

Tenant Participation Review 2018-19

Home's for Life's Tenant Participation Strategy sets out what we mean by Participation and sets out what this will mean to you in practice.

- How we will consult you
- What we will consult you about
- How you can get involved in decision making
- How you can help us improve services
- How you and your neighbours can form a registered tenant group (RTO)
- How you can get involved, through membership, attending meetings, take part in policy and service reviews

The Action Plan for 2019-20 is attached at the end of this review. This will be included in the Summer newsletter asking tenants for feedback

What did we do during 2018-19

We have continued to consult our tenants' regularly throughout this period and informed them through regular newsletters, briefing notes and to meet with our tenants through meetings as well as through our AGM.

Consultation

- **Ongoing Consultation on Tenant Satisfaction**
We continuously survey our tenant's satisfaction through questionnaires sent out after each repair, gas servicing and home visits after allocations. Issues raised are followed up and policy/procedures amended as necessary to improve our service
These include:-
Repairs Satisfaction Surveys
Novus reactive maintenance repairs – we had a **30.5% response rate to the satisfaction** surveys which reported **83.3%** rate of overall satisfaction with the repairs contractor, .
Kingdom Gas Service and Repair call outs –**there was a 39% response rate to the** surveys sent out which reported **89.5%** rate of overall satisfaction.
Post Allocation Surveys – we carried out **17** post allocation or settling in visits. None of our new tenants expressed any dissatisfaction. tenant expressed any dissatisfaction.
- **Annual Rent increase**
Each year we write out to all our tenants seeking their views on the proposed April rent increase. In December 2018 all tenants were sent a consultation notice on the proposal to increase rents by 3%. There were a total of **82 responses**, of which only 7 tenants felt the increase was unfair.

We will continue to consult and/or provide information to any tenant who wishes to discuss housing or community matters on an individual or group basis.

Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 – changes to tenant’s rights

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced significant changes to allocations and tenant’s right which required substantial input and involvement of tenants.

The Consultation process:

- We provided information on the changes though out 2018-19, starting with the April 2018 tenant’s newsletter. We started the formal consultation with a presentation at our Annual General Meeting in September 2018 and asked for tenants to become involved. This is the biggest gathering of tenants during the year with 36 tenants attending
- We sent Tenancy Agreement Amendments out to all tenants in October 2018 with further information.
- We included a further request for tenant involvement in the Rent consultation in December 2018
- We held a meeting with a focus group of tenants in March 2019
- We sent a survey and information booklet out to all our tenants April 2019
- We contacted ELTRP and sent them a copy of the survey.
- We sent the survey to other local RSLs, local advice agencies and a multiple sections within East Lothian Council
- We included a link to the survey on our website and in property we advertised on Homehunt.

Information

- **Newsletter**
We produced 4 newsletters , to communicate with and consult our tenants. The newsletters also provided feedback from consultations and prize draws.
- **Feedback reports**
We provided tenants with feedback reports on the surveys and rent consultation
- **Rent Statements**
We sent out rent statements each quarter to all our tenants.
- **Annual Report**
Tenants opted to have the Annual Report and the Customer Report on the Charter merged into one document informing them how the Company had performed over the previous year. Our Annual report includes benchmarking against previous performance and against peer averages across a range of Key Performance Indicators.
- **Tenants Handbook**
Our tenant handbook provides essential information for tenants and is updated on an ongoing basis as policies are reviewed or useful information changes. However, this is only of use to new tenants as they sign up. Moving forward we propose to consult tenants on making this information available on our website. For tenant’s without internet access we will provide them with a paper copy.
- **Interpretation and Translation**

In order to be able to communicate with tenants who's first language isn't English we have an account with VoiceOver Interpreting Services who offer interpretation and translation services as required. Our re-vamped website now includes a Google translate option which we have had positive feedback on.

- **Briefings and Flyers**

Throughout the year we have provided tenants briefings on a range of subjects from Universal Credit, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 to how to deal with Condensation

Participation

- **Tenant Panel –**

- A Tenant Panel was established in 2008 which gave tenants an opportunity to become more involved in the decision making process of the Company. However, the subsequent change in the Articles of Association to ensure we always maintained a **majority of Tenants on the Board of Homes for Life** meant it has become increasingly difficult to maintain tenant interest in attending Tenant Panel meetings. Instead a large number of Tenants opted to review policies and paperwork at home. We called these tenants our **“Armchair Reviewers”**. While we respect this choice, tenant meetings have many advantages over this form of participation and we will continue to seek ways for closer engagement with our tenants.

- **Tenant Board Directors –**

- During the summer of 2018 it became apparent that we were struggling to maintain tenant numbers on the Board. After an initial poor response to requests for volunteers the Board decided to ask tenants whether they should amend the Articles to soften the requirement for there to always be a tenant majority. Members voted to support this amendment at the 2018 AGM. We have since maintained a Tenant majority and will work towards keeping it, but the Company is now safe guarded against being in Breach of its Articles of Association.

- **Estate Walkabouts – tenant led inspections**

- Our Tenant Estate Walkabout programme for the year took place in June/July 2018 with visits carried out at 11 of our developments. Where tenants were unable to attend they made contact with the office so their ideas could be included.
- Fewer tenants are attending the walkabouts but they have still produced improvements to developments - from unreported fencing issues, to providing slabbed areas to relocate bins stores. For 2018 we also included a **Rate My Estate** form for tenant's unable to attend walkabouts to participate in making suggestions for improvements.
- Since 2010 we have awarded prizes to tenants who were making particular efforts with their gardens and communities, through the Community Pride Awards. Tenants are able to nominate neighbours, put themselves forward for recognition of their contribution or recommend a local community project worthy of recognition. The prizes awarded are always a popular part of the well attended Annual General Meeting

- **Membership**

- At each new sign up tenants are provided with copies of our Tenant Participation Strategy and encouraged to become members. During 2018-19, 18 new tenants became members. Bringing our total tenant members to 149. **Our AGMs are well attended by**

both tenant members and other tenants. In 2018 of the 44 people attending , 32 were tenants.

- **Annual Charter Report to Tenants**

The Scottish Housing Charter places tenant's interests at its core and there is an even greater need for tenant involvement in the decision making and scrutiny of the Company's performance. Homes for Life has involved tenants in the assessment of its performance in meeting the Charter outcomes each year and provides them with a report by October.

Action Plan 2019- 2020

Consultation

ACTIVITY	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TIMESCALE	OFFICER
Develop issue based groups	Increase tenant consultation in key matters of service delivery and policy issues	Development of working group(s)	As required	Customer Service Manager/ Housing Officer
Undertake repairs satisfaction surveys	Ascertain levels of satisfaction / provide feedback	Survey on all completed repairs reported	Ongoing	Customer Service Assistant /Housing Officer
Undertake Post Allocation Survey	Ascertain levels of satisfaction / provide feedback	Complete surveys	Within 12 weeks of allocation	Housing Officer
Undertake survey of the Regulator's 8 Charter satisfaction indicators	Ascertain levels of satisfaction / provide feedback	Complete surveys	Bi-Annually – usually in October/November 2020	Housing Officer/ Customer Service Manager
Undertake Household composition Survey + other specific topic	We hold up to date information. Mid year opportunity for further feedback	Complete surveys	Annually – approx. 6 months apart from main satisfaction survey	Customer Service Manager
Consult tenants on proposals for key changes to service (inc. rent increase)	Inform service review	Timeous consultation	As required	Customer Service Manager / Housing Officer
Consult tenants regarding moving the Tenant Handbook to a leaflet format to be hosted on the HfL website	All tenants can access up to date information	Website is updated with information	Complete consultation through the summer newsletter. Update website by December 2019	Customer Service Manager / Housing Officer

Information

ACTIVITY	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TIMESCALE	OFFICER
Produce 4 newsletters per year	Improved written information flow	Production of 4 newsletters	Each quarter	Customer Service Manager / Housing Officer
Produce a combined Annual Report and Tenant Charter Report	Provide performance information	Production of Tenant Charter Report	Each September and by October each year	Business Manager /Customer Service Manager / Housing Officer
Update Tenants Handbook to leaflet format for post on website	Tenants have better access to current information	Updated website information	Update website by December 2019	Customer Service Assistant/Housing Officer / Customer Service Manager
Provide written information in alternative formats and other languages if requested	Access to information for all tenants	Production of information in different formats / languages if required	Ongoing at request	Housing Officer

Participation

ACTIVITY	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TIMESCALE	OFFICER
Establish working group(s) for reviews of policies and specific issues	Greater Tenant involvement and decision making	Focus group established and operating	As necessary	Housing Officer
Establish 'Armchair Scrutineers' to review policies at home	Increased option/alternative route to involvement	Tenants who don't want to attend meetings are able to participate	Ongoing	Customer Service Manager
Encourage greater tenant membership of the Homes for Life Partnership	Greater tenant participation in HfLHP activities	Maintain min 25% tenant membership	Ongoing	Housing Officer
Encourage and Replace Tenant Directors on the Board	The Board has the full compliment of Tenant Directors as required	Maintain majority tenant directors on the Board	Ongoing	Customer Service Manager / Housing Officer
Assist in setting up representative Tenants Organisations	Greater tenant involvement	Establishment of representative tenant organisations	As requested	Housing Officer

Promotion

ACTIVITY	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TIMESCALE	OFFICER
Continue to promote tenant involvement in decision making, using appropriate methods	Increased tenant involvement	Identification of new and appropriate methods of involving tenants	Ongoing	Housing Officer / Customer Service Manager
Promote participation strategy	Improve awareness and increase involvement	Information bulletin and subsequent newsletter and / or annual report updates	As necessary	All staff and Directors