivery of this strategy.
- We will work with the housing sector to establish a housing policy panel for Northern Ireland. This will represent social housing tenants in the development of departmental policies that are relevant to their interests.
- We will, at the appropriate point in the implementation of this strategy, bring forward proposals to introduce into Northern Ireland the “right to manage” and the “right to transfer” and an equivalent to the “community cashback” initiatives of England and Wales.

DSD will follow the publication of this strategy with the publication of an action plan for the delivery of these commitments. It shall detail by what date the Department shall take these forward. It shall also provide a basis by which stakeholders can hold DSD to account.

To assess the application and effectiveness of this strategy, DSD will:

- Monitor implementation of the strategy action plan;
- Monitor the introduction of landlord tenant participation strategies and activities by undertaking a thematic inspection of tenant participation services through the regulatory and inspection processes in 2016;
- Review the tenant participation strategy for Northern Ireland every five years at least; and
- Respond to individual cases of poor performance as appropriate.

4. RESPONDING TO THIS CONSULTATION

The consultation period runs from 15th January 2015 to 8th April 2015. The strategy document sets out the Department's proposals for a tenant participation and empowerment strategy for Northern Ireland. The Department would appreciate you taking the time to read through the proposals, consider them and give us your views on any issues raised. The consultation questions are reproduced together, along with information about the public consultation events as well as your invitation to attend, at Appendix C.

Ways you can respond to the publication are detailed as follows...

by post

Complete a hard copy of Appendix C and forward to the address below:

Tenant Participation Strategy Consultation
Social Housing Reform Programme
Ground Floor Lighthouse Building
Gasworks Business Park
BELFAST BT2 7JB
Tel: 028 9082 9012

online

Complete online by accessing the DSD website at www.dsdni.gov.uk (follow the link for 'consultation zone'), or alternatively by accessing the NI Direct website at www.nidirect.gov.uk. You will then have the option to view four separate links. On clicking the links a new window will open in survey monkey to enable you to complete the questionnaire and/or the event response form and then submit online. The four links are listed below:

1. A Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015 – 2020
2. Consultation Response (survey monkey - questionnaire)
3. Public Consultation Events (survey monkey - invitation and response form)
4. Impact Assessment Screening Reports

If you have any queries on this document or require a copy in a different format you may contact us at the address above or by e-mail to: shrppolicy@dndni.gov.uk.

Following the end of the consultation period the Department will publish a response report, alongside a departmental view on the issues raised. Unless respondents indicate otherwise, all responses to this consultation may be published in full or summary form.

You should note that the Department is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which means that we have to consider any request made to us under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality between all the Section 75 groups. Without prejudice to these obligations, the Department is also required, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. Equality screening of this strategy identified no adverse impacts.

In accordance with guidance, screening was also carried out on a further three impact assessments, namely:

- Regulatory impact;
- Social Inclusion impact; and
- Rural Proofing impact.

Screening in all three areas has been completed and no adverse impacts were identified. On this basis, the decision is that this strategy should not be subject to full impact assessments.

If you wish to comment on the Impact Assessment screening you have the opportunity to do so by completing the relevant question in Appendix C by post or online as described in Section 4.

Consultation Question No. 6

Do you agree with the findings in the Impact Assessment screening reports? Please provide your reasons.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Department has worked with tenant groups, social housing providers and housing related organisations and other stakeholders to identify the key elements of this consultation document. The Department would like to thank the tenants and staff of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Housing Association sector, Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, Supporting Communities NI, Tenants Rights, Council for The Homeless , the Voluntary and Community Sector in general, and any others who were involved in the development of this strategy and consultation.

TENANT PARTICIPATION & EMPOWERMENT CASE STUDIES

NORTHERN IRELAND

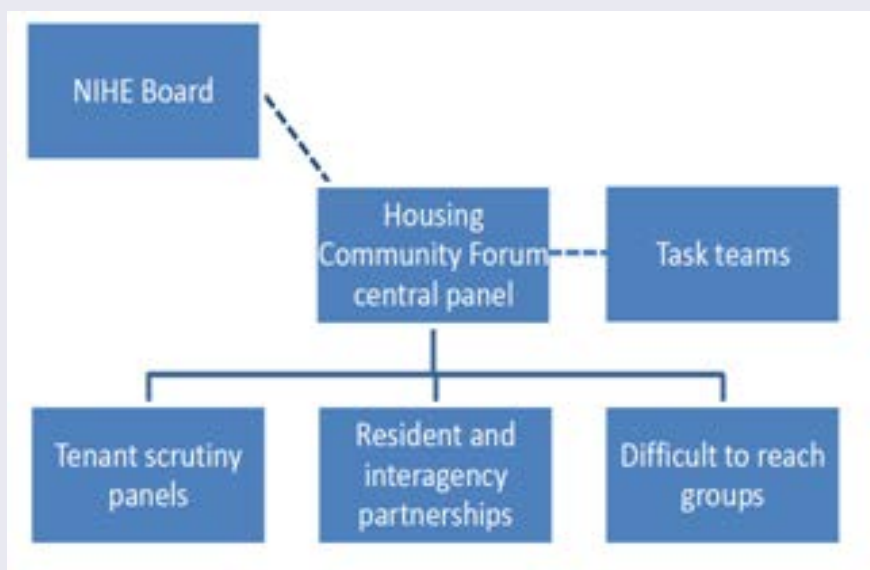
The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is the largest single social landlord in Northern Ireland.

NIHE

The Housing Executive has involved residents and local community associations in discussing and developing local services and addressing housing issues for many years. With its wide network of community groups the Housing Executive has access to more than 400 tenant groups and has an established Housing Community Network which has different tiers of involvement.

Under its previous resident inclusion strategy, tenants were involved at four levels, local, area, regional and central with representatives from each level feeding into meetings at the next level. The Housing Executive funds Supporting Communities NI, an independent province wide voluntary organisation, to work with community groups and housing providers to achieve meaningful community participation.

The network has evolved and the new community inclusion strategy has created a new structure, with tenants involved in area scrutiny panels, inter-agency partnerships and working with difficult to reach groups. These groups are represented on the central panel who meet with the NIHE board twice a year. All policy changes are discussed and consulted at central forum.



This case study outlines the services and tenant participation activities provided by a registered social landlord in England. This is a large Housing Association and their main feature is that they are community driven and extend beyond housing.

Case Study

This Housing Association owns and manages around 8,500 homes in London. They have developed and built new schools, health centres, and chemist and shopping areas in partnership with local authorities. Some of the opportunities for tenant participation include:

- Youth empowerment board with successes in projects and developing local youth;
- Relationship managers who are the first point of call for tenants to discuss problems or queries relating to their tenancy;
- Aids and adaptations – the Association is committed to helping older and disabled people to remain independent in their homes for as long as possible. Technical staff work with Occupational Therapists to provide adaptations;
- Estate boards made up of local residents to deal with local issues. The boards meet four times a year and together with Association staff they make decisions about a range of issues;
- The joint estates and street panel (JESP) is a group that represents tenants and leaseholders across the Association. Meeting every three months three residents from each of the estate boards are chosen to be on the panel. They discuss issues such as the standards of services, resources and how much rent is paid.
- Policy Advisory Groups - each estate board puts forward a resident Director to sit on the main association board. They meet four times a year to decide on policies, strategy and the direction of the organisation.

Further community activities and tenant initiatives include young advisors and leader's programmes, outreach service for vulnerable residents, fun days and events, community safety, focus groups, surveys, housing surgeries, estate inspections and mystery shopping.

This case study profiles how a Scottish Housing Association engages with tenants.

Case Study

This Housing Association manages a portfolio of over 3,500 homes with offices across Scotland. They address housing needs of people in both urban and rural areas, including older people and those who need specialised support. The Association has developed a tenant participation strategy which includes a 'menu of participation' that outlines the various ways in which individuals and groups can get involved. Some of the areas covered include:

- Customer Panel – the 11 member panel reflects the diversity of the Association's 3,500 tenants, have a direct relationship with the board, act as a critical friend of the Association, scrutinise their performance, highlight what is good and what could be better and make recommendations for improvements. Customer focus reports – these are aimed at providing tenants, staff and management committee with information and evidence on performance in customer care.
- Register of interested tenants - if tenants do not want to be involved but their name is on the register they may be contacted as part of a consultation process.
- Communications group - formed to ensure that letters, leaflets and newsletters are written in plain English and is run entirely by email, thus facilitating tenants living in remote areas or with limited mobility.

This case study profiles a Welsh local authority's approach to tenant participation.

Case Study

The local authority believes that improving tenant and resident engagement promotes their commitment to listen and learn from its communities. The engagement helps them to be open and honest in their approach, be transparent in their decision making and be accountable to the communities they represents. The following mechanisms are identified through their tenant participation strategy:

- Tenants and residents associations - tenant groups represent people who come together to improve their local community. They represent the views of the community and work with the tenant engagement team and other organisations on a variety of issues.
- Tenants working group - tenants do not have to be a member of a formal group to get involved; the tenants working group invites council tenants from across the council area to regular meetings and events to have their say, comment on services and contribute to the development of policies and procedures. A database of interested tenants is held and invites sent to consultation events or questionnaires and surveys sent via their preferred method (post, email etc) to everyone on the list. There is no pressure for tenants to take part regularly, just join in as and when it suits them or on topics that they are interested in.
- Citizens panel – the panel is currently made up of over 1000 residents of the council area who help inform decision-making on a wide range of issues. The council listens to the panel; the panel points the council in the right direction, suggests improvements needed, new ideas and measures levels of awareness of council services.
- Sheltered housing consultation - the council is undertaking a review of sheltered housing; in 2009 a survey was distributed to all sheltered housing tenants to gather their views. Since then, two focus groups have been established; a housing staff group and a tenants group. The tenants group is made up of sheltered housing tenants and also tenants aged 55+ who live in general needs housing. The groups convened as part of a consultation event using the 'world café method' where a number of questions, issues and suggestions were discussed. The groups will continue to look at the future of sheltered housing to inform future service delivery.
- 'say it' on the council website – the council believes that everyone should have the opportunity to have their say on issues that affect them. The 'say it' section includes information on past and present consultations.

TENANT EMPOWERMENT

This case study provides some information on the use of the English government's community cashback scheme under tenant empowerment

Case Study

Residents of this estate in inner city London are the first in England to take control of services under the government's community cashback scheme. Community cashback rewards tenants who group together to manage small-scale local services and budgets in order to deliver better services, also enabling them to invest any savings back into the community.

The residents association, representing council leaseholders and tenants of 36 flats, was awarded a starter grant administered by tenant participation advisory service and the national federation of tenant management organisations to help them set up the community cashback agreement with the council. Under the agreement the association will provide cleaning services to the block's communal areas and the council will pay the group what it costs to run the service.

The resident association chair said:

"bringing control of the cleaning services directly into the hands of the residents will allow us to provide a more tailored and proactive service. This is a great step that, in addition to providing a more responsive solution, also empowers the residents to take more responsibility for the environment they live in and fosters a community spirit"

Social Landlords - desirable standards and outcomes	
Standard 1 - Meaningful Participation	Outcome
Social landlords should regularly seek the views of tenants, be responsive to and consider those views in relation to the identification of priorities and the development of services for their organisation so that tenants and where appropriate, other users...	<p>...can participate in their landlord’s decisions</p> <p>...are satisfied that their views and priorities are considered in landlord services</p> <p>...have a range of ways to get involved, including ways suitable for those who are hard to reach or seldom heard</p>
Examples of activities	
<p>Mechanisms to enable tenants to actively participate e.g. in planning, standard setting, monitoring and reviewing, decision making at the operational and strategic levels, involvement in the complaints process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenant participation compacts, local agreements, neighbourhood initiatives or review groups; formal tenant and resident associations; tenant inspectors or committees; scrutiny panels, board membership; other committee membership with direct interaction with the board. 	

Standard 2 - Scrutiny Of Services	Outcome
Social landlords should demonstrate, through a range of mechanisms, how tenants have the opportunity to scrutinise and provide feedback on the services they receive from their landlords so that tenants...	<p>...have opportunities to be involved in developing, monitoring, assessing and reporting on the quality of the housing services the landlord provides</p>
Examples of activities	
<p>Mechanisms to enable tenants to give their individual views on the services provided and more formally to take part in inspection activity in all areas of service delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual home visits/one-to-one discussions; letter, e-mail, texts; surveys including survey monkey (telephone/postal/electronic); interactive web or apps, focus groups; - Formal structure – scrutiny panels, tenant inspectors, scheduled focus groups. 	

Standard 3 - Support and Innovation	Outcome
<p>Social landlords should promote, encourage and provide support for tenants to become involved and look for innovative and modern ways to gain the views of tenants, so that tenants...</p>	<p>...are able to get involved if and when they want to at a level they feel comfortable with</p> <p>...get support to build their skills for more effective involvement</p> <p>...have opportunity to progress from different levels of participation right through to membership on the board of management</p> <p>...can take part in reviewing opportunities for involvement to ensure they are working well.</p>
<p>Examples of activities</p>	
<p>Levels of participation:</p> <p>Level 1 – individual - responding to questionnaires, surveys, one-one discussions;</p> <p>Level 2 – groups/structured events - tenant participation compacts, local agreements, neighbourhood initiatives or review groups; formal tenant and resident associations;</p> <p>Level 3 – formal tenant based panels or groups – tenant inspectors, tenant participation officers, scrutiny panels, policy advisory committees or panels, youth committees, disability forums; and</p> <p>Level 4 – tenants involved in the governance of the organisation such as tenant board members, tenant policy advisors, tenant participation in the organisations sub committees such as investment boards, or shadow boards.</p> <p>Enablers of tenant participation:</p> <p>Resources - separate budgetary provision for administering tenant participation functions; start up grants for tenant groups, providing guidance and/or support on how tenants may secure funding from other sources; identifying and advertising non-financial resources for participation activities (e.g. Administration support, venues for meetings).</p> <p>Training – formal training for staff and tenants who wish to participate at levels 3 and 4 identified above, familiarisation or training for levels 1 and 2 as required, targeted training for the individual needs of tenants where required;</p> <p>Innovation – modernising the approach to gaining views of tenants such as apps, survey monkeys, social media, web-based discussion forum, podcasts; understanding the barriers to participation and developing solutions such as dedicated staff as tenant champions, incentives, having as wide a range of activities as possible at the various levels.</p>	

Standard 4 - Community And Partnership	Outcome
<p>Social landlords should develop where appropriate relationships or initiatives with other landlords, housing related organisations, local councils and elected representatives, and government departments and agencies to provide and improve services and deal with the wider community issues that impact on tenants lives. Social landlords should support tenants so that they ...</p>	<p>...can contribute to the development of their community and neighbourhoods in a structured way</p> <p>...get support for the wider issues relating to their home such as anti-social behaviour, health, wellbeing, financial stability</p> <p>...can come together to discuss and address community issues</p> <p>...share best practice with other social tenants or residents</p> <p>...can have a platform to provide feedback and influence Northern Ireland’s housing policy</p> <p>...have access to shared local services or partnerships</p> <p>...can work together to expand the services and focus of tenant participation</p>
<p>Examples of activities</p>	
<p>Mechanisms of an informal and formal nature to engage and interact with the community - informal such as resident and community groups, fun days, organised social activities; formal such as community representative groups including the locally elected representatives, businesses, community planning officials, groups for specific projects such as new schemes;</p> <p>Tenant involved in activities such as inter-agency workshops, structured meetings with officials, service providers, support organisation, government departments or agencies to discuss issues such as roads, lighting, anti-social behaviour;</p> <p>Structured social tenant network – selected tenant reps from each organisation come together on scheduled basis to share information and best practice, identify common issues, discuss impacting policy, identify joint venture activities such as youth forums, policy panels;</p> <p>Joint services such as inter-landlord scrutiny panels or inspectors, mystery shopper exercises, targets services or policy reviews; joint funding initiatives such as financial support services, community regeneration projects.</p>	

Consultation Questions

Consultation Question No. 1

How do you feel the Department can challenge Social Landlords to increase the extent and effectiveness of tenant participation in Northern Ireland?

- By ensuring specific tenant participation strategies are developed by Social Landlords
- By allowing Social Landlords the flexibility to demonstrate their achievement of the standards in other ways

Please provide your reasons

Consultation Question No. 2

Do you think the things we expect of a Social Landlord’s strategic approach to tenant participation are appropriate and fair?

- Yes No

Please explain

Consultation Question No. 3

Do you agree that the Department should support the development of an independent tenant support organisation in Northern Ireland?

- Yes No

Please provide your reasons

Consultation Question No. 4

Is the regulatory standard clear and understandable?

Yes No

If not, what more would you include?

Consultation Question No. 5

Do you agree that the Department should introduce legislation to support the introduction of tenant empowerment rights – i.e. right to manage and right to transfer or community cashback scheme?

Yes No

Please provide you reasons

Consultation Question No. 6

Do you agree with the findings in the Impact Assessment screening reports?

Yes No

Please provide you reasons

Name of Respondent

E-mail contact

Please specify if you are:

NIHE Tenant

Housing Association Tenant

Other

Please provide Organisation Name:

Public Events

The Department for Social Development will be hosting a series of public events as outlined below. We would encourage you to attend these events so that you can share your thoughts on our strategy and to voice any concerns you may have. Please indicate by return as to which event you wish to attend. If you would like to be kept up-to-date about the public consultation events please complete your contact details in the space provided below.

Event 1

Belfast Central Mission
Grosvenor House
5 Glengall Street
Belfast, BT12 5AD
Date and time - 23rd February 2015 at 10.30am

Attending: Yes No

Event 2

City Hotel
Queens Quay
Londonderry BT48 7AS
Date and time - 3rd March 2015 at 10.30am

Attending: Yes No

Event 3

Craigavon Civic & Conference Centre
Craigavon Borough Council
66 Lakeview Road
Craigavon BT64 1AL
Date and time – 10th March 2015 at 10.30am

Attending: Yes No

Name: _____

Organisation (if approp.): _____

E-mail contact: _____