



# TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

2017-2020



## **Contents**

**1.) INTRODUCTION**

**2.) BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

**3.) WHAT DO WE WANT THE TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE?**

**4.) HOW DO TENANTS GET INVOLVED?**

**5.) APPENDICES**



## **1.0) INTRODUCTION**

NB Housing aims to be an organisation where tenants can influence the decision making process through a range of involvement opportunities and work in partnership with the Association to deliver a housing service that not only meets their needs but exceeds their expectations

### **1.1) What is a Tenant Participation Strategy?**

The Strategy describes a series of actions that we intend to implement to support and enable effective Tenant Participation. A key feature of our strategy will be to encourage a culture of trust, respect and partnership between our Board of Management, tenants, service users, staff, and local authorities. This document represents our Strategy for ensuring that Tenant Participation becomes a central element in all our services. In addition, it examines the different types and levels of participation to enable tenants to choose the form of participation best suited to their particular needs and preferences.

### **1.2) What timescale will the strategy cover?**

This strategy will be implemented from 2017 – 2020 and includes a detailed action plan. (Appendix 1)

### **1.3) What limitations or constraints are there on the strategy?**

Although we would like all tenants to be involved in consultation, we acknowledge that many tenants do not wish to participate and we respect their right not to do so. The strategy therefore aims to outline participation methods for fair and representative consultation whenever participation is possible, whilst promoting maximum inclusion through equal opportunity methods. We have considered and will make available the resources required to enable effective participation and the implementation of this Strategy – see appendix 3.



## **2.0) BACKGROUND & HISTORY**

### **2.1) Why are we developing a Tenant Participation Strategy?**

The Department for Communities (DfC) has introduced a new Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland. The strategy explores how social landlords and tenants can work together to improve services by giving tenants the opportunity and choice to participate in decisions that affect them. It encourages Housing Associations to increase the effectiveness and involvement of tenant participation.

Tenant Participation is the method by which we as social landlords effectively involve and communicate with tenants and residents with an end goal of improving the delivery of services.

Whilst Housing Associations are not for profit, non-public bodies, the Department for Communities (DfC) regulatory framework requires us to consider a range of methods and opportunities to consult and obtain feedback from tenants.

All Housing Associations must:

- Consult with tenants on issues affecting their tenancies
- Have a complaints procedure in place
- Survey tenants annually

Additionally some Housing Associations may have forums, tenant committees and tenant representation on their Boards. With our tenants help, NB Housing wishes to expand on the opportunities for involvement already available to tenants and residents.

The Strategy will provide a focus and improved processes for the Board of Management, staff, individual tenants, tenants groups, residents and other community groups who wish to work in partnership with us to improve services as part of our overall commitment to customers and continuous improvement.

It also ensures adequate methods and appropriate timescales for participation are in operation.

### **2.2) Benefits of tenant participation for us and our Tenants**

The benefits of tenant participation are invaluable across the board. Participation gives us the opportunity to make informed decisions in relation to both policy and practice, based on tenants needs. By listening to our customers, we will improve our services more effectively, identify problems and find solutions early on. Participation enables tenants to exercise more control over their housing and related services, which is a fundamental aspect of their lives, and promotes a greater sense of community. Participation also empowers tenants, gets their voice heard and gives tenants confidence and personal skills. Furthermore, it provides interaction and improves the social aspect of their lives.



### **3.0) WHAT DO WE WANT THE TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE?**

#### **3.1 ) Principles of Tenant Participation**

Everyone is involved in Tenant Participation, Housing Association staff, management, Board Members, tenants and the wider community. For the strategy to work everyone must have a clear understanding of what it is trying to achieve. The 10 principles of tenant participation set the context:

1. Tenant Participation comes from and promotes a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, board members and staff at all levels. It exists when all these interests work together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services.
2. Tenant Participation is a continuous process. Participants share information, ideas and influence. They work towards a common understanding of problems and a consensus on solutions.
3. Good Tenant Participation is about sharing information. All participants need to have all the information available to consider issues properly. That information needs to be clear, timely and accessible. Information must be in a format that all participants can understand.
4. Decision making processes should be open, clear and accountable.
5. Tenant representatives should have enough time to consider issues properly. They should have the opportunity to work out a common view before meeting landlord representatives.
6. The landlord must recognise the independence of tenants' organisations.
7. Good working relations evolve gradually so must be flexible to adapt to local circumstances.
8. Tenants' organisations need adequate resources for organisation, training and support.
9. Tenant participation in rural areas must suit the particular circumstances and needs of rural tenants.
10. Tenant participation must meet the requirements of legislation on Equality and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.



### **3.2 ) We believe the strategy will be successful if:**

- a)* Tenants are central to NB Housing’s decision making processes
- b)* Tenants’ views and opinions influence NB Housing’s policy and practice
- c)* Tenants have equal opportunities and barrier free ways to participate
- d)* Tenant Participation is relevant to tenants

### **3.3) NB Housing’s Strategic Aims and how Tenant Participation Contributes**

As an organisation, NB Housing has set out a number of Strategic Aims that underpin what we are striving to achieve.

These are:

- Innovate in barrier free design in inclusive communities and influence the practice of others so that substantially more housing reflects these design principles
- Rethink models of residential support, and move from traditional patterns to new models which demonstrate our values in action
- Achieve continuous improvement in all the services we deliver, and achieve and maintain high standards of business efficiency and effectiveness
- Create opportunities for significant levels of user involvement in what we do
- Be recognised by regulators and strategic partners as delivering excellent performance
- Ensuring a comprehensive strategy for consultation, including consultation on barrier free design.
- Ensuring internal structures and processes for comprehensive Tenant Participation that foster a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, staff and the Board, and that are open, clear and accountable.
- Recognising the independence of residents’ organisations and facilitating the provision of adequate resources for organisation, training and support.
- Ensuring that tenant feedback is used to influence and continuously improve services.



- Providing relevant and timely information and being able to communicate clearly with our tenants.
- Furthering Tenant Participation into wider action, including enabling personal development and potential employment and voluntary opportunities.
- Ensuring that we comply with all relevant legislation and good practice.

### **3.4) How will we measure if we have achieved our aims?**

We will measure the factors critical to achieving successful outcomes of this Strategy on an annual basis. Successful outcomes will be:

- 1) More than 75% tenants tell us that they are satisfied or very satisfied with access to and relevance of Tenant Participation;**
- 2) More than 2% of our tenants are involved in some form of participation;**
- 3) Tenant participation is an influencer in 100% of policy and practice reviews that are relevant and appropriate to tenants.**



## **4.0) HOW DO TENANTS GET INVOLVED?**

We recognise that tenant participation is part of our wider continuous improvement process but that continuous improvement of our tenant participation processes is also essential. The aims set out in this Strategy reflect our ambition of fully embedding tenant participation in everything we do.

In developing our priorities, we are mindful of the specialist needs and issues of tenants. Outlined below are our six priority areas for the next three years that will realise our aims. A more detailed breakdown is contained within the three-year action plan in Appendix 1.

### **1) Internal structures for participation**

We will further develop our systems to facilitate and embed tenant participation in our policy development and service delivery processes. A key aid will be the establishment of a database of all tenants who would like to participate, including information on what subjects each individual wants consulted on and at what level. We will arrange staff training on Tenant Participation.

This will include:

- Annual reviews of this Strategy to ensure continued alignment with strategic objectives and tenant need.
- Give training/coaching to each department on Tenant Participation and consultation resulting in a monitored action plan for implementation with follow-up support. To have regular information on tenant participation progress for all staff.

### **2) Consultations and Reviews**

We will develop a timetable across all departments of the areas we need to review or consult on a regular basis and monitor implementation. We will use the tenant participation database to facilitate questionnaires and tenant panels. We will ensure that tenants have realistic expectations of participation and that they are aware that their views must be balanced with the business needs and future sustainability of the organization.

This will include:

- Making reviews even more accessible by having a formal tenant consultation panel in place to which all tenants will be invited.
- Continue with satisfaction surveys every year and monitor feedback and implementation of appropriate improvements as a result.





- A comprehensive consultation register for all relevant issues including relevant policies. A full strategy for consultation including timescales and responsibilities which is monitored regularly

### **3) Information giving**

Review with tenants all information sent out for content and format, including the tenant handbook, leaflets, website, newsletters, forms etc. This will include:

- Involving tenants as much as possible in the production of the newsletter
- Reassessing the tenant information packs and expand them to include information on tenant participation and local information.
- To develop website with focus on tenant participation.

### **4) Tenant groups**

Actively encourage the formation of Tenants committees/forums, tenant panels and give follow-up support and advice.

**This will include:**

- Examining the structures of groups and consider the possibility of group representation on the Board.
- Giving support and training to tenants groups wherever needed including training in group work skills.
- Making sure that participation in tenants groups is barrier free by assessing support needs and finding ways to overcome any difficulties.

### **5) Pro-active participation**

Create and support accessible methods of participation suitable for the individual and specialist needs of our tenants including alternative Tenant Participation events. Consider issues such as special needs, language etc. Encourage personal development and empowerment in tenants through wider action projects.

**This will include:**

- Continuing to hold Tenant events, using tenant panels to plan them, ensuring that their needs and interests are addressed



- To have a comprehensive register of tenants interested in recruitment and a formal training programme for those who want it
- Publicise and promote the work of our tenant participation groups and contribute to best practice guidelines
- Facilitate involvement in wider action as well as internal affairs. Encourage personal development and empowerment in tenants through wider action projects.

#### **6) Assessment**

Put in place assessment systems and measures to evaluate the success of Tenant Participation and implement changes as part of our continuous improvement regime.

This will include:

- A more comprehensive monitoring system for tenant participation, including incorporating tenant participation as part of our annual review process.
- Regular monitoring of our tenant participation measures.



**APPENDIX 1**

**TENANT PARTICIPATION ACTION PLAN**

<b>AIMS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>BY WHO</b>	<b>BY WHEN</b>
<b>1. Internal Structures For Participation</b>				
Train staff in tenant participation	Invite Supporting Communities	Increased knowledge of tenant participation processes and requirements  Improved levels of TP in NB Housing	Supporting Communities	March 2017
Review current tenant participation structure and develop model that best serves the needs of NB Housing Tenants	Review current approach and develop new avenues to participate	Revitalization of current methods and new participation opportunities in place	All staff	March 2017
Establish database of individual tenant preferences for participation including Menu of Involvement. Register of tenants who which to participate.	Letter to all tenants to include expression of interest and Menu of Involvement choices	Improved structures of participation. Easier and more reliable structures for staff to follow	Housing Manager	March 2017

<b>AIMS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>BY WHO</b>	<b>BY WHEN</b>
Development Draft Tenant participation strategy for consultation with members of Tenant Forum	Following legislative and good practice guidelines, write strategy consulting with tenants.	Consensus on methods and outcomes	Director of Housing & Corporate Services (DHCS)	Dec 2017
Tenant and Staff Involvement	Annual training/support sessions	Training completed for staff. Tenants Outstanding	All staff	Mar 2017 (Staff)
Set up Tenant Meetings for review of Strategy / Brainstorming	Quarterly Meetings Ongoing	Improved involvement and idea/suggestions on moving forward	Housing Manager	Quarterly in years 1-3
Tenant Groups: Actively encourage more tenants groups.	To encourage formation and give support.  Information on Tenant Groups to be delivered in the Newsletters and website.	More tenants groups / more satisfaction with NB response to tenants groups. Increase in numbers and activity of tenants groups. More information in the tenant's newsletter and website	All staff	Quarterly In years 1-3
Staff to seek and encourage involvement when in contact with tenants	Generate interest during contact with tenants.	Improved involvement and participation	All staff	Ongoing

AIMS	ACTION	OUTCOME	BY WHO	BY WHEN
	Staff reminded at staff meetings/brief			
Tenants inspectors	Encourage tenants to become involved in upkeep of schemes	Increased involvement and decision making regarding the conditions of apartment buildings	Housing Officers	Bi monthly in years 1-3
<b>2.Consultation and Reviews</b>				
Review tenants participation/attendance at events or meetings	Where there is a need for improvement consider incentives e.g. ballot at each event	Increase attendees and improve participation	Housing Manager	April 2017

<b>AIMS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>BY WHO</b>	<b>BY WHEN</b>
Set up a tenant consultation panel to formally review strategy, information, etc	Invite tenants to be a member of the panel in Newsletters	A formal tenant base to carry out reviews and progress	DHCS/ Housing Manager	March 2018
Create register of consultation procedures and procedures for implementation of results.	Review all issues being consulted on and any that should be consulted on according to good practice guidelines. Create timetable and guidelines for feedback reviews.	Increase in consultation completion levels and response to results.	Housing Team	June 2017
Agree proposed methods of consultation with Tenants eg Forums, Committees, Annual Surveys, Telephone Surveys,	Feedback from menu of involvement	Various methods on which to consult with tenants	All staff	June 2017
Consultation Methods	Departments to ensure tenants are consulted	Tenants aware of consultation methods	All staff	Ongoing Through out years

AIMS	ACTION	OUTCOME	BY WHO	BY WHEN
	regarding issues that may affect them eg from kitchen replacements to new developments			1-3
Review tenant questionnaires currently being sent out and implement any changes or additions needed by legislation / good practice guideline.	Collate customer service questionnaires and redesign, add subjects where necessary and make any changes needed.	Increase in numbers / quality of questionnaire response.	DHCS	June 2017
Review of TP Strategy including successes and future developments	Assess aims achieved and adjust strategy if necessary. Revisit with tenants.	TP progression	DHCS	March 2018
Review Staff and Tenant Training and arrange further training as necessary	Contact Supporting Communities when required	Provide refresher training to staff and tenants to increase knowledge and revitalize ideas	DHCS	June 2018
Creation of feedback methods to evaluate the success of Tenant Participation.	Include feedback question in Tenant Satisfaction Survey for	Increased ease and confidence in participation for both tenants.	DHCS	June 2018

AIMS	ACTION	OUTCOME	BY WHO	BY WHEN
	tenants to assess participation			
<b>3.Information Giving</b>				
Review of Tenants Information in handbook	Review with Tenants that handbook has the right information and is easy to understand	Clearer handbook	DHCS	Jan 2017 & Jan 2019
Review of all leaflets and information being sent out. Include a tenant participation information leaflet	Review with tenants that handbook has the right information and is easy to understand.	Tenants have clearer information. Review completed and new leaflets produced where necessary	DHCS	Jan 2017 & Jan 2019
Improvement of newsletter: create strategy to involve tenants more in the writing / information giving.	Review with tenants the contact, formats, etc. Seek information from tenants	More tenant orientated newsletter	All staff	Quarterly Years 1-3
Review of information on website	Review website contents with tenants	Website more used by tenants	DHCS	Ongoing in years 1-3



AIMS	ACTION	OUTCOME	BY WHO	BY WHEN
<b>4.Tenant Groups</b>				
Actively encourage more tenants' groups and provide support.	To encourage formation and give support.	More tenants groups / more satisfaction with response to tenants groups.		Ongoing in years 1-3
Consideration to be given to Tenant representation on the NB Housing Board	Open application for membership	Suitably qualified addition to Board vacancy arises	Board/CEO	Ongoing
Participation in tenants groups is barrier free by assessing support needs and finding ways to overcome any difficulties	Open participation by developing involvements routes that meet tenants needs	All-inclusive involvement	All staff	March 2017
<b>5.Proactive Participation</b>				
Continuing to hold Tenant events, using tenant to plan them, ensuring that their needs and interests are addressed and are accessible to all	Encourage youth participation; over 55+events; General needs schemes etc	All-inclusive tenant participation	All staff	Ongoing Years 1-3
To have a comprehensive register of tenants interested in recruitment and a formal training programme for those who require it	Increase awareness of interested tenants	Well informed tenants groups	DHCS/ Housing Manager	March 2017
Facilitate involvement in wider community as well as internally. Encourage personal development and	Promote any community events to enable	Increased empowerment	All staff	Ongoing

<b>AIMS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>BY WHO</b>	<b>BY WHEN</b>
empowerment in tenants through wider action projects	tenants to develop			
<b>6. Assessment</b>				
Continue to collect feedback. Review feedback and evaluate the success of Tenant participation.	Annual feedback questionnaires for tenants and staff to assess participation procedures and the ease of implementing/ becoming involved.	Active participation and involvement	DHCS/ Housing Manager	Annually Years 1-3
Review of TP Strategy including successes and future developments	Assess aims achieved and adjust strategy if necessary	TP progression	DHCS/ Housing Manager	March 2018 and annually there after
Review staff and tenant training and run refresher courses if necessary	Further staff training	Staff awareness of best TP practices	DHCS	June 2018
Review new methods for consultation with both tenants and staff	Review practices and seek to improve where necessary	Better methods of consultation	Tenants All staff	Annually Yrs 1-3
Review forms including application forms for accessibility.	Review with Tenants that forms are easy to understand and in correct format	More accessible forms for tenants		Annually Yrs 1-3

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Resources**

This strategy has considered the resources needed for implementation and ensured that we have the means needed for the realisation of our aims.

### **FINANCIAL**

NB Housing shall create a budget specifically for tenant participation. This budget includes the costs of:

- Hiring meeting rooms
- Providing lunches, teas and coffee
- Special requirements for tenants needs
- Tenants traveling expenses
- Postage and printing of newsletters, questionnaires and other information
- Access to IT for tenants
- Training costs
- Tenant Incentives
- Tenants conferences