

Tenant Participation Strategy



2020 - 2023

Our Tenant Participation Strategy is a really important document for us, and for our tenants. It explains all about our plans for involving tenants in making decisions and influencing policies about the houses they live in and services they receive.

In 2015 and again in 2018, we were assessed by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), the national tenant and landlord participation advisory service for Scotland. They awarded us Gold Accreditation in recognition of our commitment to providing opportunities for our tenants to engage with us and shape our services.

The three year Strategy is supported by an Action Plan and annual calendar of activities to ensure that we continue to look after tenants needs and positively set out how we will deliver tenant involvement to our tenants. We understand that a long document isn't ideal for everyone, so this leaflet is a shortened version to summarise the key points.

If you would like a copy of the full Tenant Participation Strategy document you can download it from **elha.com**, or request a printed copy by e-mailing **info@elha.com** or calling **01620 825032** and choosing '3' from the phone menu options.

What is Tenant Participation

Tenant Participation is a way for tenants and landlords to share information and ideas with each other to improve the standard of housing conditions and services.

There are many levels of involvement, from simple things like filling out a consultation form, right up to becoming a member of our Management Committee.

There is a legal requirement for landlords to actively develop and support Tenant Participation and all Registered Social Landlords must have a Tenant Participation Strategy.

Tenant Participation is well established within ELHA and all of the processes, policies and resources are in place to enable effective customer involvement. However, we continue to strive to improve levels of participation and have found that we have achieved most significant gains through our efforts to promote digital involvement during the last three years.

Though we have a core of dedicated tenants who participate in the more traditional way, by giving up their time to attend meetings, we struggle to recruit members to this group.

This coupled with other changes within the social housing environment, particularly Welfare Reform, has prompted us to look at how we encourage and enable tenants to become involved. Over the three year strategy period, in addition to the work outlined in the remainder of this leaflet, we will continue to have a focus on digital engagement and will;

- Continue to develop the potential of **My Home** to enable tenants to voice their opinions and influence decisions in the most convenient ways
- Consider ways to promote Platinum level membership of the Key Tenant Scheme to assist in encouraging digital engagement
- Re-organise the workload within our Housing team to enable frontline staff to spend more time encouraging tenants to become involved
- Aim to better demonstrate the direct advantages of becoming involved in issues that affect whole communities by prioritising estate management expenditure to community led projects
- Instigate visits to tenants we don't normally see to find out their views and encourage them to get involved
- Continue to seek to increase the number of tenants using **My Home** and paper free services where submitting comments and opinions can be done easily at any time
- Promote services like Praise or Grumble, Facebook and 5 minute comment cards to get occasional snapshot views from our tenants
- Work on developing our social media presence to promote Tenant Participation and encourage engagement
- Designate a "Tenant Participation Champion" within the Housing Team to encourage colleagues and tenants alike to work together to improve services
- Ensure the resources needed for effective Tenant Involvement are available
- Involve the whole staff team in working with tenants to achieve improvements within our developments
- Record praise with the same consistency that we record complaints so that we benefit from positive feedback as well as acting on negative feedback

Our Management Committee, Membership and the Tenant Involvement Group

We are run by a voluntary Management Committee. Committee members are elected by our Association Members at each Annual General Meeting. The Management Committee is made up of people who have a real interest in housing.

The Management Committee control our business by:

- Setting the policies to be followed by staff
- Making sure staff carry out our legal and financial responsibilities
- Giving authority to staff to carry out the decisions of the Management Committee and attend to day to day business

We encourage all our tenants to become Members of the Association. Membership costs £1.00 and is for life. Our members may attend the Annual General Meeting and vote for, or be elected onto, our Management Committee.

We also have a Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) which is made up of tenants who have indicated an interest in getting involved in some capacity.

The TIG Panel is a core of dedicated tenants without whom we would struggle to meet our legal obligations. This Panel meets regularly with staff and is responsible for reviewing and implementing our Tenant Participation Strategy, undertaking scrutiny projects, and working to increase Tenant Participation in all areas of our work.



Tenant Scrutiny and the Scottish Social Housing Charter

Tenant scrutiny aims to give tenants more power in holding their landlord to account for their decisions, performance and conduct. This is a very important piece of work following the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter in April 2012.

The Charter requires social landlords to meet a range of standards and outcomes and involve tenants in assessment against these. The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors and assesses how well landlords are doing against the Charter and reports this to tenants each year. More information on this, and our performance, can be found on our Performance 365 microsite: **performance365.elha.com**.



Information

We aim to provide good, clear, accurate information, in plain English so that tenants, tenant groups and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) know what is happening and can make informed choices. If it is not possible to provide any information requested, we will explain why.

We use whatever method of contact a tenant prefers, for example, via their **My Home** account or 'chatting' through our Live Help service on **elha.com**, by telephone, e-mail, letter or face-to-face meetings. Tenants can also send short messages to us via text messaging.

If a tenant needs information in a different format, for example, large print, on CD or in a language other than English, we will provide this where appropriate, on request.

We provide tenants with a range of information either by post, in our office or through **elha.com**, Performance 365, and **My Home** including:

- A written tenancy agreement
- E-news
- A regular Newsletter
- Information about our Complaints Procedure
- Information about Right to Repair
- Our performance against locally agreed targets and standards each year
- All policies relating to tenants
- Detailed information about their rent account, repair history and tenant documents held in our systems
- Our Tenant Participation Strategy
- Non-confidential Management Committee papers and Minutes of meetings

We maintain an active social media presence via Facebook, and use this to promote Tenant Participation and encourage engagement.

Consultation

We consult with our tenants to give them the opportunity to comment on services, policies and procedures before they are finally agreed. Proposals for tenants to consider will have been developed before reaching this stage.

We will consult all tenants through our 5 minute comment cards issued with our newsletter, individually, in informal groups, as part of a Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO) or a Focus Group, on the following:

- If we want to make changes to policy or service standards relating to housing management or repairs and maintenance, and the change would have a significant impact on tenants
- Our Tenant Participation Strategy
- Our rent increase proposals
- If we were to sell any of our properties that have tenants in them which would result in a change of landlord or owner
- Local issues such as waste management



We will use a variety of ways to consult tenants in the way that suits them best. For example:

- Individual letters to tenants with reply slips
- Through our newsletter
- Door to door surveys
- In **My Home**
- Facebook
- As part of an RTO or tenant group

We have set a minimum standard for all consultations so that tenants know:

- When we plan to consult them, and on what subjects
- The information we will make available
- The timescales involved
- When a final decision will be made.

When a consultation has come to an end, we will let tenants know the outcome in our newsletter and on **elha.com**.

There will also be times when we will need to consult the wider community on issues that affect them. For example, we would consult applicants who are registered with us for housing if we want to make changes to our Allocations policy. We would follow the same minimum standard for consultation as we do for our tenants.



Working with RTOs and Tenant Organisations

Tenant groups, both informal groups and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) are independent, tenant-run organisations. Anyone can set up a tenant group in their community, and we can provide advice on setting up a group to anyone who is interested.

We work with tenant organisations and other community groups, and our staff can provide support to the groups if needed and wanted. We work with East Lothian Council and Homes for Life Housing Partnership and have a joint policy to support informal tenant organisations that want to become an RTO.

Improving Housing and Wider Action

We have regularly involved the local community and individual tenants in the planning of new developments or the upgrading of existing properties. We will continue to build on the arrangements we have in place for involving tenants, prospective tenants and the wider community in our future plans. Involvement with wider community groups will also be developed upon request and where we can contribute to the enhancement of community life.



Commitment to Resources

We recognise the need to provide training for both staff and tenants involved in Tenant Participation. To encourage further participation, we will provide resources for individual tenants or groups of tenants. This training will be provided either by us or other training organisations.

As well as identifying training and paying for courses, we will also cover the cost where possible for the printing of newsletters and other information that tenants want to distribute. Our staff will help arrange and organise meetings and provide administrative support, such as photocopying or typing up notes of a meeting for informal groups looking to become more formalised.

Importantly we want to make sure that tenants can attend meetings at times that suit them. Meetings with staff will be arranged at times to suit the needs of the majority of tenants. We will reimburse travel and childcare costs where these are needed to allow tenants to attend training meetings etc.

As tenant groups develop they will need funding to allow them to achieve their aims and to meet the requirements of registration. We will provide start up grants and annual grants according to the number of our tenants represented by each group.



Monitoring & Reviewing our Strategy

Our Strategy sets out how we will encourage and develop Tenant Participation in the coming years. We regularly review the progress of our Strategy as required by law and by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Every three years we engage independent consultants to complete a tenant satisfaction survey in partnership with the TIG-Panel.

We have developed a Performance Monitoring Framework (a list of performance indicators and outputs) to help us record quantitative and qualitative measures. Regular consultation and performance reports are provided to the TIG Panel and the Audit & Assurance Committee, and an Annual Tenant Participation Report is provided to our Management Committee.

The TIG-Panel sets a three year Action Plan and an annual calendar of activities for implementing the Strategy which details the work to be carried out each year to encourage effective participation. These plans can be downloaded from **elha.com**. They are also involved in setting the Tenant Participation budget to maximise tenant involvement in our work. Regular reports are also provided to the TIG Panel and our Management Committee on the progress of our Strategy.



If you would like to get involved in any aspect of Tenant Participation, please contact us by using the contact form in your **My Home** account, by e-mailing us at **info@elha.com** or by calling us on **01620 825032** and choosing option 3 from the phone menu.

Our Contact Details

Through your My Home account:

<https://myhome.elha.com>

Website: www.elha.com

E-mail: enquiries@elha.com
(general enquiries)

By post or in person:

East Lothian Housing Association
18-20 Market Street
Haddington
East Lothian
EH41 3JL

Telephone: 01620 825032 (Main switchboard)
03000 999 247 (Repairline)

SMS:

'elha' and then your message to 88222
(message charged at standard rates)

Office opening hours:

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday:
9am to 4.30pm

Tuesday: 10am to 4.30pm

Friday: 9am to 4pm

Live Help opening hours:

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday:
9.30am to 12 noon and
2pm to 4.30pm

Tuesday: 2pm to 4.30pm.

Friday: 9.30am to 12 noon and
2pm to 4pm

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