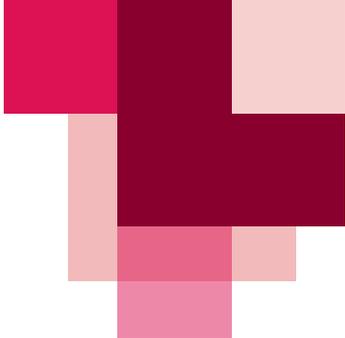


# Stories in tenant scrutiny and co-regulation in social housing

## Case studies from the co-regulatory champions and others





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## Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)

The Centre for Public Scrutiny is an independent charity that promotes transparent, inclusive and accountable public services and supports and celebrates excellent and effective scrutiny across the public sector. We support scrutineers by producing guidance, creating and supporting networks and sharing our expertise through seminars, consultancy, training and events. Our website [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk) contains the largest on-line collection of scrutiny reviews and reports, as well as other publications and information to tell you more about what scrutiny and accountability can do for you.

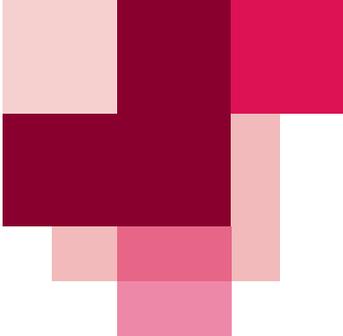
## Scrutiny and Empowerment Partners Ltd (SEP)

SEP was set up to help landlords and their tenants to develop and sustain excellent tenant scrutiny, involvement and empowerment arrangements. SEP offers a comprehensive range of services and tools to help tenants and landlords achieve excellence across all services.

SEP is experienced in service review and can build the capacity of staff and tenants to work on Involvement, Complaints, Cashback and Scrutiny. SEP's approach is to review services with tenants, undertake customer surveys and deliver comprehensive and one off training and health checks, in a partnership that challenges ways of working as well as delivering practical outcomes for landlords and customers.

Check out [www.tenantadvisor.net](http://www.tenantadvisor.net) for more information.

February 2012



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This document contains twelve case studies to provide direct learning from the experiences of the Co-Regulatory Champions and others around developing co-regulation and resident scrutiny in social housing. It has been written by Jessica Crowe of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and Yvonne Davies and Linda Levin of Scrutiny Empowerment Partners Ltd (SEP).

It accompanies the longer report, **Developing tenant scrutiny and co-regulation in social housing: lessons from the Co-regulatory champions**, and the shorter **Top Tips for Tenants: holding your landlord to account through scrutiny**. All are available from the CfPS and SEP websites: [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk) and [www.tenantadvisor.net](http://www.tenantadvisor.net).

We are very grateful to the Co-Regulatory Champions for all their assistance in compiling this appendix and producing the other reports as part of this project to promote more effective and powerful resident scrutiny and to support tenants and residents in holding their landlords to account:

- AmicusHorizon
- Community Gateway Association
- Family Housing Association
- Helena Partnerships
- New Charter Housing Trust
- Riverside Housing Group
- Salix Homes
- Soha Housing
- Wherry Housing Association
- Wirral Partnership Homes

We are also grateful to Cheshire West and Chester Council and to Bromford Housing Group for adding the perspectives of tenant scrutiny in a Local Authority setting and enlightening us around the use of social media (respectively), which the champions felt were missing elements from their particular experiences.

The examples featured here are not intended as models for others to copy wholesale – all the Champions have emphasised the importance of landlords and residents finding their own way forward to truly empower tenants and deliver better accountability. However, we hope that the stories contained in this short document will inspire other tenants, residents and landlords to develop their own local approaches to tenant scrutiny and co-regulation.

The longer guide provides more information on the principles and practice of effective scrutiny, developed by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, and the benefits for residents and landlords (Boards, councillors and front-line staff) of developing powerful resident scrutiny arrangements in their organisation. The shorter guide pulls out some highly practical tips and hints specifically for tenants to help them get started and learn from the experiences of the tenants and residents in the organisations featured in the case studies.

We hope that you are inspired!

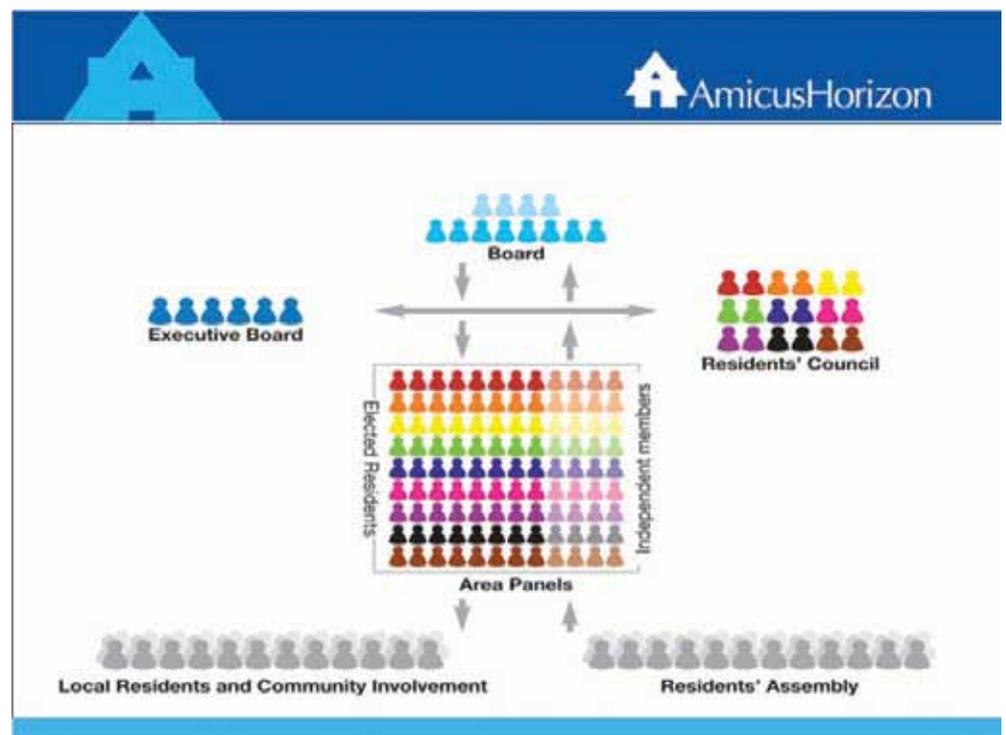
**CfPS and SEP**

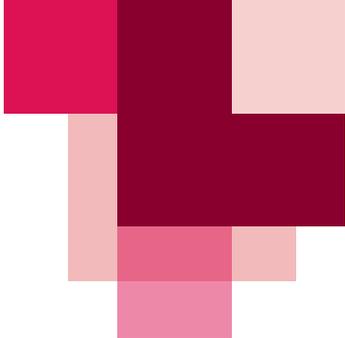
# AmicusHorizon: Resident scrutiny in a large housing group provider

AmicusHorizon is a major housing provider across London and Surrey, Kent and Sussex, managing 28,000 homes. With staff based in three regional hubs and a number of smaller offices, they have to work extremely hard to connect with all their residents in a meaningful way. They offer a range of involvement options, from formal engagement across the group to specialist interest groups to one-off, informal local events and consultations.

AmicusHorizon took two years to develop their formal involvement structure, working jointly with residents and staff to develop something that fits their size and needs. They have a system of nine Area Panels, with delegated improvement budgets, performance monitoring and scrutiny responsibilities and the ability to escalate unresolved issues to the Board. The Board includes four resident representatives and there is also an independent Residents' Council, with two representatives from each Area Panel, which can look at cross-cutting scrutiny issues. Each Area Panel includes eight residents and four independent members, eg local councillors.

Across such a large organisation, the costs of supporting the Area Panels and wider resident involvement and governance structures are high and AmicusHorizon say that *“organisations need to be prepared to invest if they want an Area Panel structure to be meaningful.”* For them it has been worth both the initial and on-going investment because *“the quality of feedback and the strength of staff/ resident relationships we have developed are strong.”*





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The return to AmicusHorizon from involving residents in scrutinising and challenging services, including their 'Local Offers', has also included tangible service improvements. For example, thanks to the Area Panels' quarterly monitoring of performance on complaints:

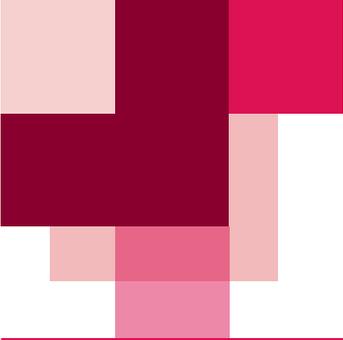
- Customer satisfaction is up from 57% in 2009-10 to 100% in Sept 2011.
- Quicker complaints response times – 90% responded to within 10 days in 2009-10, compared to 100% by autumn 2011.
- New complaints have reduced from 120 to 26 per month.

Developing a culture of co-regulation and meaningful resident scrutiny in a large, geographically widespread organisation requires not only financial resources, but also a commitment of time to get things right. Looking back, AmicusHorizon acknowledge that they did not get everything right in the early days and they have recently completed a major review of resident governance to assess what they do. Lessons learned include:

- At first the meeting structure, agendas and papers were too prescriptive.
- Taking too long getting permanent staff in place to support the panels.

#### **AmicusHorizon's top tip**

*"It's critical to move at a sensible pace and take time to get things right. The greatest improvement has been in the relationships between staff and residents. It's also the most important missing link for any organisation that doesn't have those good relationships."*



# Bromford Housing Group: Using social media to engage residents

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Bromford Housing Group (BHG) is a leading provider and developer of affordable homes. BHG also deliver specialist supported housing services. They own 26,000 homes in central England. Bromford are widely recognised for being ahead of the field in the use of social media. BHG decided to investigate opportunities to use technology to gather customer feedback. Their research found:

- 5 billion people have a mobile phone
- Average number of text messages sent was 120 per day
- 800 million active users on Facebook
- 2.9 billion hours spent on You Tube per month
- 25 million people on twitter
- 2 in 3 persons would choose the internet over a car, and 55% who said that they could not live without the internet.

Customer Influence Members are customers who work very closely with BHG in a variety of ways to help develop services, for example as part of the Offer Groups, Customer Influence Group, or the Customer and Communities Board. For residents who do not want to attend meetings, or have time to get very involved, there are other ways in which they can influence BHG services. Customers can follow BHG on Twitter or Facebook, take part in the “Your Voice” programme, or comment to the Bromford Feedback Centre or the Bromford Lab. Social media has taken feedback involvement to a new level.

## **BHG’s top tip**

*“You have to be brave and let customers say what they feel; you have to realise that the comments are in public, but you can take a debate off line if it’s personal; you have to be able to react quickly to comments which can be made day or night. Social media allows residents to shape and comment on the business instantly like never before”.*

Bromford felt the debates in meetings needed to be more transparent and involve more customers, so they invited customers to a debate on-line about their annual report through Twitter and Facebook “**Annual reports – worthwhile or worthless?**” Some customers gave their views prior to the meeting, others tweeted comments directly onto Twitter and a staff member coordinated the discussion in the

meeting and enabled live debate on line. The debate was lively with a mixture of staff and customers giving their opinions, along with other housing professionals and housing journalists who followed the debate. The general outcome was a request for a shorter annual report and one which reports on-line and gets more regularly updated.

The success of this event led to another on-line debate on Twitter and Facebook on the civil unrest and riots which broke out in the UK, in the summer of 2011. BHG discussed how to detect the early signs of unrest, how BHG might create mentoring opportunities for young people and confirmed that the BHG’s approach to change behaviour, rather than to end tenancies was the right approach. BHG have produced a “YouTube” clip on the unrest.

# Cheshire West and Chester Council: How are local authorities approaching tenant scrutiny?

Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC), is a new unitary and covers the area of three former District Councils. The Council manages over 5000 homes in Ellesmere Port and Neston. The other districts had transferred their homes to new HAs. The Council has been engaging with residents for some time in a traditional way, but scrutiny arrangements were new and recruitment to the Customer Service Inspectors (CSIs) to undertake scrutiny began in March 2011.

Twelve residents and a leaseholder undertook a mock service scrutiny on the Voids Service during training and later a full service review of Complaints from July 2011. A second recruitment exercise in Autumn 2011 has brought in and trained a further four CSIs.

The Terms of Reference which was supported by the Council involves the results of scrutiny being reported initially to the Executive team. CSIs see themselves as working in partnership with the Council with the same aims in mind. Challenges to the report (if any) by Officers are based on an advanced sight of the report and can be made at the meeting when the CSIs present their report, with no need to have another meeting. Officers draft an action plan from the report which is approved by the Executive team.

#### **CWAC's top tip**

*"Engage managers and staff early in the setup of the scrutiny panel and raise awareness. The role of the scrutiny panel can be seen as a duplication of member roles. A clear understanding of remit of the scrutiny group is necessary to remove myths and perceived threats to status and to ensure as smooth as possible a passage to achieve real co-regulation"*

The CSIs approve the action plan or raise further issues, prior to the issue being timetabled for the Housing Stock Panel of the Council which is made up of Elected Members and Senior Officers of the Council and 2 involved residents. The CSIs attend the Housing Stock Panel to present their findings from the review, Elected Members have been encouraged by the in depth work the CSIs have completed as part of the review and their emphasis on "Customer Experience". The presence of the Elected Members at the end of the process ensures that the voice of CSIs can be heard if there are any disagreements with officers.

To date, the CSIs' recommendations have included amending existing and creating new policies and ways of working on Voids and Complaints. Change is approved by the Housing Stock Panel. One CSI works with a Task and Finish Policy Group of residents and staff to ensure their recommendations are incorporated.

Since the scrutiny group reported on their work in newsletters, the Council has had more success in recruiting to Mystery Shoppers, Empty Property Auditors and an Editorial Panel. Staff have become more used to engaging with residents in a partnership arrangement.

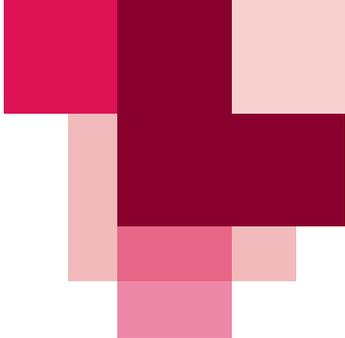
# Community Gateway Association: Reaching hard to reach groups to enable diverse voices to be heard

Community Gateway Association (CGA) is a not-for-profit community business, set up in 2005, to meet the housing needs of people in Preston and surrounding areas. It has over 6000 homes.

CGA is owned by its members. Membership is only open to residents living in its local community areas: tenants and leaseholders can become full (voting) members and other residents can become associate (non-voting) members. Residents are encouraged to join and get actively involved; both with shaping, monitoring and scrutinising CGA services & in developing their communities.

CGA's Community Empowerment Strategy is written into its rules and members receive formal feedback on progress at each AGM. All staff (including the CEO) have responsibility for proactively encouraging residents to get involved.





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The Gateway Tenants Committee (GTC) reports directly to Board. It has 30 places for full members who are elected onto the group and serve for 3 year terms; there are 10 vacancies each year. It meets bi-monthly, 10 days in advance of Board. GTC receives Board reports, questions senior staff and makes recommendations to Board. Each GTC member also works with other residents and staff on service specific action groups, which meet monthly. Action groups arrange policy reviews and develop and challenge services.

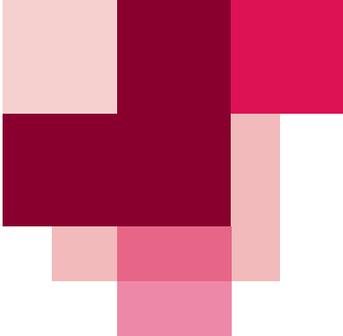
The 7 resident Board members come from the GTC and the remainder form a Scrutiny Panel which carries out the scrutiny programme. Annual road shows take messages out to the community and help to gather non-involved resident opinions on local offers and subjects for scrutiny.

**CGA's top tip**

*“Use profiling to target under-represented groups; understand that face to face contact has the greatest impact, so go out door knocking in your community, offer a range of opportunities for diverse communities, and don't create barriers like stringent application forms, there is room for everyone”.*

Community option studies have taken place in 50 sub-areas, where local communities identified issues and developed an action plan to resolve them. Less time consuming involvement mechanisms in CGA's “menu for engagement” include surveys, estate walkabouts, mystery shopping, workshops and focus groups.

Customer profiling is used to ensure the involvement structure reflects the overall customer profile. As a result CGA has: **set up BME and Disability Focus Groups; attended Sunday after church meetings to engage with an emerging Polish community; focused the work of one of its Community Development Officers onto Youth Development; actively supported fledgling youth groups such as ‘Ingol Youth’ who have consulted on their ideas for redevelopment of the local play park, drawn up plans for change and are now seeking funding for the scheme.**



# Family Housing Association: Resident scrutiny – getting started and engaging communities

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Family HA (Birmingham Ltd) provides nearly 2,500 homes for affordable rent and low cost home ownership, in inner city areas. FHA operate in a challenging environment, with 10% of their homes in the most deprived wards in the UK. 60% of customers are from Ethnic minority groups with a high number of single occupancy households and lone parents.

In March 2008, a new framework for resident involvement began called “Customer 1<sup>st</sup>”. This centred on the introduction of a Customer Sounding Board, Five Service Groups and a Residents Forum. Within 6 months, the sounding board had established a membership of 200 residents and 5 Customer 1<sup>st</sup> service groups had been successfully launched.

Stage 2 was the creation of a Resident Forum “One Voice”, established in December 2008. It consisted of 2 members from each service group, with 2 places for current Board members. Initially it was responsible for making corporate business recommendations and reviewing key strategies, like Diversity, but it has since been linked to the Board of Management and has a formal constitution. As well as these formal mechanisms, FHA continues to facilitate informal focus groups, mystery shopping and customer surveys.

To introduce the Customer 1<sup>st</sup> structure to all residents and partners, FHA held an event at Birmingham FC and invited everyone to attend. This was popular and became an annual event to celebrate achievements, to promote involvement and to give opportunities for residents to influence services. In 2011, FHA ran 3 Resident Road Shows in different parts of Birmingham to reach out to more residents, this proved more successful in persuading residents to get involved with FHA.

## Family’s top tip

*“To introduce the structured process is not enough. You have to continuously think of new opportunities to refresh, revise and renew.”*

To gather feedback, FHA established a Trust to reward residents for their participation. To ensure the reward system did not conflict with those in receipt of state benefits, they worked with the Law Centre to provide cash grants through a new charity, where residents accumulate points

for giving feedback or for getting involved in meetings.

FHA introduced “Family Days Out” where residents can bond and have an opportunity to meet other residents and staff. During the trips staff raise awareness of involvement and give information on FHA services. Alongside the introduction of FHA on Twitter and Facebook, FHA has found this engages younger residents, reduces isolation and provides a useful vehicle for recruiting to the formal involvement structure.

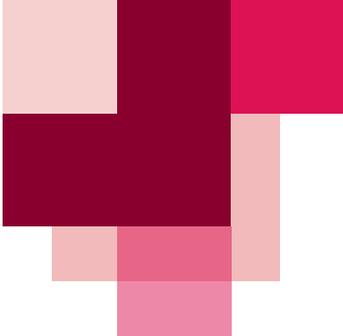
# Helena Partnerships: Delivering real improvements in residents' services through scrutiny

A stock transfer organisation with 13,000 homes across St Helens, Helena Housing was originally formed in 2002 to take ownership of the local council's housing stock. It changed its name to Helena Partnerships in 2008.

Helena Partnerships' approach to scrutiny and co-regulation has been in place for almost three years and has five elements:

- One Voice: a panel of around 400 tenants who are consulted regularly
- Customer Inspectors and Young Inspectors who test services and Helena's customer promises
- Customer Excellence Panel (CEP) who maintain an overview of service delivery, scrutinise performance and consider how Helena can improve customer satisfaction and value for money
- Resident Involvement Group that measures the impact of involvement activities.





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Key successes achieved as a result of tenant scrutiny include:

- Repairs appointments were extended to include weekends and evenings to meet the needs of employed customers, as a result of recommendations from CEP.
- Changes to the frequency and format of rent statements and repairs receipts identified by CEP in consultation with One Voice led to savings of £80,000. In addition, the statements and receipts were tailored to meet tenants' communication preferences.
- Repairs response times for external repairs were reduced from 6 to 3 months at no extra cost. CEP are monitoring satisfaction data to ensure that the quality of work is not adversely affected as a result of reducing target times.
- A new Customer Charter was developed along with measurement and reporting arrangements so that customers can track whether service standards are being achieved
- Frequency of contact with tenants suffering from anti social behaviour has been increased to ensure they are better informed of progress with their complaint. This has resulted in a significant increase in customer satisfaction.
- An enhanced complaints management process has been introduced, which has received national recognition.

**Helena's top tip**

*"The CEP have developed their own basket of customer focused performance indicators so that they can monitor and review services from a customer perspective. The Panel has also launched its own website [www.excellenceathelena.co.uk](http://www.excellenceathelena.co.uk) which publicises to other residents and stakeholders, the work they do"*

# New Charter Housing Trust: Delivering real improvements in residents' services through scrutiny

New Charter Housing Trust Group is based in Ashton-under-Lyne, Greater Manchester, and has a housing stock of around 15,000 homes across nine towns in the Borough of Tameside. New Charter's ethos is "*more than just housing*", with a strong focus on regeneration.

Co-regulation at New Charter is delivered in the following ways:

- Mystery shopping and resident inspection – both of which started in 2008. Both receive regular training and have forward work programmes, including work in support of the scrutiny panel
- Service Review Groups covering repairs and maintenance, relets, revenues and neighbourhoods
- Working Groups and panels that act as 'task and finish' groups. An example is the "Xtra Factor Team" which helped to in developing local offers and writing the annual report to tenants
- Scrutiny Panel which is a group of 12 tenants set up in 2009 to scrutinise performance across service areas and to carry out in depth reviews. The Panel aim to complete 3 to 4 scrutiny reviews per year and report their findings directly to senior managers and Board. The panel carries out its own recruitment process when vacancies arise.

One of the most significant service changes brought about by the Scrutiny Panel relates to **grounds maintenance**. The panel chose this topic for their first scrutiny review as they understood other tenants were not satisfied with the standard of service provided. The Panel carried out a very robust and thorough review which included extensive tenant consultation through door knocking and telephone surveys. Around 440 tenants responded to their postal survey (a very impressive 44% response rate).

#### **New Charter's top tip**

*"Commission Experts: The Panel also called on an independent horticultural expert to help inform their review and carried out extensive estate checks and compared standards of the grass cutting in their neighbourhoods with standards in the local parks. The Scrutiny Panel made 77 recommendations, 50 of which related to issues that were included in the grounds maintenance contract"*

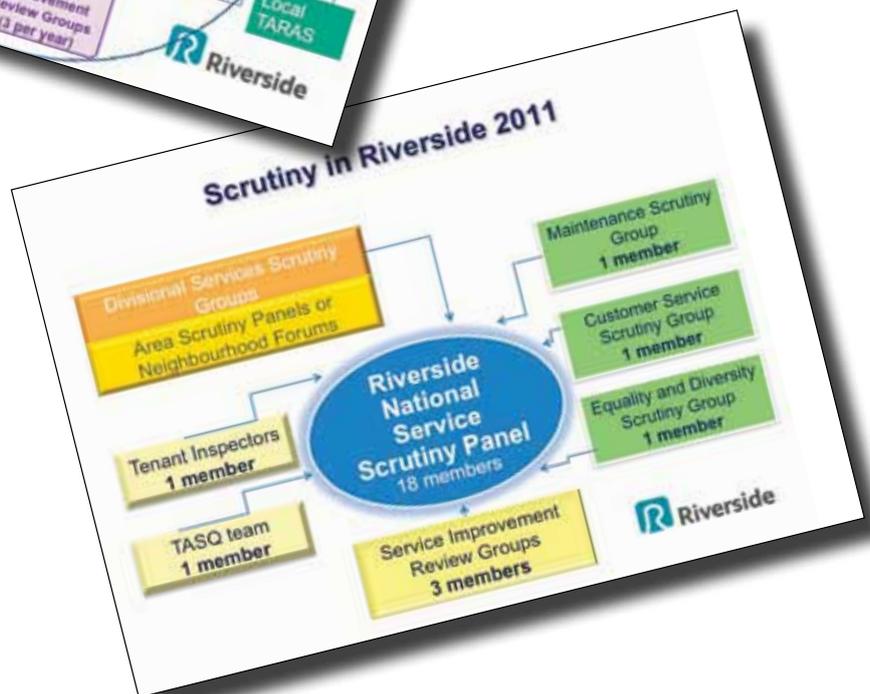
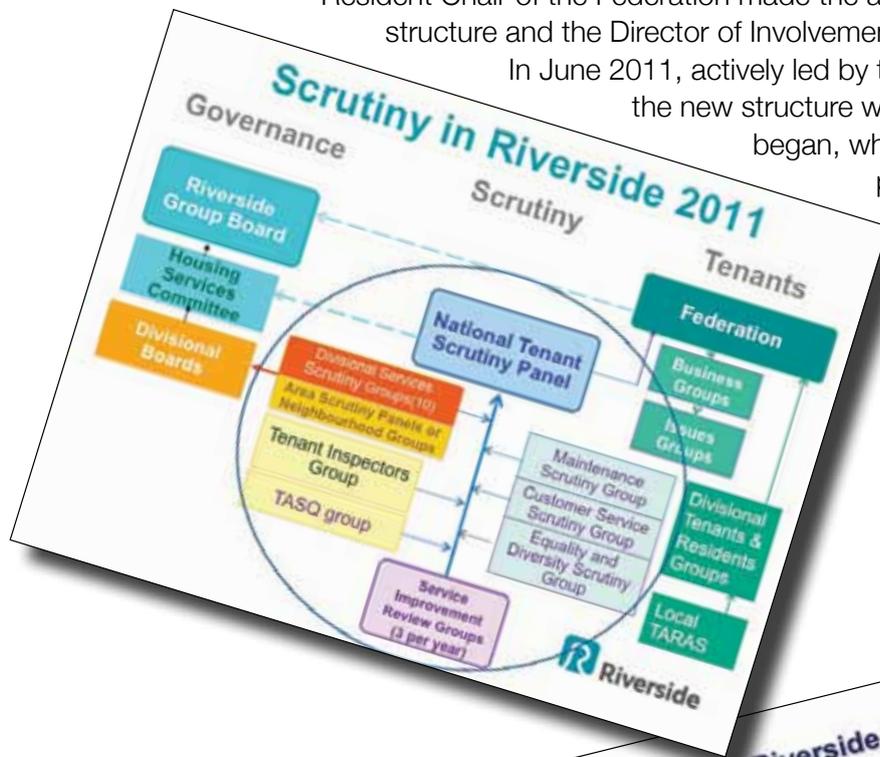
The Panel recommended that the service should be brought 'in-house'. Once fully implemented, this recommendation will result in significant savings (in excess of £100, 000). In addition, the Panel is hoping for an improved standard of grounds maintenance and greater opportunities to ensure that local labour is used to carry out grounds maintenance work.

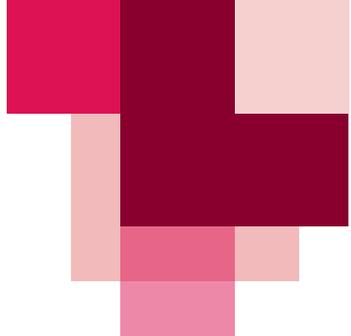
# Riverside Housing Group: The journey to resident scrutiny and re-inventing involvement

Riverside Housing Group was formed in 2001 and is one of the largest housing organisations in Britain, managing and owning more than 50,000 homes from Carlisle to Kent. In 2009/10, RHG subsidiary Housing Associations amalgamated with the Riverside Group.

Getting the right involvement structure was discussed from November 2010 and introduced to residents in February 2011, across the regions. RHG spent 3 months reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the involvement structures in the different parts of the group with their Resident Associations. This was done in the form of a staged debate across the country where the Resident Chair of the Federation made the argument to retain the current structure and the Director of Involvement made the case for change.

In June 2011, actively led by the Chair of the Federation, the new structure was agreed and implementation began, which included major induction programmes for newly involved residents and guidance for staff on the new structures.





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In September 2011, the new scrutiny structure was agreed at the formal annual meeting of the Federation Executive; the RHG Board and Housing Committee. Since then Riverside have been reviewing the roles with their 1500 active customers and updating the website with the new arrangements.

The new structure is still unfolding with support from the Federation, who report directly to the Board. RHG National Scrutiny Panel which will report to the Housing Services Committee and the 10 Divisional Local Scrutiny Panels will be in

**Riverside's top tip**

*"If you do not think your involvement structure is fit for purpose and it is not as good as it should be, don't be afraid to kill it, but don't rush to throw out what you have, use it, adapt it and grow involvement."*

place in to Spring, 2012. There are 3 relatively new national service specific panels who work with a lead Director to commission resident audits where they have concerns. A new TASQ group of residents has formed to complete in-depth scrutiny on single issues.

RHG has a long history of involvement and many residents have been involved, for up to 20 years. Newly involved residents have been asked to express interest in joining involvement structures and have undergone interview processes. More transparent selection for very involved residents has been used. New involved residents have brought a fresh and raw challenge, which has been challenging and beneficial to officers.

Directors who formerly supported committees are passing on that power to residents. Some residents prefer to attend the meeting than run it and some Directors have struggled with the new lack of control. It has been a struggle for long standing involved residents to be treated equally to new recruits and some issues where residents have used the old direct phone numbers to circumvent the new systems for involvement. RHG has held firm on this.

# Salix Homes: Recruitment and selection that ensure scrutiny is owned and led by independent residents

Salix Homes is an Arms-Length Management Organisation in Salford and manages 10,500 homes on behalf of the Council. The Framework for involvement developed in 2008 and has matured and streamlined following a service scrutiny of the involvement structure in February 2011.

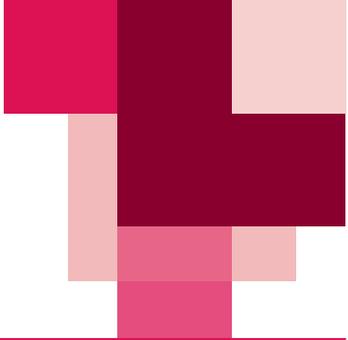
The new “Count me in” menu of involvement includes a Customer Senate (Scrutiny Panel); 3 Customer Panels; Neighbourhood Groups; Customer Inspectors and a Community Call for Action, along with some specific panels, like a Disability Focus group, a BME Forum and an LGBT Forum. The Senate reports directly to the Board on each service scrutiny and monitors the performance of the organisation on behalf of the Audit and Finance Committee. There is at least one Senator on each Customer Panel and the Board Chair drives the discussion to enable Senators to feedback from their other meetings into the work of the Senate.



Chair drives the discussion to enable Senators to feedback from their other meetings into the work of the Senate.

The position of Chair is crucial. She meets with the CEO; the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Board monthly, which is a conduit to raise awareness of the Senate with the Board and vice versa. The informal nature of this meeting and the support and respect she has been given at the meetings have enabled the new Chair to grow in confidence and feel an equal partner. The Chair is supported by the Resident Involvement Manager in a session prior to Board, she attends Board and contributes freely on the work of the Senate.





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The Senate, staff and Board very firmly point to working in partnership with the Board, but being independently minded. The Senate choose the subjects to scrutinise; call people for interview (including the CEO and Chair) and have access to everything which is relevant to that service. Quick wins which were identified through scrutiny and delivered before the report reaches the Board are acknowledged in their reports, which are written by 2 members of the Senate on a rotational basis. Senior staff do not see the scrutiny report until it reaches the Board.

New potential members are encouraged to join the Senate through a campaign and observe ahead of joining the Senate which allows for succession planning. Interviews for new members are guided conversations, with open questions. They took place for 15 minutes each on 3 carousels, each of which had 2 Senators asking the questions. Questions were framed about the values and behaviours of volunteers and teased out development needs. Weighting for under-represented groups has been used in the past, but was not used in the most recent interviews.

**Salix top tip**

*“A training needs analysis is completed for each Senator as part of an annual review and new members received additional training and support. An annual training programme is agreed for all Senators and is compulsory. The appointment of an independent mentor for the Senate is being considered”.*

# Soha Housing: Resident scrutiny acting as a ‘critical friend’ to the Board

*“We act as a critical friend to the Board. Because we are the service users – the residents – that is the best perspective that Soha can have as a housing provider.”* Nasreen Razaq Al-Hamdani, Chair, Tenant Scrutiny Group

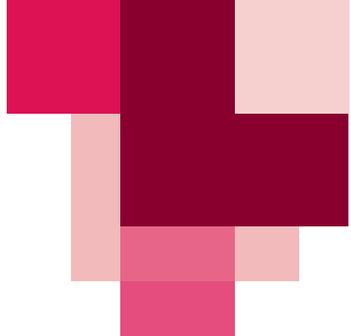
Soha Housing is a community-based housing association that manages 5,500 homes in Oxfordshire. They believe that effective resident scrutiny and co-regulation help them answer the “so what?” question about resident involvement, ensuring accountability, social capital and service improvement. Their approach to co-regulation was developed by a working group of residents and they describe it by likening the different elements to the different bits of national government:

- The Board, which includes four residents, is like the Cabinet and makes decisions about governing the organisation;
- The Tenants’ Forum is like Parliament and holds the Board to account – its views must be considered by the Board when making decisions;
- Tenant Inspectors are like the Audit Commission and other regulators – they check the performance of services

- The Tenant Scrutiny Group are like Select Committees – they challenge the organisation about plans, policies and performance at a strategic level
- Representative groups for residents with specialist interests act like national lobbying organisations and are consulted by the groups above.

Soha can point to real examples where this robust, resident-led system of ‘critical friend’ scrutiny and challenge has changed Board policy at strategic level. For example, the Tenant Scrutiny Group carried out a strategic review of Soha’s response to the changes to social housing policy and their recommendations led to the Soha Board removing a proposal to include flexible tenancies from their bid to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). They also carried out a review of Soha’s response to the Local Offers programme and recommended that the Board change the name to ‘New Services’ and invest in a communications campaign to raise awareness of what was being offered to residents.



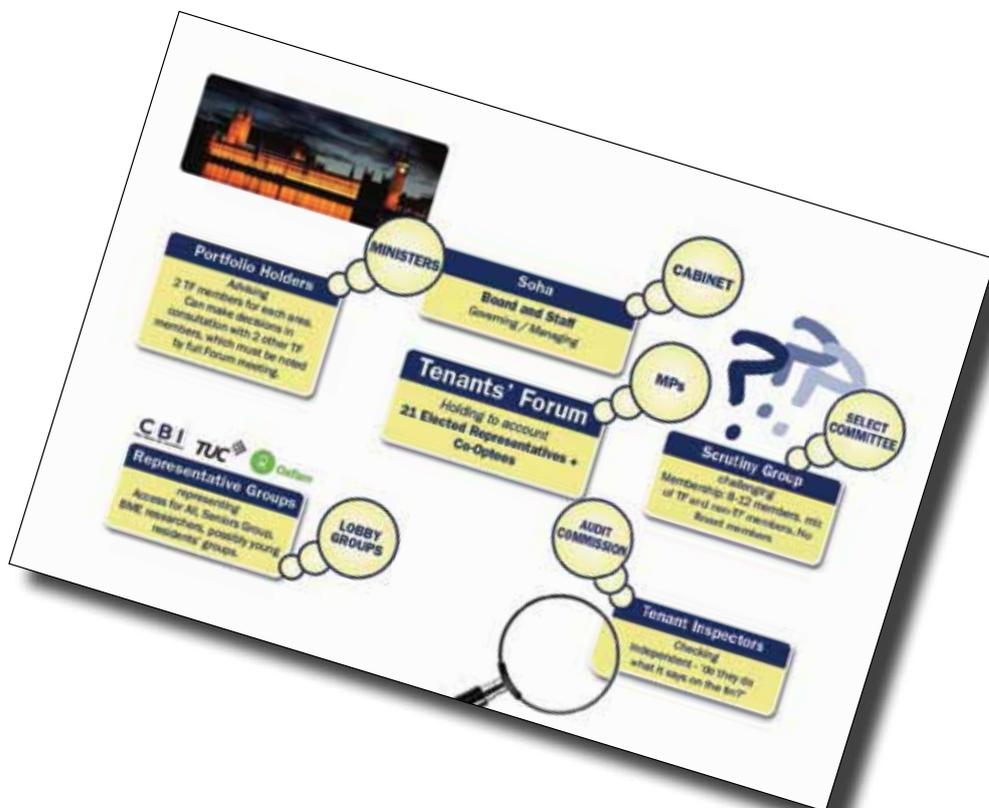


Soha's resident-led approach to service improvement and accountability demonstrates that residents feel it too: resident satisfaction that Soha takes their views into account has increased from 53% in 2007 to 71% in 2010. They argue that having commitment right from the top and throughout the organisation is crucial to enabling the 'critical friend' role to work. The Chair of their Board, who is a resident, says:

*"We have a model that works because residents have access from the very top of the organisation downwards and they work well both amongst themselves and with staff."*

#### Soha's top tip

*"Make sure there is feedback to tenants. It's obvious, but crucial! If people don't see that they're making a difference, why would they stay involved?"*



# Wherry Housing Association: Resident involvement across several landlords in a rural setting

Wherry Housing Association is one of nine housing providers that form part of the Circle housing group (formerly Circle Anglia). Originally formed from a stock transfer from Broadland District Council in 1990, Wherry now manages over 6,700 homes across East Anglia. Managing homes across often small, dispersed communities means that Wherry have had to offer a wide range of ways for residents to get involved and achieve their belief that *“by involving residents in activities relating to their home and communities we can improve people’s life chances and quality of life.”*



Eleven Neighbourhood Areas have their own Patch Panel made up of resident representatives and recognised residents’ associations. Resident representatives champion their local area and do estate walkabouts and inspections. There are Mystery Shopper, Readers Panel and Focus Group roles for residents with different skills and time available. All these sources feed into the landlord-wide residents’ representative body – Way Ahead with Wherry (WAWW) – which has set up Wherry Independent Scrutiny Panel (WISP) to review strategic service issues and performance.

Their approach has also involved developing a multi-landlord Neighbourhood Charter in Terrington St Clement, Kings Lynn.

This involved commitments by local residents and landlords to make their neighbourhood cleaner, safer and greener. The Norfolk Housing Alliance is now expanding this collaboration across the county, including launching a new website to enable residents to compare service performance, repairs and anti-social behaviour data.

For providers with a dispersed housing stock involving only a few homes in any one locality, collaborating across landlords to involve all the residents in that community can make sense for residents and landlords alike. In Terrington there is now a Neighbourhood Standards Panel, which monitors the delivery of the Charter through quarterly surveys and service reviews. The overall satisfaction

of residents has increased from 87 per cent to 96 per cent, with reported anti-social behaviour incidents decreasing.

To recruit members of WISP, Wherry held a series of Summer Fun Days and worked hard to reach more isolated groups of residents in small rural communities.

## Wherry’s top tip

*“Give yourself plenty of time. There may be pressure to get results quickly. However, if it’s to truly make a difference it needs time for those involved to truly understand what’s expected of them and how they might go achieving it. Training and support is essential.”*

They also used an on-line recruitment campaign to reach younger residents and specifically targeted areas with low involvement. Wherry’s approach demonstrates that resident scrutiny takes place at all levels and in lots of different ways – community-based, multi-landlord and strategic. What you call it is less important than ensuring residents are at its heart and that it is focused on issues that matter to local communities.

# Wirral Partnership Homes: Tenant scrutiny helping to deliver value for money

Wirral Partnership Homes (WPH) is a stock transfer organisation set up in February 2005 to take ownership of the local council's housing stock. With around 12,400 homes it is the largest Registered Provider of affordable housing in Wirral. *“Our work is more than simply bricks and mortar. We aim to work in partnership with residents and other organisations to build sustainable communities.”*

WPH offers a wide range of involvement opportunities for its tenants and communities. Their aim is to offer something for everyone, with different time commitments and levels of engagement on offer. They have an Umbrella Structure that brings together more than 30 Tenants' and Residents' Associations from across Wirral. The main tenant scrutiny activities are undertaken by the Advisory and Scrutiny Panel (ASP), which was set up in early 2010 and currently has 8 members. The Panel have a budget which they manage and undertake their own recruitment and selection process when vacancies arise. The Chair of ASP has forged strong links with the Chief Executive and Chair of the Board at WPH.

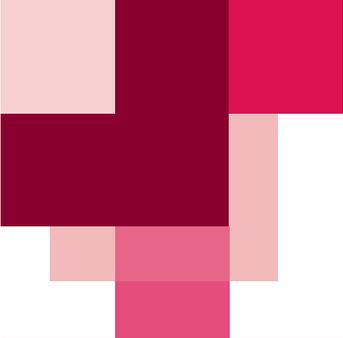


The first scrutiny review conducted by ASP examined WPH's arrangements for tackling **anti social behaviour**. The panel focused on the service level agreement WPH had with Wirral Borough Council for dealing with some of their anti social behaviour cases. ASP's review revealed that the service was not as cost efficient or effective as those provided by other landlords and that many WPH tenants were dissatisfied with the service provided.

ASP recommended that the service level agreement be terminated, that the service should be provided directly by WPH and any resultant saving be re-invested in improving WPH's quality of service and response to anti social behaviour. The outcomes from this review included significant savings of £250,000 which were re-invested in the 'in-house' service and in youth diversionary activities, along with increased customer satisfaction levels resulting from the service delivery changes made by WPH. ASP was involved in the decision making process regarding the reinvestment of all of the savings arising from their recommendations and are monitoring outcomes for tenants e.g. through customer feedback and reports on outcomes from the diversionary projects.

One of the top tips from WPH and ASP is *“Ensure that staff at all levels understand the aims and objectives of co-regulation. Also ensure that Board and Executive Management Team are regularly updated and fully endorse co-regulation, and that the wider tenant population has a clear understanding of the scrutiny group's role and how to connect with them.”*

ASP's review of anti-social behaviour clearly demonstrates the role that tenant scrutiny can play in securing better value for money for the housing provider and residents, as well as better outcomes and increased satisfaction.



## Resources section: Find out more

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### The Co-Regulatory Champions

Together the ten Co-Regulatory Champions have helped more than 2000 tenants and officers from over 250 organisations get to grips with co-regulation.

The Champions have very different ways of working, but all agree on these ingredients for success:

- A genuine belief and commitment to staff and residents working together
- Transparency and accountability
- A formal, constructive challenge from residents
- Building skills and confidence for residents
- Accountability to all residents
- A representative, resident-led voice
- A belief that what residents think is good for them is good for the landlord.

See [www.coregchamps.co.uk](http://www.coregchamps.co.uk) for useful resources and tips, or take a look at the Champions' individual websites:

- AmicusHorizon - <http://www.amicushorizon.org.uk>
- Community Gateway Association - [www.communitygateway.co.uk](http://www.communitygateway.co.uk)
- Family Housing Association - [www.family-housing.co.uk](http://www.family-housing.co.uk)
- Helena Partnerships - [www.excellenceathelena.co.uk](http://www.excellenceathelena.co.uk)
- New Charter Housing Trust - [www.newcharter.co.uk](http://www.newcharter.co.uk)
- Riverside Housing Group - [www.riverside.org.uk](http://www.riverside.org.uk)
- Salix Homes - [www.salixhomes.org](http://www.salixhomes.org)
- Soha Housing - [www.soha.co.uk](http://www.soha.co.uk)
- Wherry Housing Association - [www.circle.org.uk/wherry](http://www.circle.org.uk/wherry)
- Wirral Partnership Homes - [www.wphomes.org.uk](http://www.wphomes.org.uk)

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## Scrutiny and Empowerment Partners Ltd (SEP)

SEP was set up to help landlords and their tenants to develop and sustain excellent tenant scrutiny, involvement and empowerment arrangements. SEP offers a comprehensive range of services and tools to help tenants and landlords achieve excellence across all services.

SEP is experienced in service review and can build the capacity of staff and tenants to work on Involvement, Complaints, Cashback and Scrutiny. SEP's approach is to review services with tenants, undertake customer surveys and deliver comprehensive and one off training and health checks, in a partnership that challenges ways of working as well as delivering practical outcomes for landlords and customers.

Check out [www.tenantadvisor.net](http://www.tenantadvisor.net) for more information, or better still join SEP in their quest for the best co-regulation, with a big impact on tenants' lives.

### Tenantadvisor

Scrutiny & Empowerment Partners (SEP) set up tenantadvisor ([www.tenantadvisor.net](http://www.tenantadvisor.net)) to enable the sharing of good practice.

The information on the new pages is free to anyone.

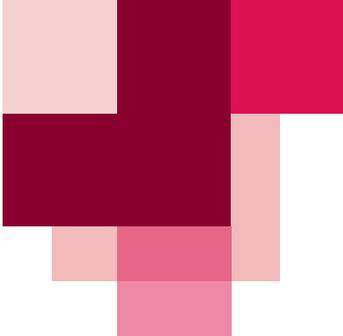
The information on the membership area is shared between members. Members share their own information, like their scrutiny panel reports, mystery shopping reports, terms of reference, code of conduct, as well as member contact details, benchmarking information and forward scrutiny plans.



SEP also share proformas and advice to help involvement and empowerment activities along the way and if SEP see good practice this is also shared with members. Tenantadvisor can save organisations time and give ideas and food for thought, it prevents tenants and landlords from re-inventing wheels.

### The Centre for Public Scrutiny

The national independent body for research and good practice on effective scrutiny and accountability in public services, CfPS has a wide range of free resources on its website: [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk), including an on-line library of past scrutiny reviews, a forum where you can meet other scrutineers, share ideas and ask questions, and regular newsletters and free publications.



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CfPS has an experienced team of staff and expert advisers who can work with organisations on all aspects of scrutiny and accountability to help them review relationships with stakeholders, ensure their governance is transparent and inclusive, and provide a range of training, coaching and development offers for lay members and staff. Recent useful publications (freely downloadable from [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk) unless otherwise specified) include:

### *Accountability Works (2010) and Accountability Works for You (2011)*

Original research into what is meant by accountability, followed by a practical framework and methodology for assessing how organisations can improve their own accountability and governance arrangements

### *Successful Scrutiny (2011)*

Latest in an annual series of reports into the best examples of scrutiny and accountability across the public sector. Since 2008 these have been based on the winners from our Good Scrutiny Awards, open to any organisation to enter to demonstrate how their approach to scrutiny has resulted in improvements to the lives of service-users and stronger public accountability.

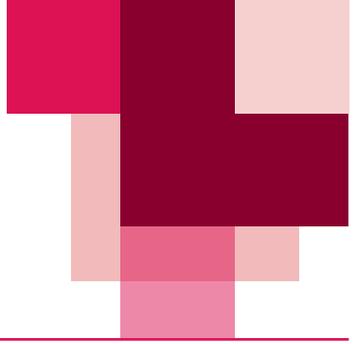
### *Library Monitor 11: Choice-based lettings (2010)*

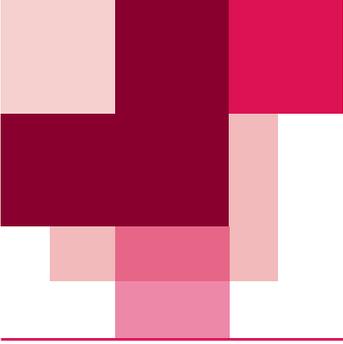
A review and analysis of scrutiny reviews in the CfPS library on the subject of choice-based lettings. Library Monitors aim to be a one-stop-shop for all the information about a subject that you need in preparation for undertaking a review, adding value to the more than 3,700 scrutiny reviews stored in our searchable on-line library and providing guidance based on the experiences of other scrutiny practitioners who have completed a review into the subject. Mostly drawn from local authority overview and scrutiny committee experiences, they have wider application to other scrutineers.

### *The Good Scrutiny Guide (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2006: available to order)*

A practical guide to the four principles of effective scrutiny discussed in this report, with examples.

The main report from this project on tenant scrutiny, ***Developing Tenant Scrutiny and Co-regulation in Social Housing: Lessons from the Co-regulatory Champions***, and the shorter guide, ***Top tips for tenants: holding your landlord to account through scrutiny***, are available to download from [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk).





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