

HINT & TIPS 4

Methods of Consultation

There are formal and informal methods of consultation. The 2 most common formal ways of consulting tenants are Tenants and Resident Associations Groups and Scrutiny Panels

Tenants and / or Residents Associations

Getting together can allow tenants and residents to have a bigger impact than as individual voices. Together they can:

- share information and support each other
- run social events or projects to bring a community together
- strengthen their impact on landlord's decisions

Supporting a Tenant Association can help landlords recognise what's important to tenants and gather responses on topics. Associations can be supported through grants, use of facilities and staff.

Since 2001 social landlords must offer Associations the opportunity to become Register Tenant Organisations (RTO). Registration ensures Associations have:

- *minimum operating standards*
- *effective links between members and Association and Association and landlord*
- *recognition by the landlord*

A key benefit of registration is landlords agreeing to extend their legal obligation to consult to the Association.

Tenant Scrutiny Panel

An effective method of achieving tenant scrutiny of performance to improve service and value for money. Tenants in a Panel:

- actively review and challenge performance data, service systems and experiences
- identify options for improvement that influence the decisions of the landlord.

Where Associations and Panels operate effectively there remain tenants who choose not to engage with them. They retain a right to be informed and heard and their views considered by decision makers. TPAS Scotland recommends a flexible and mixed approach, which is explained within the Tenant Participation Strategy.

Informal approaches

Many tenants prefer to participate in less time-consuming ways. Landlords and tenants benefit from a range of informal activities, for example:

Surveys	Focus groups	Inspection teams
Drop-in events	Service questionnaires	Roadshows
Panels & Forum	Tenant voices	Complaint & comment

These methods rely less on tenants instigating and running structures and activities. This allows tenants who haven't the time, interest or skills to engage formally to be included. However, they reduce tenant control and raise the burden on landlords.

Formal and Informal approaches working together

Where TP is strongest there is often a symbiotic relationship between formal and informal methods. Formal methods are informed by the findings of informal consultation and informal consultations are shaped and promoted by the formal.

Topics covered by methods of consultation are extensive.

Any social landlord activity can benefit from consultation including:

Annual rent setting	Business planning	Assessing performance
Investment planning	Financial resilience	Bin collection/recycling
Community events	Sheltered/amenity	Learning/employment
Standards/targets	Policy development	Reporting performance
Producing information	Shaping services	Partnership/transfers
Procurement	Service procedures	Meeting health needs
Fuel poverty	Welfare benefits	Challenging decisions
Estate management	Crime / ASB	Allocations
Community facilities	Maintenance/upgrading	Communal maintenance

All methods have strengths and weaknesses. Some work well in some communities and on some topics but fail with others. Knowledge from the community and a willingness to learn and alter methods enhance success.

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