



KINGDOM
Housing Association

Tenant & Customer Participation Policy

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Approved: March 2016
Next Review: March 2021

TENANT AND CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION POLICY

1. Introduction

We recognise the benefits of customer involvement and the added value this can bring in terms of business and customer service improvements. We are committed to customer participation in our policy formation and decision making processes and this policy sets out the ways in which we will assist our customers to become more involved in our work and to influence matters that significantly affect them.

When we use the word “customer/s” in this policy we mean: social rented tenants (who represent the core of our business) as well as sharing owners, owners who receive factoring services and housing applicants.

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland (TPAS) worked with us to review and develop our new Tenant and Customer Participation Policy.

The Policy was developed following a review of the current Customer Relations policy and is informed by:

- Three focus groups held in different geographical venues in Fife, attended by tenants and customers and facilitated by TPAS Scotland.
- Three focus group meetings with Kingdom staff including customer staff and housing and support staff, facilitated by TPAS Scotland.
- A tenant survey recently conducted by Research Resource which included questions about tenant participation.

We wish to make sure tenants and other customers are at the heart of everything we do. We wish to maximise opportunities for involvement and take away barriers to participation.

2. What is Tenant and Customer Participation?

It is about you taking part in decision making and influencing decisions in partnership with us on for example:

- our policies and practices which affect you
- your homes
- housing conditions
- the services we provide
- issues that affect your community



It is a two way process that involves us sharing information, ideas and power with you, with the aim of improving housing standards, conditions and services.

We recognise that tenant and customer participation can bring benefits to you, to our staff and to Kingdom. These benefits include:

- improved service delivery and better value for money
- better communication between you and our staff
- opportunities for you and our staff to develop new knowledge and skills
- you being informed and knowledgeable and having the skills and confidence to influence decisions
- your involvement in monitoring our services
- building mutual trust, understanding and respect
- increased satisfaction with your home, community and our services
- increased job satisfaction for our staff

3. Legal and Regulatory Background

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) assesses and reports on how social landlords are performing their housing services; Registered Social Landlords' (RSLs') financial wellbeing; and RSLs' standards of governance. The SHR will intervene to secure improvements where necessary. The SHR was established under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 with one statutory objective: *"to safeguard and promote the interests of current and future tenants of social landlords, people who are or may become homeless and people who use housing services provided by registered social landlords and local authorities"*.

Notifiable Events

The Scottish Housing Regulator requires to be notified of any significant or exceptional issue, event or change within our organisation (a notifiable event) and how we intend to deal with it. The events relevant to this policy would come under the Regulator's heading of Performance and Service Delivery issues or Financial and Funding issues. The Scottish Housing Regulator's Guidance, Notifiable Events 2012, gives examples of notifiable events.

A link to the Scottish Housing Regulator's Guidance is below:

<http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/publications/notifiable-events>

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a legal framework for tenant participation and means, for example, that:

- we will provide you with a range of information such as our complaints procedure



- we have a registration scheme for tenant organisations to register with us and keep a publicly available register of registered tenant organisations (a body can appeal to Scottish Ministers against a decision of a landlord to remove or not include them on the register)
- we will consult you and any registered tenant organisations on a range of housing and related services, including setting rent and service charges and we will take account of your views
- we have a tenant participation policy in place shaped by you

The Scottish Social Housing Charter was introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and it came into effect in April 2012. The Charter was developed with tenants and sets down the standards, outcomes and levels of service tenants and other service users should expect from their landlord. There are 16 outcomes; 14 concern registered social landlords' housing activities, for example: access to housing, communication, participation and repairs, maintenance and improvements.

You can find out more information about the Charter and our performance on our website www.kingdomhousing.org.uk or on that of www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

How we perform against the Social Housing Charter is monitored and assessed by the Scottish Housing Regulator. The Regulator expects landlords to involve their customers in assessing and scrutinising their services; this means more opportunities for you to get involved with us.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced a duty for Social Landlords to consult with tenants and applicants on their allocations policy and publish the results of the consultation when amending their allocations policy.

4. Aims

We aim to make sure that you have every opportunity to participate in the development of our relevant policies, in assessing how we deliver our services and in our decision making processes.

To achieve this we will make sure that:

- there is a range of options for you to become involved in and to influence decisions
- our information is understandable, accurate and relevant
- we consult with you using a variety of methods
- you are listened to, we act on what you say and provide you with feedback
- you are able to assess and scrutinise our performance
- we review with you the Tenant and Customer Participation policy at least every 5 years
- sufficient resources and support are provided to enable effective participation
- the differing needs and diversity of tenants/residents are recognised, respected and responded to appropriately



5. Equality and Diversity

We are committed to equality, diversity, and the prevention of discrimination. We will encourage and promote different ways to ensure that all of you are able to participate equally. To reflect and respect diversity we will use a range of methods to consult and enable participation.

We will consult and involve customers across all our geographical areas and act to prevent discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation.

We will take positive steps to break down any barriers that prevent you from becoming involved, for instance due to disability, age or poor health. We will seek to ensure you are able to take part in all activities including meetings, focus groups, discussions, surveys, etc.

We will make sure that:

- our information is clear, easily understood and jargon-free and is provided in a range of formats, such as larger print, audio, Braille or other languages, where requested.
- activities are held in settings and venues that are accessible and at suitable times.
- there is access to digital hearing systems at meetings for those with additional hearing needs.
- we provide assistance where possible to meet any other additional needs in order to facilitate participation.

6. Information

We will provide up to date, accurate, relevant and accessible information of good quality so you are well informed and are better equipped to participate. This may be by post, email or through our website or social media and includes:

- your tenancy agreement
- the calendar, which gives information on your rights
- the Resident newsletter - distributed by post, email or available as a download from our website
- an annual Policy Digest which allows you to comment on any proposed policy changes
- non confidential minutes of Board of Management meetings
- information on our performance and comparisons with other landlords
- information about our complaints procedure
- up to date leaflets
- a report on how we are performing against the Charter outcomes
- any information needed to help you participate with us.



7. Communication

We will use a range of methods to communicate with you and seek your views. We will aim to use the most suitable methods depending on the topic and will also ask you about your preferred methods of communication, which could include:

- the Resident newsletter, we welcome contributions from you and our staff
- the annual Policy Digest
- local events and information days
- meetings with tenants/residents
- focus/working groups
- surveys
- letters with reply slips
- telephone
- email
- texts
- our Annual General Meeting
- our Tenants Forum
- our Owners Forum
- our website
- social media

We will publish information about our performance and any feedback from you, on our website on a quarterly basis.

The website will include information on:

- results and actions from tenant participation activities
- how you can get involved in scrutinising our services and performance
- what you can get involved in
- the ways you can get involved with us
- what we are consulting on
- tenants meetings or events

We aim to enhance our use of social media and will investigate the benefits to tenants and other customers as well as ourselves.



8. Consultation

There are many ways to make your views known. We will listen to your comments and make sure that they will influence our work. We will involve you in our policy formation and decision making processes when relevant and will consult you on:

- changes to policies or procedures relating to housing management or repairs and maintenance where the changes would have a significant impact on you. These could include policies and procedures relating to allocations, the repairs service, estate management, anti-social behaviour, rent arrears and any proposed increase to rents and service charges
- housing management, repairs and maintenance service standards
- our Tenant and Customer Participation Policy
- local issues
- tenant/resident and community projects
- priorities for capital works programmes - this concerns improvements to your home and environment
- housing design and specifications and any relevant plans to build new houses
- any disposal of our housing stock which would result in a change of landlord

We will give you at least 2 weeks or more to consider any proposals and for you to give us your views. We will also make sure that:

- you have the necessary information
- your views are listened to
- your views are taken into account before making decisions
- we give you feedback through the Resident, our website, social media or other means on the outcome of the consultation exercises, the decisions taken and the reasons why. We will develop and agree an annual consultation programme with the Tenants Forum and the Owners Forum (see section 9. Getting involved) that will be publicised in the Resident, our website and social media.

9. Getting Involved

We will ensure there are different ways you can choose to be involved that are most suitable for you and that also reflect the spread of our housing stock.

We will establish a **Tenants Forum** that will be made up of tenants who are able to give up more of their time to provide feedback on existing policies and services and help shape services for the future. The Forum will discuss or make relevant recommendations regarding:

- scrutiny and performance
- the report on the Charter



- survey outcomes and resulting action plans
- the annual participation plan
- key issues that may impact on tenants

We will also set up an **Owners Forum** that will meet as needed during the year to discuss issues affecting sharing owners and owners who receive factoring services from us.

We will provide an annual report of the two forums' activities to the Board of Management and our staff and will publicise their activities in the Resident and on the website.

You can apply to be part of the Tenants or Owners Forums by contacting the Tenant Participation Officer.

We will maintain a **Register of Tenants and Customers**. This will be a non-public list of tenants and customers who have told us that they have limited time to participate but who are interested in taking part in surveys or attend a one-off focus group. We will use a variety of methods to obtain your views, including postal, telephone and online surveys.

We will support the setting up and work of local tenant/resident groups if there is an identified demand for them. As well as providing on going support and consulting with any groups that are established, we will also support any group to become a **Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO)**. This means ensuring, for example, that the group has:

- a formal written constitution
- a committee with elected members who meet regularly
- office bearers
- published accounts

(Further information on RTOs is available from our offices).

We will encourage and develop **customer scrutiny**. This means that our customers independently examine evidence and assess how we are doing in order to help us improve. We will do this by training a group of tenants and supporting them in different scrutiny activities. For example, helping them carry out inspections on various aspects of our services.

We may set up **focus or working groups** if, for example, we wish to discuss a particular issue in more detail or where there is a matter of local concern. Details about the focus or working groups and topics reviewed will be publicised by different methods.

We may hold **residents meetings** to provide you with information and to get your views on specific issues that affect your local area. We will ensure that the topics being discussed are well publicised at least two weeks in advance and that you also have the opportunity to suggest areas for discussion.



We will hold **tenant/resident conferences or information days** as and when required so that you and staff have the opportunity hear about new developments in housing and tenant participation.

We will develop a links with **individual tenants and other customers** who do not have time or are unable to attend to meetings.

We will continue to ask your views through regular **customer satisfaction surveys**. These will include full scale surveys, as well as one-off surveys about specific aspects of our services. The results of these surveys will be reported to our Board, to our Tenants and Owners forums when relevant and publicised to all our customers.

We will continue to promote Membership of the Association which gives members the opportunity to attend and vote at general and special meetings and to seek nomination to the Board of Management. There is a one-off membership fee of £1.00. We will monitor the level of membership on a regular basis. Application forms are available on our website and our head office.

We welcome any suggestions from you and our staff on other ways of involving tenants and other customers. This can be through, for example, contacting us through the Forums, our website or Facebook page, your housing officer or any other member of staff.

10. Supporting and Resourcing

We recognise that effective customer participation needs to be properly resourced and supported. Our budget for this will cover costs such as:

- provision of venues and refreshments for meetings
- travel and subsistence (with a maximum limit agreed before the expenses are incurred).
- stationery, including pre-paid envelopes when consulting by post, photocopying, etc
- staff time to support participation
- staff and tenant training costs and attendance at conferences
- support for tenant groups including any group wishing to become an RTO
- publications/publicity including leaflets, newsletters and flyers
- provision of translation and other services required to enable participation
- independent consultancy costs

We will review the tenant participation budget annually with the Tenants Forum and Owners Forum, when relevant, and make recommendations to the Board of Management.

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed 5 years from the date of implementation or latest review, which will be the date the policy is approved by the Board of Management, or earlier if deemed appropriate.



In the event that this policy is not reviewed within the above timescale, the latest approved policy will continue to apply.

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the Tenants Forum on a regular basis. We will provide regular reports on progress to the Board of Management and report to you in the Resident and on the website.

We will continue to produce and agree an annual Participation Action Plan with the Tenants Forum and any other interested customers. It will be publicised in the Resident and on our website.

We will monitor and report on our progress of the Action Plan.



KINGDOM HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

TENANT AND CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION POLICY

This policy has been prepared in accordance with the Plain English principles and has been reviewed by a Plain English Champion in the reviewing Department. Yes / ~~No~~

Policy drawn up with reference to:

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

Housing (Scotland) Act 2010

Housing (Scotland) Act 2014

The Equality Act 2010

Data Protection Act 1998

Reference made to the following sources and other guidance:

Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland, Our Framework SHR 2012 and relevant sources and guidance.

Prepared by: Max Scotto, Tenant Participation Officer

Reference to the current policy and date if one exists

Draft 1 Reviewed by Norah Smith and Stephen Cairns Nov. and Dec. 2015

Draft 2 Reviewed by TC Young Solicitors in 1 Feb. 2016

Sub Committee Review of Policy on 24 Feb. 2016

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Policy Approved: Yes

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