

Family Housing Association (Wales) Ltd

Local Tenant Participation Strategy

1. Introduction

The National Tenant Participation Strategy of the Welsh Assembly Government sets out the framework and requirements with which all social landlords in Wales must comply in formulating and implementing their Local Tenant Participation Strategies. The Strategy set out below attempts to comply with the requirements of the National Strategy and clearly sets out how Family Housing Association intends to make a reality of the wishes of its tenants to increase the quality and scope of Tenant Participation.

2. Regulatory Requirements

As well as the National Tenant Participation Strategy referred to above, guidance on Tenant Participation for housing associations in Wales is set out in “The Regulatory Code for Housing Associations in Wales” which specifies the Assembly Government’s expectations. “The Guarantee for Housing Association Residents” (2004) also makes reference to Tenant Participation. Additionally, the Housing Act 1985 gives secure tenants the right to be informed and consulted about proposed changes in housing management or provision of services or amenities. This Local Tenant Participation Strategy has been developed with the benefit of the accumulated knowledge of TPAS Cymru which has acted as a consultant to the Association.

3. Background and Current Position

Family Housing Association was established in 1975 and for over 30 years it has provided well-designed homes and first class management services for people who cannot afford to rent or buy privately in the areas of its operation. The Association currently manages nearly 2,400 properties throughout Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Neath Port Talbot in order to meet the differing housing and support needs of a wide variety of people. The Association’s mission statement is as follows: “We provide high quality homes and services giving support and assistance to people when needed.”

The Association’s corporate commitments are:

- To provide a top quality housing service, sensitive to the needs of our customers.
- To provide advice, care and support for those who need it so that they can live independently.
- To develop good quality homes sensitive to the needs of the communities in which the Association works.
- To ensure that all the Association’s business activities are sustainable and sensitive to the environment. To work in partnership with other agencies for the benefit of the community.

FACT

As part of its business planning process, the Association identified that that it needed to develop and improve the quality and range of Tenant Participation. Therefore, the Association commissioned TPAS Cymru to carry out an independent review which was undertaken in the summer of 2007. The recommendations and Action Plan from the review have informed the development of this Strategy and has resulted, amongst other things, in the appointment of a full-time Tenant Participation Officer.

4. Tenant Participation – Past and Present

A. Tenants' Panel

Family Housing Association Tenants' Panel has been running for approximately 12 years and was the first Tenants' Panel to be established in the county of West Glamorgan. The Panel now has 25 fully committed and enthusiastic members. It meets every six weeks with Officers of the Association at a variety of venues in different locations. The Panel has invited a range of speakers to its meetings over the years and members have also been involved in the development of a considerable number of policies and procedures, and in the review of a considerable number of services. The Panel has been, and continues to be, a great success and has been instrumental in introducing important changes within the Association (e.g. Introductory Tenancies, Tenants Insurance Scheme). The Panel has its own generous budget, allocated by the Association, and it is currently investigating ways of attracting even more sponsored resources from, for example, some of the Association's larger contractors.

B. Board of Management

Family Housing Association was one of the first Associations in Wales to allocate places on its Board of Management to tenants and it currently affords full membership to the Chair of the Tenant's Panel and one other tenant. The Board has an ongoing commitment to tenants sitting on the Board and values the contribution they make.

C. Focus Groups

- (i). A number of Focus Groups have been running since August 2008 examining a Code of Conduct for Contractors, the Appointments System and getting repairs completed Right First Time. Tenants have also been involved in meetings with contractors over the last 12 months, discussing procedures and performance and a range of other collaborative initiatives.

In Spring 2008, Family Housing Association was very pleased to announce the fact that the Tenants' Panel had been awarded a Tenant Empowerment Grant to establish a Property Services Tenants' Group that has now begun to put together a plan of work. They will participate in the focus groups and workstream meetings, feeding back to the Tenants' Panel.

- (ii). Family Housing Association has also established a Housing Management Tenants' Group who are currently drafting a set of service standards. It is also anticipated that a number of focus groups will be developed to assist in improving the services delivered by Housing Management.
- (iii) The Association's Special Projects Department has conducted a number of tenant focus groups covering the review of policies, including challenging behaviour, food provision etc.

D. Continuous Improvement

Family Housing Association continues to involve tenants in its Continuous Improvement Reviews which examine the efficiency and value of specific areas of its services.

E. Residents' Associations

- (i). The Association currently has several established Tenants' and Residents' Associations which are thriving. They are often set up in areas where there are a concentrated number of properties to enable tenants to take an organised approach to dealing with

issues which affect them. They can then communicate their views to the Association in an organised manner. We ensure that each Tenants' and Residents' Association is represented on the Tenants' Panel.

- (ii). The Association has a number of informal social groups and gardening clubs which mainly exist on sheltered schemes. They are a good way to involve tenants and bring them together through social activities, not just on their own sites but also allowing tenants to network with other schemes.

F. Competitions

- (i). The Association holds an annual gardening competition with many different categories, allowing individuals with container gardens or whole sites to enter collectively.
- (ii). The Association holds an annual golf tournament, bringing contractors, staff and tenants together to compete for a trophy. Our contractors assist with the sponsorship of this competition.

G. Site Visits

The Chief Executive, Chair of the Board and Chair of the Tenants' Panel regularly visit the larger sites, giving tenants the opportunity to meet them and give their opinions, and to discuss any areas of concern.

H. Tenants' Newsletter

The tenants' newsletter "Family Matters" has been distributed to tenants for quite a number of years and is a useful vehicle for providing information and consulting with tenants. There are 2 tenants on the editorial group and provide training to assist them with this task.

I. Surveys

The Association regularly carries out surveys such as satisfaction questionnaires following a repair (those who complete a questionnaire are entered into a prize draw), new tenant surveys (to see how tenants are settling in) and best value surveys. The Association also carries out a 3 yearly (STATUS) customer satisfaction survey. The Association's Special Projects Department consulted with tenants as part of its annual service evaluation which was conducted by Opinion Research Services Ltd.

J. Regulatory Consultation with Tenants

Annual audits are undertaken by the Care & Social Services Inspectorate and Supporting People teams. They consult with supported housing tenants as part of the audit process.

K. Staff Training

The Association's Special Projects Department has developed a bespoke training package on effective Tenant Participation and Consultation in supported housing with TPAS Cymru

L. Special Projects Tenant Participation & Consultation Policy

The above policy has been reviewed to ensure that it reflects the current structure of the organisation and how the Association consults with tenants. It provides opportunities to tenants to participate in developing the services they receive (See Appendix 1).

5. The Process of Developing the Strategy

The Association wanted tenants to be involved from the start. Therefore, as part of the process Family Housing Association set up a steering group with representatives from each department, together with representatives of the Tenants' Panel and a number of other tenants. An initial event was held with the group to identify key aims and objectives. Three focus groups involving the wider tenant body took place in the three geographical areas of the Association's operation. Further meetings of the steering group were held to look at the process of drafting a Strategy and action plan. A draft copy of the Strategy was also discussed with the Association's Tenants' Panel.

6. Scope of Participation

Family Housing Association recognises that not all tenants wish to participate in improving housing services but it will ensure that all tenants are given the opportunity to participate at whatever level they choose in a way that suits them best. Family Housing Association also recognises that there are barriers to participation and it will do its very best to ensure that all tenants are given the opportunity to participate. The results of the most recent STATUS survey undertaken by the Association has also influenced the key actions of this Strategy.

FACT

The STATUS survey carried out in 2008 for Family Housing Association recorded that just short of 70% of all the respondents to the survey were happy being consulted over issues that affect their homes via a letter (37.1%), Telephone (19.3%) and the Tenants Newsletter (13.2%). Also, out of the 400 or so respondents who took the opportunity to openly comment on various aspects of the Association's services, sometimes critically, not one of them took the opportunity to criticise the Association for the lack of opportunity for tenant participation. Finally, the survey carried out by Opinion Research Services in 2008 highlighted the fact that 62% of supported housing tenants preferred to be consulted face to face, rather than by letter etc.

7. Aims and Objectives

OVERALL AIM

Family Housing Association is committed to ensuring that all tenants have the opportunity to be involved in the development of quality housing and support services. Therefore, the overall aim of Family Housing Association in developing and delivering this Strategy is to improve the quality and delivery of services to its tenants by improving the participation of tenants in the planning and operation of Family Housing Association's services.

Family Housing Association recognises:

- Tenants needs and requirements have to be the basis of services, and that effective Tenant Participation in setting and monitoring standards can improve the quality of services.
- That Equality of access to services and to Tenant Participation for all tenants is vital so as to ensure services are suited to the diversity of groups and individuals.
- The importance of wider community and environmental issues for housing management and services, and the quality of life of tenants.

FACT

During the process of developing the Strategy tenants commented that although there would be limits to what could be achieved because of the relatively small size of the Association's estates, community involvement was a good idea.

Major Objectives

The major objectives which will contribute to achieving the above aims are as follows:

1. To improve our services and ensure they meet the needs of our tenants

The key to improving services is to listen to tenants and consider what they have to say. This will often mean involving tenants in the planning of and decision making regarding services. The services required by different groups of tenants will vary and services will need to be flexible in meeting these varied needs. Performance needs to be monitored and tenants informed of progress.

Overall commitments are:

- To gather the views of tenants regularly and transparently so as to help shape the services delivered to tenants.
- To set service standards for all services in partnership with tenants.
- To monitor performance regularly against service standards, involving tenants in the assessment and review.
- To involve tenants in the review and development of relevant policies

FACT

Development work has been underway for some time to increase Tenant Participation in repairs and maintenance and the following specific commitments have been identified:

- To ensure a 'right first time' approach for repairs
- To involve tenants in appointment of contractors.
- To develop a code of conduct for contractors.
- To involve tenants in design, layout and materials decisions.
- To involve tenants in setting service standards.

2. To develop a culture of tenant involvement and to promote the ethos of Tenant Participation within Family Housing Association and the wider body of tenants

Fully integrating tenant participation into the organisation of Family Housing Association will, to a degree, require some change to the work culture of the Association. In order to affect this Family Housing Association will:

- Develop a 'participation champions' structure with a champion in each department and a senior manager leading, in order to drive mainstreaming of tenant participation in the organisation.
- Ensure that each department develops a plan to identify where tenants can be involved in service improvements.
- Ensure that departmental team meetings will consider tenant participation within all planning.
- Involve tenants in the development of business plans and budgets where it is appropriate to do so.
- Ensure the Board of Management understands its role in relation to Tenant Participation

Individual members of staff will be encouraged and supported to involve tenants in their work. This will be achieved by ensuring that:

- All new staff will be fully briefed about the central role of Tenant Participation in the induction process.
- All relevant job descriptions will contain a component relating to Tenant Participation and where appropriate Tenant Participation will form part of the assessment in annual appraisals.

There are already opportunities for tenants, staff and Board Members to meet both at the AGM of the Tenants' Panel and the Association's AGM, as well the Tenants' Social Evening. Therefore, the Association will endeavour to continue with these arrangements so as to ensure that:

- Relationships between tenants, staff and Board members go from strength to strength.
- Courtesy and respect are shown by staff and tenants to each other.

3. To increase the involvement of all tenants and to develop their skills and confidence

Family Housing Association has longstanding experience and practice in involving tenants, particularly through the Tenants' Panel. The expectation now, however, is for wider tenant involvement. Therefore, Family Housing Association will achieve this by:

- Keeping tenants and staff well informed about matters such as:
 - tenants' rights;
 - access to services;
 - standards of services;
 - what Family Housing Association does and how it works;
 - performance of services.
- Improving communication between tenants and staff. This will include the development of a Newsletter editorial group involving tenants.
- Asking tenants for their preferences on how they to be kept informed, consulted or involved, and to meet these.
- Maintaining a profile of tenants by relevant characteristics such as area, age, type of home, ethnic background, and Tenant Participation preferences; to be used to target Tenant Participation methods and activities.
- Developing links with voluntary organisations and ethnic associations which work with sections of Family Housing Association tenants in order to improve channels of communication and understanding of particular needs.
- Reviewing and revising all relevant documents with the assistance of tenants.
- Reviewing the structure and operation of the Tenants' Panel to be able to co-ordinate a wider range of activities, and to involve a larger number of tenants in these activities.
- Exploring the development of more local area based tenants' groups and a representative structure to the Tenants' Panel.
- Using a variety of different methods to gather views.
- Supporting the development of service user involvement by ensuring staff have access to training, and service users are given opportunities to participate in the ways their homes are managed and support services delivered

It is envisaged that some additional resources may be needed to support the increased expansion of Tenant Participation. Therefore, Family Housing Association will:

- Continue to resource Tenant Participation adequately, as it does now, for activities and training of both tenants and staff. Tenants can assist in this exercise by having a dialogue with officers throughout the year and by expressing their aspirations which can be taken into account when the review of the Association's business plan takes place.
- Carry out annual training needs assessments for tenants in the light of their plan of activities, and to agree a training plan within available budgets.
- Continue to support the Tenants' Panel, and also independent Tenants' and Residents' Associations, ensuring democratic representation and responsible operation.
- Enable tenants to gain from the experience of tenants of other landlords, and to share their experience, through activities such as exchange visits and networks, as well as seminars and conferences.

4. To endeavour to play as much a part in improving the environment and community as it is possible (within limits set by resources) through collaboration with tenants, residents and other partners and agencies.

Family Housing Association recognises that the concerns of tenants about their homes are not just limited to bricks and mortar and landlord operations but extend to wider community issues. The Association will play as full a role as it is possible to, within its resource limitations, particularly where there is a direct impact on housing management issues and tenants' wellbeing. However, this role must be in partnership with other relevant statutory and voluntary organisations. Therefore, Family Housing Association will:

- Support involvement of appropriate staff and tenants in partnership forums dealing with relevant community issues.
- Contribute with other landlords, as appropriate, to the development and implementation of local environmental standards as part of achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.
- Do its best to enable tenants to access community resources.

8. Participation Options

The Association is committed to developing participation options that provides

- Different levels of participation
- A range of methods of involvement
- In a range of languages and formats relevant to the population it serves

Family Housing Association's commitments are identified throughout this document and in the Action Plan.

9. Resources

Family Housing Association will meet the requirements of the National Tenant Participation Strategy to resource Tenant Participation activities so that they are effective. This means:

- Making clear budget provision for the landlord functions of Tenant Participation separate from the budget provision of resources for tenants directly.
- Making a range of non-financial resources and facilities available to support Tenant Participation and advertising these.
- Encouraging and supporting tenants to prepare an annual 'business plan' of their Tenant Participation activities so that it can be considered as part of the Association's business planning cycle.
- Monitoring the impact of Tenant Participation expenditure to ensure value for money.
- Encourage tenants to access resources from other sources.
- Providing training for tenants, staff and Board Members to enhance skills and expertise in Tenant Participation.
- Promote the resources available to tenants to improve participation e.g. start up grants for the establishment of local resident associations.

FACT

Family Housing Association has been providing funds for Tenant Participation (and separate budgets for its Tenants Panel, Tenant Training and attendance at the TPAS conference) for over ten years.

10. Monitoring and Evidencing

The progress and achievements of the Local Tenant Participation Strategy must be monitored annually against both outcomes and outputs. Many of the achievements will be visible from the monitoring of performance standards of services, since this is where the impact of Tenant Participation is intended. Measuring the impact of Tenant Participation activities will be difficult but consistent recording of activities and the evaluation of each activity will provide a picture of the activity and of the impact.

Family Housing Association will:

- Record all Tenant Participation activities including participants, methods used and reasons why, timing and evaluations of participants.
- Record how different groups of tenants were encouraged to participate in which activities.
- Survey at least a representative sample of tenants annually to determine their satisfaction with the Association's information provision and service performance.
- Survey satisfaction of all tenants as they receive any specific service.
- Produce an annual progress report on Tenant Participation set against the Strategy and Action Plan objectives and targets so as to inform tenants and involve tenants in revising future plans.
- Establish relevant performance indicators, targets and service standards in relation to Tenant Participation.

11. Priorities and Timescales

The vision for Tenant Participation in Family Housing Association set out in this Strategy will have to be developed over time. Not all the commitments can be undertaken at once for capacity and resource reasons, and neither would this be desirable or effective – a measured building up has to take place of commitment and attitude, widening of activities and levels of involvement.

The early priorities for developments in Family Housing Association will be:

- Reviewing the structure of direct Tenant Participation
- Setting up a number of service area focus groups
- Reviewing the Tenants' Panel
- Promoting the ethos of Tenant Participation within the Association and the wider body of tenants
- Setting up a group to review and develop information materials and documents

Other developments and actions will be undertaken approximately in the timescale of one year:

- Developing participation across all service areas
- Set up monitoring and evaluation systems
- Consider setting up Tenant Inspections of services

12. Conclusion

The purpose of the Local Tenant Participation Strategy is to give tenants a real say in the services they receive and in the overall decision-making process of Family Housing Association. It will also assist in the Association's quest for continuous improvement in its services and as such will be reviewed on a regular basis to identify progress and impact on service improvement.

APPENDIX 1



Policy No: SPR019
Reviewed: 01/11/08
Lead Officer: HSP

PURPOSE OF POLICY

This policy is appended to the overall Local Tenant Participation Strategy for Family Housing Association.

It provides a framework for tenant participation and consultation specifically in Supported Housing. As this document forms part of the overall Local Tenant Participation Strategy for Family Housing Association the general methods of consultation and opportunities for tenant participation provided by the Association are not specified in this policy as they are already included in the Strategy document.

SCOPE

The 'Tenants' Guarantee and Occupancy Agreements sets out how tenants can expect to receive information and be consulted on various issues.

The policy relates to the following projects:

- Family WISH Project
- Neath Young Persons Project
- Carmarthenshire Supported Housing Project
- Carmarthenshire Floating Support Project
- Swansea Floating Support Project.

- **RELATED POLICIES / PROCEDURES**

- The Association's Local Tenant Participation Strategy
- Policy on the Provision of Support Services
- Recruitment and Selection
- Occupancy Commencement
- Refurbishment

RESPONSIBILITIES

- It is the responsibility of the Supported Housing Manager to ensure that the policy is implemented and understood by all staff.
- It is the responsibility of each member of staff to ensure they adhere to the policy.

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions apply.

- **Participation**
A mechanism which enables an occupant to influence what happens to them, or their home etc.

- **Consultation**

A mechanism which enables the occupant to receive details, information and provide opinion on same.

THE PROCEDURE

Section 1 - Support

<u>AREA</u>	<u>WHAT WE WILL DO</u>	<u>HOW IT WILL BE ACHIEVED</u>
Choice of Worker	An occupant can request a worker of a particular gender. Occupants must provide an explanation for request.	Managers must consider reasons for request and inform occupant of their decision.
Individual Support Plans	Allow people to decide what support they require. Allow people to ask for their plans to be reviewed more frequently.	By discussion at Support Plan reviews. Review and change plans at occupant's request.
Meetings	We will inform occupants of their right to have someone to accompany them to meetings and speak on their behalf.	By advising them whenever meetings are arranged

SECTION 2 - STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

<u>AREA</u>	<u>WHAT WE WILL DO</u>	<u>HOW IT WILL BE ACHIEVED</u>
Staff Recruitment	We will ask occupants what skills and qualities they require in new staff members.	Annually in Tenant Survey

SECTION 3 - OCCUPANT SELECTION (SHARED HOUSING)

<u>AREA</u>	<u>WHAT WE WILL DO</u>	<u>HOW IT WILL BE ACHIEVED</u>
New Occupants	<p>We will make all efforts to inform the current occupants of the name and sex of new occupant prior to occupancy commencement.</p> <p>We will listen to any concerns raised and take appropriate action.</p>	<p>Through individual discussion with occupants</p> <p>At managers discretion.</p>

SECTION 4 - INFORMATION

<u>AREA</u>	<u>WHAT WE WILL DO</u>	<u>HOW IT WILL BE ACHIEVED</u>
Notice Boards	<p>A notice board must be available in all shared housing for use by occupants and staff.</p> <p><u>We will display the following information:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All call contact details • Menus where applicable • Details of how to make a complaint to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FHA • Social services • Tenants Panel Meeting Minutes • House Meeting Minutes 	<p>Staff will update the information provided as it changes.</p>

SECTION 6 - HOUSING MANAGEMENT

<u>AREA</u>	<u>WHAT WE WILL DO</u>	<u>HOW IT WILL BE ACHIEVED</u>
Decoration	We will consult occupants on the colour schemes when individual rooms or communal areas are decorated.	They will be given a choice from a pre-chosen set of colours. Either on individual basis (rooms) or at House meetings (Communal Areas)
Food Provision	We will encourage occupants to choose what meals they want and go shopping.	Menus to be agreed at House Meetings. Shopping to be identified in individual support plans

SECTION 7 - POLICIES / PROCEDURES

<u>AREA</u>	<u>WHAT WE WILL DO</u>	<u>HOW IT WILL BE ACHIEVED</u>
Policies and Procedures	We will consult occupants on all policies and procedures that directly affect the services they receive	Focus Groups House meetings On an Individual basis Annual Tenant's Survey