



Homes for Life, Housing Partnership

Tenant Participation Strategy

2023 – 2026

Board Approved 25 January 2023

Review Date January 2026

Foreword: Board Chairperson

Homes for Life Housing Partnership is committed to providing our tenants with affordable high-quality homes and housing services that meet our tenants needs and priorities.

Our overall purpose is to invest in our people, our properties, and communities, assisting them to thrive and flourish. We understand that to achieve this, it is important to seek, listen and act upon your views to support us to secure our future for the benefit of our tenants.

In reflecting our core values of communication, collaboration, trust and respect our tenant participation strategy aims to ensure tenants are at the heart of the decisions we take in delivering our services. By working in partnership with our tenants and other stakeholders, we aim to ensure we deliver more than “homes for life.”

Section 1: Welcome by Chief Executive

Welcome to our **Tenant Participation Strategy** which outlines our commitment to working with our tenants to provide affordable, tailored, responsive services. The Strategy outlines how we aim to work in partnership with our tenants to further develop participation and scrutiny opportunities that are reflective of our strategic business plan and ambitions for our homes and communities.

The Tenant Participation Strategy will assist us to work towards achieving our vision of securing a bright future that best serves our tenants and service users, enabling them and HfL to thrive and flourish.

We will do this in line with our overall Strategy objectives of:

- Establishing our tenants’ priorities
- Improving our homes and services
- Contributing to the wellbeing of our communities and
- Supporting tenants to engage and provide feedback to hold us to account

Knowing how we can improve and what is important to our tenants is critical to meet the needs and aspirations of our tenants and future tenants in an ever changing environment.

I hope you enjoy reading the Strategy and that you can get involved in one of the opportunities we have developed in partnership with our tenants to help us keep improving and evolving our services.

Section 2: Developing the Strategy

In April 2022, Homes for Life commissioned the Tenants Information Service (TIS), to review our tenant participation policy, tenant participation activities and to assist us develop a new Tenant Participation Strategy.

Who are TIS?

TIS are experts in housing, community development, and engagement practice. We are committed to influencing change and strive for an active, inclusive, and just Scotland, with strong, equitable, and sustainable communities.

Our aim is simple, we want to change social rented housing in Scotland for the better.

TIS held information and discussion groups with tenants, staff, and members of Board to:

- Increase awareness of the legislation surrounding tenant participation and scrutiny
- Seek views on Homes for Life's participation practice
- Identify what participants consider what Homes for Life does well and what could be improved and
- Consider what needs to be in place to increase and further develop opportunities for the future.

The TIS review of tenant participation at Homes for Life highlighted that although satisfaction levels with the participation opportunities are high, the number of tenants actively involved is low, there is no active tenant scrutiny group or activities and that the range of opportunities available could be further developed.

The new strategy provides an opportunity to increase involvement alongside the development of new methods in partnership with tenants.

Sharon Donohoe, Development Director, TIS.

Your Views

During the sessions with TIS and through participation in the Homes for Life 2022 satisfaction survey you told us:

Although Homes for Life newsletters are well received and provide information of interest to tenants, overall communication requires improvement, including the development of new methods.
Homes for Life needs to ensure and demonstrate that tenants' views are listened to and acted upon.
Improved consistency is required in the delivery of services and communication to all tenants and communities.
Homes for Life needs to ensure the methods used to seek tenant satisfaction levels are accessible to everyone with the tenant demographic profile.
Improvements to tenants' homes are required to meet all associated housing standards and tenant priorities for investment.
The repairs service response timescales require improvement.
Staff training and development is required to ensure services are delivered to a high standard in a consistent manner.
Tenants require information, training, and support to assist them to fully engage with Homes for Life, and to increase skills and confidence to effectively influence decisions on housing services, standards, and policies.

Section 3: Legal Rights to Tenant Participation

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a legal framework for Tenant Participation.

Tenants have the right to:

- Form independent representative associations.
- Access information about housing policies.
- Be consulted on issues that affect them.
- Participate in decisions that affect the services tenants receive and be given adequate time to fully consider proposals.

Homes for Life Housing Partnership has duties to:

- Produce a Tenant Participation Strategy.
- Make sure that our Tenant Participation Strategy complies with equal opportunities requirements.
- Set up a register of tenant organisations, in line with Scottish Government guidance.
- Consider feedback made by individual tenants and tenants' groups.
- Inform tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations of proposals for housing management, standards of service & the Tenant Participation Strategy.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter

In 2010, the Scottish Parliament introduced the first Scottish Social Housing Charter (The Charter). The right to adequate housing is a human right in international law. The Charter supports this right by setting the standards and outcomes that social landlords should achieve for their tenants and other customers by delivering good quality homes and services. The Charter came into effect in 2012 and was last reviewed in 2022 and has specific standards and outcomes regarding **communication** and **participation**.

Communication

Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

This **outcome** covers all aspects of landlords' communication with tenants and other customers.

This could include making use of new technologies such as web-based tenancy management systems and smart-phone applications. It is not just about how clearly and effectively a landlord gives information to those who want it. It also covers making it easy for tenants and other customers to make complaints and provide feedback on services, using that information to improve services and performance, and letting people know what they have done in response to complaints and feedback. It does not require landlords to provide legally protected, personal, or commercial information.

Participation

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

This **outcome** describes what landlords should achieve by meeting their statutory duties on tenant participation. It covers how social landlords gather and take account of the views and priorities of their tenants, other customers, and bodies representing them such as registered tenant organisations; how they shape their services to reflect these views; and how they help tenants, other customers and bodies representing them such as registered tenant organisations to become more capable of involvement - this could include supporting them to scrutinise landlord services.

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

The SHR is the independent regulator of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), such as Homes for Life and Local Authority housing services in Scotland. The SHR is responsible for monitoring, assessing, and reporting on how well social landlords achieve the Charter's outcomes.

Annual Return on the Charter (ARC)

Homes for Life is required to provide information each year as part of a report on our performance against the Charter. Following the submission of the ARC report, the SHR then produces an independent report on our performance by the end of August each year. This report is available to the public on the SHR website and can be used to compare performance between landlords and against the national average.

Annual Performance Report

Homes for Life is required each year to produce an Annual Performance Report to tenants to communicate the outcome of the SHR assessment and performance information.

Annual Assurance Statement

In October each year, we are also required to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the SHR. Homes for Life needs to confirm to the SHR that it is complying with all regulatory requirements and standards. If it is not meeting these requirements, we must advise the SHR and say what we are doing to address the issues. Once it has been approved, the Statement is signed and submitted to the SHR and then made available publicly on our website.

More information on SHR responsibilities and landlord annual reports on the Charter can be found at: - <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot>

Tenant Scrutiny

Housing organisations have been involving and consulting with their tenants for many years. However, the Charter introduced a requirement for landlords to be more proactive in self-regulation and to involve tenants to analyse and challenge their performance and decision making through a process called tenant scrutiny.

Ensuring Equal Opportunities

The **Equality Act 2010** re-enforced and promoted equal opportunities in Scottish housing. The Act requires landlords to approach Tenant Participation in a manner that encourages equal opportunities and observes equal opportunity requirements laid out in the Act. The Charter also includes an outcome on **equalities** which states that social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- They support the right to adequate housing
- Every tenant and other customer have their individual needs and rights recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services

This **outcome** describes what social landlords, by complying with equalities legislation, should achieve for all tenants and other customers regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

It includes landlords' responsibility for finding ways of understanding the rights and needs of different groups of tenants, for example victims/survivors of domestic abuse and delivering services that recognise and meet these.

To find out more about the Equality Act 2010, click here <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act-2010/what-equality-act>

The **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015** sets the National Standards for Community Engagement and the values that provide the basis for successful community engagement.

To find out more about the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, click here <https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/>

Section 4: Our Ambition and Principles

Our **ambition** is to encourage more tenants to actively engage with and influence our decisions, to assist us to continually improve our housing services and standards.

We want to make it easy for everyone to get involved in consultation, participation, and scrutiny opportunities.

To help us achieve this we will:

1. Ensure tenants are well informed
2. Seek and listen to tenants' views, before making decisions
3. Develop a range of ways for tenants to influence our services and future developments
4. Provide resources, support, and training to assist tenants get involved in participation and scrutiny activities

In further developing our approaches we will work to recognised **Good Practice Principles** to:

Have trust, respect, and partnership in the work that we do
Agree the agenda jointly with tenants
Listen to tenants before decisions are reached
Recognise the independent role of tenants' and residents' groups
Provide adequate time for responses
Provide adequate resources, support, and training to encourage tenant involvement
Report on the results of all consultations
Ensure equal opportunities for everyone to get involved in a way that suits their needs and location

Section 5: What We Will Do

We aim to effectively involve our tenants in the development and monitoring of our services, participation easy and accessible for all and increase satisfaction with all of aspects of what we do. We plan to do this in partnership with our tenants under the following key headings.

1. Ensuring tenants are well informed

Good communication is essential to build good relationships between tenants, staff, and Board members as well as to ensure tenants have the information required to influence the decisions, we make to improve our service delivery. We will:

- Provide information that is easy to read, understand and is in a format to suit tenants needs, including large print, braille, audio, and other languages, in both online and paper formats
- Ensure you have time to review the information and respond to any proposals.
- Ensure we are aware of how you want us to communicate with you – by post, telephone, text messaging, online, in person.
- Provide opportunities for tenants to speak to our staff to give your views and to assist you to respond to consultations.
- Provide updates on consultation results, agreed actions and progress.

We will do this through:

- Newsletters
- Information Leaflets
- Tenant Satisfaction Surveys
- Annual Reports
- Questionnaires
- Interested Tenants Register
- Meetings and Events
- Telephone, Email, Text Messaging

2. Seeking and listening to tenants' views, before making decisions

We want to ensure our tenants are at the heart of everything we do. We will seek and listen to tenants' views to ensure our services meet tenants needs and priorities as well as meet our strategic objectives and legislative requirements.

We will:

- Encourage tenants to engage and get involved with us.
- Listen to our tenants, taking account of your views, and acting upon your feedback.
- Show tenants how we make decisions and how your involvement can influence what we do.

We will do this through:

- Tenant Satisfaction Surveys
- Complaints, Suggestions, and Compliments Feedback
- Annual Performance Reports
- Service Delivery Feedback & Tenant Satisfaction Reports
- Consultation on Changes to and Development of Policies and Service Delivery
- Meetings and Events

3. Developing a range of ways for tenants to influence our services and future developments**We will:**

- Increase the number of tenants who actively participate from across all communities we serve.
- Provide a range of ways for tenants to easily get involved.
- Encourage tenants to carry out in depth service reviews through tenant scrutiny.
- Work with our tenants to improve their communities and local services.

We will do this through:

- Encouraging tenants to become members of Homes for Life
- Supporting tenants to become Homes for Life Board Members
- Developing a Tenants Panel to work with us to review policies, services, and Asset Management Strategy through tenant scrutiny.
- Seeking tenant views on priorities for policy review and development.
- Establishing a Register of Interested Tenants to participate in our consultation activities from home.
- Developing tenants' groups with our tenants in our communities.
- Agreeing new participation opportunities with our tenants.
- Developing and supporting digital engagement opportunities.
- Working in partnership with other organisations to assist our tenants and communities' flourish.
- Providing opportunities for tenants to come together to share views and ideas.

4. Providing resources, support, and training to assist tenants get involved in participation and scrutiny activities

We understand that tenant participation requires adequate resources and support.

We will:

- Provide a Tenant Participation Budget for participation and scrutiny activities.
- Provide funding to support the development of tenants' groups.
- Provide training and support to ensure tenants have the skills, knowledge, and confidence to participate.
- Ensure that tenant participation is a key part of all staff's role, and that staff are trained and supported to ensure that tenant participation is an integral part of service delivery and policy development.
- Provide tenants with access to independent development support and training.
- Support the development of new digital participation methods, including supporting tenants access the devices and training required.

We will do this through:

- Consideration of funding and resources required to deliver the Tenant Participation Strategy in partnership with tenants and reflective of the strategic business plan and Charter requirements.
- Provision of tenant and staff training and support, including delivery of in-house and independent opportunities.
- Investigate and apply for funding to increase availability of devices and internet connectivity for tenants.

Section 6: Monitoring Our Success

A monitoring group consisting of tenants and housing staff will be set up. This group will meet at least twice each year and will be responsible for ensuring the strategy is effectively implemented and outcomes are monitored. An Action Plan will be reviewed annually.

This group will produce a report each year to inform the Board and tenants on the Tenant Participation Strategy's implementation progress.

Action Plan

1. Ensuring tenants are well informed			
What we will do:	How we will do it:	Lead Officer:	Timescales:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information that is easy to read, understand and is in a format to suit tenants needs, including large print, braille, audio, and other languages, in both online and paper formats • Ensure you have time to review the information and respond to any proposals. • Ensure we are aware of how you want us to communicate with you – by post, telephone, text messaging, online, in person. • Provide opportunities for tenants to speak to our staff to give your views and to assist you to respond to consultations. • Provide updates on consultation results, agreed actions and progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce four issues of our Homes for Life Broadcast Newsletter 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One per quarter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform you of any proposals or plans, in advance of making decisions and provide a range of ways for you to find out more and give your views 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As required
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In consultation with tenants develop information in formats to suit your needs, including online and paper formats 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As required
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Interested Tenant Register 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out satisfaction surveys, report findings and agree improvements where required 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post repairs • Post allocation • Annually re. Charter Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a Tenants Handbook which is reviews every 3 years in partnership with tenants 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review in 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce an annual report detailing our performance and achievements 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually in October

2. Seeking and listening to tenants' views, before making decisions

What we will do:	How we will do it:	Lead Officer:	Timescales:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage tenants to engage and get involved with us. Listen to our tenants, taking account of your views, and acting upon your feedback. Show tenants how we make decisions and how your involvement can influence what we do. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenant Satisfaction Surveys 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints, Suggestions, and Compliments Feedback – You Said, We Did 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Performance Reports 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually in October
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Delivery Feedback & Tenant Satisfaction Reports 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation on Changes to and Development of Policies and Service Delivery through an Annual Calendar of Opportunities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually as required
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings and Events, including joint tenant / staff estate inspections 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing

3. Developing a range of ways for tenants to influence our services and future developments

What we will do:	How we will do it:	Lead Officer:	Timescales:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of tenants who actively participate from across all communities we serve. Provide a range of ways for tenants to easily get involved. Encourage tenants to carry out in depth service reviews through tenant scrutiny. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging tenants to become members of the Homes for Life Company 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting tenants to become Homes for Life Board Members 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a Tenants Panel to work with us to review policies, services, and Asset Management Strategy through tenant scrutiny. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking tenant views on priorities for policy review and development. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with our tenants to improve their communities and local services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a Register of Interested Tenants to participate in our consultation activities from home. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing tenants' groups with our tenants in our communities. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As required
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing new participation opportunities with our tenants. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and supporting digital engagement opportunities. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership with other organisations to assist our tenants and communities' flourish. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities for tenants to come together to share views and ideas. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually

4. Providing resources, support, and training to assist tenants get involved in participation and scrutiny activities

What we will do:	How we will do it:	Lead Officer:	Timescales:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a Tenant Participation Budget for participation and scrutiny activities. • Provide funding to support the development of tenants' groups. • Provide training and support to ensure tenants have the skills, knowledge, and confidence to participate. • Ensure that tenant participation is a key part of all staff's role, and that staff are trained and supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of funding and resources required to deliver the Tenant Participation Strategy in partnership with tenants and reflective of the strategic business plan and Charter requirements. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2023 – ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of tenant and staff training and support, including delivery of in-house and independent opportunities. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing

<p>to ensure that tenant participation is an integral part of service delivery and policy development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tenants with access to independent development support and training. • Support the development of new digital participation methods, including supporting tenants access the devices and training required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing funding where available to increase availability of devices and internet connectivity for tenants. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing
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5. Monitoring implementation:			
What we will do:	How we will do it:	Lead Officer:	Timescales:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan Implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a joint staff & tenant review group to meet twice per year 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually April & October
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report progress to the Homes for Life Board 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually May & November