

**Langstane Housing Association
Tenant Participation Strategy 2022 – 2025**



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Foreword from Helen Gauld, Chief Executive



Welcome to the Tenant Participation Strategy. Our strategy was reviewed in consultation with both tenants and staff. This document clearly demonstrates our full commitment to involving tenants in a meaningful and effective way.

This strategy reflects our values as a business. We value our tenants and aim to have them at the heart of our decision-making process. This is done by consulting, listening, and acting on the views of our tenants. Only by doing this can we achieve our mission to 'be the best we can be'.

More than ever, we need our tenants to come forward and take the opportunity to influence the way we work. It is an important part of what makes us a successful social landlord. My thanks to each and every tenant that has taken time out to get involved and have their voice count.

Introducing our tenant participation strategy from Judith Sutherland, Director of Housing

Involving tenants is not seen in isolation but is an important part of our day-to-day work. Our tenants need the information, support and confidence to participate and see there are real benefits to it. You'll see examples of real results later in this strategy, but they include:

- Improved service delivery and better outcomes for tenants that give value for money;
- Working together with respect and understanding, sharing the same goals;
- Tenants gaining knowledge, new skills and confidence to influence decisions.

Staff worked hard to increase the amount and the quality of tenant participation over the past few years. Much has been achieved with more and more tenants offering their views and opinions on a range of different parts of our business. We offer a variety of ways tenants can take part, and we remain open to trying new things. We know there are many tenants willing to get involved, and we never take that for granted.

This strategy sets out what we want to achieve over the next three years. Although challenging goals have been set, our team has the drive and commitment to get us there.



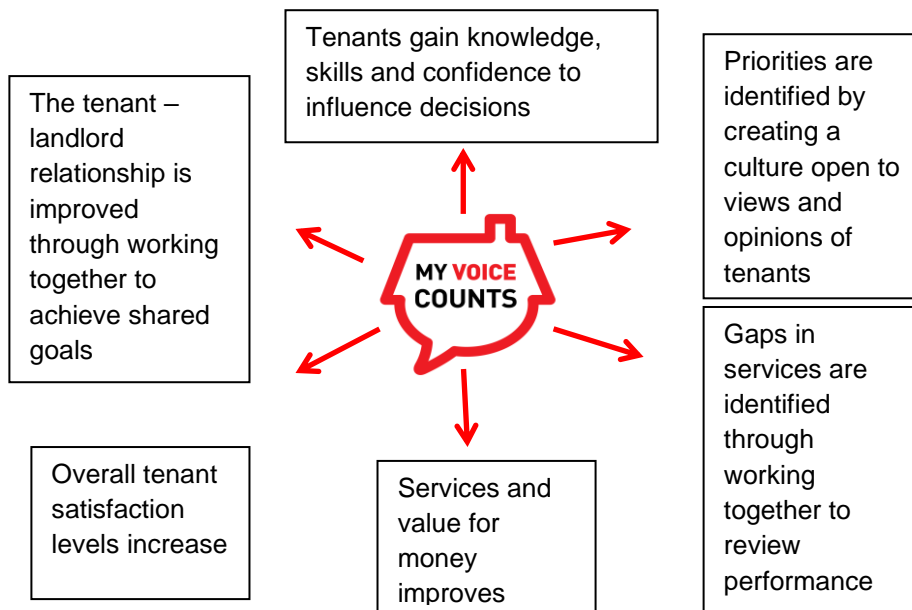
1. Why we have a strategy - the legal background

Since 2001, there have been a growing number of requirements written into law that set out what social landlords must do to make sure tenants are involved in developing services and influencing decisions. The following three elements describe the legal framework a housing association works in:

1. **The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001** introduced the need to publish a tenant participation strategy, and review and monitor the strategy. It introduced the need to consult with tenants on a range of services and provide information to tenants.
2. **The Scottish Social Housing Charter** was introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. This came into effect during 2012 and sets out standards and outcomes social landlords must deliver to tenants. In particular there are outcomes about participation and communication with tenants and other customers. The Charter pushed tenant participation into something more active and allows for tenants to review performance and make formal suggestions for improvements directly to decision-makers. This is called tenant scrutiny.
3. **The Scottish Housing Regulator** is an independent body that monitors and reports on how social landlords achieve outcomes in the Social Housing Charter. From 2019, this involves the Association providing a Statement of Assurance to the Regulator that covers every aspect of our business.

The benefits of being involved

The reason the law makes us have a strategy for involving tenants in our work is because there are real benefits for everyone, and these benefits increase over time.



2. Tenant participation at Langstane – Your Voice Counts

We offer a range of opportunities to tenants to get involved. We know people have limited free time and will not be interested in every part of our business. There is a menu of options so people can choose subjects that interest them and offer their time in a way that fits with their lives, their skills and their interests.

Tenant panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The fastest way to participate. We contact occasionally about a housing issue. Members decide how we contact them. We ask only a few questions and keep it short.
Reader panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Tenants help us keep things clear and simple. We send letters, leaflets and other documents out to this group. Once we have taken feedback on board we apply our 'Reader Approved' logo.
Register of Interested Tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The largest group we have, around 20% of our tenants are members. We include tenants on our Register in all opportunities to share views on their topics of interest.

We also have our regular full tenant consultations on the annual rent increase and other big changes affecting tenants. We have two newsletters a year, and these include a 'consultation special' offering all tenants the opportunity to take part in a consultation and also join one or more of our groups.

Tenants can also apply to become lifetime members of the Association. This means they would have rights, which include standing for election to the Board of Management.

We have also recently started to contact a selection of our tenants on a weekly basis to obtain feedback on how they found the service they received during a recent telephone call.



Our tenants are also encouraged to provide feedback on our services, people or their neighbourhoods via our website and Facebook pages.

We use the 'My Voice Counts' logo and a small range of merchandise especially for tenant participation. We use this merchandise to thank those who are involved in tenant events and focus group meetings.

We use the logo regularly in our news and publications so tenants are aware when there is an opportunity to get involved, or we want to share some outcomes of tenant involvement.

3. Tenant participation in action at Langstane

- We were delighted to win the top category of Tenant Participation Champion (Organisation) at the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) awards.
- We were also thrilled that our tenant Ronnie Boyle won Tenant Participation Champion (Tenant) for his fantastic contribution making our satisfaction survey more accessible to people with communication difficulties. Ronnie continues to be an important member of our Register of Interested Tenants.
- Langstane tenants were part of a group from local landlords who did a mystery shopping exercise. The project won a 2018 TPAS good practice award in involving customers, and a further award for inspiring others in 2019.

Award winning organisation



- Our Reader Panel logo was introduced when developing our Annual Charter Performance Report. We use it regularly to make sure our publications are easy to read and understand.
- Every year we meet up with a group of volunteer tenants to plan our Annual Charter Performance report. A significant change suggested by tenants was the introduction of a shortened summary version of performance information using as little text as possible.
- In 2022, tenants told us they want us to continue communicating with them via the annual newsletters, with both phone and email remaining popular methods. Face-to-face was also important so we will continue to pursue hybrid meetings as to include all and break down any barriers.
- We will also use Facebook where appropriate to communicate and gather Feedback.

Communication improvements



- We have met with tenant groups to test our tenant satisfaction surveys to make sure it is easy to complete.
- Our Customer Care Charter was developed with tenants during several 'tea-room' chats. We plan to review the charter in 2023 with tenants help and will again look at ways to involve our communities.
- We worked with tenants to test our new application portal on our website in 2021.
- In 2021, we asked tenants what they want to read about in our newsletters. We will continue to use this feedback to focus on issues that matter to our readers.
- In 2021, tenants also helped us design our new interactive website. One of the big questions was the redesign of our Langstane logo. Tenants voted the logo be kept the same therefore no change was made.
- 2021 also saw tenants help us shape the services we offer post pandemic. This included the re-opening of our reception. Our Aberdeen and Elgin offices are now open during the week based on tenants feedback.
- In 2022, tenants told about their communication preferences, helping us review our communications and tenant participation strategies. Feedback focussed on methods of communication and what tenants want to be involved with in the future i.e, community issues.

Working together



4. Our commitment to involving tenants

We are committed to involving tenants in a meaningful and effective way. To do this, we will:

- Provide clear information about our services and how to get involved.
- Provide opportunities for tenants to get involved in things they are interested in.
- Identify and remove barriers to involvement so all tenants regardless of age, disability, race, gender, relationship status, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, or sexual orientation can get involved if they want to.
- Consult and work with tenants in a variety of ways most suited to individual needs and circumstances.
- Provide feedback and make information available in other formats where possible.
- Provide support to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence of all participants, so they are confident to input to the work of the Association
- Monitor, report on and review this strategy.
- Provide a number of communication channels to allow as many of our tenants to engage with us via a method that works for them.

5. Our commitment to good practice

Principles of good practice are the basis of our strategy. Good tenant participation requires the following:

- That a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership is established between tenants and members of the Association at all levels.
- The Association recognise the independence of tenants' organisations.
- That tenant participation is seen as a continuous process, and forms part of the culture of the Association.
- That tenant participation meets the requirements of equalities legislation.
- A commitment to being transparent with our tenants throughout their involvement.

Tenant participation plays a key role in enabling our tenants to engage with us and make their expectations, concerns and aspirations known to us. The Tenant Participation Strategy sets out how we support our tenants to work with us. The aim of working together is to develop services that are efficient, accountable and responsive to tenants' needs.

This strategy has been written in line with:

- The National Standards for Community Engagement. More information about these standards can be found at www.gov.scot
- The Guide to successful Tenant Participation (2018) published by the Scottish Government and available at www.gov.scot

6. Aims and objectives

When tenants have a meaningful role to play in making decisions and an understanding of policy and operational processes, there is a greater level of trust, and a good working relationship develops between tenants and staff. This leads to **higher overall levels of satisfaction with services**, which is an aim common to all social housing providers.

In addition to this basic aim, our aspiration for tenant participation is that we can move from the current practice of consulting with tenants and 'deciding together' to a longer-term aim of being an Association that 'acts together' with tenants. In order to reach these aims, our objectives for this strategy are:

Service reviews & performance improvement

- Mystery shopping of the Customer Care Charter - with tenants making specific recommendations for improvements directly to decision makers.
- Regular Estate Walkabouts - so tenants influence the housing management in their local area.
- Review of the Association's Lettable Standards - tenants have the opportunity to set their priorities, and decide together how to achieve best value and work within our budget.
- Seek continuous improvement on ARC indicator 25; keeping tenants informed and indicator 26; opportunities to participate. These are measured every three years in the full tenant satisfaction survey.

Increase meaningful & inclusive involvement

- Increase the numbers of involved tenants - both levels of involved tenants and also in response levels to opportunities to participate.
- Analyse tenant involvement based on specific and minority groups – work to reduce any identified barriers to achieving higher engagement with under-represented groups.
- Complete an analysis of engaged tenants as proportion of total tenants, and calculate the proportion of those that go on to actively participate in order to understand what motivates people to get involved.
- Provide more information about budgets and spending to provide more context to assist tenants with their decisions, and where possible provide opportunities for tenants to feed into how budgets are set and spent.

Training & awareness

- Continue to promote opportunities for tenants to attend training/events/tenant conferences.
- Complete a staff awareness raising exercise in order to embed an understanding of our responsibilities and reinforce having a culture open to and supportive of tenant involvement.
- Continue to promote 'Your Voice Counts' with anecdotal views from tenants/staff/senior managers and the Board of Management.
- Regularly publicise outcomes of tenant consultations, and demonstrate the impact getting involved has on the work of the Association.

7. How the strategy was developed

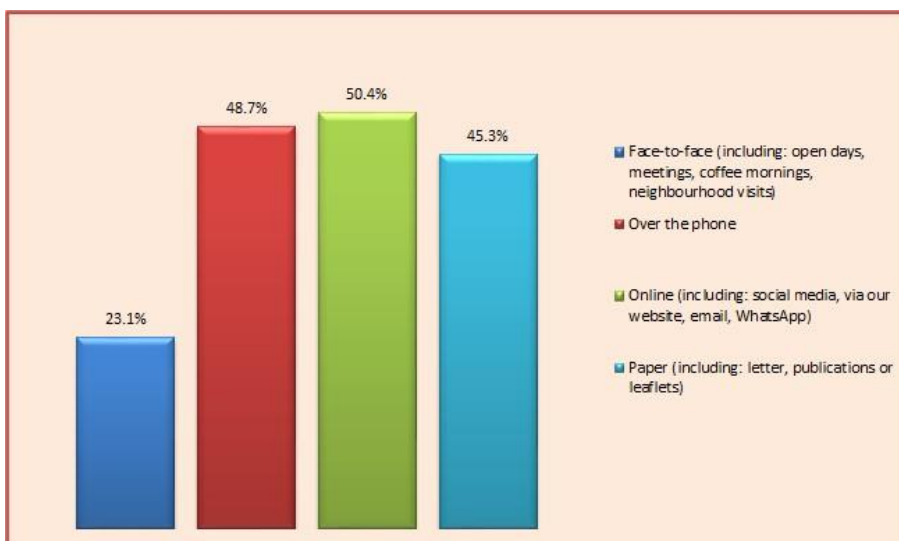
Every tenant has had the opportunity to feed into this strategy. A full tenant consultation took place in December 2018. In August 2022 we asked 2,464 tenants to help us review our communications and tenant participation strategies. We received 117 responses which is 4.7% of our tenants. This helped us continue to establish the effectiveness of certain aspects of the current strategy.

The graphs below highlight the information we received in our 2022 review. Graph one illustrates the activities engaged tenants wish to get involved in, including helping us review key decisions to the organisation but also community related issues. Graph two highlights the top methodologies for tenant communication when we have important information to relay.

Graph one



Graph two



The consultation results fed into the reviewed document. Once a draft document was prepared, staff and tenants were invited to discuss this and make sure it was fit for purpose. A key aim of stage two of the consultation was to make sure tenants agreed how the strategy is to be monitored and reported on to make sure it is effective.



Autumn 2022 – hybrid tenant meeting to discuss the draft strategy. Deciding together how to monitor the strategy is working.

The strategy went to the Board of Management on 26 October 2022 for final approval.

8. Links to other strategies/policies

In addition to demonstrating the values we set in our business plan, this strategy links to the following Association documents:

- Customer Care Policy
- Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Social Media Policy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Communication Strategy

9. Resources

There is a cost to deliver effective and meaningful tenant participation. This is especially true where communities are dispersed across wide geographic areas. It is important the Association dedicate sufficient resources to support the delivery of meaningful and inclusive tenant involvement and support continuous improvement.

In addition to a member of staff whose core task is customer involvement and communication, there is an annual budget identified for tenant participation to cover costs such as:

- Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) - annual subscription fee. This provides support, training and access to specialist services and resources
- Booking fees for venues for events like tenant meetings
- North East Tenants Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) annual membership fee – this is a partnership of local landlords working together to increase tenant involvement and share resources, experience and good practice
- Catering for refreshments at tenant events/meetings
- Expenses for tenants attending meetings and events
- Costs for attendance at TPAS and other conferences for staff (and tenants)
- Training costs for tenants and staff

- Newsletter and other publication costs
- Printing, stationery, and postage (including pre-paid envelopes) for mail outs and publications
- Mass texting costs for consultations
- Costs for external tenant satisfaction survey every three years
- Prize draw (incentive) fund
- Merchandise for tenants

Total budget for all the above costs for the period 2022-23 is £30,000

Total spending for the period so far is £9,000

10. How tenants will be kept informed

The Association is committed to developing a wide range of communications options that keep up to date with changing tenant expectations, and to make use of new technologies as they become available. Tenants are regularly asked how they prefer to receive information from the Association to make sure everyone has the opportunity to access the information they need.

The methods currently used by the Association to communicate information are as follows:

- The tenant newsletter – this remains as one of the most popular choices for tenants when asked about how they prefer to receive information
- The Association’s website – this contains a large amount of information and documents and is a good resource for tenants. It also features news items and there are some opportunities for tenants to interact directly with the Association
- The Annual Charter Performance Report to tenants
- Facebook – a useful resource available to promote activities, share news, and make service announcements
- Tenant meetings – used for specific topic-based conversation (focus groups) and consultation with tenants
- Messaging by text and email – used to issue reminders to participate

11. Consultation

Consulting with tenants is a core activity, and fundamental to complying with our obligations as a landlord and in building a relationship with tenants based on trust and mutual understanding.

In addition to consulting with tenants on any change to their rent and service charges, we are obliged to consult on anything affecting the way we let our properties (our allocations policy). In fact, we consult on anything that impacts on, or changes the services delivered to tenants. This ranges from deciding our Mission, Vision and Values for the Business Plan, to how we deliver every day front-line housing services.

Consultation outcomes are reported to the Senior Managers and the Board of Management so that decision makers can take into account the views, concerns and aspirations of tenants and other customers.

12. Deciding how we consult

Because of the wide variety of topics, we consult on, we have to think about how to get an effective and meaningful outcome. We do this by approaching each consultation as an individual exercise. In order to help us achieve good outcomes we:

- Ask tenants to provide us with their topics of interest when they decide to join up as an Interested Tenant
- Recruit tenants to the different groups on offer to make sure we are asking people to take part in things that interest them, or they have time for
- Avoid too many full tenant consultations. We do this to avoid causing 'fatigue' from asking for too much from tenants
- Offer small incentives to taking part in postal or email surveys where this is appropriate
- Make sure accessible venues and flexible options are available for face-to-face events to work around tenant's individual circumstances
- Make sure reasonable adjustments are made in order to accommodate specific needs (home visits/scribes etc.)
- Acknowledge when someone has taken part, and provide information about the outcome and impact of the consultation exercise
- Make sure an inclusive approach that will engage with as many people as possible, offering a range of formats and options to encourage participation

The Association will make sure decision-making processes have the opportunity for tenant participation built into them. This is part of embedding a culture of tenant participation across the Association. There is no automatic assumption tenants are involved in all aspects of Association business, but rather there is adequate time and resource built in to allow for tenant involvement where appropriate, or where tenants have stated a specific interest in an aspect of the business.

13. Consultation results

It is important to promote the value and impact of tenant involvement. The Association publishes the outcomes of tenant consultations on the website and in the tenant newsletter. In some cases, tenants that took part in a consultation will receive a personal communication about the progress or outcome of the consultation exercise.

Where we have not been able to change something the majority of tenants have asked for in a consultation, we will explain why. This is an important element of the process, so tenants understand the reasons why something is not possible or practical.

14. Tenant groups

We will provide resources to help tenants to set up groups. Resources may include funding; staff assistance to get started; help with photocopying and the production of promotional material; and provision of venues for meetings.

When a group makes suggestions or requests information we will respond in writing and in accordance with our Customer Care Policy. We will let formal groups know how we have taken account of their views.

Tenant groups do not have to be registered, but there are certain advantages for groups who wish to form a Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO). These include:

- The right to be consulted over proposed changes to housing services
- The provision of start-up and annual grants from the Association
- The opportunity to establish networks with other RTOs

To become an RTO, a tenants' group must meet certain criteria and we will offer advice and assistance to establish the group. We will also direct tenants to independent organisations such as the Tenant Information Service (TIS) and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) for additional advice and support.

We will maintain a register of our RTOs and make that information available at our offices and on our website, and once per year this information is reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

15. Monitoring the strategy – the framework to measure success

It is important that the tenants are involved in monitoring and evaluating the strategy. Stage two of the consultation process for this strategy was meeting with tenants to decide together when and how this will be done. In addition, some tenants who could not meet with us in person fed into this part of the consultation via post and email. A summary of what was agreed for the content of the strategy action plan is below:

Action	Purpose
Quarterly report to the Board updating on items in the strategy action plan	It is important that the Board members are kept updated with progress of tenant involvement activity
Quarterly Customer Participation Officer activity report to be published on the website	To make sure there is easy access to information about tenant involvement work. The report includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant training attended (by staff and tenants) • Outcomes of tenant surveys and consultations • List any meetings and events, their purpose and tenant attendance • Updates on tenant involvement initiatives and projects, include any joint working with external groups
Publish summaries and outcomes of all tenant consultations and surveys	Tenants want to see the results and benefits of taking part. This report must also include explanations for any decision taken by the Board of Management or staff that goes against the majority responses of the tenants
Publish notes of tenant meetings on the website, and provide hard copies to those who request them	Tenants need to see what is discussed as it may encourage others to take part. Publishing also generates trust due to being transparent about these discussions

Action	Purpose
Regular analysis of tenant participation activity	Required to assess effectiveness of different approaches, and to check participation amongst different groups in the community to reduce any barriers to participation
Publish spending on tenant participation activity every year	This is to be provided to tenants at the evaluation meetings, and then published where appropriate after the tenants have had the opportunity to comment

16. Evaluating the strategy

Tenants agreed that they wish to evaluate progress of the strategy once per year to make sure that the objectives are being met.

The evaluation process will be in the form of a full review of the action plan that is attached to the strategy. The format of the action plan was agreed at the consultation meeting. Tenants also agreed that invitations to involved tenants from the North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) group will be asked to attend the review in order to share their experience and support Langstane tenants.

The review will involve recognising things that have not gone so well and also understanding what has been behind successes. In addition, there will be agreement on what changes are required to meet the changing needs of tenants, and to overcome barriers to success.

After the evaluation process is complete, the results will be available to tenants on the website, reported in the tenant newsletter, and in hard copy upon request.

17. Training

We demonstrate our commitment to success by ensuring our staff and tenants have the appropriate skills and knowledge to achieve successful outcomes from tenant involvement.

Training not only makes sure staff are delivering a high quality of work and are up to date with current good practice, but it also increases both staff and tenant confidence in what they are doing, and in the outputs achieved.

Joint training involving tenants/staff/board is effective in breaking down barriers and building positive working relationships.

18. Reducing barriers to tenant participation

Successful tenant participation is inclusive, respectful, and non-discriminatory.

The sign-up and new tenant contact process is a very important part of making sure all tenants are aware of tenant participation, and how to influence decisions and get involved in the work of the Association. Speaking to all new tenants makes sure no one is missed out, and staff have the opportunity to find out about specific communication or accessibility requirements. This makes sure our approach as inclusive as possible.

In certain circumstances, and for specific policies or service reviews, it will be appropriate to target specific groups based on their characteristics such as their age, whether they have a disability, or if they are from a particular minority group. This could be either to make sure we have heard from a good representative sample for a wider consultation, or due to the subject being relevant to that specific group, such as employability for younger people, or services designed for older people.

In some cases, it may be a lack of confidence is a barrier to a tenant getting involved. Our staff are aware of this, and work to build trust, create safe spaces for meetings, setting ground rules to make sure meetings are respectful and structured, providing good advance information, and offer options for people to take part in a way that suits them.

19. Alternative formats available

So that everyone can access this strategy and other Langstane documents this strategy will be available in digital and hard copy format. It will also be available in large print and in alternative languages. If you need to access alternative formats, please contact the Customer Service Team, or email us on info@langstane-ha.co.uk.

Right to Complain

In the event you are not satisfied with the service you have received, please contact the Association for a copy of the Complaints Policy, which can also be viewed on the Association's website – www.langstane-ha.co.uk

Equality and Diversity

The Association is committed to promoting equality and diversity across all areas of its work, and discrimination or harassment of any kind is not tolerated

If you would like this document sent to you in large print, please contact the Customer Service Team on 01224 423000.