



# Tenant Panels

## Options for Accountability

The National Tenant  
Organisations  
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“Tenant Panels: Options for Accountability” has been written by Nic Bliss & Blase Lambert on behalf of the National Tenant Organisations - the Confederation of Co-operative Housing (CCH), the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO), Tenants & Residents Organisations of England (TAROE) and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS).

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 championing better homes and communities

## Using and printing this guide

The intention behind this guide is that its users will use the parts of the guide that they find useful. Some sections will be useful for most readers. Others will be of use only to some readers.

The guide is 173 pages long due to the inclusion of many case studies, and various appendices. If you wish to print the guide, we would suggest that you print pages 1 to 83 (ie. without the case studies and some of the appendices). If you wish to print the case studies and all the appendices, please identify the specific pages you wish to print.

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★ where you see this sign, if you click on it, it will take you to the page where there is further information on the relevant subject matter.

A special thanks to Trident Housing Association for the use of their meeting room facilities.



Social housing can change lives. A decent, affordable home can be the lifeline which vulnerable families rely on and a springboard to success which allows people to get on in life.

That's why this Government has committed to invest in building more affordable homes, and ensure that existing social housing is used as well as it can be.

Tenants know their housing better than anyone. They are best placed to know what's working and what isn't. That's why our reforms are demolishing the ineffective apparatus of central regulation, and instead allowing a much stronger role for tenants.

This includes making it much easier for tenants to form their own Tenant Panels, which they can use to challenge the performance of their landlords and hold them to account. They can also enable them to resolve complaints at the local level, and have a more powerful voice in their local community.

This excellent guide gives practical advice on the options available and resources needed to form an effective and credible Tenant Panel. It is drawn from examples of active Tenant Panels, highlighting the breadth and diversity of approaches. It draws on the support that we are giving to provide a strong platform for tenants to get things done locally.

I am sure that landlords will welcome the involvement of tenants in scrutinising performance and the decision-making process.

Good landlords understand that listening to tenants is not just the right thing to do. It is also good for business. Shaping services around the needs and expectations of tenants provides reassurance to investors and lenders that resources are being directed at the priorities that matter most, and brings landlords and tenants closer together, leading to fewer complaints.

I am grateful to the National Tenant Organisations for their hard work in producing a valuable resource for tenants and landlords.

With the help of this guide and drawing on the support that we are providing, tenants will have stronger tools to work with locally elected representatives to resolve issues at the local level, hold their landlords to account and press for better services.

I urge tenants to take advantage of these new, exciting opportunities and help make a positive difference in the areas they live.



Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps MP  
Minister for Housing & Local Government

## 1 What are Tenant Panels?

There is no one definition of Tenant Panel. Tenants and landlords have told us that Tenant Panels are involved in decision-making, monitoring and scrutiny, complaints, service review, policy consideration and various other functions.

To reflect these diverse views, we have used the term “Tenant Panel” to encompass a non-prescriptive set of arrangements being used to ensure accountability to tenants. Tenant Panel arrangements could include:

- Tenant Panels set up to be involved in decision-making in the landlord
- Tenant Panels shaping services
- Tenant Panels set up to perform a monitoring and scrutiny function
- Tenant Panels set up to be involved in complaints
- tenants from different landlords working together in some way with each other in “collaborative” Tenant Panels that are area based and “multi-landlord”.

The term “Tenant Panel” could also be used to refer to the many neighbourhood based groups set up by tenants and communities, such as tenants and residents associations. Local people can make a significant impact at this local level, and there are particular opportunities for local communities in the Government’s new Community Rights which tenants may wish to explore<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> You can find out about the Community Rights programme at [www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill](http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill)

However, exploring opportunities at the local neighbourhood level is not within the remit of this guide.

Tenant Panels should be seen in the context of many initiatives from the 1980s onwards designed to empower tenants. These initiatives have included:

- the introduction of the Right to be Consulted in 1985
- housing co-ops, the Right to Manage and tenant management organisations
- Compulsory Competitive Tendering monitoring panels
- tenant compacts
- tenants groups of varying shapes and sizes (including numerous tenants and residents associations and Tenant Federations) and with varying levels of influence
- growing numbers of tenants on the boards of ALMOs & housing associations
- tenant involvement in stock transfer housing associations
- Community Gateway – tenant owned housing associations
- the Audit Commission’s inspection process
- co-regulation and the TSA’s focus on tenant involvement and empowerment

All of these approaches have played a role in providing greater opportunities for tenants to be involved in housing issues, but in November 2009 the Tenant Services Authority reported that “only one in two tenants are satisfied with opportunities for involvement and only one in six tenants feels their landlord takes a lot of notice of their views”. Things have moved on since then, but the emergence of Tenant Panels can potentially build significantly on this progress.



“Fundamental responsibility for effective service delivery lies with the landlord, not the regulatory system. Landlords are accountable to their tenants, not to the regulator. Tenants must therefore have the information and opportunities they need to hold landlords to account and to shape service delivery.”

Review of Social Housing Regulation  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
October 2010

Current debates on Tenant Panels emerged from the Government’s review of social housing regulation in 2010. This review led to a changed emphasis that landlords should be locally accountable for their service delivery to their tenants and not to a regulator.

Representatives from the four National Tenant Organisations met Housing Minister the Right Hon. Grant Shapps MP in November 2010. He asked us to develop a flexible framework for local Tenant Panels working with the landlord professional bodies<sup>2</sup>. This guide is the result of our work on Tenant Panels.

With funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government, we have discussed Tenant Panels with many tenants and landlords across the country, with their professional bodies, and with representatives of the relevant Government bodies. In particular, we have consulted on a draft version of this guide with those tenants and members of staff who asked to be included on a database for that purpose. We thank all those who have made comments to us. The result of this is that the

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<sup>2</sup> The landlord professional bodies are the Chartered Institute of Housing, Local Government Association, the National Housing Federation, and the National Federation of Arms Length Management Organisations

information we have produced here is tenant and sector led - a reflection of what the many people we have talked to have told us about what they want from Tenant Panels.

There have been three key messages that have come from our dialogue with tenants and landlords:

- tenants we have talked to want a robust framework where landlords are accountable to and work in partnership with their tenants. Tenants see this as being a fundamental part of what should be on offer from landlords.
- many landlords increasingly see involving tenants in decision-making as a business imperative. They have seen how involving service users makes their business more effective.
- no one wants us or anyone else to tell them how tenants and landlords should work with each other. People want information, ideas and options, but they want to be free to pick and choose the best ways to set up Tenant Panels in ways that will suit them. And that is how it should be.

So you will not find anything in this guide that is prescriptively telling you what to do. This is an approach supported by all the organisations we have worked with to develop this guide, including the Department for Communities and Local Government and the professional housing bodies.

So setting up Tenant Panels is all about tenants and landlords working together to set up what is best for them. Our guide is aimed at providing you with options and resources designed to help you make your choices.

## 2 What do we mean by tenant and landlord?

We have used the term “tenant” because we wish to reinforce the status of being a tenant. However, we are intending it to include all people who are service users of a “registered provider” landlord. This means that our definition of “tenant” could include social, intermediate and market rent tenants; those with temporary tenancies and tenants of hostels etc; leaseholders; shared home owners; those who receive particular care or other services; and possibly others.

“Registered provider” means a “social housing” landlord that is registered with the social housing “regulator”. Previously this was the Tenant Services Authority, but from April 2012, it is the Homes and Communities Agency. The regulator’s duties and objectives are set out in an Act of Parliament. Councils that still own rented homes are “registered providers”, as are most housing associations and housing co-operatives.

Some tenants receive services from management organisations (eg. Arms Length Management Organisations - ALMOs or Tenant Management Organisations - TMOs). In these cases, the landlord (eg. the Council) remains the “registered provider”. The landlord continues to have legal responsibility to their tenants, even if most of the services tenants receive are through the management organisation<sup>3</sup>.

During our work on Tenant Panels, some people have asked us if panels could support tenants of private rented sector landlords as well (ie. those that are not registered with the regulator). Our guide is aimed at tenants of “registered provider” landlords, but it may be the case that Tenant Panels may wish to expand their remit to support other tenants. We would welcome that if it happens.

<sup>3</sup> In some cases, ALMOs legally own homes themselves, and for those homes, they are the “registered provider” and have direct responsibility for them.

### 3 Why are tenant panels important?

The case studies we have included in this guide show that tenants are already playing an important role in many landlords. Over many years, Tenant Panels have been progressively becoming an integral part of the landlord business.

#### Making the landlord business more effective

Tenants and landlords have shown us that where Tenant Panels are set up well, they are a business asset to the landlord. They can:

- make considerable contributions to ensuring that services are what tenants want
- play a role in supporting effective governance and decision-making, particularly in areas such as getting the best possible Value for Money
- be an important component in assessing performance
- provide constructive challenge to the accepted ways that things are done in order to improve them
- be particularly helpful in sorting out tenant problems and issues locally and speedily
- act as service user ambassadors for the landlord.

#### Improving tenant quality of life

Tenants get involved with Tenant Panels for many reasons, and there are many ways that Tenant Panels can help to improve tenant quality of life:

- Tenant Panels provide a means for tenants to get involved in shaping how housing services are provided. They can help tenants to influence how their homes and neighbourhoods are managed.
- Tenant Panels enable tenants to challenge, assess the performance of and review services. The tenant perspective usually improves the services tenants receive.
- tenants often value being able to engage with their fellow tenants on Tenant Panels to sort out problems and to discuss ideas about how services can be improved.
- for those who get involved in Tenant Panels, they enable tenants to gain skills, knowledge, experience, and confidence - both individually and as a team.

## Co-regulation and the “Regulatory Standards”

The concept of “co-regulation” where the regulator, the landlord, and tenants would all have a role to play to ensure that landlords complied with the “Regulatory Standards” was introduced as part of the regulatory framework in 2010.

Despite changes to the way social housing is regulated, co-regulation remains central to the regulatory framework. The regulator will continue to set Regulatory Standards that “registered provider” landlords will be expected to comply with. However the regulator will not actively monitor compliance with the Regulatory Standards that relate to the landlord’s service delivery (known as “consumer standards” which include the Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard).

Landlords are responsible for ensuring that they meet the consumer standards. The regulator's role is limited to only intervening where failure of a consumer standard could lead to a risk of serious harm to tenants and potential tenants (known as the "serious detriment test" – you can find out about that here [★](#)).

So it is now up to tenants and landlords to work in partnership to "self-regulate" the delivery of housing services. This means that Tenant Panels will play an important role with their landlords to ensure that the quality of homes and tenant experience meet the needs and aspirations of tenants and prospective tenants.

## 4 The Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard

The Government directs the “social housing regulator” – from April 2012, the Homes & Communities Agency – to set certain Regulatory Standards. These standards set out what is expected of landlords who are registered with the Homes & Communities Agency. The standards have applied since April 2010, following consultation in 2009. A subsequent consultation to revise certain standards was carried out in 2011/12 following new directions issued to the regulator. Coming into force in April 2012, the regulatory standards are available on the regulator’s website<sup>4</sup>.

The part of the Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard that relates to involving and empowering tenants is as follows:

### Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard

#### Required outcomes

Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a **wide range of opportunities** to influence and be involved in:

- the formulation of their landlord’s **housing related policies and strategic priorities**
- **the making of decisions** about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- **the scrutiny of their landlord’s performance** and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved

<sup>4</sup> You can find out more about the regulator and the standards on their website - before April 2012, [www.tenantservicesauthority.org](http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org) - after April 2012, [www.homesandcommunities.co.uk](http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk)

- the management of their homes, where applicable
- the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and agreeing local offers for service delivery


### Specific expectations

Registered providers shall support their tenants to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment, including by:

- supporting their tenants to exercise their **Right to Manage** or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate
- supporting the formation and activities of **Tenant Panels** or equivalent groups and responding in a constructive and timely manner to them
- the provision of **timely and relevant performance information** to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in a form which registered providers seek to agree with their tenants.

Such provision must include the publication of **an annual report** which should include information on repair and maintenance budgets, and providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved





Registered providers shall consult with tenants on the scope of local offers for service delivery. This shall include how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants and arrangements for reviewing these on a periodic basis.

Registered providers shall consult with tenants, setting out clearly the costs and benefits of relevant options, if they are proposing to change their landlord or when proposing a significant change in their management arrangements.

Registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service.

## 5 Common principles behind Tenant Panels

It is not our intention to be prescriptive about the structures and methods tenants and landlords use to work with each other. However, tenants and landlords we have spoken to have generally agreed with us that there are a common set of principles that lie behind Tenant Panels.

We have grouped the common principles we have identified into four areas:

- co-regulation
- tenant leadership
- access to all and fairness
- effective structures and adequate support

### Co-regulation

The first set of principles relate to the important area of co-regulation. Co-regulation is about tenants and landlords working in partnership to self-regulate service delivery to tenants. As well as enabling tenants to ensure that landlords are delivering what is expected of them in the Regulatory Standards, co-regulation can mean that tenants and landlords work with each other to shape landlord decision-making and services.

We would expect there to be Tenant Panel arrangements in landlords that enable tenants to input into what are known as “consumer” issues. Consumer issues could include areas such as tenant involvement and empowerment, repairs and maintenance, tenancy issues, and neighbourhood and community issues.

But it is now also becoming more common that landlords work with their tenants in relation to other areas such as rents, Value for Money and governance and viability. Tenants often have a useful contribution they can make in these areas.

## Tenant “leadership”

Tenant Panels can only be as effective as the tenants who get involved with them. Different tenants will perform different functions within Tenant Panel arrangements, but all those who get involved are the “tenant leadership”. They need to have or develop skills and attitudes that enable them to be effective tenant leaders. This means that it is now becoming commonly expected that Tenant Panels need to be based on:

- development of the understanding of the tenant leadership. Those involved in Tenant Panels need to understand their role, purpose & responsibilities, recognising their accountability to the other tenants
- supporting Tenant Panels to think independently, reach their own conclusions, challenge when it is appropriate to do so, and hold the landlord to account
- identification of the skills and qualities that Tenant Panel members need to have or develop in order to be effective tenant leaders - procedures that will help them develop the skills they need - and assessment of their progress
- enthusiasm to learn and to engage with tenants and landlords from elsewhere to gain wider knowledge

## Access to all and fairness

Tenant Panels should be run in accordance with equality & diversity principles. They should be accessible to all tenants, and operate in accordance with accepted standards of fairness and conduct. Common principles include that Tenant Panels should:

- seek to understand and reflect the views of all of the diverse groups of tenants (and other service users). It is often the case that the most disadvantaged tenants are unable to get involved in Tenant Panel activities themselves. They need panels to speak on their behalf.
- be accessible to all tenants. All tenants need to be able to raise issues through their Tenant Panel. All tenants should be in a position to apply to become a member of the Tenant Panel (with some exceptions – see here [★](#)).
- be governed by codes of conduct agreed with tenants that are complied with and steps taken if breached

## Effective structures and adequate support

Tenant Panels can only be effective if there are clear and functioning structures and if the panel is properly resourced to carry out its functions:

- having clearly defined and agreed structures and having clarity about the objectives for each part of the structure

- ensuring that structures are periodically assessed to ensure that they are delivering the intended outcomes
- ensuring that sufficient resources are available to support the Tenant Panel's work

## Achieving outcomes for tenants

An overarching principle that applies to Tenant Panels, as it does to all tenant involvement activity, is that Tenant Panels must be about achieving outcomes for tenants.

Inputs	Inputs are the resources that go to make something happen (eg. volunteer & staff time, financial costs)
Outputs	Outputs are the things that are done in order to achieve outcomes (eg. meetings, focus groups, surveys, scrutiny exercises, a new policy, contract or leaflet)
Outcomes	Outcomes are the changes you want to achieve that make things better for tenants or prospective tenants.

Outcomes can be achieved in the short, medium and long term, and they can be qualitative and quantitative:

### Qualitative examples

Tenants receive better quality information  
 Disabled people find the service easier to access  
 Anti-social behaviour cases are resolved more effectively  
 Tenants feel more confident to review policies

### Quantitative examples

Number of first time repairs increased

More tenants feel their views are taken into account


Average time to let a home decreased

Cost per repair decreased and so more resources available





The process to assess whether Tenant Panels are delivering outcomes is known as “impact assessment”. This is explored in more detail here [🌟](#). Sometimes outcomes of activities may not be what was originally intended, but are still beneficial.

## 6 What are the options for tenant panels?

Tenant groups and landlords are now working together in so many different ways that it is not easy to summarise them all. Our diagram of the options on the next page gives a flavour of the diversity of options. These options are not intended to be exhaustive. Several different approaches may be being used in most landlords, and there may be links between the approaches used. We want to encourage tenants and landlords to continue being innovative and coming up with new ideas for how they can work together. Please help us redraw the diagram!

In our summaries below, we have illustrated models we are aware of with case studies, which are set out here .

We have categorised the activities of Tenant Panels into four areas:

-  Tenant Panels involved in decision-making
-  Tenant Panels shaping services
-  Tenant Panels involved in monitoring or scrutinising services
-  Tenant Panels getting involved in complaints

## Options for Tenant Panels

Involvement in decision-making	Shaping services	Monitoring & scrutiny	Involvement in Complaints
Co-governance	Service review groups	Performance monitoring	Assisting tenants
Joint & tenant management	Task & Finish groups	Tenant Scrutiny	Stage 2 or 3 of procedure
Tenants Federations	Communication groups	Joint scrutiny approaches	Complaints Panel
Advisory Panels	Involvement strategy groups	Undiscovered approaches?	
Area & specific panels	Diversity groups		

Collaborative Tenant Panels (area based & multi-landlord)



## Tenant Panels and decision-making

The Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard requires landlords to offer opportunities for tenants to be involved in developing housing related policies and strategies. There are many types of Tenant Panel involved in decision-making, most of which have developed over time. Effective Tenant Panels involved in decision-making usually need to:

- be about partnership working with the landlord
- have a means of being accountable back to the wider tenant constituency
- have routes by which they can influence decision-making and services
- be about practical issues that matter to tenants.

The wide array of Tenant Panels involved in decision-making makes them difficult to define. The brief descriptions below give some impression of the diversity that exists.

**Co-governance** Some Tenant Panels involved in decision-making have been defined to have a specific involvement in governance (in some cases in the landlord's rules). They could be described as "co-governance" panels, working alongside housing association or ALMO Boards or the Council's cabinet:

### Examples:

- ★ Amicus Horizon's Resident Council
- ★ Community Gateway's Gateway Tenant Committee
- ★ Soha Housing's Tenant Forum
- ★ Hull City Council's Tenant Forum
- ★ Rochdale Boroughwide Housing Representative Body

**Joint management** Others involve tenants as part of a body that also includes other members, such as senior staff, Portfolio Holders for housing or other councillors.

**Examples:**

- ★ Tendring District Council's Tenant Panel
- ★ Bristol City Council Housing Management Board
- ★ Isos Housing

**Tenant management & control** With high levels of tenant satisfaction, tenant controlled housing organisations (eg. co-ops/tenant management organisations & others) are examples of Tenant Panels who manage and/or own their homes.

**Examples:**

- ★ Watmos Community Homes
- ★ Poplar HARCA

**Advisory panels** Whilst not formally part of the governance structure, some panels have been set up to perform similar functions with direct relationships with Boards and senior staff.

**Examples:**

- ★ National Accent Group Resident Panel
- ★ The Guinness Partnership's Customer Strategy Group
- ★ Metropolitan Housing Trust's National Residents Group
- ★ Moat's Resident Forum
- ★ Innisfree's Tenant Panel
- ★ Stonham National Customer Panel
- ★ Warwick District Council's Tenant Panel

**Tenants Federations** Tenants Federations are a long standing means by which tenants have been represented. Usually independent of the landlord, they have had various

relationships with landlords and operate in different ways. Our examples are a small selection of Federation approaches.

#### Examples:

- ★ Barnsley Tenants Federation
- ★ Riverside Federation of Tenants & Residents
- ★ Carrick District Forum of Tenants

**Area and specific panels** Larger landlords often have area based Tenant Panels that operate locally. Some housing associations formed as a result of mergers have Tenant Panels set up in different parts of group structures. Some Tenant Panels have been set up to consider particular service areas, such as communications, major repairs, resident involvement, diversity, and many others. Some Tenant Panels have been set up to represent particular demographic groups in relation to landlord's tenants.

#### Examples:

- ★ Amicus Horizon's Area Panels
- ★ Guinness Northern Counties Area Panels
- ★ Sovereign Kingfisher's regional panels
- ★ Accord Housing Group's Resident Panel
- ★ Gentoo's customer panels
- ★ St Basil's Youth Advisory Board
- ★ St Mungo's Outside In group

These all involve Tenant Panels being in a position to influence decision-making in various aspects of the landlord's governance, such as corporate objectives, finances, services and operations. Several panels may exist in any one landlord.

## Tenant Panels shaping services

The Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard requires “registered provider” landlords to offer opportunities for tenants to be involved in decisions about how housing services are delivered, including the setting of service standards.

Most landlords have some panels that have been set up to enable tenants to be involved in reviewing particular services. These may be permanent or temporary task and finish groups. It is difficult for us to point to particular examples of these panels because so many exist, but good systems to review services might include:

- a systematic plan to review “front line” services so that tenants are clear when particular elements of the service will be reviewed
- leadership of the review by a team including tenants, staff and possibly governing body members
- gathering evidence that feeds into the review (such as survey data, evidence of dissatisfaction, focus groups, the use of tenant sounding boards, tenant inspection & mystery shopping reports, performance data, benchmark information, information on best practice used elsewhere)
- collating this evidence in a tenant friendly fashion to enable tenants to “challenge” emerging conclusions and to enable informed debate between members of the review team

- changes to policies, procedures and systems that are then fed back to tenants to show how their input made a difference

Because of the importance of being able to input into service reviews for tenants, tenants and landlords may find it useful to set up Tenant Panels that are specifically to oversee how service reviews are carried out.

#### Examples:

- ★ Rooftop Housing Group's Service Review Group

### Tenant panels monitoring and scrutiny

The Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard requires “registered provider” landlords to offer opportunities for tenants to scrutinise the landlord’s performance and to make recommendations for change.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines scrutiny as “close and critical observation or examination”. This function is carried out in many different ways in landlords. Governing bodies (Boards of housing associations and ALMOs and cabinets in local councils) scrutinise the way their staff implement policies. Sub-committees scrutinise particular aspects of services. Various groups scrutinise performance information. External and internal auditors independently scrutinise particular activities (most notably the landlord’s accounts). Tenant Panels can be involved in many of these activities.

### Examples:

- ★ Eden Housing Association's Performance Posse
- ★ Crawley Borough Council's Action Panel
- ★ Notting Hill Housing Trust's Local Scrutiny Panels
- ★ Paradigm's Resident Internal Auditors

Paradigm's Resident Internal Auditors are a new way in which tenants are working with Paradigm's Internal Auditors to provide a tenant perspective in the internal audit function.

The Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard requires the production of an annual report to tenants in a form agreed with tenants. This is a particular activity that enables Tenant Panels to be involved in scrutiny and monitoring. The National Tenant Organisations identified<sup>5</sup> the following particular features as being important in relation to these annual reports:

- they need to be easy for tenants to read and done specifically for tenants.
- it is no longer a requirement that landlords send the reports to the regulator, and the regulator does not scrutinise them<sup>6</sup>.
- the best reports had tenants involved in their development. It is encouraging that many Tenant Panels have been involved in developing 2011 reports.

<sup>5</sup> "A good start but could do better" – The National Tenant Organisations 2010

<sup>6</sup> The Localism Act 2011 repealed the regulator's powers to require that annual reports are sent to the regulator

- tenants value honesty in service assessment. Comparisons, benchmarking and tenant peer review are particularly helpful for tenants.
- some tenants are interested in all aspects of how a landlord operates. Tenant Panels have useful contributions to make in all areas.

## Tenant Scrutiny

The last two years has seen the development of many Tenant Scrutiny Panels as a formal method of enabling tenants to hold their landlords to account for the delivery of particular services. TPAS, HouseMark and the Chartered Institute of Housing have pioneered a system of “Tenant Scrutiny”, identifying the following principles as integral to the Tenant Scrutiny option:

### Tenant-led and independent

The Tenant Scrutiny role should be independent from governance. Whatever structures are put in place to deliver the Tenant Scrutiny role, there must be accountability, openness and transparency.

### Clearly defined and real power

For Tenant Scrutiny to be effective, it must integrate with the strategic and performance management frameworks of a landlord.

Clear roles and responsibilities with capacity to deliver

Roles and responsibilities must be clear and agreed from the beginning. In order to deliver against expectations, it is crucial that those undertaking Tenant Scrutiny are supported and have the right skills and knowledge, and that there is sufficient capacity and plans in place for succession.

Decisions based on freely available & commissioned information

To make sure the Tenant Scrutiny role works tenants must have access to a range of information from different sources and also be able to influence how and why their landlord collects and analyses key data.

Embedding scrutiny in performance management arrangements

Tenant Scrutiny should be fully part of the formal structure which forms the operation and assessment framework of an organisation.

Equality and access

The Tenant Scrutiny role should encourage diversity and promote equality. There should be an emphasis on raising the profile of scrutiny and making as many tenants aware as possible of what it is and how to get involved. There should be links between scrutiny and other forms of tenant involvement.

John Thornhill – CIH Senior Policy Officer – writing in Housing – November 2011

Some of the issues that need considering in setting up a *Tenant Scrutiny Panel* include:



Choosing  
scrutiny areas

How will tenants and staff be involved in deciding what areas are scrutinised, and what evidence will inform their decisions?

Make up of the  
scrutiny panel

How will tenants be recruited to the panel, and how will conflicts of interest between governance and scrutiny be dealt with?

Evidence in  
scrutiny  
processes

What evidence is needed to support scrutiny process (eg. tenant views, staff views, statistical information etc)?

Consideration  
of reports

What format will scrutiny reports be in, and how will reports and recommendations be considered by the governing body?

Communicating  
outcomes

How will outcomes of scrutiny recommendations be implemented and fed back to tenants generally

#### Examples of *Tenant Scrutiny Panels*:

- ★ Barnsley Federation's Challenge Panels
- ★ Cross Keys' Scrutiny Panel
- ★ Family Mosaic's Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- ★ Festival Housing Group's Scrutiny Panel
- ★ Guinness Northern Counties' Tenant Scrutiny Council
- ★ Helena Partnership's Customer Excellence Panel
- ★ Hull City Council's Independent Tenant Review Group
- ★ Metropolitan Housing Trust's Scrutiny Panels
- ★ North Star Tenant Voice
- ★ Riverside Housing Group's national & local scrutiny panels
- ★ Salix Homes' Customer Senate
- ★ Slough Borough Council's Customer Senate
- ★ Soha Housing's Tenant Inspectors Group

### Examples of *Tenant Scrutiny Panels contd.*

- ★ South Staffordshire Housing Association's Scrutiny Panel
- ★ Stockport Homes' Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- ★ Watford Community Housing Trust's Scrutiny Panel
- ★ Way Ahead with Wherry Tenant Scrutiny Sub-Group

*Tenant Scrutiny Panels* are, by definition, not decision-making bodies. They make recommendations to governing bodies based on the evidence they scrutinise. If a Tenant Scrutiny process is managed well, governing bodies are likely to approve recommendations. This is often the case, but it may not always be.

*Tenant Scrutiny* has perhaps been a particularly effective way of enabling tenants to hold their landlord to account because it has focussed clearly on practical aspects of the housing service that tenants can readily relate to. If performed well it can lead to beneficial changes to the quality of life for tenants. Most landlords who support *Tenant Scrutiny* systems also consider the constructive challenge and evidence base of *Tenant Scrutiny* to be an integral part of their business<sup>7</sup>.

### Tenant Panels and complaints

Successful businesses learn and benefit from complaints. There are potentially many ways in which Tenant Panels can be involved in complaints systems if they want to - making a difference for tenants through their involvement, and resolving complaints locally and at the earliest possible stage:

<sup>7</sup> a further research guide "Developing tenant scrutiny and co-regulation in social housing: lessons from the co-regulatory champions" has been produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny working with the ten "co-regulatory champions", a group of landlords chosen by the Tenant Services Authority as reflective of different aspects of co-regulation. For further details, please see [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk)

Resolving issues locally	Tenant Panels have often been involved in helping to resolve issues raised by tenants. Tenants sometimes find landlord systems complex and a Tenant Panel may be able to explain how things work and unblock problems before they become complaints.
Advice on the complaints procedure	Tenant Panels can help tenants to take complaints through the landlord's complaints procedures.
An informal opinion	Tenant Panels can also give tenants an honest assessment from a tenant perspective of whether the tenant is justified in making the complaint.
Stage 2 or 3 Complaints Panels	In some cases, Tenant Panels, or panels with other representatives, "hear" evidence about tenant complaints, and make recommendations about how they should be handled. This is usually Stage 2 or Stage 3 of a complaints procedure.
Monitoring complaints	Tenant Panels can be involved in monitoring complaints received, ensuring that they are taken into account when carrying out service reviews.
Following up complaints	Tenant Panels can play a role in following up successful implementation of complaints procedure outcomes with tenants.
New local roles for Tenant Panels	The Localism Act 2011 has also introduced a new and additional role that Tenant Panels could play in helping to resolve complaints locally (see below).

Where a Tenant Panel gets involved in individual complaints, which would be the case with some of the options above, it is important that the tenants involved are properly trained to carry out the role and that they do so with appropriate integrity, confidentiality, and in accordance with legal requirements.

#### Examples of Tenant Panel involvement in complaints:

- ★ CityWest Homes Stage 2 involvement
- ★ Crawley Borough Council Stage 2 involvement
- ★ Green Square Group complaints monitoring
- ★ Salix Homes' Customer Senate
- ★ Slough Borough Council's Complaints Panel
- ★ Stockport Homes' Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- ★ Viridian's Complaints Panel

The Localism Act 2011 has introduced new complaints provisions which will be implemented from April 2013. The intention behind the changes is to encourage local dispute resolution, at a level closer to the knowledge and expertise to deal with them, and to reduce complaints made to the Housing Ombudsman Service that are outside their scope. The changes mean the following for tenants:

#### A designated Tenant Panel

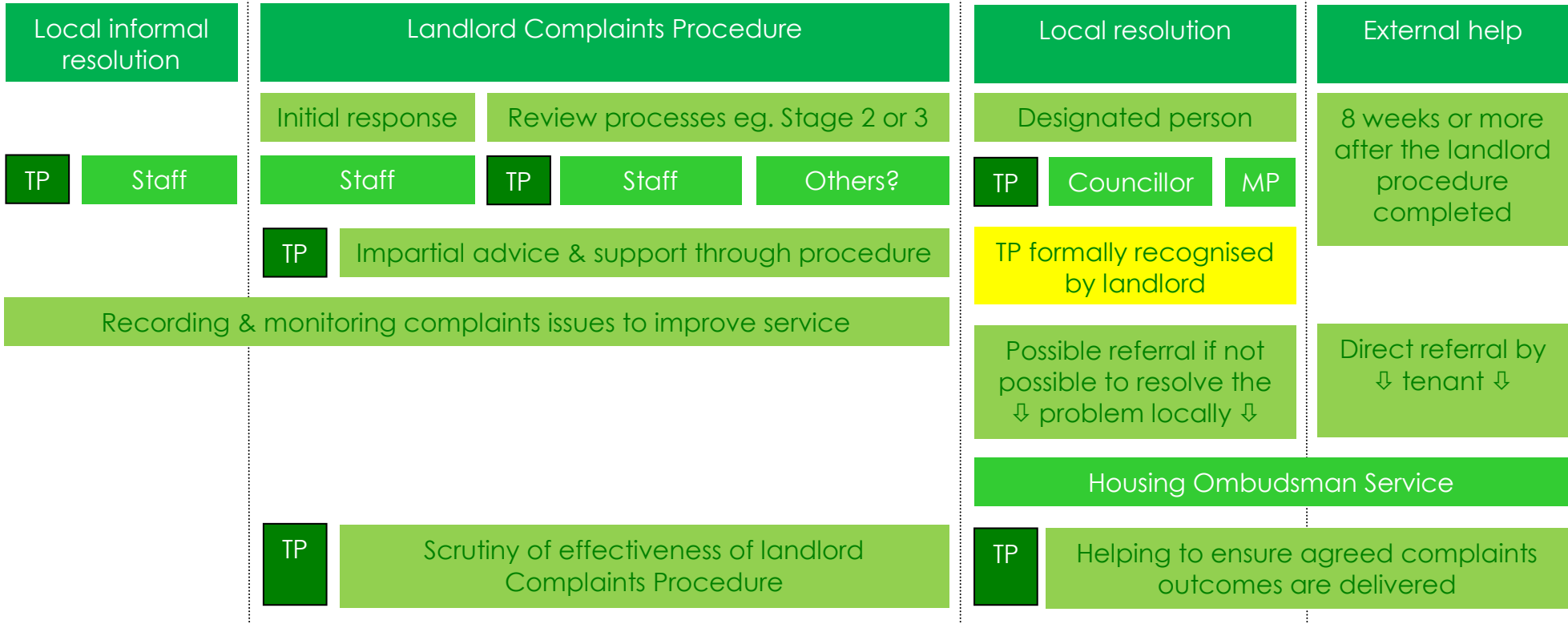
A group of tenants may apply to their landlord to become a "recognised" Tenant Panel. A "designated" Tenant Panel is one recognised by a "registered provider" landlord to play a formal role in resolving complaints once the landlord procedure has been exhausted. A "designated" Tenant Panel could be set up in just one landlord or across several. A landlord can "recognise" more than one Tenant Panel.

	Landlords should support the formation & activities of Tenant Panels, including where tenants wish to play a formal role in resolving complaints, but they need to consider the practicalities and support needs of being a designated tenant panel.
A councillor, MP or a designated Tenant Panel	If a tenant remains unsatisfied with the outcome of a complaint at the conclusion of the landlord's procedure, they may submit their complaint to a councillor, an MP, or a designated Tenant Panel.
Resolving the complaint locally	The councillor, MP or designated Tenant Panel will engage with the landlord to try to get the complaint resolved locally.
The Housing Ombudsman	If this is not possible, they may submit the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.
Direct submission of complaint	If 8 weeks have gone by since the conclusion of the landlord's complaints procedure, a tenant may submit their complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman.
New Housing Ombudsman powers	Currently council housing tenants make complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman, and housing association tenants to the Housing Ombudsman Service. From April 2013, a single service will exist. The Housing Ombudsman will be able to consider (and have legal powers in relation to) complaints from tenants of housing associations and councils that it has not been possible to resolve locally.

# Complaints & Tenant Panel options for involvement

A tenant wants a problem resolved	A tenant submits a formal complaint through the Landlord Complaints Procedure	Local people try to help at end of landlord complaints procedure	Getting external help when all else has failed
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⇄⇄⇄⇄ Aim to get the problem sorted as early as possible, preferably through local means ⇄⇄⇄⇄



TP = Tenant Panel

## Collaborative Tenant Panels

The previous examples were all about Tenant Panels formed within one particular landlord. A further option that some tenants and landlords are exploring is whether tenants would benefit from tenant representatives coming together from different landlords in a borough or an area.

As the National Tenant Organisations, we consider that area-based “multi-landlord” Tenant Panels (we have called them “Collaborative Tenant Panels”) could be beneficial for tenants. Tenants from different landlords coming together to hear about what others are doing has always been useful to tenants.

Collaborative Tenant Panels could enable tenants to:

- compare, contrast and benchmark services, policies and systems in different landlords
- develop peer pressure in an area to ensure that all landlords improve their performance to the level of the best performer
- develop a greater sense of local identity and tenant confidence, self-help and independence
- enable tenants to have a stronger local voice with their local councils and other local service providers
- provide particular joint local services, such as complaints or scrutiny panels

- develop and submit proposals for particular activity, such as Community Right to Challenge and/or Bid proposals

There are currently only a few examples of Collaborative Tenant Panels. We hope there will be more.

#### Examples of Collaborative Tenant Panels:

- ★ Cumbria & North Lancashire Tenants & Residents Forum
- ★ Hampshire & District Residents Forum
- ★ Leeds Collaborative Group\*
- ★ Norfolk Housing Alliance Residents Group\*
- ★ South Yorkshire Network
- ★ Welwyn Hatfield Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- ★ Worcestershire Tenants Panel Partnership\*

\* we specifically worked with these groups during the course of our project

We have also heard that tenants in Bradford, Cornwall, Leicestershire, the North-West (the Airport Group), Shropshire and Wiltshire may be exploring setting up Collaborative Tenant Panels.

#### Setting up a Collaborative Tenant Panel

There is no one blueprint for how to set up a Collaborative Tenant Panel. It depends on local circumstances and what those involved want to do. The pointers below are to help people get started and think through some key issues.



Who initiates a Collaborative Tenant Panel?

Tenants clearly need to lead Collaborative Tenant Panels. A starting point for tenants might be to talk to their landlord or Council about putting them in touch with tenants of other landlords in their area. It would be difficult for tenants to set up a Collaborative Tenant Panel without some support from their landlords and/or council.

The landlord role

Landlords have a key role in facilitating Collaborative Tenant Panels. In some cases, existing local landlord forums could support the development of the panel.

The council role

Councils may assist (as the landlord if they own homes). All councils have a “strategic” housing role (ie. they decide how best to provide local housing options). They should welcome tenants in their boroughs coming together to talk to them about housing and other strategies.

What area will the panel cover?

The groups set up so far have covered either local boroughs in urban areas and counties in rural areas, but it’s up to those involved to decide what makes sense.

Where will the involved tenants come from?

Tenant representatives will need to be drawn from individual landlords in such a way as to reflect a fair and diverse split of tenants in the area.

What outcomes will the panel seek to achieve?

This question needs to be answered at the outset. It will be hard to get tenants and landlords to participate if there isn’t clarity about how the panel will benefit tenants.

### How will the panel be resourced & facilitated?

Some resources may be available through the council or other local sources, but it is probable that most resources to establish a Collaborative Tenant Panel will need to come from one or more of the landlords involved. Predominant landlords in the area could be expected to be “lead” facilitators of the project.

The activities that existing Collaborative Tenant Panels have explored include:

#### Service related issues

- comparisons of service review processes & standards
- consideration of allocations and ASB systems
- consideration of repairs & improvements systems
- consideration of grounds maintenance & estate services
- joint mystery shopping & tenant inspection
- common customer satisfaction benchmarking
- common service standards
- using panels to bring operational staff together
- local service rationalisation in multi-landlord areas
- considering joint under occupancy strategies
- considering joint procurement (eg. gardening contracts)
- tenant complaints

#### Resident involvement

- shared resident training
- comparing & developing resident involvement structures
- involved resident events & newsletters

### Other issues

- considering local Housing & Regeneration Strategies
- considering national housing and other policies
- inputting into Choice Based Lettings debates
- considering digital inclusion, fuel poverty, worklessness, domestic violence and potentially other areas

It was particularly pointed out to us by the larger landlords with homes in many boroughs that supporting Collaborative Tenant Panels in all the areas they own homes in would be challenging. This is a reality that an emerging Collaborative Tenant Panel would have to consider.

If they develop, we consider that Collaborative Tenant Panels will develop organically and alongside Tenant Panel arrangements in individual landlords (rather than as replacements to them). We do not think it is likely that Collaborative Tenant Panels will spring in up every borough, but we hope that landlords will support their tenants to consider where it might be appropriate to pilot them to see if they could bring benefits to tenants.

### Collaborative Tenant Panels for smaller landlords

Collaborative Tenant Panels across a particular landlord type could also be formed to enable the tenants of particular landlords (such as co-operatives, Almshouses or other small landlords) to hold them to account. In such landlords – it may be inappropriate to assemble a specific group of tenants to form a separate Tenant Panel, and their tenants may not have common issues with Tenant Panels aimed at tenants of housing associations and councils.

## 7 Resources

### Rules & Regulations – setting things up

In most cases, setting up Tenant Panels will be about reviewing existing involvement structures and possibly modifying them. If there are landlords who still do not have any Tenant Panel structures from which to work, then please contact the National Tenant Organisations and we will point you in the right directions.

Tenant Panels (and all parts of the Tenant Panel arrangements) will need rules (ie. terms of reference or constitutions), policies and procedures for how they do things and how they are involved. Documentation could be expected to include:

#### Direct access to governance

Documentation that sets out how Tenant Panels can directly access the governing (and management) bodies of landlords (ie. the Boards of Housing Associations and ALMOs and the housing portfolio holder and cabinets of local councils) on strategic and policy issues.

#### Provision of information & consultation/involvement

Documentation setting out how information will be provided to the Tenant Panel and how the Tenant Panel will be consulted and involved in:

- the landlord's business plan and corporate objectives (the Housing Revenue Account business plan in councils)

- financial and Value for Money issues (the budgets of housing associations and Housing Revenue Accounts of local authorities)
- setting and reviewing housing management policies and strategies
- scrutinising the housing service, and reviewing and monitoring performance information on housing issues

### Methods to recruit and develop Tenant Panels

Documentation setting out how tenants and landlords will work closely together to recruit the best tenants suited to be “tenant leaders” and to ensure that their potential is maximised. We discuss Recruitment and Development of Tenant Panels here [★](#)

### The Resident Involvement Strategy & communications

Documentation setting out how landlords will work closely with their Tenant Panels on developing, monitoring and reviewing their Resident Involvement & Communications Strategies. We discuss review and impact assessment of Resident Involvement Strategies here [★](#). It is now commonly accepted that resident involvement should be impact assessed and based on outcomes and benefits for tenants.

### Resourcing Tenant Panels

Documentation setting out how the landlord will resource Tenant Panels. We discuss this here [★](#).

## The issue of independence

How far a Tenant Panel is independent of the landlord is a critical issue.

### Independent tenant perspective

Tenants involved in any aspect of Tenant Panel activity need to be able to discuss their views and reach and state their conclusions independently of the landlord if and when they wish to.

### The function of the Tenant Panel

The level of independence necessary may depend on function. Tenant Panels involved in partnership working with the landlord are not independent and tenants wouldn't want them to be. However, scrutinising an aspect of landlord service may rely on the people scrutinising being independent from the governing body and staff delivering the service.

### Independence & responsibility

The more independent a Tenant Panel is, the more it would have responsibility for its establishment, development and operations. Many tenants do not want this level of responsibility.

### Influencing change

The more independent a Tenant Panel is, the more it can choose its independent position on issues, but it will always be outside the landlord making it difficult for it to influence change. A Tenant Panel that is an integral part of a landlord's structures may be in a better position to influence change, but it is not "independent".

## Resources

Landlords have the responsibility to resource a panel that is part of the landlord's structures, although the panel may find it difficult to argue for more resources if there are not enough. An independent Tenant Panel can negotiate resources from landlords, but landlords will always expect an independent organisation to comply with delivery conditions for their grant funding, including that it will need to be renegotiated on a periodic basis.

## Separation of functions

There are arguments for and against Tenant Panels performing different functions being populated by different tenants. Having different tenants on different panels means that more tenants can participate, but complete separation makes it difficult for the tenant constituency to develop a coherent viewpoint. The following points are of note:

- it was once considered desirable that tenant board members should not participate in any Tenant Panel activity. Opinion has changed on this now, because it made tenant board members remote from the tenant constituency and fostered an “us and them” culture.
- guidance on *Tenant Scrutiny* has indicated that tenants involved in scrutiny should not be involved in governance
- complaints panels would need to be able to operate independently from those being complained about.

The key issue with regards separation of function is recognising the potential for conflicts of interest and managing them. It's up to tenants and landlords to work out the best way to do that. There are no hard and fast rules.

## Terms of reference

The following need to be considered in establishing the terms of reference/constitutions of Tenant Panels:

- the aims, objectives and role of the Tenant Panel
- the relationship with the landlord governing body and other parts of the Tenant Panel arrangements
- who has the responsibility for facilitating that the Tenant Panel meets its aims and objectives
- who are the members of the Tenant Panel and how are they recruited
- operational issues regarding how often the group meets, how its meetings are conducted and any officer/ delegation arrangements
- how the Tenant Panel is accountable to its stakeholders (ie. the tenant constituency, the landlord, others)
- reference to its code of conduct
- how the Tenant Panel activities will be reviewed



## Recruiting and developing Tenant Panels

Tenant Panels will be as effective as the “tenant leadership” that participates in them. Ensuring the most effective tenant leadership requires an effective approach to recruit the most appropriately skilled tenants and to develop and review their skills, knowledge & experience.

Many Tenant Panels and landlords are now taking an approach that mirrors equivalent processes to recruit and develop staff, although with the system adapted to take account of the voluntary nature of most of the tenant leadership.

Tenant Panels can be elected, selected or a mixture of both, and different approaches will be appropriate dependent on the function of the panel being recruited to. The advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches may be summarised as follows:

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Election	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• can be perceived to be more democratic</li><li>• gives all tenants an opportunity to express their opinion</li><li>• an elected tenant may see themselves as accountable to other tenants</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• not many tenants vote in tenant elections &amp; uncontested elections</li><li>• tenants not understanding what they are voting for</li><li>• good tenants may be put off by an electoral process</li><li>• can be costly</li><li>• may not result in the most effective tenants being elected</li></ul>

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may be a simpler and more transparent process for tenants</li> <li>• may be a more welcoming process for tenants new to involvement</li> <li>• an opportunity to select the most effective tenants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may not be perceived to be democratic</li> <li>• perceptual concerns about who “selects”</li> <li>• may result in tenants not seeing themselves as accountable to the tenant constituency</li> </ul>

The credibility of a selection process relies on ensuring a fully transparent process and on the perceived integrity of those carrying out the selection. A selection process that is developed and administered entirely by a landlord’s staff is unlikely to have much credibility with tenants.

Our advice is that:

- the methods used to recruit tenants to Tenant Panels should be discussed and agreed with the tenants who are actively involved at the time.
- Tenant Panels and landlords should be imaginative regarding who carries out selections.
- existing tenant representatives can be used if any are available and not themselves standing for selection.
- tenant involvement staff who are respected by tenants can be used.

- someone with experience of tenant issues from outside the organisation could be used (perhaps a tenant of another landlord) and may have credibility with tenants.
- a Board member or Councillor who enjoys the credibility of tenants could be appropriate.

There are parallels between recruiting tenant volunteers and staff recruitment, but they are not the same. Experience of staff recruitment may be helpful, but anyone who has been chosen to be part of a selection process would need to adapt those skills to make them relevant to a tenant selection process.

**Role specification** - in either an election or a selection process, a “specification” setting out the qualities being sought in potential Tenant Panel members is helpful. A specification may have “essential” qualities that are considered to be fundamental to the role and “desirable” qualities that would be nice and may form the basis for making a choice between two similarly suitable candidates.

Of course, the purpose of the exercise is to encourage good quality active volunteers to come forward and so it is important not to include essential qualities that are too restrictive and off putting. A sample Tenant Panel member person specification is included in Appendix 4.

**Serious breach of tenancy** - it is now also commonly accepted that where a tenant is in serious breach of their tenancy agreement, they may not be able to be a Tenant Panel member. Application process documentation should also set

out what happens if a tenant seriously breaches their tenancy agreement whilst they are a Tenant Panel member.

**CRB checks** – these are “Criminal Records Bureau” checks for people being recruited to positions of trust. A CRB check for a Tenant Panel member may be necessary if they are likely to come into contact with children and vulnerable adults. For further information, check the Independent Safeguarding Authority website - [www.isa.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.isa.homeoffice.gov.uk)

**Independent chairs** - in some cases, Tenant Panels have been set up with independent chairs in order to establish them and to mentor the tenant members of the panel. This approach can work well if it is clear that the independent chair has the position in trust and on a temporary basis whilst the panel’s tenant members develop their skills. An independent chair needs to earn the trust of tenants by showing tenants how they can constructively challenge and recommend improvements.

**Developing and reviewing skills** - having recruited Tenant Panels there is a need to develop and review the capacity, skills and knowledge of Tenant Panel members - individually and collectively. An annual panel assessment and personal development plans for Tenant Panel members may be useful to identify the skills and interests of each panel member and to actively assist them to develop their abilities.

## Representing tenants

Tenant elections produce a form of tenant representation. It can be argued that the opportunity for tenants to vote in elections is important, even if not many tenants vote. But

whether tenants are elected or selected, tenant democracy and representation is about more than just election systems.

Tenant Panels have a responsibility to consider and reflect the needs and aspirations of all tenants when carrying out their roles. The strategies that support the work of Tenant Panels need to include active methods to enable all tenants to input their views and get involved.

### Protected characteristics

The Equalities Act 2010 brought together all the legal requirements on equality that the private, public and voluntary sectors need to follow. Whilst some of its provisions refer to employment, it also applies to organisations providing services (ie. including Tenant Panels and landlords).

The Act protects people from discrimination in relation to certain “protected characteristics”. In relation to provision of services, these characteristics are:

- disability
- sex (gender)
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- age

For further information go to [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

There should be periodic consideration of the make up of the tenant constituency against the “protected characteristics”, considering how to reflect the views of under-represented groups. There should also be consideration of other factors

that may make it difficult for particular groups to participate (such as tenants who are working or have parental responsibilities).

The make up of Tenant Panels against “protected characteristics” should also be periodically considered. It is unlikely that any Tenant Panel would ever neatly reflect the tenant constituency. However, considering where they don’t may identify particular groups of tenants from whom views should be sought in evidence gathering activities.

## Resourcing Tenant Panels

Tenant Panels will not be effective unless they are properly resourced. Some resources to support Collaborative Tenant Panels could come from the local Council or other local sources, but in most cases, Tenant Panels will need to be resourced primarily, if not exclusively, by the landlord.

### Staffing resources to facilitate the Tenant Panel

Usually there is a need for paid staff members (alongside tenant volunteers) who are responsible and accountable for ensuring that the Panel is delivering on its objectives.

### Other staffing resources

An effective Tenant Panel will have relationships with landlord staff in most departments. Collaborative Tenant Panels will need access to staff in each of the landlords involved.

### Training & development

Resources need to be available to train and develop Tenant Panel members.

**Meeting & other expenses**

There need to be resources to enable the panel to meet and to cover the costs of panel members expenses for attending meetings and carrying out their roles

**Gathering ideas from other sources**

There need to be costs relating to engaging with tenants of other landlords – which may involve attendance at conferences/events

**External independent support**

On occasion, there may be a need to bring in particular services externally to support the Tenant Panel – either to provide information not known by staff involved, or to ensure an independent perspective from someone experienced and knowledgeable

In some cases, Tenant Panels themselves are responsible for making decisions about their involvement budgets.

There are two particular resources to support the development of Tenant Panels funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. These are:

**The National Tenant Training Programme**

This will provide tenant training on a variety of tenant empowerment issues. For further information email: [tenantempowerment@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tenantempowerment@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

**The National Residential Training Programme**

This provides residential courses (at low costs for tenants) at the National Communities Resource Centre, Trafford Hall, near Chester. These courses focus on co-regulation, scrutiny and Tenant Panels. For further information, go to [www.traffordhall.com](http://www.traffordhall.com)

## Remunerating tenants

Some landlords “remunerate” their tenants with shopping vouchers and in other ways for participating in certain activities. This approach can encourage some tenants to participate who might not otherwise be involved, although some people have concerns that this approach does not sit well with the principle of voluntarism.

Remunerating tenants in receipt of benefits without affecting their benefits can be very difficult, complex and open to interpretation. There is a prevailing view that shopping vouchers are not considered income for benefit purposes. Whether this is the case or not may depend on their value and whether they are given on anything other than a one-off basis. Further information is available in the DWP publication “Volunteering Whilst Receiving Benefits” available at [www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp1023.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp1023.pdf).

Tenants who receive remunerations from their landlord may also be subject to tax liabilities.

## Reviewing Tenant Panels

There may be a number of reasons to review your Tenant Panels, such as considering new ideas, approaches and expectations, reviewing the panel against its original intended role, or reviewing the ways that tenants are recruited.

However, perhaps the most important reason to review Tenant Panels is to consider whether they are delivering outcomes for tenants. This type of review is known as an “impact assessment” – considering the impact Tenant Panel arrangements are having on the quality of life for tenants.



Impact assessment involves checking the amount of resources going in and the outcomes coming out. If something isn't making a difference for tenants – especially if its resource intensive - then there may not be much point in continuing doing it, and it needs to be changed.

Below is one way of carrying out an impact assessment. There are many ways that impact assessments could be carried out. The intention of this one is that it is reasonably straightforward and simple for tenants and staff to use together – and which hopefully will give clear indications regarding where changes need to be made. The tables referred to are in Appendix 5.

### An impact assessment process

- 1 Assemble a team of people that includes Tenant Panel members, possibly other tenants, staff, governing body members and possibly others to carry out the impact assessment. An external facilitator may be helpful to assist with objectivity.
- 2 Break your Tenant Panel activities down into manageable categories, such as (there could be many ways to break down your activities):
  - A **accountability** – can tenants hold the landlord to account through Tenant Panels?
  - B **improving services** – are Tenant Panels leading to improved services?
  - C **improving neighbourhoods** – is local involvement leading to improvements in neighbourhoods?
  - D **diversity** – are all tenants able to participate?

Allocate your activities to each of the headings you have chosen. The tables in Appendix 5 illustrate the way that activities could be allocated.

3

Get estimates of the resources that are being used for each of the activities. This isn't easy and its not a number crunching exercise, but you are aiming to assess (ball park estimates will suffice):

- the amount of time used by resident involvement and other staff used on the activity
- the amount of volunteer time used on the activity
- the amount of money used on the activity
- any external consultancy or other expenditure used on the activity
- any other resources that have gone into the activity

4

Gather any data or evidence that may inform consideration of outcomes from activities. Dependent on the qualitative and quantitative outcomes to be assessed, evidence could include:

- data related evidence, such as changes to satisfaction statistics
- reports from tenants, staff or others about how something has improved
- value for money information about how activities have enabled resources to be used effectively
- information that shows that particular groups of tenants have benefited from the activity
- other evidence

5 Assemble your impact assessment team. Your impact assessment session is likely to take a half day or possibly longer. If you have a large team, you may want to break them down into more than one team, with a cross section of representation in each team. This can help to get a more balanced assessment.

6 With each Tenant Panel activity, using the information prepared, ask the team(s) to:

- identify why the activity is being done
- consider the resources going into the activity
- consider the outcomes coming from the activity

7 Each team should score the resources going “in” and the outcomes coming “out” as follows:

**Resources**

1. we aren't putting any resources into this
2. we aren't putting much resources into this
3. we are putting some resources into this
4. we are putting quite a lot of resources into this
5. this is very resource intensive

**Outcomes**

1. we aren't getting any outcomes from this
2. we aren't getting much outcomes from this
3. we are getting some outcomes from this
4. we are getting quite a lot of outcomes from this
5. this is making a very big difference for tenants

- 8 After the impact assessment session, colour code the results based on the outcome ratings given by the team (4 and above green; 2 and below red; between 2 and 4 amber). If there is more than one team, average the results. See sample table in Appendix 5. “Resources in” do not affect the colour coding. The key issue is the delivery of outcomes. Significant resources may yield significant outcomes. Including the agreed level of resources in the final report will identify where large resources are being used.
- 9 The Tenant Panel and the landlord should draw overall conclusions from the impact assessment. Discuss any areas with low outcome ratings, especially if high resources have gone into them. The final report can be used to drive changes to Tenant Panels.

## Embedding Tenant Panels

The work of Tenant Panels needs to be “embedded” into the work and culture of the landlord. Some key questions include:


- a) how does the governing body consider the Tenant Panel viewpoint in relation to their decisions?
- b) which member of staff has overarching responsibility for facilitating Tenant Panel arrangements and how does this enable issues relating to the Tenant Panel to be considered in senior management discussions?
- c) how are staff trained and inducted with regards their involvement with Tenant Panel arrangements?

- d) how do tenant involvement staff provide support to other staff in their relationships with the Tenant Panel?
- e) how is the Tenant Panel involved in setting the corporate objectives of the landlord?

In 2007 the following guidance was produced setting out how tenant involvement could be linked into a landlord's corporate governance process<sup>8</sup>. The 8 "elements" of their process (designed to be cyclical) include:

<p><b>1</b>    <b>Developing top level aims &amp; priorities</b></p>	<p>Determining what the overall strategic aims are for the involvement strategy (eg. improved services, better equality of access or value for money, increased transparency of decision-making, more effective tenant scrutiny of performance)</p>
<p><b>2</b>    <b>Making a strategy</b></p>	<p>Developing/reviewing the involvement strategy with associated policies &amp; procedures and with an action plan setting out what will be done to achieve the top level aims and priorities</p>
<p><b>3</b>    <b>Agreeing outcomes</b></p>	<p>Agreeing outcomes that are SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time based – and are generally about achieving what tenants want</p>

<sup>8</sup> Housing Corporation - "Measuring Change: Involvement impact assessments" – August 2007



4	<b>Action planning</b>	Developing an action plan with timetabled action points with people responsible for achieving them that are designed to achieve the agreed outcome objectives
5	<b>Agreeing measures</b>	Agreeing quantitative and qualitative measures to assess whether action points have been achieved
6	<b>Implementing the action plan</b>	Clearly the major part of the process – carrying out the action plan – and regularly reviewing its progress with tenants
7	<b>Assessing impact</b>	Carrying out an impact assessment process to review whether the action plan has achieved the desired outcomes and how they have contributed to achieving the top level aims and priorities
8	<b>Scrutinising impact</b>	Ensuring that the governing body takes responsibility for the impact assessment – and that involvement is embedded into the organisational structure and culture

## 8 Overcoming challenges

When Tenant Panels are operating well, they yield many benefits for tenants and landlords. But difficulties do crop up. This section explores some of them.

### Not enough tenants involved

People often say that not enough tenants get involved and that it's the same tenants who do.

Is it the case that not enough tenants are involved?

Not many tenants may come to meetings, but taking into account all the different ways that tenants communicate their views many mean that many more tenants are involved. Attendance levels at meetings should not be the only way of assessing how many tenants are involved.

The “usual suspects”

Sometimes the phrase “the usual suspects” is used about tenants who may have been attending meetings voluntarily for many years. Tenants can find this offensive. Those who attend regularly and have developed knowledge and experience should be treasured. They can also help to grow the next generation of involved tenants.

Menus of involvement

The newer menus of involvement that many are now using to encourage tenants to get involved are beginning to lead to a wider group of tenants coming forward.

### Tenant elections

Traditional tenant election processes can put off tenants who may have something to offer. It may be useful to use other methods as well.

### Making a difference

The differences that have been made when tenants do get involved need to be made clear to them and to all tenants.

### Are tenants interested?

It's rare that tenants are not interested in some aspect of how their homes & neighbourhoods are run. Tenant Panel activities need to be about the issues that tenants are interested in.

### The cultural importance of Tenant Panels

Tenant Panel activity needs to be part of the landlord culture from top to bottom. It needs to feature regularly in the boardroom, in meetings and in reports. If the landlord doesn't consider Tenant Panels to be important – then neither will tenants.

### Helping tenants to get involved

Tenants have lots of challenges in their lives, and sometimes don't have the time to get involved. There needs to be consideration about what would best enable the most tenants to get involved, but sometimes it's just about accepting that some tenants can't.

## Equality, diversity & Tenant Panels

Concern is also expressed that the profile of tenants who get involved in Tenant Panels is not diverse, and that diverse groups of tenants (ie. those who have one or more of the “protected characteristics” – see here 🌟 – or other particular groups) do not participate.



Being aware of the tenant profile

It is important that Tenant Panels and landlords are aware of the “profile” of the tenant constituency in relation to the “protected characteristics” and other issues.

Barriers to involvement

Tenant Panels and landlords need to be aware of barriers to involvement amongst their tenants. Panels need to operate in ways that will best tackle these barriers and facilitate the involvement of as many diverse groups as possible.

Seeking views

Steps should be taken to seek the views of any under-represented groups.

Reflecting the views of diverse groups

In carrying out activities, Tenant Panels should take appropriate steps to reflect the views of diverse groups, and consider the impact that activities could have on them.

Periodic diversity assessments

Tenant Panels should carry out a periodic assessment of how well they are reflecting the needs and aspirations of diverse groups.

#### Examples of Tenant Panels & diversity:

- ★ London Borough of Greenwich
- ★ CityWest Homes
- ★ Preston Community Gateway

### Tenants reluctant to embrace change

There is a need to periodically review and impact assess all aspects of Tenant Panels to ensure that they are delivering benefits for tenants. This therefore means that Tenant Panels

will go through changes as new approaches are introduced. Sometimes tenants are concerned about change to the structures they have been involved in and can be reluctant to embrace change if change is not managed sensitively.

**Working with tenants to make changes**

Tenants will usually embrace change if the landlord works with them to discuss, agree and implement those changes. Tenants need to see that changes being made will benefit them and their fellow tenants.

**New roles for existing involved tenants**

All tenants who are prepared to volunteer to be involved should be valued. In making changes, all involved tenants should be helped to find new ways to contribute.

**Winning arguments for change**

It is important that landlords seek to win arguments for changes they think are needed, and that they put in the effort to bring tenants with them.

**Independent advice**

Bring in skilled independent advice to review structures and processes with tenants. Ensuring that tenants have access to the National Tenant Organisations may help.

**Developing trust**

Trust lies at the heart of the tenant/landlord relationship. Tenants need to trust that landlords will act in the interests of tenants. If it is not already being done, landlords need to do what is necessary to earn that trust (and tenants need to earn the trust of their landlord by contributing to debates constructively and positively).

### Examples of change in Tenant Panel arrangements:

- ★ The Community Housing Group
- ★ Gosport Borough Council
- ★ Paragon's Resident Council

## Conflict

Conflict, either between tenants or between tenants and the landlord, is likely at some point in a Tenant Panel or landlord with a dynamic empowerment strategy. Landlords are strengthened by constructive challenge from Tenant Panels, but sometimes things don't go as planned. Tenants often feel strongly about issues. They may not always share the same views or have the right diplomatic skills. Staff can often be uncomfortable being challenged by tenants, and the culture in some landlords may not be conducive to challenge.

### Don't panic!

If there is conflict, don't panic! Conflict occurs in the field of tenant involvement. The key to handling conflict is to handle it. See beyond the conflict to overall objectives and work through the issues methodically.

### Respect

The starting point for handling conflict is for everyone to understand and respect the perspectives of the other parties involved.

**Conflict resolution responsibility**

Someone needs to be identified to take responsibility to resolve the conflict – usually a Tenant Involvement Officer, but there could be a role for a tenant from another Tenant Panel or landlord. They will have to earn the trust of tenants and the landlord that they will act as objectively as they can do in resolving the conflict.

**Using codes of conduct**

Codes of conduct ensure effective handling of conflict. They need to be comprehensive and implemented effectively when it is warranted. When someone contravenes the code of conduct, it may seem like the easiest thing to do to let sleeping dogs lie, but this can send the wrong message to everyone.

**The staff tenant relationship**

The code of conduct also needs to cover the relationship between tenants and staff, how the landlord will work with Tenant Panels, and how staff will be trained to work with panels.

**Trust and respect**

Ultimately it all comes down to landlords and tenants doing what is necessary to earn the trust and respect of each other.

**Tenants Panels having low expectations**

Tenant Panels may have low expectations and become unfocussed because they don't know what standards they should expect or they may feel helpless to effect change because of perceptions that the landlord won't listen. For the landlord, in both cases, it may look like no one is complaining, but in reality the service may not be as good as it could be. A culture where Tenant Panels do not challenge, and where staff

react defensively when they are challenged is unlikely to benefit tenants.

In a recent involvement review, the landlord's involvement staff asked an independent facilitator to lead the review. This was because for many years their involvement apparatus had blossomed into complex structures that were not were not benefiting tenants or enabling tenants to hold the landlord to account. This was partly because the involved tenants were comfortable that they could have the occasional chat with staff, and partly because staff were comfortable that they were not being challenged by their tenants. So everyone was comfortable with the way things were (apart from the involvement staff who knew that it wasn't working). A number of best practice sessions and an impact assessment later, tenants and staff realised that being comfortable is not the same as business effectiveness!

**Being comfortable**

If everyone is happy to be comfortable, then tenants and landlords are unlikely to get much positive impact from Tenant Panels.

**Information**

The key is information – information about the services and performance of the landlord – information about what other landlords are doing – information about what is possible.

**Evidence and market knowledge**

Tenant Panels need to be based on evidence and market knowledge - including knowledge from service users and providers about its effectiveness and how it could be improved; knowledge gathered from dialogue with tenants of other landlords; knowledge about new and innovative approaches.

**Impact assessment & outcomes**

Tenant Panels activities should be impact assessed. New approaches should be tried, but tenants and staff need to be challenged about long term activities that are not producing beneficial outcomes for tenants.

**A culture of constructive challenge**

A culture of constructive challenge, where tenants are encouraged to tell it like it is, and where staff are not defensive when they do, is a business investment.

**Independent chairs**

If necessary, temporary independent chairs of Tenant Panels can act as mentors to demonstrate how to constructively challenge.

## 9 What if landlords don't support Tenant Panels?

The following are steps that tenants could take if they feel that their landlord could do more to support Tenant Panels:

### Diplomacy

Diplomacy is always the best route to getting things resolved. Has everything been done to get the problem solved with the landlord? Are tenants aware of the landlord's perspective on the problem issue?

### The views of other tenants

Are tenants aware of the views of their fellow tenants on the issue? If it is only a small number of tenants who think there's a problem and other tenants are perfectly happy, it will be harder to get support to tackle it. If a number of tenants share the same concerns, people who might help are more likely to do so.

### The landlord's complaints procedure

It may be possible to resolve the issue, dependent on what it is, through the landlord's complaints procedure. If a formal complaint is submitted, tenants need to wait for all stages of the procedure to have been exhausted before taking further action.

### Official organisations

In some cases, support may be available from an official organisation (eg. the local Council's Environmental Health Department or the local Police in cases of Anti-Social Behaviour; the Fire Brigade regarding fire safety issues; the Care Quality Commission for care and support issues; the Equality & Human Rights Commission for diversity issues).

### Councillors or MPs

Issues can also be raised with councillors and MPs. If they consider that there is a valid case, they should be willing to raise issues on behalf of tenants with the landlord. An approach made to a councillor or MP will be stronger if made by a group of tenants or a Tenant Panel. If raising an issue with a councillor or MP does not resolve the matter, tenants could ask them to raise the matter elsewhere (eg. with the Housing Ombudsman).

### The National Tenant Organisations

Tenants can raise issues with the National Tenant Organisations. We have limited resources to engage with individual landlords, but all our organisations do our best to support tenants where we can. It is also useful for us to be aware of the issues and concerns that tenants have, so that we can raise these issues in discussions with Government and other bodies.

### Publicity

Everyone likes good publicity. Landlords may be prepared to take some actions in order to get good publicity or to avoid bad publicity.



### The Housing Ombudsman

A complaint can be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman if it is referred to them by a councillor, MP or Tenant Panel, or if 8 weeks have gone by since the conclusion of the landlord's complaints procedure. The Ombudsman usually receives complaints from individual tenants, but they will consider complaints from a group of tenants in the name of one of the tenants involved. The Ombudsman can deal with most service related complaints, including those relating to involvement and empowerment.

### The regulator

Most service delivery issues should be first raised with the landlord and, where possible, local means should have been used to rectify the problem. However, the social housing regulator (the Homes & Communities Agency) may be able to help if they consider an issue to be very serious. Whilst the regulator will proactively engage with landlords about *economic* standards (ie. how the business is run and financial issues), they will provide *backstop* regulatory intervention regarding *consumer* standards only where non-compliance has led to or will lead to "serious detriment" to tenants.

### The regulator and serious detriment

The threshold for “serious detriment” is intended to be very high. The regulator will consider referrals that meet four criteria:

- a) whether the issue is about tenant(s) of a landlord registered with them & whether it is covered in a Regulatory Standard
- b) if one of the Regulatory Standards has been or is likely to have been breached
- c) if the impact of the breach is to cause actual harm or potential harm to tenants
- d) if the actual or potential harm to tenants is likely to be serious

### Serious detriment scenarios

The regulator will assess the evidence and individual circumstances in each situation referred to it, in order to decide whether, in their opinion, the failure risks or has led to serious harm to tenants (or potential tenants). The regulator will take regard of information relating to serious detriment referred to it by the Housing Ombudsman, councillors, MPs or designated Tenant Panels.

### Further information

The regulator may need to carry out further investigations to establish whether serious detriment has or could occur. Where the regulator makes a judgment of serious detriment, it will consider the most appropriate means of intervention, including the use of its statutory powers to address the landlord’s failing where appropriate.

## Appendix One – Glossary

<b>Annual report to tenants</b>	Report that “registered provider” landlords are required to produce annually for their tenants
<b>Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)</b>	An organisation set up by Councils to manage housing
<b>Audit Commission</b>	Former body that inspected “registered provider” landlords
<b>Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH)</b>	National body that represents those Councils that own social housing in relation to their housing functions
<b>Benchmark</b>	Statistical figures that enable tenants and others to compare landlord performance
<b>Board</b>	A group of people in housing associations and ALMOs who have legal responsibility for overall decision-making in an organisation
<b>Cabinet</b>	A group of people in Councils who have legal responsibility for overall decision-making
<b>Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)</b>	Professional body that represents the housing sector
<b>Housemark</b>	Organisation that provides advice on benchmarking arrangements
<b>Choice based lettings</b>	System to enable prospective tenants to “choose” social housing homes
<b>Collaborative Tenant Panel</b>	A Tenant Panel made up of tenant representatives from different landlords

<b>Community Gateway</b>	A housing association model which is owned by tenants and where tenants have tenant control opportunities
<b>Community Right to Challenge</b>	A new legal right that allows communities to identify public services that could be provided through a community or other provider
<b>Community Right to Bid</b>	A new legal right that allows communities to “bid” for public and other assets before private sales
<b>Co-governance</b>	Landlord arrangements where Tenant Panels are constitutionally part of governance
<b>Co-regulation</b>	Tenants and landlords working together to ensure and monitor standards
<b>Corporate objectives</b>	The high level aims of a housing or other organisation
<b>Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)</b>	Part of Government that deals with housing, community & local government issues
<b>Designated Tenant Panel</b>	A Tenant Panel that has been formally “recognised” by a “registered provider” landlord to play a formal role in resolving complaints at the end of the landlord’s complaints procedure
<b>Focus group</b>	A group of people (often a particular group such as young people) brought together to consider a particular issue on a one off basis

<b>Front line services</b>	Housing and other services which come into contact with service users (ie. tenants)
<b>Governance &amp; viability</b>	The process of ensuring that an organisation is running efficiently and legally and that its finances are “viable”
<b>Governing body</b>	The part of an organisation that has the legal responsibility to make decisions (ie. a Board of a housing association or ALMO and the cabinet in a local authority)
<b>Homes &amp; Communities Agency (HCA)</b>	A Government body set up to support the development of new housing and to regulate social housing providers
<b>Housing Ombudsman</b>	A Government body that receives and adjudicates on complaints from social housing tenants
<b>Housing &amp; Regeneration Strategy</b>	Council strategies to ensure viable and sustainable provision of homes of all tenures and neighbourhoods in their boroughs
<b>Housing Revenue Account</b>	Annual housing council housing budgets
<b>Impact assessment</b>	Process to determine whether activities are having impacts and outcomes
<b>Internal auditor</b>	An independent body used to check internal systems and processes in an organisation
<b>Local Government Association (LGA)</b>	Organisation which supports, promotes and improves local Government

<b>Localism Act 2011</b>	An Act of Parliament that made a number of changes to social and other housing provision and local government
<b>Mystery shopping</b>	A method of checking services where unknown tenants and/or others assess particular services
<b>National Housing Federation (NHF)</b>	Trade organisation that represents the housing association sector
<b>National Federation of ALMOs (NFA)</b>	Trade organisation that represents Arms Length Management Organisations
<b>Outcome</b>	The results of activities for the people who receive services (as opposed to output – a step on the way to achieving outcomes)
<b>Portfolio holder</b>	A local authority councillor appointed to oversee a particular area (eg. portfolio holder for housing)
<b>Procurement</b>	Process to recruit contractors and consultants to carry out work
<b>Protected characteristics</b>	A set of personal equality & diversity characteristics defined in the Equalities Act 2010
<b>Registered provider</b>	A landlord registered as a social housing provider with the Homes & Communities Agency
<b>Regulator</b>	The body (the Homes and Communities Agency) set up by Government to set and regulate standards expected of “registered providers”

<b>Regulatory standard</b>	A standard set by the regulator with which “registered providers” are required to comply
<b>Right to Manage</b>	A legal right for council tenants where they can take over management of their homes
<b>Role specification</b>	A document that identifies the qualities needed in a particular role (such as a Tenant Panel member or an employee)
<b>Scrutiny</b>	Close and critical observation or examination
<b>Service review group</b>	A body set up in landlords to review a particular service usually involving tenants
<b>Sounding board</b>	A body set up in landlords which is consulted on particular issues (usually by post or e-mail)
<b>Stage 2 or 3 complaints procedure</b>	Stages of a landlord’s complaints procedure which reviews a tenant complaint after initial consideration by staff
<b>Stock transfer</b>	The process to transfer ownership of homes from local authorities to housing associations
<b>Task &amp; finish group</b>	A temporary group set up to review a particular service or activity
<b>Tenant federation</b>	A (usually independent) tenant representative body in a particular area
<b>Tenant leadership</b>	A definition we have used to mean all those tenants who are involved in Tenant Panels



<b>Tenant inspection</b>	A process where tenants are involved in inspecting particular service areas
<b>Tenant Involvement &amp; Empowerment Standard</b>	The Regulatory Standard that applies to how landlords involve and empower their tenants in decision-making
<b>Tenant Management Organisation (TMO)</b>	A tenant organisation that has legal responsibility to manage local authority or housing association homes
<b>Tenant scrutiny</b>	Tenants involved in close and critical observation or examination of landlord services and operations
<b>Tenant Services Authority (TSA)</b>	The former social housing regulator prior to the Homes & Communities Agency
<b>Under occupancy</b>	An issue where a home has more bedrooms than the occupants are considered to need
<b>Value for Money</b>	Ensuring that resources are used effectively and efficiently



## Appendix Two – The National Tenant Organisations

### Confederation of Co-operative Housing (CCH)

CCH was formed in 1993 as the representative body for co-operative and mutual housing. Its membership is open to housing co-ops, community-controlled housing organisations, and others that support co-op housing.

Address: 19 Devonshire Road, Liverpool L8 3TX  
Phone Number: 0151 726 2228  
e-mail/website: [info@cch.coop](mailto:info@cch.coop)/[www.cch.coop](http://www.cch.coop)

### National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO)

The NFTMO was founded in 1992 and represents tenant management co-ops, estate management boards and other forms of tenant management organisations in the council and housing association sector.

Address: Resource Centre, Burrowes Street, Walsall WS2 8NN  
Phone Number: 01704 227053  
e-mail/website: [contact@nftmo.com](mailto:contact@nftmo.com)/[www.nftmo.com](http://www.nftmo.com)

### Tenants and Residents Organisations of England (TAROE)

TAROE was founded in 1997 as the representative body for tenants in social housing in England. Membership is open to regional tenant bodies, tenant federations, tenant & resident associations, and individual tenants.

Address: The Old Police Station, Mersey Rd, Runcorn WA7 1DF  
Phone Number: 01928 798120  
e-mail/website: [runcornoffice@taroe.org](mailto:runcornoffice@taroe.org)/[www.taroe.org](http://www.taroe.org)

### Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)

Formed in 1988, TPAS promotes excellence in resident involvement and empowerment through training, advice, and accreditation - representing 1700 tenant groups and 250 landlords across England.

Address: Trafford House, Chester Road, Manchester M32 0RS  
Phone Number: 0161 868 3500  
e-mail/website: [info@tpas.org.uk](mailto:info@tpas.org.uk)/[www.tpas.org.uk](http://www.tpas.org.uk)

## Appendix Three – useful contacts

Association for Retained Council Housing	c/o HouseMark, 4 Riley Court, Millburn Hill Road, University of Warwick Science Park, Coventry CV4 7HP Telephone: 024 7647 2711 e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@arch-housing.org.uk">info@arch-housing.org.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.arch-housing.org.uk">www.arch-housing.org.uk</a>
Care Quality Commission	CQC National Customer Service Centre, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle NE1 4PA Telephone: 03000 616161 Website: <a href="http://www.cqc.org.uk">www.cqc.org.uk</a>
Centre for Housing & Support	1st Flr, Elgar House, Shrub Hill Road, Worcester WR4 9EE Telephone: 01905 727272 e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@chs.ac.uk">info@chs.ac.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.chs.ac.uk">www.chs.ac.uk</a>
Chartered Institute of Housing	Octavia House, Westwood Way, Coventry CV4 8JP Telephone: 02476 851700 e-mail: <a href="mailto:customer.services@cih.org">customer.services@cih.org</a> Website: <a href="http://www.cih.org">www.cih.org</a>
Department for Communities and Local Government	Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU Telephone: 0303 444 000 e-mail: <a href="mailto:contactus@communities.gov.uk">contactus@communities.gov.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk">www.communities.gov.uk</a>
Equality & Human Rights Commission	3 More London, Riverside Tooley St, London SE1 2RG Helpline: 0845 604 6610 <a href="mailto:englandhelpline@equalityhumanrights.com">englandhelpline@equalityhumanrights.com</a> Telephone: 0203 1170235 e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@equalityhumanrights.com">info@equalityhumanrights.com</a> Website: <a href="http://www.equalityhumanrights.com">www.equalityhumanrights.com</a>

<p>Homes and Communities Agency</p>	<p>Central Business Exchange II, 406-412 Midsummer Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes MK9 2EA  <b>Telephone:</b> 0300 1234 500  <b>e-mail:</b> mail@homesandcommunities.co.uk  <b>Website:</b> www.homesandcommunities.co.uk</p>
<p>Housing Ombudsman Service</p>	<p>81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN  <b>Telephone:</b> 0300 111 3000  <b>e-mail:</b> info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk  <b>Website:</b> www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk</p>
<p>Local Government Association</p>	<p>Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ  <b>Telephone:</b> 0207 664 3000  <b>e-mail:</b> info@local.gov.uk  <b>Website:</b> www.local.gov.uk</p>
<p>National Federation of ALMOs</p>	<p>Rockingham House, St Maurice's Road, York YO31 7JA  <b>Telephone:</b> 0845 4747 008  <b>e-mail:</b> almos@hqnetwork.co.uk  <b>Website:</b> www.almos.org.uk</p>
<p>National Housing Federation</p>	<p>Lion Court, 25 Procter Street, London WC1V 6NY  <b>Telephone:</b> 0207 067 1010  <b>e-mail:</b> info@housing.org.uk  <b>Website:</b> www.housing.org.uk</p>
<p>Sitra (housing with care &amp; support)</p>	<p>3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 55 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ  <b>Telephone:</b> 0207 793 4710  <b>e-mail:</b> post@sitra.org  <b>Website:</b> www.sitra.org</p>

## Appendix Four - Tenant Panel Member Person Specification

This form is a sample tenant panel member person specification. We discuss recruitment of tenant panel members in the resources section (here [★](#)).

Person specification	E	D	Assess
<b>Attitudes</b>			
Enthusiasm for & commitment to resident involvement	E		Interview
Respect for residents and staff	E		Interview
Enthusiasm to learn new skills & meet new challenges	E		Interview
A commitment to customer care and quality	E		Interview
Commitment to equal opportunities & diversity	E		Interview
<b>Skills, knowledge and experience</b>			
Experience of being a tenant and using housing services	E		Application
Experience of how you've worked with other tenants and/or staff to improve your community		D	Application
Basic knowledge of how housing services are delivered		D	Interview
Ability to discuss issues	E		Interview
Ability to work as part of a team	E		Interview
Some literacy & numeracy		D	Application
<b>Other role requirements</b>			
Available to attend tenant panel meetings	E		Application
Willingness to sign a code of conduct	E		Application
Willingness to sign a code of confidentiality	E		Application

E = Essential; D = Desirable

## Appendix Five - Sample impact assessment results

This table is a sample of impact assessment results in relation to the impact assessment process set out in the resources section (here [★](#)).

ACCOUNTABILITY				
Activity	Why were we doing it?	In	Out	Rating
Tenant Panel meetings	To represent tenants and to input into strategy/policy	3.5	4	Green
Scrutiny Panel (reception areas)	To scrutinise reception areas	5	3.5	Orange
Scrutiny Panel (repairs)	To scrutinise repairs service	5	4.5	Green
Involvement in annual report	To enable tenant panel to shape report to tenants	4	5	Green
Communications Panel	To improve accessibility of communications materials	3	4	Green
Governance training	To create pool of potential tenant board members	3	4	Green
Equality & diversity training	To ensure open mindedness & non-discriminatory behaviour	3	5	Green
Tenant board membership	To ensure flavour of tenant viewpoint in board discussions	4.25	2	Red
Overall rating				4.00

IMPROVING SERVICES				
Activity	Why were we doing it?	In	Out	Rating
Satisfaction surveys	Gathering tenant views on services	4.5	1	Red
Service Review Group	To facilitate overall service improvement	2	2.25	Orange
Leaseholder services review	Review effectiveness of service	1	1	Red
Lettings & allocations	Review effectiveness of service	3	2	Red
Tenant involvement	Review effectiveness of service	5	1	Red

IMPROVING SERVICES				
Activity	Why were we doing it?	In	Out	Rating
ASB Forum	Involve tenants in reviewing and improving services	3	4	
Involvement in staff recruitment	Ensure tenant involvement in tenant facing appointments	2	2.5	
Overall rating				1.96

IMPROVING NEIGHBOURHOODS				
Activity	Why were we doing it?	In	Out	Rating
Walkabouts	To gather information about local needs & aspirations	4.75	3.5	
Community Voices	To build community links in areas without significant involvement	1	1	
New tenants group	To ensure effective involvement in the new development	5	5	
Existing tenants groups	To support involvement in existing tenant groups	5	3	
Activities for All	To reduce social isolation and promote self-support	4.5	4	
Cross generation project	To promote community cohesion	4.5	4	
Sheltered scheme mtgs	To maintain links with sheltered scheme residents	4.5	2.5	
Overall rating				3.29

DIVERSITY				
Activity	Why were we doing it?	In	Out	Rating
Review of tenant panel diversity	To check Panel activities reflecting tenant profile	3	2.75	
Independent living project	Supporting older people capacity	4.5	3.75	
Young People's Forum	To help younger tenants to get involved	5	5	
Learning difficulties	To build capacity for people with learning difficulties	2.5	4.5	
Overall rating				4.0

## Appendix Six - Directory of Case studies

The directory of case studies is in two parts – case studies of collaborative Tenant Panels, followed by case studies of Tenant Panels in individual landlords.

Because we have included a case study does not mean we are advocating the approach being used. We were not in a position to say whether what is being done in the case study is leading to benefits for tenants or not. But we think the approaches identified to us are interesting and are illustrative of the breadth of approaches out there.

### Collaborative Tenant Panel case studies

Collaborative Tenant Panel	Homes	Page
★ Hampshire & District Residents Forum	c70,000	88
★ Leeds Collaborative Group	c11,000	89
A group we worked with as part of this project		
★ Norfolk Housing Alliance Residents Group	c60,700	92
A group we worked with as part of this project		
★ South Yorkshire Network	c107,000	95
★ Welwyn Hatfield Tenant Scrutiny Panel	c12,000	96
★ Worcestershire Tenant Panel Partnership	c25,000	98
A group we worked with as part of this project		

The Hampshire & District Residents Forum (HRDF) formed following an event in 2009 where about 100 residents from 14 Hampshire housing providers came together to consider how to improve standards across the housing sector in Hampshire.

The Forum currently includes representation (up to 2 residents and 1 staff representative) from Winchester City Council, First Wessex, Sentinel, Radian, Testway & Sovereign Kingfisher. The landlords involved financially resource the Forum and the Forum has a website at [www.hampshire-residents.org.uk](http://www.hampshire-residents.org.uk)

HRDF was funded in 2009 through the TSA's Tenant Excellence Fund to develop a set of local standards for resident involvement. The standards refer to the Forum playing a role in resident training & capacity building; feedback and communication; increasing numbers of involved residents particularly from under-represented groups; developing staff commitment to involvement; using involvement to improve repairs, ASB and community facilities; increasing choice for residents; making involvement better value for money; developing resident scrutiny at a county level; and involving residents in corporate and business planning.

The Forum also carried out a benchmarking exercise to consider methods, costs, customer satisfaction and other features of grounds and estate services, and developed a system for standardising tenant satisfaction surveys.

Not all of the Forum's original aspirations have yet been developed. The Forum is now reviewing its activities to ensure an outcome based approach, with suggestions to explore more project based activity such as work on preparing for welfare reform or tackling worklessness.

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The Leeds Collaborative Group (LCG) emerged out of an alliance between 5 housing associations - Connect Housing (3,266 homes); Headrow Housing (1,400); Leeds & Yorkshire Housing (1,150); Leeds Federated (4,000); Unity Group (1,100). As well as being Leeds based, the 5 associations had in common their comparatively smaller size and long standing community roots - with several of them having been formed from mergers between smaller community organisations some years ago. They also all have a strong track record in involving tenants. The alliance between the housing associations was intended to give them a stronger collective voice in Leeds, as well as well as enabling them to come together in specific areas.

Consisting of 2 residents and 1 staff member from each association, the LCG started in Summer 2010 with a general aim for tenants from the 5 associations to explore best practice. The formation of the LCG was intended to mirror the alliance, with either group being in a position to make recommendations to the other. The Chief Executives of the associations involved strongly support the LCG and have given them a free hand to develop the group as they wish. The LCG is considered to be dependent on the goodwill of the landlords to make it work.

Initial progress over the first four months was slow as the group found their feet. There was not a "grandiose plan" behind the development of the LCG - activity has developed "organically". Those involved particularly value their informal relationships - speaking of sharing practical ideas, free swapping of knowledge and being in a position to ring each other up to discuss different approaches. They considered that LCG involvement had helped to "raise tenant expectations".

### Outcomes

The actual and intended outcomes of the LCG are as follows:

- a scrutiny exercise of kitchen replacements
- idea sharing on responsive repairs (an association repairs officer carried out a presentation which inspired ideas for others)
- development of a joint "traffic light" system for tenant inspectors
- the three smaller associations carrying out joint inspection activity

- resulting cross association working between staff (eg. estate managers from the small associations getting together)
- collaborative training on tenant inspection
- arranging sufficient attendees for a free TPAS course
- comparisons of contractors in relation to small works, resulting in savings of between £10K to £15K
- considering Connect's "ranger" service
- getting informal tenant feedback on gas servicing

The following areas were discussed as possible future initiatives:

- nominating a representative from the group to the Leeds Housing Forum to enable the LCG to input into the Council's Housing & Regeneration Strategy
- examining "rationalised" services for homes in the same areas
- consideration of joint "local offers"
- a project on digital inclusion
- a joint approach to choice based lettings
- a joint scheme to tackle under occupancy
- joint procurement exercises
- using one gardening company across the 5 associations

## Complaints

During our work with the LCG, they particularly considered setting up a complaints panel, identifying the following positive reasons for doing so:

- to establish independent mediation and advocacy for tenants
- to enable them to refer complaints to the Ombudsman as a "designated" tenant panel and to stop complaints going to the Ombudsman that don't need to go there
- to deal with malicious complaints from tenants who consider that staff are against them
- to enable tenants from different associations to consider complaints with a view to them being considered objectively
- to give tenants confidence to make complaints in the knowledge that they could be considered by a tenant panel at the end of the process. Concern was expressed that currently tenants may simply "give up" on complaints, or that particularly elderly tenants do not complain for fear of losing their homes.

The following challenges were identified in relation to setting up a complaints panel:

- the LCG's intention is that a different group of tenants than those involved in the LCG will be recruited to set up the panel. There was a discussion about whether tenants would come forward for that purpose. It was felt that some would because it was recognised that there would be considerable training required and some tenants would welcome developing the inherent life skills.
- with differing internal complaints procedures, there was a discussion about when a complaints panel might get involved, with most agreeing that this should be after stage 3 of the procedure
- it was noted that there had been less than 10 complaints reaching stage 3 per annum for all the associations, although it was felt that the number of complaints may rise as a result of setting up an independent tenant complaints panel
- it was suggested that the LCG could obtain collective legal advice on the quasi-judicial role of a designated tenant panel
- there was a question about whether there would be management buy in to a tenant complaints panel

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With the providers of affordable housing wishing to raise their collective profile in the region, the Norfolk Housing Alliance (NHA) was formed in 2007. The landlords involved included Broadland Housing Association, Cotman Housing (a member of the Places for People Group), Flagship Housing Group, Freebridge Community Housing, Great Yarmouth Community Housing, Guinness South, Hyde Minster, Norwich City Council, Orbit Housing Group, Saffron Housing Trust, Stonham Services (part of the Home Group), Victory Housing Trust, and Wherry Housing Association (part of the Circle Group).

Initially the partnership was at Chief Executive/Director of Housing level, but it subsequently developed into operational levels and in multi-agency forums, with project groups collaborating on various aspects (eg. Allocations and choice based lettings, creation of mediation services, aid/adaptations, resident involvement officers coming together, other methods of sharing good practice).



The proposal to form an NHA Residents Group initially came following work done on a TSA “local offer pilot” at Terrington St Clement in 2008 where Freebridge, Cotman, Flagship & Wherry worked together to improve an estate with a particularly poor reputation for ASB and unco-ordinated services.

The pilot scheme resulted in an estate agreement charter drawn up and now monitored by residents, joint estate inspections and, with the support of a grant from Keep Britain Tidy, all landlords agreed to use the same grounds maintenance contractor.

This project had shown the value of residents from different landlords working together to the respective landlords. A conference was held for residents from the different landlords operating in Norfolk in March 2011 at Norwich City Football Club, particularly considering four strands:

- the mechanics of setting up a multi-landlord residents organisation
- specific rural housing issues
- how scrutiny/comparisons could be used in a multi-landlord context
- multi-landlord communities - how the experiences at Terrington could be replicated

The conference agreed the following objectives for the group:

- to be a voice for residents in Norfolk
- to scrutinise and challenge service delivery
- to promote partnerships in training, sharing resources
- to compare and monitor service standards
- to take an active part in NHA projects

## Outcomes

The conference led to a series of objectives and about 100 proposals for action – which a steering group subsequently whittled down to 20 possible projects and then to three to be focused on initially.

These are:

- **fuel poverty** A major issue in rural housing, the group wish to explore with the Norfolk Rural Community Council, cost effective ways to replenish supplies for oil heating
- **developing survey templates** The group will consider using either the same “status” style surveys – and/or neighbourhood surveys

- **considering localised standards** the group aim to develop common performance indicators for sheltered and general housing (eg. average time for repairs/complaints/satisfaction); to consider whether the indicators that residents are interested in are being collected; and to publish information on a bespoke website.

### Structural issues

There are up to 2 resident nominees from each of the landlords involved on the group. Staff members from two NHA landlords attend meetings and facilitate the Residents Group (with other landlords supporting other NHA projects). A part time staff member employed to support the NHA is also able to provide some support to the Residents Group.

Terms of reference for the group were signed up to by all the landlords in the NHA. The intention is that Residents Group meetings will go into a cycle with NHA Strategic Group meetings to enable the residents to feed in their views and with protocols to be developed to enable appropriate relationships.

It is intended that the Residents Group will have a website page on a forthcoming NHA website ([www.norfolkhousingalliance.co.uk](http://www.norfolkhousingalliance.co.uk)) and that the NHA Residents Group will arrange and report back to other residents at an annual residents conference. The NHA Residents Group stressed the importance of taking an outcome based approach where the group can clearly demonstrate what it has achieved for residents.

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## SOUTH YORKSHIRE NETWORK

c107,000 homes

A South Yorkshire Network has existed for several years as a networking collaborative Tenant Panel. Primarily hosted by three local authority tenants and residents federations (Barnsley Federation, Doncaster Federation and Rotherfed), it is open to all tenants in the south Yorkshire region and attracts tenants from Sheffield (where there is no federation) and some housing association tenants.

Informally run (with no constitution and no funding), the South Yorkshire Network is tenant-led (although it is supported by the relevant landlords). The network enables the sharing of good practice (both amongst tenants and amongst the Federation staff), helping participants to keep up to date with what other local providers are doing, and holds joint conferences, training and consultation events.

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The Welwyn Hatfield Tenant Scrutiny Panel was set up in 2011 to bring together social housing residents in Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield and surrounding areas. The landlords supporting the panel include Welwyn Hatfield Community Trust (Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's ALMO), Genesis Housing Group, Guinness Trust, Circle Anglia, Paradigm, Home Group, Aldwyck Housing Group, Moat, and Sanctuary.

Managing nearly 25% of the homes in the borough, the Welwyn Hatfield Community Trust has taken the lead in facilitating the panel (with support from consultants HQ Network). For most of the other landlords involved, the number of homes they manage in the borough reflect only a small proportion of their overall stock. There are also some small landlords in the borough who are not yet participating.

All the landlords nominate up to two tenant representatives to the panel, chosen in whatever way is appropriate to them. One was not able to find a tenant representative from the 30 homes they own in the borough, and so it was agreed that a tenant from nearby Hemel Hempstead would represent that landlord's tenants. It was decided that there could be no resident board members on the panel.





With some panel members new to resident involvement, a gradual approach is being taken to build the panel's capacity, identifying resident areas of interest and working out how the panel can add value. At this early stage, there is a need for effective facilitation, but there is a commitment amongst the partners that the panel members will lead the group as soon as it is possible. The panel is currently working to explore joint approaches to monitoring repairs performance (an area identified as important to the residents), with work being done particularly to identify particular repairs where residents would like to be able to compare value for money and how services are provided.

It is intended that the panel will particularly do scrutiny, monitoring and review work. Using joint approaches to resident satisfaction surveys and to grounds maintenance contracts has also been suggested as possible areas for exploration. It is also intended that the panel will become a "Stage 3" borough wide complaints panel, although there may be complications regarding the different procedures used.

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The Worcestershire Tenant Panel Partnership had been formed in 2010 as a result of Worcestershire tenants showing an interest in opportunities to meet together and to share information.

The Partnership covers the majority (80%) of the social housing in Worcestershire including residents of Festival Housing Group (8,000 homes), Rooftop Housing Group (6,000 homes), The Community Housing Group (6,000 homes) and Worcester Community Housing (4,785 homes). Three of the landlords were transfer housing associations from local authorities, and the area covered is predominantly rural.

The following activities have already taken place through the Partnership:

- comparison of service standards, particularly in relation to consideration of performance information in annual reports
- accredited training in social housing governance provided by the University of Derby. 20 residents from three associations participated in training in 2010 and 2011 and received awards, leading to an increase in skills and knowledge base amongst residents and resident board members.
- residents from different associations have visited others to discuss arrangements for involvement and scrutiny of services
- residents from the associations have been involved in discussions on complaints processes, with dialogue with the Housing Ombudsman, leading to an interest in developing a county-wide complaints review panel

The Partnership had drafted terms of reference for a complaints panel. They had started to consider how it would fit in with different individual complaints procedures (eg. tenants are already involved at Stage 2 and 3 of WCH's complaints procedure; Festival have a 2 stage process); with different methods of resolving issues arising from complaints; and with different cultures. Further work to form the complaints panel was put on hold pending the passing of the Localism Act.

It was agreed that there was merit to continuing to collaborate in order to continue to learn about different approaches. A key message from the tenants involved was that opportunities for collaboration, comparison of services and training have enhanced their ability to hold their landlords to account already. It was suggested that the “journey of working together was one of its benefits”.

## Outcomes

During the course of our work with them, the Panel has identified the following measurable outcomes for their work:

- improving customer satisfaction with services
- strengthening resident involvement in individual partners through sharing good practice, information and differing approaches
- providing enhanced training experience(s) for involved residents
- improving the ability of residents to challenge standards of service
- the potential to investigate the opportunity of set shared service standards (particularly for standards such as anti-social behaviour which involve working with a range of stakeholders/partners)
- providing further benchmarking of services at a local level (allowing residents to compare landlord performance)

An action plan, with leads and timescales, has been agreed that includes the following:

- sharing service review processes and standards through good practice exchange. Particular potential areas for consideration include a joint Rooftop & Festival inspection of allocations, and a South Worcestershire agreement on ASB.
- mystery shopping exercises, leading to service improvements, improved tenant knowledge of partner service standards
- customer satisfaction benchmarking to enabling effective comparisons of services that are meaningful to residents
- a joint resident training programme
- an involved resident event to enable communications between residents – particularly involving workshops on involving new residents and involvement structures

- an involved resident newsletter to share information & good practice
- sharing information on external changes such as the Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard to improve resident and staff knowledge of changes in the sector
- on-going work on tenant complaints to share good practice and learn from the outcome of complaints, to improve satisfaction with complaints handling, and to enable further consideration about whether a Worcestershire Complaints Review Panel might improve satisfaction with complaints handling

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## Landlord based Tenant Panel case studies

Landlord	Type	Homes	Page
★ Accent Group	HA	19,000+	104
National Accent Group Residents Panel & group member scrutiny activity			
★ Accord Group	HA	11,000+	106
Group residents panel in diverse group			
★ Amicus Horizon	HA	27,372	107
Group Residents Council & Area Panels			
★ Barnsley Fed/Berneslai Homes	ALMO	19,500+	109
Federation “challenge” teams			
★ Bristol City Council	LA	c28,300	111
Partnership advisory board & service user group panels			
★ Carrick Housing	ALMO	3,754	112
Independent Federation & tenant inspection programme			
★ CityWest Homes	ALMO	21,700	114
4 area committees, a Strategic Committee & Stage 2 complaints panel			
★ Crawley Borough Council	LA	9,500+	116
Action Panel – monitoring and advisory role – Stage 2 complaints panel			
★ Cross Keys Homes	HA	10,000+	117
Tenant Scrutiny Panel			
★ Eden Housing Association	HA	1,600+	118
Performance Posse – scrutinising and monitoring			
★ Family Mosaic	HA	20,000+	119
New tenant scrutiny panel			
★ Festival Housing Group	HA	8,947	120
Tenant Scrutiny Panel & 12 service specific panels			
★ Gentoo	HA	29,763	121
6 “standards” based groups & overarching “Customer Link”			
★ Gosport Borough Council	LA	3,186	122
Customer Opinion Panel – new resident involvement structure			
★ Green Square Group	HA	c10,000	123
Residents Forum & Resident Scrutiny Panel – performance & complaints			
★ London Borough of Greenwich	LA	c23,000	124
Borough-wide panel, 9 area panels and a Diversity Board			
★ The Guinness Partnership	HA	60,000+	126
Customer Strategy Group drawn from group members			
★ Guinness Northern Counties	HA	21,300	128
Tenant Scrutiny Council			

Landlord	Type	Homes	Page
★ Helena Partnerships	HA	13,000+	129
Customer Excellence Panel – tenant scrutiny			
★ Hull City Council	LA	25,965	130
Tenant Forum/panels for performance monitoring & independent review			
★ Innisfree Housing Association	HA	500+	132
New Tenant Panel in small association			
★ Isos Housing	HA	c12,000	133
2 Area Panels – mixed membership & part of governance			
★ Metropolitan Housing Trust	HA	35,000	134
National Resident Group, 3 scrutiny panels, service audit programme			
★ Moat	HA	15,000+	135
Moat Residents Forum, 3 area panels, policy working party			
★ North Star Housing Group	HA	3,000	136
North Star Tenant Voice – tenant scrutiny in new group			
★ Notting Hill Housing Trust	HA	25,000	138
4 local scrutiny panels checking performance – other specific groups			
★ Paradigm	HA	12,000+	139
Resident Internal Auditors – Residents Forum & Area Panels			
★ Paragon	HA	c9,000	141
Group wide panel with two panels in group member organisations			
★ Poplar HARCA	HA	c8,500	142
Resident majority Board, 12 Estate Panels, Joint Panel, Youth Board			
★ Preston Community Gateway	HA	6,000	144
Gateway Tenant Committee – part of governance – scrutiny panel			
★ Riverside Housing Group	HA	51,500	146
Federation, National and local Scrutiny Panels, Service Groups			
★ Rochdale Boroughwide Housing	ALMO	13,700	148
Tenant and staff Representative Body & Tenant Scrutiny Commission			
★ Rooftop Housing Group	HA	6,000	150
Customer Panel & Resident Action Team (doing customer research)			
★ Salix Homes	ALMO	10,500	151
Customer Senate – scrutiny, performance monitoring & complaints panel			
★ Slough Borough Council	LA	7,400	152
Customer Senate – scrutiny, performance monitoring, Stage 3 complaints			
★ Soha Housing	HA	5,500	153
Tenants Forum, Tenant Scrutiny Group & Tenant Inspectors Group			
★ South Staffordshire HA	HA	5,878	155
Resident Sounding Group & Resident Scrutiny Panel			

Landlord	Type	Homes	Page
★ Sovereign	HA	21,000+	157
7 Regional Panels – Residents Council – new post merger structure			
★ St Basil's	Agency		158
Youth Advisory Board			
★ St Mungo's	Agency		159
Outside In group in homeless service			
★ Stockport Homes	ALMO	11,584	161
Tenant Scrutiny Panel (independent mentor) & Complaints Panel			
★ Stonham	Agency		162
National Client Panel and Involving You Steering Group			
★ Tendring District Council	LA	3,215	164
Tenant Panel with sub-groups in rural location			
★ The Community Housing Group	HA	5,500	166
Tenant led change process			
★ Viridian	HA	c16,000	167
National Residents Forum, Tenant Inspectors & Complaints Panel			
★ Warwick District Council	LA	5,600	169
Tenant Panel, Tenant Champions & "Walking the System"			
★ Watford Community Housing Trust	HA	4,800	170
Change process, scrutiny & review programmes			
★ Watmos Community Homes	HA	1,700	171
Tenant majority board/8 TMOs/Tenants Service Panel – high satisfaction			
★ Wherry	HA	6,700	173
Way Ahead with Wherry & scrutiny sub-group			

ACCENT GROUP

Housing Association  
Group with 3 subsidiaries

19,000+ homes

Accent Group owns and manages nearly 20,000 homes through 3 housing association group members – Accent Foundation (managing homes in the North), Accent Peerless (managing homes in the South), and Accent Nene (managing homes in the East).

A 12 member National Accent Group Residents Panel is made up of residents from all three group members. These residents may also be members of their own registered provider panels, groups and forums but each provider decides how residents are recruited to the Group Panel. The Group Panel's aims are to advise and assist the Group Board on reviewing group strategic objectives, to scrutinise performance and to drive policy and service improvements across the Group. Their role is about taking a strategic view of the Group and advising Group Board on direction of travel and on specific strategic and policy debates.



Meeting a minimum of four times a year, with additional meetings and training as required, residents chair the meeting on a rotational basis and set the agenda. Specific meetings focus on reviewing performance, budgets and the Group strategic plan. The Panel has instigated group-wide service reviews including on ASB, sheltered housing and asset management which have led to significant improvements and greater consistency of service quality. The Chief Executive and Group Chair attend each meeting in a non-voting capacity and then report to Group Board on meeting outcomes.



Each association in the Group has its own involvement plan and delivery structure made up of a variety of locally agreed groups which focus on service development and performance scrutiny. These include resident inspectors, mystery shoppers and complaint review groups. Currently the associations are developing their scrutiny structures. Accent Nene has established a scrutiny panel which reports to an operations committee and then to Board. Accent Peerless has established a scrutiny panel which draws from each of its main involvement groups and reports to Board. Accent Foundation has a Resident Panel which also fulfils the dual role of policy development and performance scrutiny.

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## ACCORD GROUP

Housing Association  
Group with 7 subsidiaries

11,000+ homes

The Accord Group Wide Residents Panel represents the views of tenants and service users from the 7 subsidiary member housing associations of the Accord Group (Accord HA, bchs, Caldmore, RCH, Ashram, M&D and Fry Housing Trust). Each subsidiary elects 2 representatives from their local panels, and they can serve up to a 2 year term.

The panel supports networking across what is a diverse housing association group. It enables its members to influence business planning, strategy and Accord Group objectives, to work with staff to set service standards and targets, develop and review procedures, and to monitor performance.

The Panel wrote the Accord Group Resident Engagement Strategy. It plans and delivers the annual residents conference and communications to residents on the impact that the panel has made. It has developed and launched the resident inspector project which feeds into the panel, and it has shaped various other policy initiatives.

The main challenges remain fully embedding the panel into the governance structure and closing the gap between them and the Board.

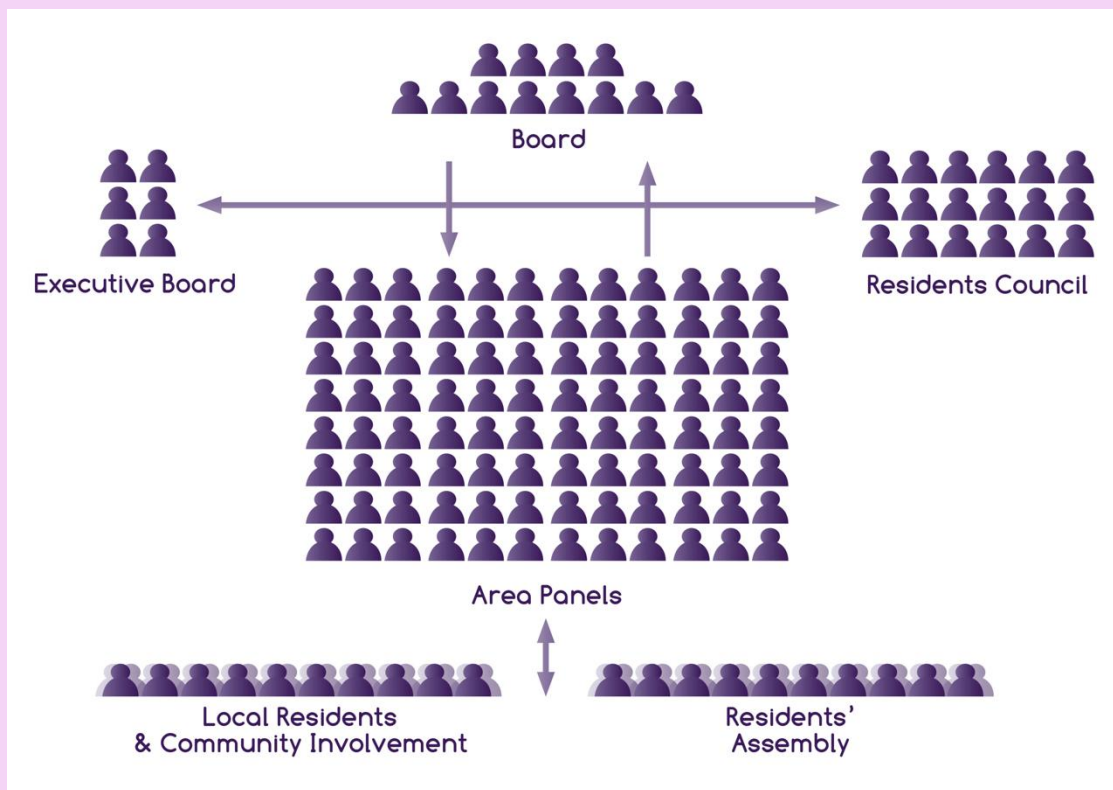
It can also be challenging to maintain equal representation between different members of the group and ensuring that all attendees feel involved in decision-making when some issues discussed are not directly relevant to their subsidiary organisation.

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Amicus Horizon manages 27,372 homes across the three areas of Kent, London and Surrey, and Sussex. Their resident governance structures are based primarily on nine Area Panels set up in 2009 feeding into a Resident Council.

Area Panels are made up of 8 elected residents along with 4 “independents” with resident chairs and vice-chairs. The residents are recruited through election, co-option or selection interview, dependent on the time of their recruitment in relation to the election cycle. Panel meetings are open to non-panel members, and one panel is trialing rotating non-member co-optees in order to give greater opportunities for non-members to be involved.



Area Panels focus on local offers, performance, local budget setting and area plans and involvement priorities. They have control of a £20K per annum Local Improvement Fund. They have a remit to maintain

local community links and to undertake local scrutiny programmes with staff and to recommend wider areas of scrutiny. They also nominate members to participate in resident only Stage 3 appeals panels.

The Residents Council is made up of 18 members nominated by the Area Panels. The Council's remit is to scrutinise, challenge and question decisions made by the Board. No business decision is passed without sign off from the Residents Council. It reviews and approves customer facing strategies prior to Board consideration, and it can commission scrutiny and policy reviews. It has an overarching role to support and develop Area Panels, and Council members are involved in recruiting key strategic staff. The Council also oversees a series of 8 task groups (made up of Council members and other residents) to reflect the 6 regulatory standards as well as homeownership and policy task groups, and a series of Regional Repairs and Maintenance Panels (RAMPs) to work alongside Area Panels on the asset management programme.

Amicus' governance and co-regulatory structure is serviced by a Governance Director, Manager and Officer. Area Panels, part of the governance structure, are co-ordinated by a full time Empowerment Manager. The Empowerment Manager supports Area Managers and local Customer Service teams, who administrate each Area Panel. Each Area Panel has access to a staff "buddy", and each Resident Council member has access to a senior staff "buddy".

Amicus list a number of benefits to their structure, most notably the removal of barriers and mistrust between residents and staff, improved performance, empowered residents and better business decisions. The challenges they identify include the balance between one organisation consistency and localism, involving residents in decision-making from "before the beginning", helping residents to understand complex business issues and the big picture, helping residents to challenge in a non-challenging way, and helping the weakest panels come up to the level of the best.

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The Barnsley Federation of Tenants & Residents Associations represents 20 Barnsley tenants groups and other tenants and residents. Berneslai Homes is Barnsley's ALMO managing just over 19,500 Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council homes.

During 2010, the two organisations worked together, involving over 80 tenants, to develop "The Berneslai Challenge" - an independent approach to scrutinising the performance and services provided by Berneslai Homes.

Four challenge panels have been established (Home, Tenancy, neighbourhood and community, Value for Money, and Involvement & Empowerment) reflecting the regulatory standards. The groups consist of between 4 and 6 residents, supported by an officer, and it is intended that they will each carry out two reviews per year. As well as this, the panels can issue a "Berneslai Challenge Card" if there is concern about a particular area of service.



Initial reviews were carried out in April 2011 with results feeding into Berneslai Homes' annual report in October 2011. Initially the panels, run solely by volunteers, were presented with a self-assessment report on each service, which they then considered and requested further information.

Reports from staff identify how effective the panels were. They considered the panel reports to be fair but identifying key areas for improvement – from which action plans have been developed. The Director of Finance commented that “Co-regulation through the Scrutiny Panels is a very important component in the drive for continued future high performance”.

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Bristol City Council is the 12th largest local authority in the country, and its "landlord services", part of a Neighbourhoods and City Development Directorate, manages nearly 28,300 homes.

The Council's Housing Management Board (HMB), consisting of 4 tenant members, 1 leaseholder member, 1 independent member, the Service Directors for Landlord Services and the Executive Member responsible for housing, and is an "Advisory Board". Its key role is to enable tenants to influence housing decisions before they are taken, but it is not fully clear how they fit into the Council's decision-making structure. Meeting every six weeks, they also share in setting the service's vision and direction and influence strategy.

The HMB is supported by 6 Area Housing Forums which are currently under review because they have been poorly attended and sometimes duplicate work done by the Council's 33 neighbourhood forums - and a set of Service User Group Panels.

The Council also operates a set of particularly effective Service User Group Panels. They enable groups of self-nominated tenants to work with Service Managers to consider service performance, to scrutinise operational delivery, to make suggestions for improvement and to take part in service improvement projects. Panels have been involved in a various activities including leaflet/letter re-design, recruitment and contractor selection (for repairs and ASB), policies and procedures, decision making on use of garage sites, developing service standards, and the Council's self assessment and annual report processes.

The Council is currently working to establish a tenant-led scrutiny panel, supported by tenant inspectors, and TPAS has been recruited to provide training and development to support this activity.

The Bristol Housing Partnership - a forum for social landlords in Bristol - has provided joint events and training for tenants, but as yet, there are no plans to establish a Bristol Collaborative Tenant Panel.

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Carrick Housing manages 3,754 council houses in Carrick owned by Cornwall Council. It supports the District Forum of Tenants, incorporated as an independent not for profit company in 2008, whose committee membership is made up of Carrick Housing tenants from tenants and residents associations and locally elected tenant area representatives.

Since Carrick Housing was set up in 2003 and before that, the Forum scrutinises and reviews proposals from the Council and Carrick Housing regarding housing issues to ensure the views and interests of all tenants are represented before any decisions are made.



In 2006, Carrick Housing formed a tenant inspector programme to scrutinise three or four service performance or standards identified by the Forum. Made up of some Forum members and other tenants not involved in other ways (eg. in 2010, 7 Forum members and 9 non-Forum members were trained as inspectors), the inspector group membership changes from programme to programme. Recent inspections have included repairs & maintenance, customer care, gas servicing communication, ground source heating, & the new tenant experience.



A particular challenge has been council staff and members being unused to tenants scrutinising their activities in relation to scrutiny of council services, such as allocations. Whilst tenant inspections have been resource intensive, the Tenant Inspection Group allowed tenants to get involved in a way that was flexible to their needs and was purely about the area they were interested in. Tenants valued getting to know and understand the complexities of the service, talking to staff and other residents, and making recommendations from an informed perspective.

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CityWest Homes manages about 21,700 homes for Westminster City Council, 9,134 are leaseholder homes. In 2010, residents, CityWest Homes and the Council agreed that the existing engagement structure was not working, and that there was a need to reach out to a diverse group of residents and to have better knowledge of how housing policies were affecting residents.

The review undertaken resulted in the formation of four Area Management Committees (AMCs) to sit alongside four new area service centres. The AMCs will monitor performance, assist with resolving disputes, ensure effective local communications, consider small pots of funding for residents and challenge CityWest Homes on local policy changes. 50 residents applied to the AMCs and recruitment was through interviews carried out by resident representatives, local area managers and Board members.

This approach has resulted in a broad diversity of residents across the AMCs (a reflective gender, ethnicity and age mix), a mix of skills, and many residents new to involvement bringing new ideas and thinking. The challenge will be to ensure that this mix of people is retained. A Board member attends each AMC meeting to ensure information from them feeds into the Board, and the Council sends representatives to some AMC meetings.



Each of the AMCs nominate two members to form a Strategic Committee to consider CityWest Homes policy and strategy as well as central Government housing policy changes.

The Strategic Committee and the AMCs will have the power to undertake reviews on any aspect of policy to ensure that residents' priorities are considered. Since 2009, CityWest Homes has also had residents on a Stage 2 Complaints Panel, working with a Board member and CityWest Homes staff to review complaints and make recommendations.

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## CRAWLEY HOMES

Local Authority

9,500+ homes

Crawley Homes manages over 8,100 rented homes and over 1,450 leasehold homes for Crawley Borough Council. A new resident involvement structure was established in 2011 comprising of 3 tenant panels working with an existing network of Neighbourhood Forums and the Crawley Homes Involving People database. Recruitment to all three panels is through application and interview.

The main panel is the Tenant & Leaseholder Action Panel (TLAP), launched in July 2011, which has a remit to monitor the work of Crawley Homes, to independently check performance, to advise on standards and local offers, and to participate in the production of the annual report to tenants. The Panel checks Stage 2 complaints to ensure they have been dealt with correctly, and nominates 3 members to the Crawley Homes Advisory Group which considers the HRA budget and housing priorities with Service Heads and Councillors.



Alongside TLAP two service related panels (on planned maintenance & repairs and tenancy & neighbourhood) are being established to scrutinise services. Arrears and money owing from former tenants is a particular area identified by TLAP for an early scrutiny exercise.

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Cross Keys Homes' residents scrutiny panel was set up in October 2010 with nine members initially drawn, through an application and interview process, from existing involvement groups, such as area panel members, tenant inspectors and policy review group members. The 12 places on the panel are now advertised to Cross Keys Homes' "key contacts" database, with an aim to ensure that a third of the group are newly involved residents. The group has also successfully brought together a diversity of people – an even split of men and women, tenants from sheltered and general needs housing, and tenants who are working, retired and some with disabilities.

The panel reports directly to Cross Keys Homes' board and carries out four scrutiny exercises per year focussing on key service areas and areas where improvement is required. The group works together well and Cross Keys Homes considers that it challenges their "way of thinking by presenting a different perspective".



Cross Keys Homes also supports a range of other panels, including area panels across four areas of Peterborough, a resident liaison group which deals with broader housing issues, a one equality committee where residents and staff work together on diversity issues, and a policy review group.

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Eden Housing Association provides homes in the Allerdale, Carlisle and Eden districts of Cumbria. Providing rural homes and sustaining rural communities lies at the heart of their ethos. Their “Performance Posse” was established in 2009 to scrutinise and challenge the performance of Eden.

It was set up as a sub-group of Eden Community Homes & Organisations (ECHO), the representative body for Eden residents, because prior to establishing the group, performance information had not been looked at in detail at ECHO meetings. The Performance Posse has set repairs and anti social behaviour as their priority, and have scrutinised performance figures in depth, changing the way that performance is reported. The Posse have also given feedback on proposed surveys, scrutinised survey results and the action plan developed after an Audit Commission Short Notice Inspection.

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## FAMILY MOSAIC

Housing Association

20,000+ homes

Family Mosaic are one of the largest housing providers in London and Essex, providing affordable homes to rent and buy as well as services to people who need extra support. They have around 23,000 homes for rent in 51 neighbourhoods.

Family Mosaic recruited a ten person Scrutiny Panel in May 2011 using a skills based selection process, with an additional 12 associate members who support them in reviewing performance. Training, either external consultants or from staff, is available to all Scrutiny Panel members and associates. The aim of the training is to enable panel members to effectively hold the landlord to account. 3 panel members will step down each year to enable new members to come forward. The setting up of the panel has brought a new duty to the Board to formally respond to tenants' views.

A particular feature of the Family Mosaic approach has been to employ one of its tenants to support and facilitate the development of the Panel.

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**FESTIVAL HOUSING  
GROUP**

Housing Association  
Group

8,947 homes

Festival Housing Group brings together Elgar and Spa Housing Associations together making them the largest provider of affordable housing in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Their Tenant Scrutiny Panel was set up alongside 12 specific service panels in 2008 following a review of resident involvement. The intention behind setting up the panel was to enable a wider group of residents to participate, particularly in relation to strategic issues. The Panel was originally made up of 6 residents recruited through an application form and interview process and 3 staff members. The resident membership was increased to 8 in 2010, and an increasingly close working relationship with the Board and staff based on mutual respect has led to the Panel becoming an integral part of governance.

It is anticipated that staff mentoring will taper off and the Panel become more independent and self-determining. Tenants on the Panel have led on the development of three reviews, based on performance and Status survey information. It is intended that the outcome of these reviews will be published to tenants and to the Board.

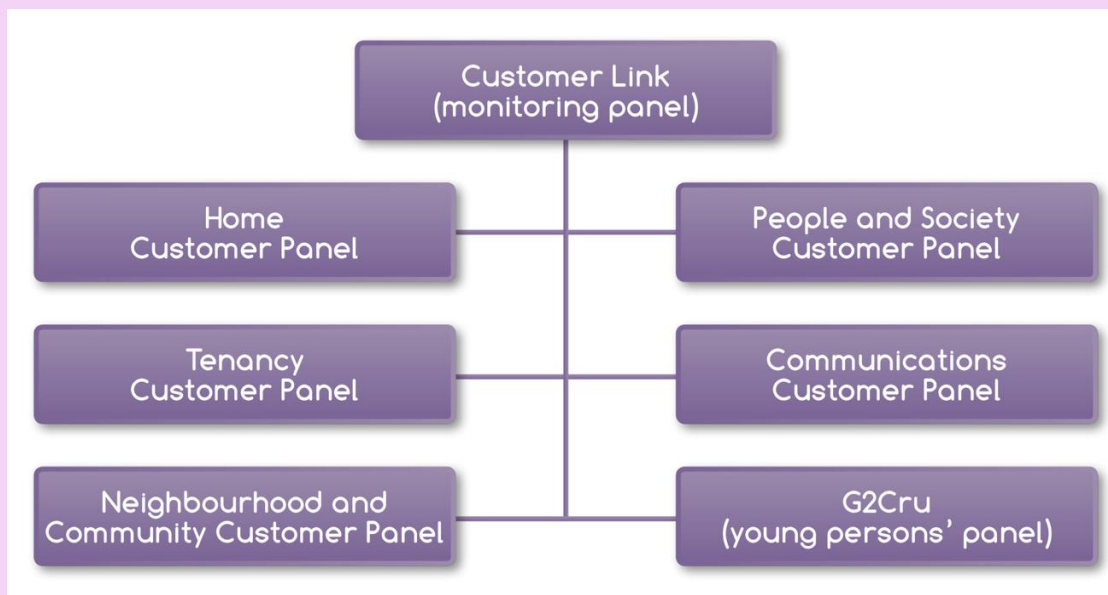
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Gentoo, a housing association based in the North East split into 5 management areas, refashioned their previous 12 Customer Focus Groups into a set of customer panels matching regulatory standards. Panel chairs and vice chairs come together in the “Customer Link” monitoring panel, and the whole structure links to Gentoo’s Resident Scrutiny Group which has links to all other formal involvement structures including local management committees and to the Gentoo Sunderland and Group Boards.

The main benefit of this new structure is that the panels have been designed to be outcome based, with a range of practical activities taking place in the panels.



Tenants are restricted to participated in up to two panels, and this has led to new tenants getting involved and more productive meetings. The challenges of the structure has been the steep learning curve, residents adapting to the change, and the sometimes slow progress due to the larger volume of work to ensure that involvement activities in each panel cuts through all agendas.

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GOSPORT BOROUGH COUNCIL

Local Authority

3,186 homes

The Borough of Gosport is set on a peninsula on the Hampshire coast. Gosport Borough Council (GBC) owns 3186 homes, which includes 288 leaseholders.

In June 2011, GBC's Housing Service Unit replaced its tenant participation framework for a new structure. The new framework allows tenants and leaseholders to become involved in a way that suits them. The new structure has elements of participation which interlink all opportunities for getting involved and aims to improve the housing service, achieving better value for money and raise tenant satisfaction.

A Customer Opinion Panel (COP) is an open meeting for all tenants and leaseholders of the Council. It meets quarterly to discuss issues which affect tenants and guides the Council to make sure services meet tenant needs and aspirations. The COP plays an important role in making decisions and monitoring the housing service.

GBC is also in the process of setting up a Scrutiny Group, which it is intended will undertake projects to scrutinise the housing service and make recommendations for improvement.

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Green Square Group provides homes throughout Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

The Group provides a variety of resident involvement mechanisms including a Residents Forum consisting of up to 14 residents for those wishing to attend meetings and a Citizens Panel of over 300 residents, for those wishing to take part through email and telephone surveys. These are used to represent residents' views, being consulted on changes to policies and procedures, the "Resident Business Plan", and considering how residents can be involved in decisions and in monitoring performance.

A Residents Scrutiny Panel (RSP) of ten openly recruited residents assess Green Square's performance, monitor complaints, decide on areas of service that need investigating, and arrange for reports. Also having overall responsibility for Continuous Improvement for the Group, the panel is seen as an integral part of the governance structure - independent from the Green Square Group Board but reporting directly to it, and having full access to all board papers (including confidential papers). The panel has an open remit to conduct inquiries into any activities (ie. not just customer services) and is currently carrying out an inquiry into Green Square's governance review. They also have a "call for action" power if they are concerned about the response they receive to a recommendation.

The panel was initially set up in 2008, and an independent chair (an ex-chief executive of a larger housing association) was employed to support and mentor the new team to enable them to build knowledge, skills and confidence. Staff set up and ran initial panel recruitment processes, involving residents in decision-making, but the RSP is now Chaired by a resident member and they now run their own recruitment with administrative support from staff.

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The London Borough of Greenwich's housing panel structure was established in 2001 with the aid of external consultants following extensive consultation which showed that residents wanted face to face meetings with their local manager to discuss local housing service issues in their communities.



The Panel structure has evolved over time but continues to include a borough wide panel which enables strategic debate and nine local area housing panels. Panels are divided into about ten constituencies to ensure each neighbourhood is well represented. As well as this, a Diversity Review Board enables honest debate across a cross section of tenant representatives about multi cultural changes to the borough's population and impacts on services. All meetings are open to the public, and the panels are chaired by a tenant (with the vice-chair being a local councillor).

Each Panel is supported by the Participation Team who set agendas and track progress on the development of action plans. Tenant representatives have played an active role shaping the Decent Homes programme and numerous policy and service changes, which have been supported by a mystery shopping scheme, tenant void inspections, and a healthy walk leadership programme. Tenants get wide benefits from their involvement in area panels, including access to funded college courses, a wide range of training opportunities offered by the Participation Team and national training at Trafford Hall.

Tenants can also be paid £20 for a 2 hour attendance at 4 panel meetings per year which is credited to their rent account, although most representatives do not claim this payment. Panel Chairs are issued with a mobile phone and mystery shoppers are paid in vouchers.

Partnerships have been formed with the PCT, Charlton Athletic FC, local colleges and others which have led to tenants personally adopting healthier lifestyles and gaining access to work.

The current economic climate has led to decreasing attendance at Panel meetings and fewer tenant networking opportunities. This has led to consideration about how to focus debate with tenants about their communities, lifestyle choices and employment opportunities, as well as ongoing debates about future investment in the homes to reflect consumer need and the needs of an ageing population. This new approach includes a dedicated online Housing Panel to reach those who can't attend meetings or who prefer to engage online.

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The Guinness Partnership is one of the largest affordable housing and care providers in the country. They own and manage more than 60,000 homes and provide housing and care services for 120,000 customers. Three regional housing companies (Guinness Hermitage, Guinness Northern Counties & Guinness South) provide local housing services, whilst Guinness Care and Support provides national care and support services.



Their Customer Strategy Group (CSG), set up in 2008, has evolved into an effective part of the Partnership's governance structures responsible for helping to shape and influence the Partnership's strategic plan, customer policies and services. It has a formal role to endorse new customer policies and to ensure that the consultation process leading to the development of new policy has been robust.

It has also recently taken on a scrutiny and challenge role to ensure that the Partnership Board's aims are met and to advise the Board about resident priorities.

Membership of the CSG is open to 3 resident representatives nominated by each member of the Partnership alongside 3 individuals not recruited through a partnership member structure with a trustee chair nominated by the Partnership Board. The CSG operates Communications, Appointments and Training sub-groups and members of the group are given specific portfolios such as Development, Equality & Diversity, Worklessness, and Care & Support.

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Guinness Northern Counties (GNC), a member of the Guinness Partnership, managing homes in the Midlands and the North, launched their 12 member Scrutiny Council in April 2011. The role of the Council is to take an independent view of and scrutinise GNC's performance against expected standards and corporate "dashboard". It operates a scrutiny "referral" scheme, and it can commission staff and customer interviews and reports to carry out its work (with the support of a team of "Incheckers" set up in 2011 to support the Council with inspections and questionnaires). It makes recommendations to GNC's Board and Corporate Management Team and publishes an annual report to all customers.

A scrutiny test case on customer service in repairs and maintenance in 2011 has had a major impact on GNC who have agreed all their recommendations and have drawn up an action plan to implement changes. Their recommendations included addressing a culture of staff blaming others for weaknesses; introducing more robust line management arrangements; additional customer service training; improvements in accountability through publishing regional performance information; holding a series of Business Objectives Roadshows attended by 605 staff; and setting up a new Repairs Hub Service. These changes have already led to improvements in satisfaction ratings, and Scrutiny Council members have been asked to share their experiences at various conferences.

As well as monitoring improvements from the complaints scrutiny programme, the Council's aims in 2012 are to particularly focus on voids and repairs performance, as well as ensuring that it improves its communications with customers, staff and other involvement groups.

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Helena Partnerships is the largest social housing provider in St Helens, Merseyside, and one of the TSA's "Co-regulatory Champions". Helena's approach to scrutiny has five key elements, one of which is the Customer Excellence Panel (CEP).

The CEP is a group of tenants who review Helena's performance, service delivery and value for money to identify where improvements can be made. The Panel sets its own review programme, commissions mystery shops and has full access to Helena's performance and complaints information, customer surveys, activity-based costing, GIS mapping and customer insight data.

The CEP has also developed its own approach to service reviews, terms of reference and code of conduct. The Panel's Chair and Vice Chair attend Helena Board meetings and, to date, the board has supported all of its decisions.

The Panel's achievements are impressive. It was instrumental in developing Helena's Customer Excellence website ([www.excellenceathelena.co.uk](http://www.excellenceathelena.co.uk)), a resource for tenants to find out how the organisation has responded to feedback and share best practice with other housing associations. It has also carried out its first tenant-led peer review with more planned for the coming year, and is set to host a series of webinars to engage with others involved in scrutiny.

Currently, the CEP is working with partner organisations to co-ordinate a CIH qualification in Resident Scrutiny which will be offered to tenant volunteers involved in scrutiny. It also works closely with Helena's Young Inspectors – a group of under 25s who play an active role in testing and challenging services while gaining transferable skills for employment. The Panel's work has been responsible for a number of practical changes to Helena services which reflect tenants' wishes and deliver better value for money, including tailored rent statements, extended repairs appointment times and changes to the complaints service.

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Hull's Tenants Forum was established to represent tenants and residents with regards the quality of Hull's homes and housing services, with major housing issues being considered by the Forum before decisions are made. The Forum also discusses cross tenure housing, environmental and other issues with the Council and others.

Membership of the Forum is open to all tenants and residents, but to become a member, tenants and residents have to complete a "Housing Opinion Panel" application form, which offers options for involvement. Membership is also open to tenants and residents associations and discretionary "stakeholder" membership is available to other people or organisations. Relevant portfolio holders and the chair of Hull Housing Scrutiny Committee are invited to attend Tenants Forum meetings as observers. The Forum elects 6 of its members to act as a Forum Committee.



Hull City Council also supports 4 Performance Monitoring Panels covering involvement & empowerment (including a set of equalities focus groups and a complaints process panel), repairs & maintenance, tenancy issues, and neighbourhood and community. These panels are also open to all Hull City Council tenants and leaseholders, and any concerns identified are fed back to the Tenants Forum.

Tenant Forum members and Hull resident involvement staff are currently in the process of recruiting to a 12 member Independent Tenant Review Panel (ITRP).

The ITRP will review and, if necessary, challenge Hull's housing services to improve performance. The panel aims to carry out 4 evidence based reviews per year. They will self-select review areas based on requests from the Forum, other tenant bodies, or from staff. Having discussed their recommendations with relevant officers, their final reports will be submitted to the Tenants Forum.

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Founded in 1985 to help homeless and poorly housed Irish people in the Kilburn area, Innisfree is a small housing association whose primary mission remains to address the needs of the Irish community in London.

Formed in May 2010, Innisfree's Tenant Scrutiny Panel, its first successful resident involvement venture, has quickly become an established and respected force within the association.



The panel has nine members, drawn from general, supported and sheltered housing. During the last year, they have developed Innisfree's "Customer Service Promise" (their local standards) and have considered policies on complaints, disabled adaptations and the fire safety process.

They have also assisted with the production of two annual reports to tenants, and have advised Innisfree on their planned website redesign. They have also commented on Government consultation documents.

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Isos Housing's tenant structures were formed following a merger in April 2011 of group subsidiaries Isos, Castle Morpeth Housing, Milecastle and NomadE5 to become the one company Isos Housing, which now manages almost 12,000 homes across the North-East.



The merger led to the formation of a North and a South Area Panel each consisting of up to 10 members (7 tenants or leaseholders, 1 Group board member and two independent members). In addition, the Northumberland Area Panel currently has up to 3 Northumberland County Council nominees. With interest in the panels high, the tenant members were recruited following publicity, taster sessions and semi-formal interviews. The panels are a new initiative, but are being seen as a vital governance component in the new association - an important alternative to tenant board membership. They will focus on strategic issues and will develop other involvement activities.

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**METROPOLITAN HOUSING  
PARTNERSHIP**

Housing Association  
group

35,000+ homes

Metropolitan Housing Partnership (MHP), through its member organisations (MHT London, Metropolitan Home Ownership, Metropolitan Support, Granta, Spirita and Clapham Park Homes), manages over 35,000 homes in London, Cambridgeshire, the Midlands and South Yorkshire.

The National Resident Group (NRG) is made up of 12 residents receiving MHP and/or care or support services (independent of the MHP Board). NRG Members are selected through a recruitment process on their ability to constructively challenge and to represent the views of the diverse customer profile. Its role is to monitor MHP performance, to comment on MHP board reports, to scrutinise the MHP involvement approach and assess its impact, and to consider customer facing policy reviews.

The NRG is supported by three Scrutiny Committees (for MHP's North & South areas and for Care and Support) made up of 12 residents chosen through a recruitment process (independent of the MHP Board and NRG). The committees monitor regional housing performance against local offers, interpret regional resident feedback and comment on service improvement plans.

MHP also operates a service audit programme as part of its performance and review function consisting of customer audit inspections, mystery shopping and customer access audits. Six customer-led audit inspections are carried out each year that mirror the previous Audit Commission Short Notice inspection regime.

MHP's Service Audit Team recruit, train and mentor residents ensuring that there is a large enough pool of empowered and qualified auditors to carry out inspections. The NRG identifies the services to be inspected, and scrutiny committees are also able to commission a local inspection. Both receive inspection reports alongside senior staff and the Board's Customer First Committee.

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Moat own and manage over 15,000 homes throughout the South East, developing around 500 additional new homes each year.

The Moat Residents Forum (MRF) has been established to influence key decisions on behalf of residents at a strategic and senior level, to receive monitoring reports on key service areas and suggest ways to improve the service, and to promote resident involvement in Moat.

MRF consists of five residents from each of the three local area panels, a client from supported housing and a home owner representative. Senior members of staff attend MRF meetings, and MRF representatives also attend the Housing & Customer Services Committee (a sub-committee of the Board).

The area panels, aligned to Moat's business areas, look at performance information and issues, consider feedback from individual residents, and review the content and progress of local offers. Alongside these structures, MRF operates two sub-groups - a Policy, Procedure and Strategy Working Party which reviews proposed changes to policies, and the Moat Property Services Group which meets with contractors and reviews repairs and planned works performance and progress.

Moat also provides a number of other opportunities for resident involvement, including mystery shopping and tenant inspection. A review of their strategy for resident involvement is currently underway with MRF and the area panels to reduce any duplication, to make lines of communication clearer, to ensure distinct responsibilities for each group and to ensure that the structure is supported by appropriate training and development for residents and staff.

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**NORTH STAR  
HOUSING GROUP**

**Housing Association  
Group**

**3,000 homes**

Formed from the urban based Endeavour Housing Association (2,200 homes) and the rural Teesdale Housing (800 homes), North Star Housing Group established the North Star Tenants Voice in 2010 to act as a scrutiny panel.

11 tenants have been recruited to the panel from an initial group of 22 who had expressed interest. This group have received ongoing support from TPAS as an Independent Tenant Advisor, who have facilitated their first scrutiny programme carried out in Autumn 2011 and reporting to the Board in March 2012.



The North Star Tenants Voice's members are independent of North Star's governance, but they have a direct link to the Board and can influence the association's priorities. Some considerable work was done to develop appropriate links with the Board.

The panel can choose what areas it wishes to scrutinise, and has received over a year's training from TPAS and from association staff



on services. North Star consider that the independence of the panel, ongoing support from TPAS, the differing urban and rural areas represented, and enabling tenants to set the pace - resulting in retention of active volunteers - as important features. They also consider flexibility to have been important - "we were clear that where we started from may not be where we ended up - it wasn't, it was better".

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## NOTTING HILL HOUSING

Housing Association

25,000 homes

Notting Hill Housing is one of the largest providers and developers of affordable homes in the London area, and manages over 25,000 homes.

It has set up four Local Scrutiny Panels in London (a additional North London Panel will be set up in 2012) to enable residents to discuss how Notting Hill Housing is performing in each of the areas. Each panel has up to 12 residents who work with housing management staff and the Resident Involvement Team to challenge and scrutinise Notting Hill Housing's performance data. Recruitment is through a basic application form and half hour interview.

As well as these groups, Notting Hill Housing has set up specific panels for various areas, such as a Leaseholders Action Group, a Disability Forum, a Communications Panel, a Design Group and an Annual Report Working Group.

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Paradigm Housing Group, providing housing and support services throughout the South, East Midlands and West London, has established a team of Resident Internal Auditors (RIAs), who have been recruited and trained to work alongside Paradigm's internal auditors (Mazars).

This approach was requested by Paradigm's Residents Forum, whose members are elected from four area panels. The Forum is currently evolving from being a discussion forum for policy & strategy into a central location for the receipt of performance reports and face to face feedback from service heads. This enables them to make recommendations to Paradigm's management and Board.

The concept of having residents trained and mentored by professional auditors to become "junior auditors" held a strong appeal to both residents and staff as a value for money approach to resident scrutiny.

Each RIA works on several audits a year, with findings reported back to the Residents Forum to help inform it about service delivery. Three RIAs were recruited through a widely advertised process, two of whom had not been involved at all, and the third having only had neighbourhood based experience.

Whilst applicants were told that they could claim expenses, it was not advertised widely that the role would be paid. To prevent a conflict of interest, the Residents Forum chose that a Forum member could not be an RIA. Training for the RIAs was provided jointly by Mazars and in-house. Mazars have also mentored the three RIAs, and this, as well as early positive feedback from managers, has helped to build the confidence and skills of the RIAs.

In the first year (2011-12), the RIAs chose audits from the existing Audit Plan, selecting those that were most customer-facing. Six audits were originally identified, but that grew to nine to be completed by Spring 2012 (including responsive repairs, neighbourhood management, asset management, health and safety, complaints and void management). The Residents Forum will be closely involved in choosing future audits.

RIA involvement in scoping audits has grown, and their increasing resident focussed involvement has helped to ensure Paradigm's internal audits are testing the impact of services for residents. This is an evolving process, but Mazars have commented that "these changes have strengthened the way audits are carried out at Paradigm".

RIA findings are reported in the internal audit report, with any RIA conclusions accredited to them. Once agreed by the service manager, the report is submitted to Paradigm's Audit Committee (previously made up solely of Board members, but now including a Residents Forum representative as well). A summary of the report is then forwarded to the Residents Forum.

Paradigm and Mazars consider that RIA involvement is changing the internal culture about the role that residents can play in helping to scrutinise services. It has also helped to raise the profile of internal audit in Paradigm, and has become one of the foundation blocks of the self-assessment process carried out between tenants and Board.

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**PARAGON COMMUNITY  
HOUSING GROUP**

**Housing Association  
group**

**c9,000 homes**

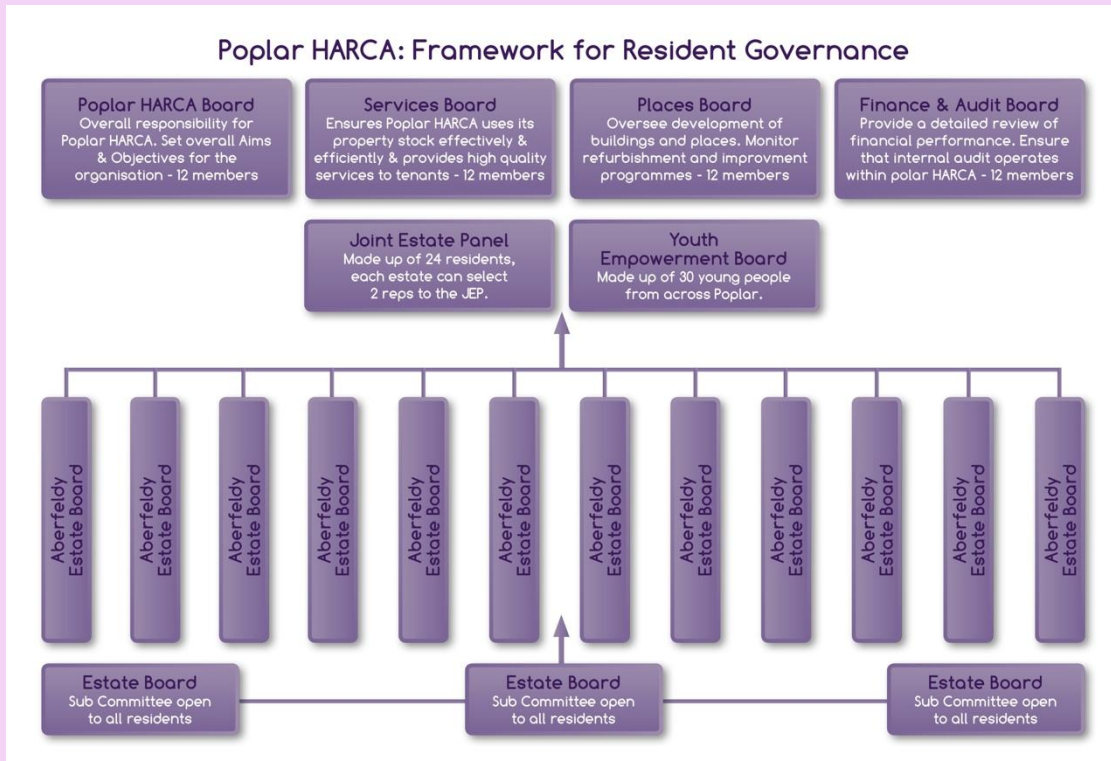
Owning and managing almost 9,000 homes in Elmbridge, Richmond upon Thames, Kingston upon Thames, Wandsworth and surrounding boroughs, Paragon Community Housing Group consists of Elmbridge Housing Trust and Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust.

Two local resident panels enable active tenants to debate issues with each of the Trusts on local housing management issues. A Residents Council has recently been set up across the Paragon Group to manage the development of co-regulation, to deal with Group-wide policies and initiatives, to act as the manager of Paragon's "Challenge Fund", and to promote Group-wide resident involvement. The Council was recruited following an advertising campaign that attracted a number of residents who had previously not been involved. Paragon's resident involvement structure blends its previously existing local networks with a new Group-wide strategic group.

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Poplar HARCA (Housing and Regeneration Community Association) owns and manages 8,500 homes across twelve estates in economically deprived areas of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It is governed by a resident majority membership Board, with three Focus Boards, also with resident majorities.



Up to 25 residents are democratically elected onto twelve Estate Boards that represent each of the estates. These Boards have their own local budget to implement local improvements and are responsible for monitoring service on their local Estate. The Joint Estate Panel (JEP) is a 24-member Panel made up of representatives from each Estate Board, whose main role is reviewing and refining policies. It also considers new initiatives and reports on live complaints. The JEP may invite senior management and other staff to report on particular performance issues.

Poplar HARCA also supports a Youth Empowerment Board (YEB), made up of 30 young people aged 16-25 from across the 12 Estates. The YEB have similar functions to the JEP and its members are invited to participate at the strategic level through the main Boards.

A self-directed group of twelve qualified NVQ Level 3 residents inspect performance and report findings on service areas. Their reports go to the main Board or relevant staff group and are shared with Estate Boards and the JEP. Poplar HARCA is currently reviewing additional scrutiny groups set up in April 2011, because the various existing structures and resident inspectors were already providing effective scrutiny.

Resident Board members are involved in all Stage 3 complaints. With a sounding board and a resident empowerment team delivering bespoke development leading to accredited training, Poplar HARCA's resident-driven approach has over 300 residents directly participating in decision-making, complaints and performance monitoring at various levels.

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Community Gateway Association (CGA) was set up in 2005, taking transfer of Preston City Council's 6,000 homes. It was set up as a tenant owned housing association, with full (voting) membership open to all tenants and leaseholders who pay a service charge and associate (non-voting) membership open to all other residents in CGA local community areas.

The Gateway Tenant Committee (GTC) is made up of up to 30 members elected by the membership. The CGA's 7 tenant board members are elected by and from the GTC, and continue to be members of the GTC. The GTC is an integral part of CGA governance, it being seen as a Board sub-group in relation to all customer facing activity. It considers all policies and strategies prior to Board meetings, and is responsible for shaping the Resident Involvement Strategy.



The GTC has always scrutinised performance and service delivery. The group receives the same performance information as Board and is able to challenge members of the senior management team who attend GTC meetings. GTC members also sit on service specific action groups where they work with managers and front line staff to monitor performance and improve service delivery. There are currently 17 action groups which cover topics ranging from tenancy enforcement, allocations and environment to supported housing, communications and worklessness.



It is the responsibility on each action group to ensure that wider consultation and involvement is carried out as required. Vehicles for involvement and consultation include workshops, focus groups, door to door or postal surveys and road shows.

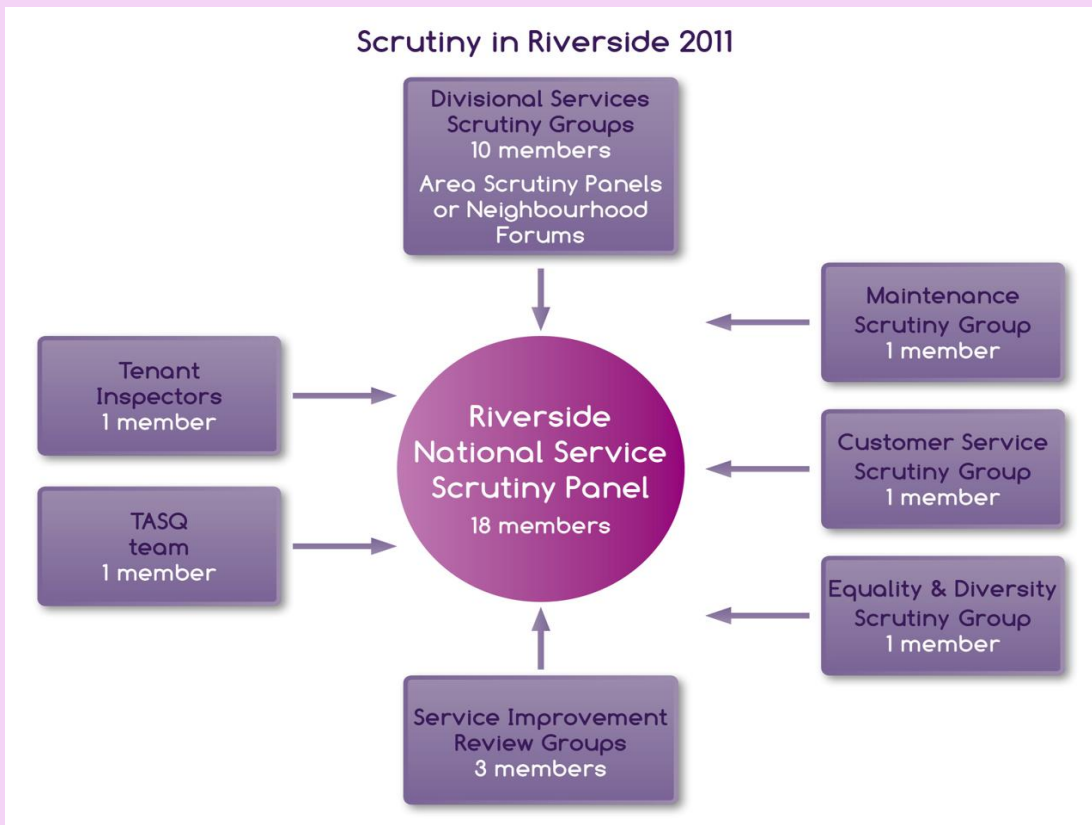
In addition, GTC (excluding its tenant board members) has drawn up a scrutiny programme developed on the basis of customer feedback and performance information. They recently completed a review of environmental services and members from the panel presented their report to the Board. The recommendations they put forward were agreed by Board and are currently being actioned. The panel is supported by staff from CGA's Business Improvement Team, placing co-regulation at the heard of the organisation.

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One of the largest providers of affordable and social housing in the country, Riverside owns and manages over 50,000 homes, housing around 85,000 people across 169 local authorities. Recently amalgamating its social housing subsidiaries in order to maximise financial capacity and lower overheads, Riverside now operates as a single asset owning charitable housing association.



An Executive Committee of the Riverside Federation of Tenants and Residents acts at the “Tenant Panel” for Riverside overall. They are responsible for the promotion of tenant engagement in Riverside and hold the Board to account on behalf of all tenants and residents in Riverside. They report back to all Riverside tenants and residents each year through their own annual report, and are accountable to “divisional groups” who select their representatives.

A Riverside National Services Scrutiny Panel (RNSSP) made up of representatives from other scrutiny bodies, assesses scrutiny outputs across Riverside and draws conclusions about the effectiveness of Riverside services. Playing a role equivalent to the Audit Committee, it reports directly to the Group Board and to the Federation Executive.

Using local service, complaints, and inspection information Local Service Scrutiny Panels scrutinise service delivery and assess service effectiveness in Riverside's local areas. The format of Local Panels is determined locally from locally active tenants and residents. Local Panels report on their findings to the NRSSP, but it is expected that most activity will be local, led by local tenants and residents, and resolved by local staff.

Three service specific scrutiny panels consider the key service areas of Customer Service, Equality & Diversity, and Maintenance. Reporting to the NRSSP, they undertake detailed service assessments with the lead Director for each service area, commissioning tenant inspections and tenant audits when appropriate.

Riverside also operates Service Improvement Review Groups with tenants involved to review particular services as determined by the Board on the basis of annual satisfaction survey information or concerns expressed by the Federation Executive.

Tenants involved in scrutiny participate in a recruitment exercise aimed at testing their skills and aptitudes and are recruited for a three year period. Those involved in scrutiny are not able to be members of Riverside's Board or Divisional Boards. Members of the local and specific scrutiny groups and the service improvement review groups are appointed by the Federation Executive.

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## ROCHDALE BOROUGHWIDE HOUSING

ALMO (to  
become HA)

13,700 homes

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH), currently Rochdale Borough Council's ALMO, will take ownership, following a positive tenant transfer ballot, of the Council's 13,700 homes on 26<sup>th</sup> March. Whilst transfer from council to tenant ownership and membership is not new, what is new about RBH is that the new society will be owned jointly by tenants and staff – ie. those receiving services and those providing them. This will be a unique “mutual” approach to self-regulation and co-governance.



RBH's tenant and staff membership, and a Representative Body will play a governance role in the new organisation alongside RBH's board. Membership rights will be built into RBH's constitution (including any changes to the constitution). The Representative Body will be made up of 15 elected tenants, 3 representatives elected from tenant management organisations, 8 elected employees, 2 council nominees, and 3 others appointed from partner organisations.

The Representative Body, with the power to appoint and remove non-executive Board members, will define RBH's values and ethos, will scrutinise strategic and business decisions and will work with the Board on service improvements.

Alongside these co-governance structures, a Tenant Scrutiny Commission, made up of tenants only who were openly recruited, has been established to provide challenge to RBH and to the Representative Body.

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**ROOFTOP HOUSING  
GROUP**

Housing Association

6,000 homes

Evesham based Rooftop Housing Group owns or manages 6,000 homes across Worcestershire and Gloucestershire.

Its long standing 20 member Customer Panel has become increasingly more effective as the central hub of resident involvement at Rooftop. It monitors Rooftop performance and is involved in reviewing policies and strategies, with representatives from the Panel also involved in monitoring service standards and in a Service Review Group.

In 2009, following informal work done by some Panel members to survey residents, the Customer Panel proposed the establishment of the Resident Action Team – a team of residents paid to carry out resident surveys and other customer research work.

A programme of customer research has been developed which supports the monitoring of the Rooftop service standards. The Resident Action Team was set up in 2010 and has carried out over 1,500 customer surveys during 2010-2011, as well as carrying out customer survey work for Wychavon District Council and the Worcestershire Family Intervention Project.

The Customer Panel has also played an increasingly central role in Rooftop's neighbourhood and community programme, making decisions on the investment of the Rooftop Community Fund, actively supporting the neighbourhood walkabout programme and local community projects.

Rooftop also established the Independence at Home Group in 2010 to enable older residents to have their say, has worked with a Gypsy Roma Traveller group on the development of a specific site, and is working to set up a young people's panel as part of its G3 support and care service for younger people.

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## SALIX HOMES

ALMO

10,500 homes

Salix Homes is an ALMO, managing 10,500 homes for Salford City Council. Originally established in 2007, Salix's 11 member Customer Senate has three roles – to scrutinise services and performance; to monitor “level 1” performance on behalf of the ALMO Board; and to act as a Stage 3 Complaints Panel. The Senate is strongly supported by the Board and staff placing it at the heart of the organisation and it has generated a lot of interest amongst residents.

Feeding into and represented on the Senate, there are three Customer Panels that deal with policy & procedure change consultation, monitoring “level 2” performance, and monitoring service action plans. A team of customer inspectors feed into the panels and are commissioned by the Customer Senate to undertake reality checking during scrutiny activities. All of the groups contribute to selecting scrutiny programmes, and there are many opportunities for the wider tenant body to get involved through reality checking and consultation.

Salix considers that a range of factors are important to their successful resident involvement approach – the ethos of partnership working, the Senate reporting directly to the Board, delegation of performance monitoring to the Senate, guaranteed access to all information, delivery of recommendations, investing time in training and mentoring Senators, and identifying the impact of the Senate and ensuring that the wider tenant body is aware of it.

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Serving a culturally diverse town, with nearly a third of its population coming from black and minority ethnic communities, Slough Borough Council has 6,400 tenancies and about 1,000 leaseholders.

Slough Housing Service supports a Customer Senate, whose main role is to scrutinise the service's performance. A recruitment campaign to the Senate in April 2011 recruited 8 members, who have been through intensive training - completing CIH Level 3 in Resident Scrutiny - delivered by Thames Valley Housing. This training has helped to develop Senate members as community leaders.

The purpose of the Customer Senate is to consider performance against national and local standards and with regards agreed goals, objectives and benchmarks. It also scrutinises strategy development and use of complaints to improve service delivery and access. The Senate ensures that customers are measuring, testing and monitoring the services they receive, recommending improvements to the housing service. It is also anticipated that the Senate's work will improve efficiency and Value for Money, as well as developing greater partnership between staff and Senate members - giving them a greater understanding of how and why decisions are made.

In 2011, the Senate considered the Estate Service, carrying out mystery shopping, resident led inspections, door knocking and surveys to gather evidence, and producing a report of recommendations for service improvements. The Senate has now set a programme of scrutiny exercises for 2012, and Area Panel referrals or issues arising from surveys or complaints will inform future scrutiny topics.

A new Complaints Panel, which revamped a previous panel, was set up in November 2011. The new panel will hear Stage 3 complaints and is made up of Customer Senate members.

Jatinder Randhawa

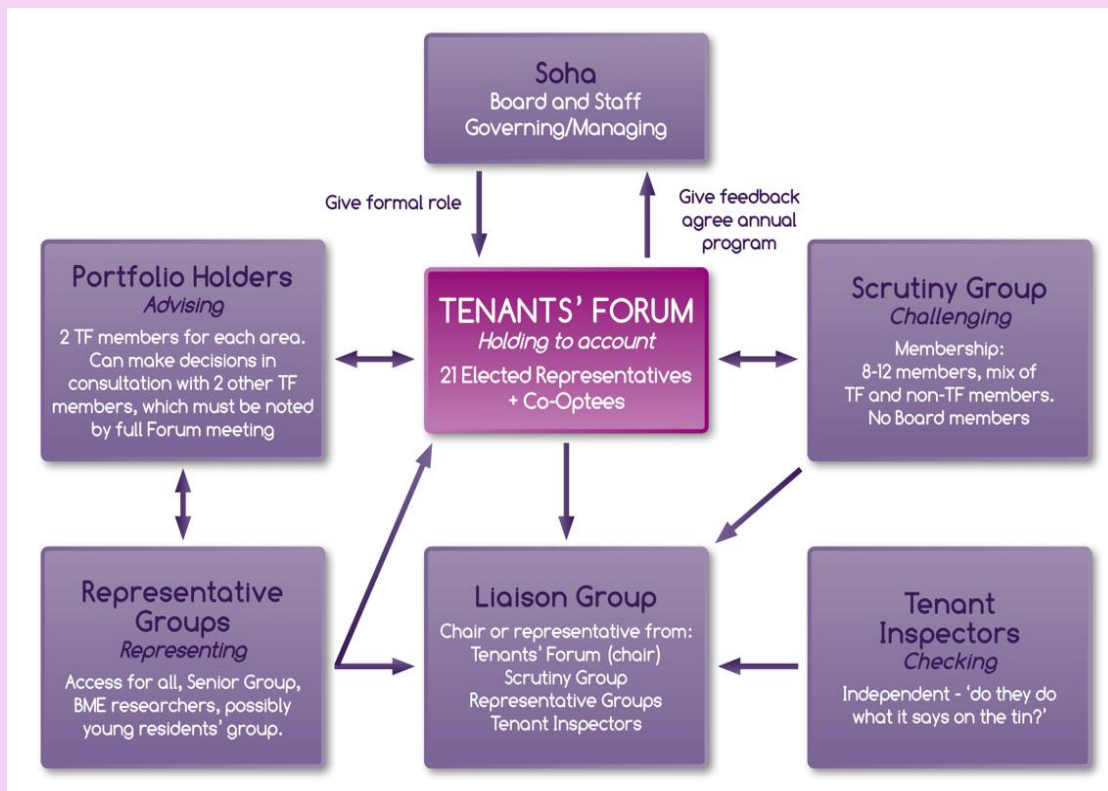
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Oxfordshire based Soha's co-regulation structure (which earned it Tenant Services Authority "co-regulatory champion" status) is made up of an elected 21 member Tenants' Forum, a recruited Tenant Inspectors Group and a Tenant Scrutiny Group consisting of 8 to 12 representatives either from the Tenants Forum or elsewhere.



The Tenants Forum is the lead tenant body and the Board wants to know their views of major issues like the Corporate Plan and policies prior to them being considered by the Board. Drawn from the Forum, a system of Portfolio holders enables tenant representatives to champion and work with service managers on particular areas of business.

Using robust systems (such as staff, tenant and manager interviews, desktop review, focus group and surveys and site visits), the Tenant Inspectors check Soha's delivery of service standards – "do they do what it says on the tin?".

The Tenant Scrutiny Group challenges Soha's Board and Management at a strategic level. They ask "is it the right tin?". For example, they've looked at how Soha is responding to changes in social housing (e.g. affordable rents and flexible tenancies), as well as reviewing Soha's Local Offers.

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**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

Housing Association

5,878 homes

A member of the Housing Plus Group, South Staffordshire Housing Association (SSHA) owns and manages 5,878 homes in southern Staffordshire and Shropshire. SSHA operates a Resident Sounding Group which has a core membership of 17. The Group evolved out of the tenant consultative group that was set up in 1996 prior to the homes being transferred. The Group helps shape policy and influences the design of services and delivery plans, working with SSHA to guide and challenge via policy reviews and making proposals for meeting Local Offer delivery targets. Group membership is open to all residents, and it works with “lead managers” to make recommendations to the Board.



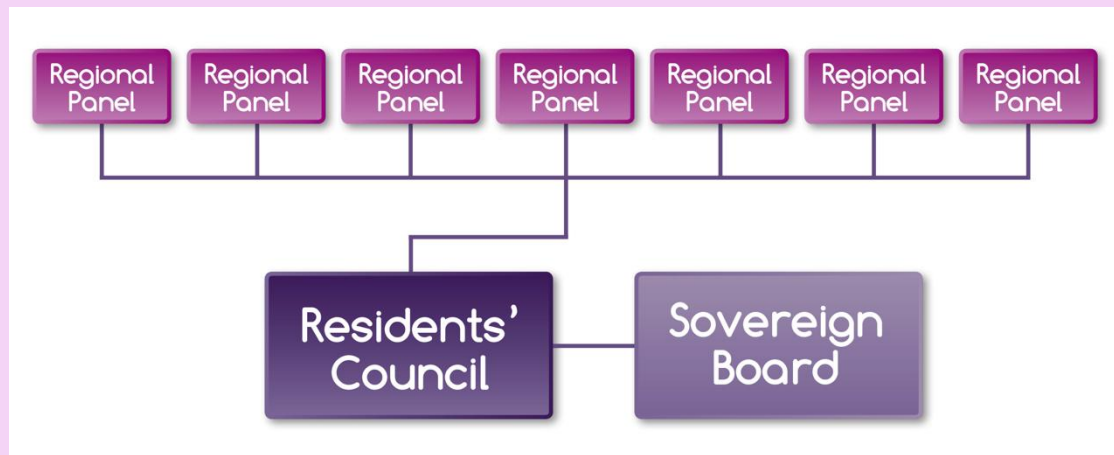
Set up to be part of SSHA's governance structure reporting directly to the Board, a Resident Scrutiny Panel was established in May 2011.

Initially four members were recruited from residents who attended a training course in early 2011. An integral part of SSHA's performance management function, the Scrutiny Panel aims to carry out two scrutiny cycles per year (the first review, of voids, was completed in July 2011), using a Scrutiny Handbook to verify and challenge performance against SSHA's Local Offer. Due to the Panel's business focus, SSHA have used a formal process (through an application form, a team exercise and an informal interview) to recruit and develop residents with sufficient skills and experience to undertake the scrutiny process and has used an independent Chair for the first year to mentor and develop the panel.

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In July 2010, the Sovereign Group Board proposed collapsing its group structure (formerly consisting of 3 housing associations each with boards and resident involvement arrangements) and introducing a new resident involvement structure for the new association. In November 2010, Sovereign consulted its tenants on the proposed new structure of 7 resident-led Regional Panels feeding into a Residents Council that influences the Board and speaks on behalf of all residents.



The process to establish the new structure was extensive, involving considerable consultation with all tenants and a Development Working Group consisting of representatives from each regional panel area and staff developing terms of reference for the Regional Panels and Residents' Council, person specifications, a recruitment strategy, a training strategy and a code of conduct.

Successfully resulting in October 2011 in over 150 residents attending recruitment sessions, most of whom had not been involved previously in a "spirit of partnership and fun", Sovereign identify the following as important factors - a "slow burn" consultation and involvement process; a clear and well marketed campaign for the consultation and recruitment; weekly communications and updates; an open and honest approach which promoted trust, ownership and partnership; and full involvement of residents, operational teams and regional directors.

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St Basils, a youth agency providing various services to young people aged 16 to 25 in the West Midlands, to enable them to find and keep a home, to develop their confidence, skills and opportunities and to prevent homelessness.

The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) was established in 2005 as a key part of St Basils governance and development, with links directly to St Basils Board and the Senior Management Team. It is made up of 15 young people who were recruited through an interview process, each with a specific portfolio of interest, such as Finance, Human Resources, Quality and Standards.

The YAB meets formally once a month, with numerous smaller meetings in between, and has a dedicated support work and a support budget of £10K. Some of its key functions are defined as acting as youth representatives on training, conferences and representative forums; advising staff and young people on involvement practice; reviewing policies, practice and strategy; and acting as a reference point for the views of young people on big decisions for St Basils.

Since 2005, the YAB has had a substantial impact on the culture of St Basils, with members involved in the redesign of St Basils direct access accommodation; numerous internal reviews; and in St Basils business planning. St Basils considers that the YAB has “improved service delivery, organisational awareness of young people and helped individual young people directly”.

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St Mungos was set up in 1969 to tackle street homelessness in London and is the largest provider of hostel beds in the capital. As well as providing temporary and permanent housing, they offer a wide range of non-residential services covering outreach, resettlement, employment and training particularly for people with drugs, alcohol or mental health related problems.

Outside In was set up in 2005 to give St Mungos clients a say in how the organisation is run. All clients are welcomed to Outside In meetings, and their involvement is a key part of clients' recovery process, helping them to build self-esteem and confidence. Its core group now includes up to 30 active clients, with a further 30 who get involved sometimes. The group meets with Directors and Board members every six weeks - putting forward their concerns and ideas and helping to set the agenda for future developments.



Outside In set up a peer facilitation body – 10 times better – to help to signpost and motivate St Mungos’ clients and to support other residents to run their own meetings. They have also become training providers through NIACE’s Learning Champions programme – supporting the development of IT literacy and other areas and running presentations and workshops at staff inductions and helping to recruit new staff. Outside In also administer a grant scheme for St Mungos’ activities, and have developed a Social Policy Forum to enable debate with Government and DCLG.

Clients describe their ownership of Outside In as being important to them because it starts to give them some element of control over their lives. It is a vital means of tackling isolation, providing peer support, and personal development that helps clients through a difficult and challenging period in their lives.

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## STOCKPORT HOMES

ALMO

11,584 homes

Stockport Homes' Tenant Scrutiny Panel was established in January 2011. The 8 original members were appointed with the involvement of a neighbouring scrutiny panel, but newer members have been appointed by the panel's elected chair and staff members. The panel has a paid independent mentor who has helped scope and carry out the panel's first review on void management. This was an area of strong performance, but the review made a number of outcome focussed recommendations which were all accepted following a roundtable with managers to develop an action plan prior to consideration by the Board.

The main benefits of the panel are considered to be that tenants can see their landlord being challenged by a tenant body, and that, in the absence of external inspection, the landlord is being held to account in an outcome focussed manner. It is also considered helpful that the Scrutiny Panel aims to identify positive issues as well as areas for improvement.

Stockport Homes also established a three person complaints panel in 2008 to act alongside a director to review complaints handling at the final stage of the complaints procedure. The complainant has a choice as to whether their case is heard by the panel or just by a director, and the panel hears from and can question the manager who considered the case at the second stage and the complainant. Stockport Homes anticipates expanding the panel to respond to the role of referring complaints to the Ombudsman.

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Stonham is part of Home Group, which owns 52,000 homes and is the largest provider of care and support services in the UK. Stonham delivers care and support to 26,000 clients a year including young people, family services, ex-offenders, people with mental health issues, people with learning disabilities and single homeless people.

Part of its governance structure, the National Client Panel, made up of 20 Stonham client members drawn from diverse backgrounds across the client base, provides advice and support to the Stonham Executive on how it can deliver products and services.

It provides a focal point for consultations with clients, particularly acting as a key channel of communication between the Home Board and clients, and it challenges policies, processes and communications.

The role of the National Client Panel was co-developed by the Involving You Steering Group, as part of their process to make Stonham client led. Formed originally in 2005, the Involving You Steering Group is made up of 20 clients, each serving for one year. It steers the development of involvement nationally, writing and reviewing Stonham's National Client Involvement Strategy 2009-2012.

The Client Involvement Strategy has led to clients being involved in Stonham activities in many different ways. Clients are involved in training staff, delivering regional workshops and recruitment. They participate in KISS groups (Keep it Short and Simple) which ensure that documents are customer friendly. In 2011, 40 documents were 'kissed' by 126 people attending 13 KISS groups across the country.

Clients co-developed the Representing Equality and Diversity (RED) pilot to create the role of client diversity ambassadors and raise awareness and understanding of diversity.

Stonham's comprehensive impact assessment reports show multiple ways in which client involvement has improved services and products.

However, constant threads running through all activities are the increased confidence and self-esteem, development of new skills, peer support and friendship and increased confidence to return to work that clients gain from their involvement - "Hi – I'm Duncan. My involvement has been one of the best experiences I have ever had. Before I joined I had no confidence and I used to avoid life as much as possible. I have gained so much confidence and I have got involved in so much. I'm more positive and I want to live again and enjoy life".

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Tendring District Council owns 3,215 homes in a rural part of Essex. Its tenant panel was initially set up in 2001 as a “focus group” to represent tenant views at a time when there had been very little tenant participation prior to that. Since then it has developed into a body of tenants who fully participate in and influence council housing decisions before they are made.

The Panel is supported by dedicated staff and its bi-monthly meetings are attended by housing service managers and the Housing Portfolio Holder. All reports and policies are discussed with the Panel before they are presented to the Portfolio Holder or Cabinet. As well as considering all housing functions, the Panel has a remit to engage with other organisations, such as the Police and social services.



The Panel also operates a set of sub-groups that cover planned maintenance and improvements, responsive repairs, anti-social behaviour, communications, equality and diversity, tenant participation and allocations. There is also a performance and scrutiny group which, after relevant training, has an active role in scrutinising performance, monitoring and agreeing performance indicators and preparing the annual report.

Each of these sub-groups report back to the Panel. Recent examples of service improvements that have come about through work with the Tenant Panel have included alterations to the specification of lighting and electrical fittings, an improved standard of garden maintenance, the implementation of introductory tenancies, and an improved void letting standard.

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**THE COMMUNITY HOUSING  
GROUP**

Housing Association  
group

5,500 homes

The Community Housing Group (TCHG) owns or manages 5,500 homes in Wyre Forest, as well as providing care and support services.

It has a long standing resident involvement structure largely developed before its homes were transferred from Wyre Forest District Council in 2000. Residents on a Task & Finish Group led a review of resident involvement during 2011 working with their resident involvement manager and an independent facilitator. Whilst residents were initially of the view that their structures represented best practice, following an impact assessment, they concluded that some of the existing structures were overly complicated and were not enabling residents to effectively influence TCHG.



The work of the Task & Finish Group has been supported by TCHG's Board and management, and now being consulted on with residents. The proposals include a new Central Tenant Panel (recruited through an interview process) set up to be an integral part of TCHG leading on resident involvement; continuation of the development of a scrutiny panel and involvement in service reviews; development of a neighbourhood strategy to maximise local involvement; changes to TCHG's cultural framework to embed resident involvement; and more extensive resident involvement in communications.

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Viridian Housing own about 16,000 homes in London, the South-East, the Midlands and West Sussex. Meeting quarterly, its National Residents Forum (NRF) oversees and monitors resident involvement, consultation and performance. The Forum manages Viridian's Resident Inspectors programme and is responsible for agreeing Viridian's annual aims for resident involvement and is a key part of the co-regulation structure.

In 2007, Viridian set up a Complaints Panel, which was developed into its current form in April 2009 working with a newly created Business Improvement team to improve complaints handling. There are currently nine residents on the Complaints Panel, with existing members leading on new member training and mentoring.



Open to all residents who meet the basic criteria, the Panel makes decisions on how complaints are resolved and levels of compensation, and it works with Viridian staff to generally improve complaints handling, as well as holding Viridian accountable for how it learns from complaints to address issues and improve services for residents.

The Panel hears complaints that have not been resolved at the previous stage of the formal complaints process, drawing on their own experiences as residents to identify solutions that satisfy residents and Viridian. Viridian has received feedback from both staff and residents about the Complaints Panel's professionalism.

Because it includes residents, most complainants feel at ease in their hearings, and see them as impartial and understanding residents concerns.

The Panel also monitors response letters; scrutinises Viridian's performance on complaints handling, using benchmarking and satisfaction data; and develops and delivers complaints training for staff. It also played a leading role in developing Viridian's Compensation & Redress Policy eg. ensuring that residents can choose between decorating vouchers or Viridian carrying out decorations.

The Complaints Panel also gets involved in wider issues related to complaints. They visited retirement housing schemes to make residents aware of the complaints procedure when statistics shows fewer complaints came from them. Having identified mental health as a factor in many complaints, they worked with staff to improve unacceptable behaviour and vulnerability policies.

The Panel's work with Viridian to improve complaints and in training delivery resulted in performance for responding to complaints within target improving from 59% to 91% during 2009. The Panel is now an established part of Viridian's co-regulation structure and has had considerable influence in driving performance improvement.

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Warwick District Council's Tenant Panel was established in September 2010. The Panel agreed a constitution that made membership open to any Council tenant, and there are currently around 25 regular members. The Panel and its activities are publicised in the Council's quarterly tenant newsletter, and it co-ordinates regular Tenant Roadshows at public venues which increases membership levels. The Panel has a dedicated office space in the central housing office amongst senior housing staff with access to all relevant IT facilities.

The Tenant Panel agrees the Customer Involvement and Empowerment Strategy. It also nominates "Tenant Champions" who lead four Service Improvement Groups (SIGs) which monitor and scrutinise the Council's performance in specific areas - housing management, allocations & lettings, repairs, and performance review (including complaints).

Each group meets monthly to receive performance monitoring reports, challenge performance and to evaluate service improvement proposals.

Performance reports are also supplemented with opportunities for tenants to "walk the system" - eg. tenants spending time at the Call Centre, listening to calls and understanding how the system operates. This approach, together with training provided through the Learning Equals Project (a consortium of landlords providing training to tenants and staff together), has improved scrutiny, accountability and performance outcomes. For example, void times have reduced by 50% and investment has been focussed on areas of concern to tenants such as call answering.

With a service-wide culture that "the customer is king", Warwick's Tenant Panel received an award from the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) in 2011.

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Watford Community Housing Trust (WCHT) is a Community Gateway Association, where all tenants, leaseholders and shared owners are able to join as members, making them the legal owners of the Trust, with the right to shape policies, procedures and plans.

In 2011, WCHT reviewed its primary strategic tenant panel (an elected "Gateway Committee") and this will be replaced with an elected body of 9 tenant representatives, who will be responsible with other tenants for three major programmes of work around neighbourhoods and communities, communications and membership. These new structures will lead to tenants having more influence on strategic direction and will make it easier to attract active involvement from other tenants.

It is also intended to establish an independent scrutiny panel to build on a successful pilot scrutiny programme in 2011. The former Gateway Committee agreed this pilot programme, which included scrutiny of 30 promises set out in the previous year's annual report, asset management customer satisfaction returns, and estate services standards. The methodology for carrying out these reviews differed – with Gateway Committee members and new tenants involved in different programmes, and with various approaches to data and tenant inspections. Tenants involved have particularly valued looking at "real" issues and making recommendations (rather than focusing only on prescribed performance data). Ongoing scrutiny arrangements will be influenced by the new tenant body.

Alongside this work, WCHT also operates a variety of joint tenant/staff working groups, such as on customer service & satisfaction (which includes complaints), equality and diversity and communications. Tenants are also involved in scrutinising the improvement programme; hold appeals panels for tenants who are unhappy about proposed improvements; and hear third stage complaints.

Owning 1,700 homes in Walsall, WATMOS is based around eight Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) who have successfully managed their own homes for many years. It is part of WATMOS's culture that local people should decide how their housing services are run, and the results of this have been exceptionally high tenant satisfaction statistics and quality of service over many years.



A tenant representative from each of the TMOs sits on WATMOS's Board alongside 4 independent members. As the landlord and owner of the homes, WATMOS is responsible for the strategic development, for the relationships with the Council, lenders and regulator, for major housing improvements, and for regulating the provision of housing services by the TMOs through a formal management agreement.

Having successfully managed their homes for many years (previously as TMOs with Walsall Council), the eight TMOs are tenant panels who provide local housing services on behalf of WATMOS, scrutinising the quality of their services through local management. They have tenant committees elected by a tenant membership open to all residents living in their area, and they employ staff to manage their estates.

Through WATMOS, the TMOs set up a 12 member Tenants Service Panel with membership open to any WATMOS tenant. Meeting once a month, the panel looks at customer documents before they are produced; they test and rate service levels as mystery shoppers and tenant inspectors and they support WATMOS wide consultation and involvement activities. Whilst independent

from the TMOs, the TSP has informal relationships with it – the TSP assisting TMOs with community activity and carrying out scrutiny activity that helps TMOs to improve services, and with some TSP members becoming TMO committee members.

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**WHERRY HOUSING  
ASSOCIATION**

Housing Association

6,700 homes

Wherry Housing Association (WHA), a member of the Circle Housing Group, owns and manages approximately 6,700 homes in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. WHA's primary tenant panel - Way Ahead with Wherry (WAWW) - has responsibility for co-regulation, tenant scrutiny and strategic direction with WHA. Created in 2008, WAWW has an Executive team who oversee its direction. With a membership made up of residents' forums, representatives and associations, nominations to the Executive come from 11 neighbourhood level Patch Panels (with up to 15 resident representatives) and from the Sheltered Housing Advisory Panel and Circle Living Panel (a leasehold residents panel.)

WAWW has appointed a sub group to oversee specific Scrutiny Reviews. This sub group investigates particular service areas, based on WAWW recommendations, and then makes recommendations for service improvements to the Wherry Board via WAWW. WHA is also creating a Youth Forum, which will mirror and feed into WAWW to ensure that younger residents are given a voice at a strategic level. With a predominantly rural stock, WHA uses fundays and other methods to recruit their patch panels, and has had success in using social networking sites to engage with residents.

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