
TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Title:	Tenant Participation Strategy & Action Plan
Purpose of Procedure:	To Promote Participation of Service Users & Promote Opportunity for Tenant Scrutiny
Section:	Housing Management & Management Committee
Date:	October 2018
Review Date:	October 2021

Charter Standard: The Customer/Landlord Relationship

1: Equalities

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- *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*

2: 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.*

Blairtummock Housing Association

Developing Tenant & Resident Involvement

Tenant Participation Strategy

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Blairtummock Housing Association

Tenant Participation Strategy

Introduction

Tenant participation is about sharing ideas, information and power. It is about service users being empowered and being given the chance to make decisions about their homes and their communities.

This strategy is intended to ensure that opportunities are created for service users of Blairtummock Housing Association to influence policies that affect the management of their homes. It is therefore of paramount importance that the development and ongoing review of this strategy is influenced by service users.

For the purpose of this strategy service users are all Blairtummock Housing Association tenants, owners, sharing owners and everyone who uses the services of BHA.

This strategy should be seen as a working document that will need to change in response to different circumstances, ideas and developments.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 enhanced the individual and collective rights of service users regarding tenant participation. In response to that legislation this strategy was developed and it is hoped that our approach to service user involvement will not only meet, but surpasses the new statutory minimum created by the Act.

It also takes account of the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter 2012.

Developing this strategy with service users

Blairtummock Housing Association has endeavoured to involve as many service users as possible in the development of this strategy to ensure that it reflects the ways local people want to get involved.

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service was commissioned to assist service users and the Association in developing the original version of the strategy and to ensure that that it is suitable to both parties. The Association has always ensured that when reviewing the Strategy and Action Plan it continues to be suitable to both parties.

“Increasing Tenant & Resident Involvement”

Blairtummock Housing Association's Strategy for Tenant Participation & Scrutiny

The Aim of this strategy is to ensure service users are able to influence housing decisions and that the Association is open to influence. The following is a summary of the key features of the strategy:

Keeping Service Users Informed

What we do now:

- We currently keep service users informed with Newsletters, Website, Twitter, Home Visits, Open Days, Leaflets, Annual Reports and Personal Letters. Tenants can also refer to their Tenancy Agreement for further information.
- We ensure that all information is available in different Languages and Formats when required.
- The Association will consider any methods suggested through community surveys, meetings etc. to improve consultation.

Consulting with Service Users

At present we use a variety of methods, such as:

- Discussion meetings on various issues such as tenant's rights and tenant participation.
- Carry out Tenant Satisfaction Surveys every 3 year
- Conduct continuous feedback surveys on repairs standards
- Issues form available at reception
- Suggestion cards and box in reception area
- Comments form in all newsletters that are issued
- Comments through Association's website

How we will improve:

- **Consultation Register.** This is to ensure that all interested service users are always given the opportunity to have their say over any proposed changes to the service they receive. Everyone will be regularly offered the chance to put their name on the register.
- **Rent Increases.** Annually give tenants and sharing owners the opportunity to be consulted over rent increases
- **Policy Review.** We will use the website and newsletters to advise what **policies and procedures** are due to be reviewed each year and invite service users to participate in review discussions. This is to ensure that service users get the opportunity to shape and influence the way we work.
- Make **home visits** where required.
- **Tenant Scrutiny** - as part of monitoring the Social Housing Charter the Scottish Housing Regulator expects RSLs to involve tenants and other service users in the preparation of the information contained within the Annual Return on the Charter. The Association will hold an annual event in June each year in order to achieve this

Service User Participation

What happens now?

- Local people serve as members of Blairtummock Housing Association's management committee. Residents are encouraged to stand for election to the management committee.
- There are no service users & residents groups in the area at present.

How we will improve:

- We will continue to encourage residents to become members and to consider **participating in the Association's management committee**.
- Through the newsletter we will prepare a **timetable for tenant participation**. This will set out when key decisions such as rent setting and policy reviews will take place, this is to ensure that service users have sufficient opportunity to get involved .
- We will **promote the benefits of tenants groups** and the support available to groups in our newsletters
- Promote our service satisfaction survey for service users to raise issues / ideas.
- Promote our annual Tenant Scrutiny Event and send an invite to all tenants/service users

Why service users views matter

Blairtummock Housing Association wants to make sure that it's approach for consulting with service users and keeping them informed is working.

We are always keen to hear your views about the ideas contained in this strategy. Phone or call into the office and let us know what you think. Telephone 0141 773 0202 or email enquiries@blairtummock.org.uk

The Strategy

Aims

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that service users have the capacity to influence and that the Association is open to influence.

Blairtummock Housing Association is committed to ensuring that there are ongoing opportunities for all service users to participate in the design and delivery of their housing and associated services.

Service users are encouraged to participate at different levels, from basic level quality control to influencing decisions at a strategic level. The Association endeavours to provide all service users with sufficient information and opportunities to be involved in consultation and participation.

Objectives

In order to meet these aims it is essential that the following objectives are met:

-

- Improved information to service users
- Proper consultation with service users
- Create opportunities to participate at different levels
- Raise awareness of the benefits of tenant participation amongst staff, committee and service users
- Agree levels of support and resources for residents groups

Keeping service users informed

The Association is legally obliged to explain how service users will be kept informed.

Blairtummock aims to provide service users with good quality, accurate, up to date and easily understood information. However we are keen to receive comments from service users on how it may be improved, as information is crucial for the development of tenant participation. Service users can request information by telephoning, writing, and through the Association's website or calling into the office.

At present the Association keeps service users informed in a number of ways:-

- A) Blairtummock Housing Association Newsletters
- B) Annual Report
- C) Tenancy Agreement
- D) Letters
- E) Summary Leaflets of Policies
- F) Open Days and Exhibitions for passing on information
- G) Information leaflets and guides
- H) Website
- I) Twitter

All our documents can be interpreted into different languages or made available in different formats when necessary. (See additional and useful contacts)

Blairtummock Newsletter

The newsletter contains information about the Association's achievements, community events, local news and housing information to service users.

Tenancy Agreement

All tenants are provided with a copy of their tenancy agreement. This sets out the rights and responsibilities of tenants and the Association. The tenancy agreement clearly sets out the free information that all tenants are entitled to request. This includes information on the following: -

- Association policy about setting rent and service charges
- Association policy and rules about: -
 - Applying to housing lists
 - Allocations
 - Transfer of tenancies
 - Exchanges of houses between tenants
 - Repairs and maintenance
- The right to buy your house – to be removed in August
- The likely consequences for you if you decide to buy your house
- The Association's tenant participation strategy
- The Association's arrangements for taking decisions about housing management and services

Policies and Procedures

Service users can request any of our policies and procedures, which are all clear and concise, for example:

- Complaints procedure
- Repairs and maintenance policy
- Association's allocations policy
- Community regeneration policy
- Some policies are also available through the website

Open Days & Exhibitions

Blairtummock will sometimes hold open days to inform and consult service users over major policy and housing related issues such as, rent setting and development/refurbishment proposals.

Additional methods of keeping service users informed

Consultation & Participation

Blairtummock Housing Association will regularly consult with service users to obtain feedback on the service and to make sure that service users have the chance to have their views heard. The Association aims to consult service users at the earliest stage possible. That means that service users will have

the chance to be involved in the policymaking stage rather than the policy implementation stage.

In accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Association is legally obliged to: -

- Set out how it intends to consult with tenants
- Indicate the issues that service users will be consulted on

Individual Service Users

Service users who have a particular issue, concern or problem that they would like to raise with the Association can either do so themselves directly, or through a residents group. At present Blairtummock is already committed to working with individual service users and would also be prepared to support local residents groups should residents feel the need to set one up.

Suggestion Slip

At a basic level the Association will include a suggestion slip with every newsletter seeking views and comments on the service that service users receive.

Consultation Register

Blairtummock Housing Association has also introduced a Consultation Register for individual service users who have an interest in being consulted on housing and related issues. Service users interested in being consulted in this way were identified following a request in a newsletter aimed at finding out how people wanted to get involved. This means that service users can choose to be consulted over housing issues without having to join or start a residents group.

Promoting this service

Blairtummock Housing Association will actively encourage the use of this service through the usual channels to maximise feedback from service users. In particular the Association will publicise this service through: -

- The Association 's Newsletter
- Home Visits
- Housing officers during sign ups
- Posters in the office foyer
- Personal Letters

In order to consult with as many service users as possible Blairtummock Housing Association will use a number of techniques including: -

- Discussion Meetings
- Consultation Register
- Home visits where requested
- Surveys
- Telephone surveys – e.g. follow up to a repair?
- Occasional use of random samples to target service users
- Website
- Twitter
- Text Message

We recognise that not all service users will want to be involved in consultation. The Tenant Satisfaction Survey carried out in 2016 showed that 97% of tenants were very satisfied/satisfied with the opportunities given to participate in Blairtummock's decision making process. 89% of those surveyed were not interested in being included in future consultations. Where samples are used Blairtummock will survey a minimum of 10% of service users.

The next Tenant Satisfaction Survey will be carried out in 2016/17.

Door Knocking

From time to time the association may opt to carry out door knocking exercises in order to disseminate information and find out service users views.

Issues that we will consult service users on

The Association aims to continue consulting on and encouraging service users to participate on issues such as: -

- Repairs & Maintenance
- Housing management (allocations, estate management, tenancy agreements, tenant participation & services)
- Stock improvements
- New build
- Rent setting
- Service quality
- Complaints procedures
- Neighbour Relations

- The Environment
- Communication & Information
- Measuring Performance
- Tenancy agreements
- Community Issues – Wider Role Issues
- Customer Service Issues

And

- **Proposals that may result in a change of landlord**

Facilitating Service User Involvement

Key Decisions – a timetable for participation

The Association will produce a timetable that illustrates when key decisions are taken e.g. rent setting and agreeing capital spending. This will allow service users to be properly consulted and included in the decision making process. The timetable will also include the details of what policies are due for review and renewal each year. The newsletter, website, twitter and notice board at reception will be used to advise of this.

Raising Awareness of the Opportunities to Participate

Service users can participate in the running of the Association and the development of the local community in the following ways: -

- Local Service users & Residents groups - we can provide contact details of groups in your area and information on starting your own group.
- At an individual level through the consultation register
- Stand for election to the Association 's Management Committee

Independent Advice for Service Users

Blairtummock recognises the role and value of independent advice for service users on certain issues. The Association will give service users the opportunity for independent advice when appropriate. For example, service users have received independent advice on the new legal position regarding tenant participation.

Promoting resident participation in groups

In order to stimulate interest in setting up community groups Blairtummock will be proactive in promoting the benefits of collective action in resident and community groups in the association's newsletters.

Particular benefits include: -

- Service users can influence the Association's service delivery in favour of to the needs of the community
- Tenants can get involved in the development and review of policies and procedures
- Improve communication with service users
- Highlighting problems with the Association s service provision
- Lobbying various bodies on local issues
- Fundraising
- Community safety
- Environmental improvements

Often people will not participate because they don't realise what they could achieve. Promoting the positive aspects of resident participation should help attract more interest.

Identifying any barriers to participation

As part of this strategy the Association will continually seek to identify any barriers to participation. The Association will engage with residents groups and individual service users to identify any barriers and ways to overcome them.

Register of Tenants Organisations

Blairtummock Housing Association will keep an up to date register of any local tenants and residents groups. At present there are no residents groups operating within the Association 's boundaries, however in line with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Association will produce criteria that groups would have to meet should they wish to register with the Association. This register will be reviewed and developed to ensure that it is consistent with requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The information contained in this register will be available on request either by calling in to the Office during office hours or, if this is not suitable, by written request.

How do groups register?

To register with Blairtummock Housing Association a group must complete a short registration form and include a copy of the constitution with the registration form.

Criteria for groups

Blairtummock recognises and seeks to support both formally constituted residents organisations as well as more informal groups that have perhaps emerged in response to a particular issue. Informal groups will receive support 'in kind' for example staff support to get started or help with photocopying. In order to receive any financial support or resources all groups must have open memberships and comply with the Association 's equal opportunities policy.

Groups applying for financial assistance must have a constitution and at least three office bearers i.e. Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary.

The criteria for Registered Tenants Organisations will be agreed with residents groups. The criteria will be based on minimum legal criteria set by the Scottish Executive. (See Appendix A)

Why register?

Registering your group is a good way to promote your existence to local people. Also, once a group is registered with Blairtummock Housing Association the Association will make an annual grant (the amount of grant available is reviewed annually) to the group's funds providing the following criteria are satisfied: -

- **Groups have an agreed constitution, containing an equal opportunities statement**
- **There are elected office bearers**
- **Minutes of meetings available for inspection**
- **Accounts are audited on an annual basis**
- **Groups hold open meetings that are advertised and accessible to all**

Annual Updates

Groups will be required to submit an annual update to the Association containing a copy of the minute from their AGM and names and addresses of the office bearers. Groups will be required to re-register every three years.

Refused registration

If the Association refuses entry on to the register or removes a group from the register the group can firstly appeal via the Association's complaints procedure.

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 if, following this process the group is still not satisfied, the group can then apply to The Housing Regulator who may confirm or overturn the decision.

Responding to representations made by groups

The Association also has a new legal duty to respond to any issues or concerns raised by a registered tenants group. The Association will attend on request any meetings held by a Registered Tenants Organisation provided that two weeks notice has been given. Some issues may be resolved through the provision of information whilst others may need a lot more time and consideration before they can be resolved.

Resources and Support for Tenants Groups

Blairtummock Housing Association will on request provide appropriate support for new and existing groups including the following: -

- Guidance and support for starting new groups – Tenants Group Starter Packs are available
- Ongoing evidence and support for existing groups
- Assistance with the production of promotional material and photocopying papers for meetings

- Staff will attend meetings when invited (Minimum Two Weeks Notice)

The Association will endeavour to keep groups up to date with housing issues affecting their area

Training

Blairtummock Housing Association recognises the value of training for both service users and staff. Training can be arranged for new and existing groups either in house or by an outside agency.

Equal Opportunities

Equal opportunities statement is always put in Association's newsletters. Blairtummock Housing Association wishes it to be known that it is an equal opportunity Association. This means in the provision of housing services and employing staff to provide these services the Association will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all persons.

Accessibility

Blairtummock aims to ensure that meetings continue to be held in venues that are suitable for everyone, at suitable times and will be publicised in a way that all service users can understand.

Information

The Association will ensure that there are procedures in place for information to be made available in different languages, large print, Braille and tape. The Association provides a telephone interpretation service.

Equal Opportunities in Tenants Groups

Blairtummock Housing Association will encourage any tenants groups that may emerge to adopt an inclusive approach towards involving minority groups in the community.

The Association will offer training on race, gender and disability equality issues to any new tenants groups.

Tenants and residents groups who act in a discriminatory or offensive way could be subject to some or all of the following sanctions:

- Withdrawal of funding
- Withdrawal of support in kind e.g. use of premises
- Removal from register of tenant organisations

Implementing the Strategy

Blairtummock Housing Association would like to continue to involve service users in as many areas of the Associations work as possible. It is hoped that by involving service users in the reviewing of the participation strategy, the Association will produce a strategy that will facilitate attractive opportunities for resident participation that will have potential benefits for all service users receiving Blairtummock Housing Association's services.

Additional Information

Do not hesitate to get involved

Tenants have certain rights which means they are protected by law, making it illegal for an Association to inconvenience a tenant who has been involved in challenging the Association on any of the issues mentioned previously.

Useful Contacts

RNIB – For Braille translations

0141 334 5530

Alpha Translating and Interpreting Services

96 West Regent Street

GLASGOW

G2 2QD

Tel: 0141 333 9800

Fax: 0141 333 9889

Glasgow Interpreting Services

39 Napiershall Street

Glasgow

G20 6EZ

Tel: 0141 341 0019

Fax: 0141 339 0020

Tenant Participation Strategy April 2018 - March 2020 Action Plan

Timescales	Action	Comments
April 18 – October 18	Consult with tenants/sharing owners & owners on the Tenant Participation Strategy & Action Plan.	Newsletter Website Open Day
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote consultation register and encourage more residents to participate. 	Will be done through spring newsletters and website.
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce advice in relation to setting up Registered Tenants Organisation. 	Will be done through summer newsletters.
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice on Right to Repair. 	Will be done through spring newsletters and website.
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Committee Membership 	Will be done through summer newsletter and website.
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on Association's performance 	Annual Report/Newsletter
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold AGM and invite all shareholders 	September each year
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on performance against the charter 	Done through newsletter/annual report. Charter event.
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenant Scrutiny Open Day 	In June each year write to all tenants/service users to drop into open day, which will give them an opportunity to

		comments and contribute to: Association Performance Policies/Procedures Leaflets Newsletters Planned & Cyclical Maintenance Programmes
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold meetings with factored owners 	In June each year invite all factored owners for a meeting to discuss charges, services etc.
Feb 19 – June 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a small working group to discuss how the Association will celebrate 30 years, arrange events etc 	Group to report back to Management Committee
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise service users on policy reviews. 	Will be done through newsletters, meetings, website and focus groups.
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult those on consultation register on policy reviews changes etc. 	By letter. List can be updated after next Tenant Satisfaction Survey
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult service users on wider activities. 	Newsletters, website and twitter.
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage tenants on becoming a share holder 	Will be done through newsletters, website and at sign up stage.
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information through Association's website 	The Association is working towards achieving Open All Hours

		in relation to website information.
December /January Each Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult all tenants on rent increases and service charge. • Report findings to Management Committee. 	By questionnaire & website.

The following timetable is intended to assist the Association to plan out the implementation of this strategy for the next two years.

As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise tenants/owners on cyclical/planned maintenance programmes. 	Newsletters, letters and drop in days.
April – October 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints Policy & Procedure 	Newsletters, Open Day
October 18 – April 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocations Policy 	Newsletters and website
October 18 – April 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estate Management Policy 	Newsletter and website
October 18 – May 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factoring Policy 	Meeting with owners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	
April 2018 – May 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CR2 site to be completed 	CR2 consulted with tenants prior to site start
Spring 2018 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress Area 1 (Blairtummock) backcourt design 	Tenant steering group to be established

Appendix A

Criteria for Registration with Blairtummock Housing Association

Constitution

1. Groups must have a written constitution available for inspection by the public that sets out -
 - (a) its objectives and its area of operation;
 - (b) its membership criteria and procedure for application for membership;
 - (c) the operation of its committee;
 - (d) its procedure for election of its committee and office bearers;
 - (e) how its business is conducted, including delegation of powers;
 - (f) how its decisions are reached;
 - (g) how its funds are managed;
 - (h) its procedures for meetings of members including the annual general meeting; its procedure for amending its constitution; and
 - (j) its commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities and tenants' housing and related interests in relation to the registering landlord.

Committee

- (1) The group must have a committee, the members of which are elected at an annual general meeting of the applicant. Members of the committee must be required to stand down after a period specified in the applicant's constitution.
- (2) The committee must consist of at least three members who may co-opt other members on to the committee during the course of a year; and
- (3) The committee procedures set out in the constitution of the applicant must require that the decisions of the committee are reached democratically.

Area of operation

3. The group must operate:
 - (a) within a defined area, which includes housing stock owned or managed by any local authority or registered social landlord with whom it is seeking to register; or
 - (b) a local community; or
 - (c) at a national level, if the applicant is seeking to register with a registered social landlord that operates across Scotland.

Membership policy

4. Membership of the group must be open to all those tenants of the landlord to which application has been made who are tenants-

- (a) under a Scottish secure tenancy or a short Scottish secure tenancy; and
- (b) of a house situated within the applicant body's defined area of operation.

Accounting

- 5. Groups must maintain proper and timely accounting records. Its constitution must require that an annual financial statement is prepared showing income and expenditure and a statement of assets and liabilities. The statement should be independently validated by a body agreed with the registering organisation and be presented at its annual general meeting.

Consultation and representation

- 6. Groups must be able to demonstrate to the landlord their commitment to representing the interests of its members and its ability to represent the views of its members who are tenants of the landlord with whom it is seeking to register.

Procedure for application for registration

- (1) An application for registration in the register shall be in writing.
- (2) A separate application shall be sent by the applicant to each landlord with whom the applicant wishes to register, accompanied by the following:-
 - (a) a copy of the applicant's constitution;
 - (b) a list of its office bearers and their contact details;
 - (c) details of other landlords with whom the applicant has registered or is seeking to register;
 - (d) a description of its area of operation; and
- (3) An applicant for registration which satisfies the criteria described above shall be registered by the landlord as a registered tenant organisation.
- (4) The landlord will notify the applicant in writing whether or not registration has been granted and, if it is so granted, the effective date of registration.
- (5) If the application for registration is refused, the landlord will notify the applicant in writing of the reason for refusal and of their right of appeal.

Procedure for Removal from a Register

- (1) If it appears to a landlord that a body which is a registered tenant organisation satisfies the criteria for removal from the register, the landlord may, whether or not on the application of the registered tenant organisation and after giving the body written notice specifying the reasons for and the effective date of removal, remove it from its register.
- (2) In the case of a body which appears to a landlord to have ceased to exist, or not to operate, notice under paragraph (1) above is deemed to be given to the body if it is served at the address last known to the landlord to be the principal place of business of the body.

- (3) A registered tenant organisation may make a written application to a landlord to be removed from the register and the landlord will reply to that organisation in writing either accepting or refusing that application.