

# Tenant Participation & Community Involvement Strategy 2020 - 2023



*Big Enough to Deliver & Small Enough to Care*





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## Introduction

Following on from our previous Tenant Participation Strategy 2017 – 2020, we continue to view both tenant participation, local accountability and community empowerment, along with the feedback we receive from all our stakeholders, as essential tools for assessing how we operate, deliver change and adapt to ensure essential services are provided to everyone residing within the communities we serve.

Furthermore, we are aiming to encourage and attract those who did not participate or engage with us over the past few years, to do so, in a way that suits them. We would like to see our tenants become actively involved in shaping the services we provide, whilst also recognising that some of our tenants are already involved in participation through local community groups, resident groups or scheme forums.

We aim to ensure that everyone can have their say in the delivery and development of our services. With this in mind, our new Tenant Participation & Community Involvement Strategy will provide us with a platform to build upon our work to date and reinforces our commitment to supporting, guiding and strengthening those who play an essential role in complementing our work or who provide direct support to our tenants and local communities in general.



## NHA Background & Current Engagement

Newington HA was formed nearly 45 years ago and views itself as a community-based Housing Association. We currently own and manage 723 homes, all of which are located within North Belfast.

As a locally based organisation, we have always sought the views of our tenants and have worked progressively with others to ensure effective and efficient delivery of our services. Through our new Tenant Participation & Community Involvement Strategy, we aim to build upon our success to date.

Since the inception of our last Tenant Participation Strategy 2017 - 2020, we have formed new relationships and joint working partnerships with new residents, local representatives, the community and voluntary sector and statutory agencies, to support our tenants and the wider community.

We have continued to actively engage in multiagency partnerships, local forums, residents' groups as well as statutory agencies such as the Police, the Housing Executive and Belfast City Council. This is to improve community safety and the health and well-being of all.

With current challenges facing the housing sector in general, such as the continued role out of Welfare Reform measures, uncertainties and the future impact this may have on the community and voluntary sector after the UK & N.I. recently left the European Union, housing demand and housing stress, etc., we believe it is imperative that these partnerships complement and support how we deliver services to our tenants and others who reside locally.







# An Organisational Overview

from our C.E.O

As Newington Housing’s Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O), I wish to express my delight with the direction we have travelled over the past three years, since the introduction of our initial Tenant Participation Strategy in 2017.

As we have seen a significant increase in our stock levels during this time, with the acquisition of over 150 additional new homes, we have recruited additional staff to ensure we continue to provide the highest standards of service delivery.

We have also worked tirelessly to retain our well-established culture and community ethos and forged new and strengthened existing community partnerships, all which highlight our continued commitment to the communities we served.

As C.E.O, I see tenant engagement and community empowerment as essential key business objectives. With this in mind, we will treat all feedback which we receive from our tenants and other external stakeholders as essential and influential tools when evaluating:



How we operate



The types of services we deliver



How we invest locally



How we support those most in need



The strategic direction we take as an organisation

Also through valuable feedback we received, we will continue to monitor, review and adapt the services we provide, with the objective of ensuring positive and meaningful outcomes, which will undoubtedly improve the quality of life for all.

From a tenant perspective, I would again encourage everyone to engage in the opportunities which we currently provide as well as any new initiatives, which we are promoting within this document.

I believe we have actively encouraged, supported and promoted meaningful tenant participation and played a pivotal role in supporting community led empowerment, via our attendance and participation at the various multi-agency working groups and community led initiatives.

I have no doubt that our dedicated staff team will continue to participate proactively to acquire and deliver positive outcomes for our tenants and the local community in general.

I wish to thank all those who have played an essential role in assisting us to achieve our successes to date, particularly those who make up our Tenant Forum, who have worked extremely hard to acquire outcomes that have benefited everyone who currently acquire our services.

Finally, on behalf of everyone associated with Newington Housing, I look forward to developing new and strengthening current partnerships, during the next three years of this Strategy.

**Anthony Kerr**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Update from our Tenant Forum Chair

As Chair of Newington Housing’s Tenant Forum, I wish to initially reflect on some of our achievements to date. After receiving support from Newington and through them, Supporting Communities, we established a Tenant Forum made up of various tenants from the Association’s General Needs & Sheltered accommodation. Throughout the last 3 years, we have been working hard to develop the Forum and I am pleased to confirm that we have achieved many of our main objectives which we set ourselves.

Although there have been many successes, there are some areas which we must refocus our attention to. I am in no doubt that with hard work and the dedication from myself and other Forum members; and with the continual support provided by NHA staff and others, we will meet these challenges head on and continue to flourish and grow as a group.

Moving forward, we see our role as crucial in ensuring how the Association operates and delivers its services to all tenants on a day to day basis, both operationally and strategically.

Our focus over the next few months and beyond will be to assist the Association in developing a new Tenant Service Review Panel. This can be made up of tenants either currently participating within the Forum, or by others who currently do not.

Through our recently developed Action Plan, both myself and other Forum members have now set our own targets and objectives for the upcoming year and we will review this on an annual basis. This structured approach will allow us to focus on key areas of Newington Housing’s core business processes, such as -

- reviewing of service delivery standards and performance,
- helping support community engagement projects funded by the Association,
- help with the reviewing of some NHA’s policies and procedures and;
- complete further Tenant Satisfaction Surveys (electronically) via home visits, directly with tenants.

Finally, I wish to thank my colleagues on the Forum for the commitment they have shown to date and I would encourage others to actively participate in any way they can, as by doing so, their participation will increase landlord accountability and enhance the services which we all currently avail of.

**Stephen Graham**  
Tenant Forum Chair





## Our Strategic Objectives over the next few years

We are committed to supporting and developing local communities. Our well-established community relationships and joint working partnerships have assisted us to date in delivering programmes in line with the mission and values of the Association and we hope these foundations will continue to allow us to do so.

Below are several key objectives which we have set to ensure our new Tenant Participation & Community Involvement Strategy complements, supports and effectively delivers our current Three-Year Corporate Plan's Strategic Objectives.



### Our Homes

We will support tenants and community partners to develop initiatives and partnerships which enhance and strengthen new and existing communities.

### Our People

We will develop staff to make a difference, whilst also ensuring good organisational governance.



### Our Services

We will provide opportunities for tenants to review and scrutinise existing services and to further develop the services that are provided by us.



### Our Finances

We are committed to funding our community engagement activities either directly or by working in partnership, whilst ensuring value for money and financial scrutiny.



### Our Tenants & Communities

We will deliver all aspects of the Tenant Participation & Community Investment Strategy 2020 – 2023, which will support us to engage with and invest in our communities.



## Supporting Communities' New Tenant Participation Standards

Supporting Communities was appointed Independent Tenant Organisation by the Department for Communities in 2017 and have worked tirelessly over the past 40 years to raise the standard of tenant engagement in Northern Ireland.

More recently, in December 2019, Supporting Communities announced the launch of a new Tenant Participation Standards accreditation service for social housing providers in Northern Ireland. It is envisaged that their new accreditation scheme will help raise the overall standard of tenant engagement in Northern Ireland.

### The New TP Standards

Tenant Participation Accreditation is a robust and structured process for assessing how well we as a landlord involve tenants in our services.

We will be assessed on the following **TEN** criteria measures:

- 1 Do we as a landlord have an effective participation strategy?
- 2 Do we provide good information to tenants?
- 3 Are there effective tenant involvement structures?
- 4 Are tenants involved in making decisions?
- 5 Do we work in partnership with tenants?
- 6 Are tenants involved in the scrutiny of our performance and self-assessment?
- 7 Are there sufficient resources and support to enable tenant participation?
- 8 Do staff have good awareness of tenant participation?
- 9 Do we have realistic timescales for implementing tenant participation?
- 10 Are we committed to promoting equal opportunities?

### How Do We Measure Up?

Supporting Communities' Tenant Participation Standards will enable us to assess our progress in meeting the Consumer Standard as determined by the Department for Communities' Regulatory Branch in 2015.

Their accreditation standard provides an external professional validation of how well we as a landlord are meeting their tenant participation goals such as:

- » Are we meeting best practice standards in tenant involvement?
- » How effective is our organisation in involving tenants?
- » Help us evaluate whether our service has improved as a result of us putting tenants at the 'heart' of our business

**The TP Standards Accreditation is awarded at three levels: Gold, Silver and Bronze.**

Within the lifetime of our new Tenant Participation & Community Involvement Strategy 2020 - 2023, we are committed to undertake Supporting Communities new accreditation assessment, as we believe it will assist us to identify whether we as an organisation involve residents effectively and help us highlight any opportunities for us to improve.



# Supporting Tenant Involvement

How we will support our tenants to engage:



Provide, source or fund relevant training for tenants, staff and Board members



Provide secretarial support at Forum meetings



Provide suitable/ accessible venue to hold meetings and provide refreshments



Provide transport to attend training courses and sector conferences



Reimburse tenants for any travel costs and childcare activities (with supervision) when tenants are attending Tenant Forum meetings

At Newington, we are committed to supporting any tenant interested in taking part in initiatives which will promote tenant engagement, either by helping them access training to ensure they have the skills to contribute confidently and effectively or by providing financial support for any associated costs incurred by tenants. We will also make available staff time and administrative/office facilities to support and encourage tenant involvement.

## Attracting hard to reach and ethnic minority groups

We will continually aim to encourage tenants, particularly from under-represented groups, to become involved in the various engagement opportunities and we will provide all relevant training and other support mechanisms to do so.



## How will we fund the commitments we have made?

Our Community Investment Fund will allow us to meet the strategic aims and objectives of the Strategy, whilst also ensuring Value for Money. Through this fund, we will support NHA initiatives, other local organisations or projects which will meet one or more of the strategic aims of the Community Involvement Fund.

## Other ways we intend to support local groups and organisations

We understand many groups can struggle to acquire funding to support their projects or the delivery of new programmes. As a result of this, we will be seeking to support groups or organisations with applications for funding, either from our own Community Investment Fund or external funding providers.

## Measuring Outcomes and our Performance

Throughout the term of this Strategy we will continue to record information about our activities on our internal systems. This will allow us to produce a variety of different reports which will identify initiatives which produce high levels of involvement, areas of good practice and measurable outcomes.

We will test our existing current strategies to meet the expectations of the Department for Communities current Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland.

We have developed a three-year Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan 2020 – 2023 to record, monitor and evaluate our performance in delivering meaningful opportunities to engage as well as monitor and evaluate the delivery of this Strategy.

We intend to regularly report progress against the Action Plan targets by way of:

- » On our Website
- » Tenant Forum Meetings
- » Senior Executive Team Meetings
- » Sub Committees and Full Board Meetings
- » In DFC & NIFHA returns and publication

## Who have we consulted with to influence and shape this Strategy, prior to publication?

The Association has undertaken consultation with various groups and organisation, such as:

- » Our Tenant Forum
- » Local Residents Groups
- » Local Community & Voluntary Sector Organisations
- » Supporting Communities
- » Other Key Stakeholder
- » Newington Housing Staff
- » Newington Housing's Board of Management



# Expanding on our work to date



Our new Tenant Involvement Strategy 2020 – 2023 has been developed to reinforce and build upon the 10 principles contained within the Department’s Regulatory Framework.

## Principles For Tenant Participation

All parties must be committed for tenant participation to work effectively. Everyone needs a clear understanding of what participation is trying to achieve. It should build meaningful relationships between landlords, tenants and the wider community. It must also promote good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

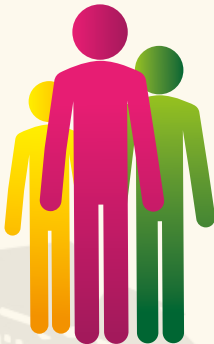
The 10 principles below set the context for the measures that follow.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <div>1</div> <p>Tenant participation comes from and promotes a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, board members and staff at all levels. It exists when all these interests work together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services.</p> | <div>6</div> <p>The landlord must recognise the independence of tenants’ organisations.</p>  |
| <div>2</div> <p>Tenant participation is a continuous process. Participants share information, ideas and influence. They work towards a common understanding of problems and a consensus on solutions.</p>   | <div>7</div> <p>Good working relations evolve gradually so must be flexible to adapt to local circumstances.</p>                                 |
| <div>3</div> <p>Good tenant participation is about sharing information. All participants need to have all the information available to consider issues properly. That information needs to be clear, timely and accessible. Information must be in a form that all participants can understand.</p>   | <div>8</div> <p>Tenants’ organisations need adequate resources for organisation, training and support.</p>                                       |
| <div>4</div> <p>Decision-making processes should be open, clear and accountable.</p>  | <div>9</div> <p>Tenant participation in rural areas must suit the particular circumstances and needs of rural tenants.</p>                       |
| <div>5</div> <p>Tenant representatives should have enough time to consider issues properly. They should have the opportunity to work out a common view before meeting landlord representatives.</p>   | <div>10</div> <p>Tenant participation must meet the requirements of legislation on equality and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.</p> |

Effective tenant participation methods, developed and delivered by landlords who have engaged, supported and have listened to their tenants’ needs (including where tenants are living with disabilities), will remove barriers arising from ethnicity, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, age, sexual orientation or disability.



As well as incorporating measures to effectively deliver the 10 principles of good participation for landlords, we are committed to ensuring:



Our tenants have a choice in:

- The areas they want to participate in.
- The level of participation.
- Whether to be involved as an individual or part of a group.

Tenants have an opportunity to influence:

- Policy decisions that will affect them.
- Decisions that will affect their general area or community.
- Services that they receive as an individual user.
- Their landlord organisation’s business planning and identification of future priorities.

# Our Menu of Involvement

We will continue to put our tenants at the heart of everything we do. This new Strategy will outline our objectives and commitments that are necessary to achieve this goal.

Some steps have already been taken by Newington Housing to date. All tenants are frequently contacted and asked to consider joining the Forum. NHA provides Independent support to the Forum on a regular basis from Supporting Communities (Independent Tenant Organisation).

Working with the Tenant Forum we hope to continually develop new opportunities for all tenants to engage.

Below are various ways our tenants can actively participate:



**Be available to complete telephone questionnaires and satisfaction surveys**

Time commitment will be a maximum of one hour per year



**By making yourself available to assist in reviewing NHA policies**

Time commitment will be a maximum of one hour per policy



**Help to review Maintenance performance standards delivered by us and our Contractors**

Time commitment will be a maximum of two hour per year



**Verify findings of Annual Satisfaction Survey**

Time commitment will be a maximum of one hour per year



**Help form or join an already established Residents Groups**

Time commitment will be dependent on whether you are helping to form or joining an established group)



**By joining your Tenant Forum**

Time commitment will be a maximum of six hour per year



**Take part in individual focus groups to review NHA's Services**

Time commitment will be a maximum of three hour per year



**Participate in the reviewing of our Housing Management services delivery**

Time commitment will be a maximum of two hour per year



**Participate in Mystery Shopping exercises**

Time commitment will be a maximum of two hour per year (plus any additional training time required)



**Take part in Estate Walkabouts**

Time commitment will be a maximum of two hour per year



**Help to deliver Fun Days or other local community events**

Time commitment will be dependent on the scale or support from other participants

# The Different Levels of Participation

Newington acknowledges that due to other personal commitments, some tenants may not have any interest in engaging at all; whilst others are already actively involved in various local initiatives/ groups; however there may also be an appetite from others to have a say in how our policies, procedures and daily practices are developed. We have considered this when developing our “Menu of Involvement” which outlines what participation levels are available to every tenant. These participation levels are summarised below.

## LEVEL 1

**LOW LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT:**  
You will receive regular and up to date information, participate in the completion of surveys, provide feedback and keep us up to date on what is the best way to communicate with you.

## LEVEL 2

**MID LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT:**  
You can consider developing or joining an existing established local Residents Group with a view to developing different types of social activities within the local community (i.e. organisation and delivery of community fun days, promote local activities and engagement opportunities, etc.).

## LEVEL 3

**HIGH LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT:**  
You can participate in a Tenant’s Forum, carryout Policy Reviews, participate in Mystery Shopping exercises and Review Management & Maintenance performance standards.

## LEVEL 4

**STRATEGIC LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT:**  
Join the Board of Management and other opportunities which specifically looks at the work of Newington Housing, scrutinises our activities and policies and engages in our business for the benefit of all tenants.





# Levels of Commitment required from our Tenants

## Level 1 - Commitment of your time

By engaging with us at this level and by taking an interest in how we perform, you can provide a platform that influences and enables us to improve. For example, by simply responding to our annual tenant satisfaction survey, you will give us a steer on how to make improvements to the services you receive.

By committing to Level 1 engagement, we will ask you to:

- » take the time to respond to our tenant service surveys,
- » attend scheme specific tenant meetings,
- » Provide up to date contact information (i.e. your email address)
- » Provide articles and feedback for our publications and
- » To follow us via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

By engaging at this level, you will help us:

- » deliver service improvements,
- » allow us to provide information electronically,
- » help us meet our environmental goals in the production of less wastepaper
- » help us provide information that is relevant and up to date
- » help us to deliver Value for Money

## Level 3 - Commitment of your time

Level 3 Participation - By engaging at this level you will be required to attend regular Tenant Forum meetings; training sessions, seminars and other event, etc.; however, we can tailor opportunities for you to engage, dependent on the level of commitment you can give.

## Level 2 - Commitment of your time

Level 2 Involvement requires a greater level of commitment from tenants than Level 1 as you will be required to assist group(s) to become established and sustainable and this commitment would extend to:

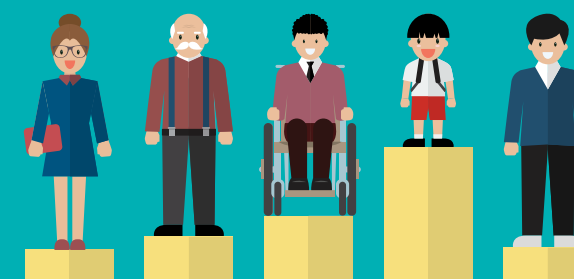
- » Being involved in organising or attending regular meetings;
- » Being involved in organising or attending community activities;
- » Representing tenants at Newington Housing focus groups and other such activities.

Through a group structure it will:

- » Make you feel more involved and take ownership of what you do;
- » Provide tenants with an opportunity to feel more involved and empowered;
- » Make a positive impact locally for you and your neighbours;
- » Help improve community cohesion;

## Level 4 - Commitment of your time

Level 4 Participation - By engaging at this level you will be required to attend regular quarterly board meetings and other business review meetings, training events, seminars and play a key role influencing policy and the strategic direction of the Association.



# Our Equal Opportunities Statement

We value involvement that reflects the whole of our tenant population and are committed to treating people respectfully, fairly and equally, tackling discrimination and harassment and ensuring our services are accessible irrespective of race, religious belief, disability, gender, age or sexual orientation.

We will make sure all groups and individuals have equal access and opportunity to engage in activities.

We require all groups and individuals involved with tenant participation to act to promote equality and welcome participation from all our community. To this end, and in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, we actively seek to remove barriers to tenant participation arising from people with:

Different religious beliefs

People of different  
racial groups

Men and women generally

People with a  
disability and  
people without

People of different  
political opinion

People of different ages

People of different  
sexual orientation

People with dependents  
and people without

We aim to ensure that our involvement opportunities are accessible, that our written material is clear and easy to understand, and that we do not present any other barriers to involvement.

We will provide information for tenants in other languages and formats such as audio or large print where tenants need it.

We will provide information in ways that are easy to understand for tenants with limited or no reading skills where tenants need it.

We will ensure that all our tenant groups recognise the importance of equal opportunities and seek to involve all those who are eligible to join them.

**For further information on Newington Housing's Equality Policy and Equality Scheme, please contact our office for details.**





## Questions & Feedback

Newington Housing welcomes any questions or feedback you may wish to submit to us in respect of this Strategy. Also, if you are interested in becoming involved, please contact us:

**In writing or in person:** Newington Housing Association  
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Belfast  
BT15 2GB

**By Telephone:** 028 9074 4055

**By Email:** [admin@newingtonha.co.uk](mailto:admin@newingtonha.co.uk)

### Related Publications

A copy of the Department for Communities' current Tenant Participation Strategy can be found at the site below:  
[www.communitiesni.gov.uk/publications/tenant-participationstrategy-northern-ireland-2015-2020](http://www.communitiesni.gov.uk/publications/tenant-participationstrategy-northern-ireland-2015-2020)

An Easy Read version can also be acquired at the site below:

[www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/tenant-participation-strategy-2015-2020-easy-read.pdf](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dsd/tenant-participation-strategy-2015-2020-easy-read.pdf)





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