

# Tenant Participation Policy

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## Scottish Social Housing Charter Relevant Standard Outcomes

STANDARD	OUTCOME
<p><b>Section:- The customer/landlord relationship</b></p> <p>1. Equalities</p> <p>Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services</i></li> </ul> <p>2. Communication</p> <p>Social landlords manage their businesses so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>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.</i></li> </ul> <p>3. Participation</p> <p>Social landlords manage their businesses so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.</i></li> </ul>	<p>This <b>outcome</b> 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 needs of different customers and delivery services that recognise and meet these needs.</p> <p>This <b>outcome</b> covers all aspects of landlords' communication with tenants and other customers. 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.</p> <p>This <b>outcome</b> 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; how they shape their services to reflect these views; and how they help tenants and other customs to become more capable of involvement.</p>

# **TENANT PARTICIPATION POLICY**

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# TENANT PARTICIPATION POLICY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association is totally committed to tenant participation in everything it does. Tenants are the heart of our organization and we want to ensure there are opportunities for tenants to get involved with us at a level that suits them.

1.1 We believe that effective tenant participation brings:-

- Improved services and better performance.
- Services that fit what tenants want.
- Individuals and communities that are equipped to have a say and be heard.
- Better service delivery and increased value for money.
- Help for the Management Committee and staff in decision making and priority setting.
- Personal development for tenants.
- Increased tenant satisfaction and better communication between the Association and tenants.
- Better links between the Association and the community.

1.2 Tenant participation is a two-way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power between tenants and the Association.

1.3 The Association recognises that we all live in communities, and we will encourage other groups, such as neighbouring residents, community councils or other partner organisations to participate to ensure that particular local circumstances are taken into account.

1.4 It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive to ensure that all Management Committee members, staff members and agents acting on behalf of the Association are fully aware of the policies and procedures relating to tenant participation and to arrange all necessary support to ensure the implementation of the policy.

1.5 We will ensure that the Management Committee and staff are trained in Tenant Participation.

## 2. BACKGROUND TO THE POLICY

2.1 The Housing Scotland Act 2001 sets out some key tasks for landlords in relation to participation. Any tenant participation policy must be developed with tenants.

It should include details regarding:-

- how we will give tenants information
- how tenants can get involved with us
- the range of issues tenants can get involved in and how we will take their views into account
- how resources will be assessed and committed – including any funding and staff time
- our public register of Registered Tenants Organisations
- information on how groups can become registered.

2.2 The Scottish Social Housing Charter was developed with tenants in Scotland and it sets out what services a landlord should be providing for tenants. The Charter is used by the Scottish Housing Regulator to measure a landlord's performance and tenants have a key role to play in scrutinising their landlords performance.

2.3 The Association will support tenants to set up a scrutiny panel to assess our performance and work in partnership with tenants to improve our services.

### **3. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION**

3.1 We recognise that good communication is key to the services we provide and is a vital part of effective customer involvement. To ensure that good communication takes place and tenants are properly informed:-

- We will write letters and emails in plain language so that they are clear and easy to understand.
- All of our published information will be easy to read and in plain language and we will make all of our information available in other languages and formats when this is asked for.
- We will confirm which member of staff is dealing with particular issues in all communications.
- From time to time we will provide information on who does what in the Association to keep you up to up to date.
- We will encourage the use of Information Technology to allow contact by e-mail and promote interactive use of the Association's website.

3.2 We will give you information in a variety of ways for example through:

- our website - [www.lsha.co.uk](http://www.lsha.co.uk)
- by email
- use of press releases for local media outlets and inclusion of articles in partner organisation newsletters and publications

- our newsletter - published 3 times per year
- personal letters and home visits
- our Annual report
- our Tenants handbook
- information leaflets
- any Registered Tenant Organisations, and tenants & residents groups local meetings
- through our tenants scrutiny panel.

#### **4. HOW WE WILL CONSULT**

4.1 We will use a range of different ways of consulting with you so that you can influence our decisions.

4.2 We will consult tenants on a variety of issues including:-

- any proposal to change housing management, repairs or support services or policies
- any issues unique to your local area
- any proposals to change our service standards in housing management, repairs, support or related services
- our rent and service charge levels each year
- programmes such as maintenance and planned improvements to our properties
- our Customer Satisfaction arrangements
- our performance and services
- any new information for tenants, leaflets etc
- our participation policy and how you can get involved.

4.3 We know that a number of our other policies and strategies can impact on tenants and other customers, so we will make sure tenants are consulted on these too, where they might be affected by any changes.

#### **5. HOW WE TAKE VIEWS INTO ACCOUNT**

5.1 Whenever we consult tenants we will make it clear what we propose to do and how it will affect them. We will also tell them:-

- How, when and who will make the final decision.
- How the proposals and the decisions will affect tenants and how they can let us know what they think.

- How long they have to tell us what they think.
- The contact person or people dealing with the consultation.
- What the results were of the consultation process.
- What, if anything, will happen next.
- Tenants' views will be a key to the final decision being made by the Association.

## 6. HOW TENANTS CAN GET INVOLVED

- 6.1 The Association will actively encourage tenants to participate at the level which best suits their needs.
- 6.2 The Association will ensure that all participants receive the relevant information required to consider issues properly, ensuring that it is clear, concise and easy to understand and distributed in sufficient time to be considered properly. Long documents will have a summary page included.
- 6.3 All consultations will involve named members of staff and, where appropriate, members of the Management Committee.
- 6.4 There will be equal access to information for all minority groups and those with disabilities and information can be made available in a variety of formats on request.
- 6.5 Where meetings are being held, they will be as local as possible or we will provide transport or pay for reasonable travel costs. The Association will ensure that tenants or their representatives receive relevant feedback on consultations, including an explanation if their views have not been accepted.
- 6.6 We want to make sure tenants can participate in a way that best suits them. Here are some of the ways that they can get involved:-
- 1 **The Management Committee** is our governing body. It is responsible for setting our aims and objectives and agreeing policy. To become a member of the Management Committee individuals firstly have to be a member of Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association. Information on becoming a member is available at our office and on our website. Members of the Management Committee are generally voted in at our Annual General Meeting held in June each year.
  - 2 **Register of Interested Tenants** – this is a register of people who are interested in being informed about, or being consulted on, various issues. If a tenant joins the register, they can say which areas interest them (for example, allocations, our newsletter, etc). When we are reviewing policies or considering changes we will contact those tenants and ask for their views. We might ask them to come to a meeting or we might just contact them to ask a few questions. To join the Register of interested tenants

please go to our website [www.lsha.co.uk](http://www.lsha.co.uk) or contact our office on 01478 612035.

- 3 We understand that not every customer wants to become involved in formal structures such as Registered Tenant Organisations or residents groups. Therefore we want to ensure that tenants can have their say if they want to and as well as the register of interested tenants there are a number of ways tenants can do this as an individual:-

- through the newsletter
- by the Web site
- by letter
- by attending occasional meetings or surgeries
- by responding to surveys
- discussions with, and feedback to any member of staff.

- 4 **The scrutiny panel** - this group will meet as needed and will focus on a particular part of our service or performance. The panel will thoroughly examine issues and make recommendations for improvement. The panel members will be offered training and will be supported by the Association.

- 5 **Surveys** – to ensure our customers have the opportunity to comment on a variety of issues, we will carry out the following surveys:-

**Customer satisfaction surveys** – these will be carried out every 2 or 3 years. We will ask tenants how satisfied they are with our services such as housing management or repairs. The results and any actions to be taken will be published in our newsletter.

**Repair surveys** – random surveys of a percentage of tenants who have had repairs or planned maintenance carried out will assess the quality of repairs, attitude of tradespersons, timescales and any additional comments. The results and any actions to be taken will be published in our newsletter.

**Web site** – we want to promote the web site – [www.LSHA.co.uk](http://www.LSHA.co.uk) as a way of communicating with us and giving us views and comments.

- 6 **Residents groups** – we will support any tenants who wish to set up a local group to discuss local issues and put forward ideas to improve their local area. We will help and support these groups through, for example, funding, training and staff time.

- 7 **Registered Tenants Organisations ( RTOs)** are formal groups which need to meet certain conditions set out in the 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act.



A member of our staff team can help tenants form an RTO and support them through the registration process.

To register, tenants must have a constitution which confirms:-

- Anybody can join irrespective of race, creed, colour, religious beliefs, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- The streets, or geography of the area to be covered.
- They have an elected committee, normally of at least 5 people.
- How the committee will operate.
- How the committee will be elected at the annual general meeting.
- The number of public and committee meetings they will have each year.
- That they have a bank account and how they will manage their funds.
- How they will represent the people who live in the area they cover.
- Their objectives.
- How the group will reach decisions.
- How to change their constitution.
- What happens if the group no longer exists.

If we have decided :-

- not to register the organisation
- to remove the organisation from the register
- not to remove the organisation from the register
- the group can appeal to the Association through our Complaints Handling Procedure.

If they are not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal they can appeal to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

- 8 **Local meetings** – if we are planning some improvement work in an area, or if there is an issue that will affect an area we will hold local meetings with the local tenants group or committee or RTO (if one exists). We are happy to organise meetings at the request of our customers if necessary. To arrange a local meeting please contact our Tenant Adviser.

## 7. RESOURCES FOR PARTICIPATION

- 7.1 We know that our customers are likely to need support and resources to participate and this might mean financial and other help. We will make a budget available every year to support tenant participation. It will allocate specific amounts of money to, for example, transport costs, grants to new and existing groups, childcare etc.
- 7.2 The Association will ensure that sufficient funds to support its Tenant Participation Policy are set aside within its annual budget.

7.3 In support of Registered Tenants Organisations, funds will be set aside to ensure that such organisations are able to work effectively and the Association will normally meet the following costs, where applicable:-

- Set-up costs.
- Travel and subsistence expenses.
- Meeting costs.
- Stationery, photocopying, etc.
- Training costs.

7.4 We will provide:-

- Free use of our own premises for meetings.
- Assistance with printing newsletters and leaflets.
- Help with photocopying minutes etc.
- Funding for room or hall hire.
- Training for all.
- Expenses for travel costs.
- Childcare expenses where needed.

7.5 We will train our staff in how to work with and involve customers.

7.6 Training options for the Association's Management Committee, staff members and for tenants will be developed and may be held jointly with other community groups on common issues.

## **8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

8.1 For all communications and information we will offer a translation service. We will also provide our communications and information in other formats, such as audio or Braille for example when asked.

8.2 We will try to involve our customers who may be traditionally excluded, for example young people, those who may have a learning or support need, those whose first language may not be English and housing applicants and homeless people.

8.3 Our strategy recognises that people want to get involved in a variety of ways. We want to maximise our customers' involvement by ensuring they can get involved at a level that suits them.

8.4 We also aim to break down barriers which would prevent customers participating. To achieve this we will:-

- Hold meetings in easily accessible premises.
- Hold meetings at convenient times.
- Hold single sex meetings if appropriate.
- Meet with existing community or support groups.

- Encourage under-represented groups and individuals to get involved by offering support and working with other key agencies.
- Provide specialist equipment such as a hearing loop, translations and interpretation services to assist if required.
- Train our staff to make sure they are aware of equalities issues and actively promote participation.

## **9. REVIEW**

- 9.1 This document will be reviewed by the Management Committee or Sub-Committee set up for that purpose in accordance with the requirements of the Association's Register of Policies and Procedures.
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