



SHDC Housing Landlord Service: Tenant Engagement and Influence Strategy

2025 – 2027



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Introduction

During 2024, TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Services) worked with tenants and staff to ensure tenant experiences influence service design and delivery. They conducted surveys and focus groups, introduced the lived experience concept, and provided recommendations.

These recommendations shaped the Tenant Engagement and Influence Strategy, which supports the requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards.

We define tenant engagement as:

"Tenants taking part in the decision-making process and influencing choices which affect the services, homes and communities in which they live".

Definitions

TPAS	An organisation that supports and promotes tenant engagement and participation in housing and community services.
Engage/engagement	To participate or be involved in something.
Influence	To affect or change something.
Lived experience	Things that someone has experienced themselves.
Regulator of Social Housing	Sets consumer standards for Registered Providers. The Council is subject to a programmed regulatory inspection at least every four years.
Housing Revenue Account	A Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a financial account used by local authorities in the UK to record income and expenditure related to their housing stock
South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership	A partnership involving Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council, and South Holland District Council. The largest council partnership in the UK serving over 300,000 residents.
Equality Impact Assessments	A process used to evaluate the potential effects of a policy, project, or decision on different groups of people, particularly those who are protected under equality legislation.
Officer	A council 'officer' is an individual employed by a local government council to carry out various administrative and operational tasks.
Co regulation	This typically involves tenants and council officers engaging in joint decision-making processes, sharing information, and cooperating.
Housing Landlord Service	A council housing landlord service refers to the services provided by local government councils to manage and maintain council housing properties.
Portfolio Holder	A local government portfolio holder is a councillor appointed by the leader of the council to oversee specific areas of responsibility within the council's operations. These areas, known as portfolios, can include services such as housing.
Scrutiny	Examining or reviewing something closely and critically. To find strengths and weaknesses to provide feedback.
Housing Landlord Board	The Housing Landlord Board ensures collective awareness and visibility relating to regulatory assurance, financial resilience, risk management, performance and compliance on all matters relating to being an effective and compliant landlord.

Background

Social landlords in England are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing, which promotes quality housing to meet diverse resident needs. The regulatory framework focusses on the importance of tenant engagement and influence.

Engaging with tenants is a key requirement:

- Tenants' views should be key to decision-making at all levels.
- There are various ways to gather tenants' views. Boards and Councillors must ensure these views are actively sought and considered in decisions about landlord services.
- Communicate to tenants how their views have influenced decisions about landlord services. Improving and tailoring these services should be an ongoing effort across the organisation.
- All tenants should have a fair chance to be involved in influencing and scrutinising strategies, policies, and services, considering their diverse needs.
- Support tenants who want to lead activities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies, and services.

Objectives

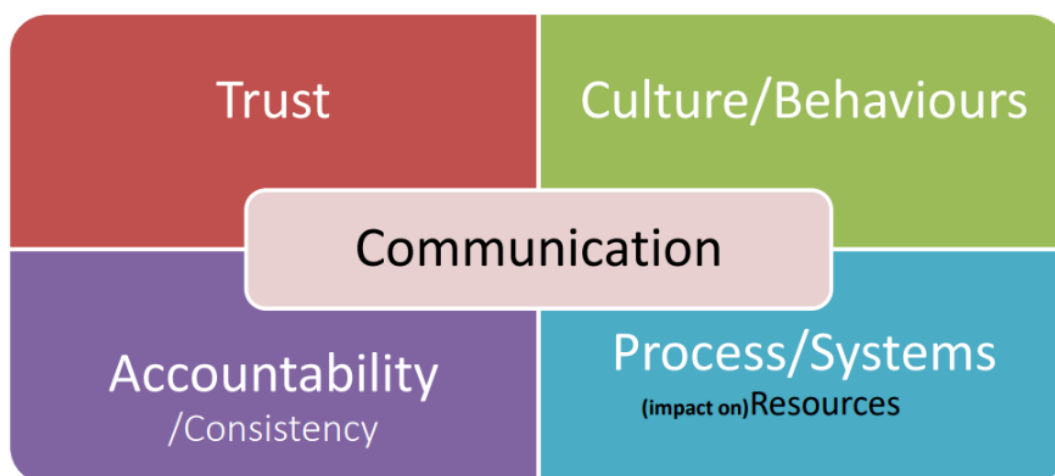
The strategy will encourage tenants to be actively involved in shaping, improving, and scrutinising the housing service. SHDC Housing Landlord Services will listen to, hear, understand, and act on tenants' experiences.

The objectives of this strategy are as follows:

- Tenants have the opportunity and support to be involved in a way that suits them.
- Tenants are at the heart of the service and their voices are heard and valued.
- Managers and staff respect and work in partnership with tenants.
- Tenants have increased access to Senior Officers and Councillors, ensuring transparent communication and a collaborative approach where tenant feedback influences decisions.
- There is an effective mechanism for reviewing services assuring Senior Officers and Councillors that services are delivered correctly, and tenant concerns are addressed.

The Re-engineering Engagement Approach

Tenants and officers identified five key themes to enhance the Council's Tenant Engagement and Influence practices.



Our tenants

We aim to engage about things that matter most to tenants in a way that is as inclusive as possible. We will seek to ensure we have representative views and local area views when engaging.

We deliver services to a diverse range of people and so it's important that we understand more about them so that:

- When we develop or review services, policies, and procedures we can be sure that our services are inclusive.
- When we plan engagement activities, we can develop methods that are of interest to relevant groups and easily accessible to take part.
- When we test services, we do so from a wide range of perspectives. An example of this could be organising a reading group on a new policy to gather feedback. The reading group aims to include a wide range of perspectives to ensure the policy is fair, effective, and meets the needs of the community.
- When we ask for views and ideas, we do so from a wide range of perspectives.

What do we know?

We carried out a tenant census in 2023 with a 70% return rate. From that we know that:

- 64% of all tenants are female.
- The average age of all tenants is 63 (less than 1% aged under 25)
- 51% of tenants having a limiting disability
- 92% of tenants are white British with 4% of tenants from eastern European countries (2.5% Polish nationals, 1.4% Lithuanian nationals, 1% Portuguese nationals and 0.9% Latvian nationals)

How we try to get a representative view

- We use social media and electronic communications to reach more tenants and support those who need adjustments like translation or screen changes.
- We ask tenants views and opinions on local neighbourhood issues.
- We conduct Equality Impact Assessments to identify and ensure underrepresented groups are included.
- We use various methods to engage different groups and capture diverse views.
- We visit local areas to hear tenants' voices and address their specific needs.

Our Commitments

Commitment 1 We commit to ensuring that trust and respect towards our tenants is a part of all aspects of the landlord service	Commitment 2 We commit to a consistent approach of feeding back the results from tenant influence .
Commitment 3 We commit to delivering the priorities in this strategy to demonstrate how tenant's experiences will be noticed and how their influence improves the landlord service	Commitment 4 We commit to creating a Tenant Influencing Vehicle* with links into the Council's governance arrangements

*A Tenant Influencing Vehicle could be a Panel or Board. We will work with tenants to shape this.

Resources for tenant engagement

Engagement is a shared responsibility across the Housing Landlord Service.

All managers understand the importance of listening to tenants and are encouraged to work with Officers to develop effective ways to engage tenants in giving feedback about the service delivered by their teams. Managers will develop effective ways to encourage as much feedback as possible from tenants about the service they receive.

We will appoint a main point of contact for tenant engagement to support teams and enhance tenant involvement in daily activities. We have allocated specific budgets to fund tenant engagement.

The ways we engage tenants

Tenant engagement includes various ways for tenants to participate and make a difference. We offer multiple options to suit different preferences and time commitments, ensuring all tenants can contribute to improving the Housing Service.

We will establish the following offering:

Informing We give tenants information about policies, events, and services that may affect them	We do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publishing information on our website• Sending out texts and emails• Using our social media platforms• Sharing and publishing our performance reports• Holding meetings in tenant's local areas.
Consulting We seek the views of tenants in relation to services we deliver.	We do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seeking views of the Tenant Forum in the first instance.• Involving tenants in matters important to them.• Sending out surveys.• Using our social media platforms.• Holding meetings in tenant's local areas.
Involving We give tenants the opportunity to influence the decision-making process, through our menu of involvement both at a local and strategic level.	We do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involving our Tenant Forum• Using our Tenant Forum representatives• Hosting estate walkabouts• Facilitating mystery shopping• Hosting local meetings• Focus groups on specific services• One off surveys• Committee meetings• Ongoing one to one interactions with tenants
Supporting We provide a range of support to our tenants to enable them to become actively involved in shaping services	We do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offering training to ensure tenants have the skills and knowledge they need to get involved.• Paying reasonable out of pocket expenses.

Working together We work with tenants to support them operating tenant led activities to scrutinise the service.	We do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering tenants the chance to influence decisions through feedback and scrutiny activities. • Bespoke scrutiny groups for example involving tenants to review how we collect and spend rent.
Empowering We give tenants the skills and tools they need to actively make a difference.	We do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the Right to Manage which means tenants taking control of managing their housing services. • Ensuring tenants have the skills and knowledge they need to effectively challenge us.
Feeding back We provide feedback to tenants to help them understand how their input has shaped decisions regarding our landlord services.	We do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing regular updates in newsletters. • Publishing reports showing the improvements tenants have made. • Promote examples and case studies. • Letting all tenants understand how their input helped. • Publishing infographics and posters. ‘you said we did’.

Involvement Opportunities

Involvement will be flexible and inclusive, offering various ways for tenants to engage based on their needs. Some opportunities will require less time than others.

Tenant Forum

The Tenants' Forum will give tenants the opportunity to give feedback and discuss housing issues before decisions are made. All tenants can join. A code of conduct (set of rules) will be agreed, ensuring everyone understands how it works.

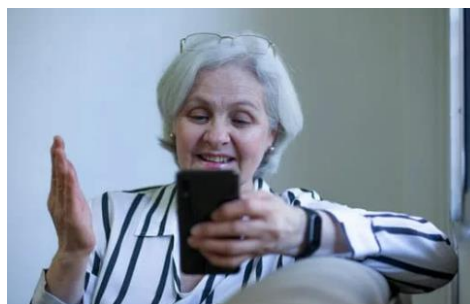
Tenants' views will and do make a difference. If you want to be part of the Tenant Forum database, you can register by phoning 01775761161 and asking to speak with the Housing Transformation Team or emailing get-involved@sholland.gov.uk.

Mystery Shopping

Evaluating the service quality through hidden testing.

Example: Tenants act as though they are reporting a repair in a mystery shopping exercise to assess customer service.

Provided with a scenario by the Tenant Engagement Officer and tenants call the Council Offices to report a repair. They take notes on their experience and feedback to the Tenant Engagement Officer. Feedback may reveal areas for improvement, like clearer communication about timescales, leading to service enhancements.



Estate Inspections

Regular walkabouts by tenants and Housing Officers to assess the condition of the estates and communal areas.

Example: During a walk about in a specific area, tenants and Housing Officers might identify maintenance issues, such as broken street lighting and overgrown communal gardens. These issues could then be promptly addressed, improving the safety and appearance of the estate.

Sheltered Housing Focus Groups

An opportunity for Sheltered Housing tenants and housing landlord services to work in partnership, to discuss services received and identify areas for improvement.

Example: In a focus group session, Sheltered Housing tenants discussed their experiences with the current support services. They suggested introducing a handyperson service to support tenants with minor jobs. Based on this feedback, the Council introduced a new handyperson service which has enhanced the quality of life in the sheltered housing community.

Communal area inspections

Volunteering to monitor the standard of service, according to our contract specifications.

Example: Volunteers could conduct inspections of the shared areas in flats, such as corridors, to check the cleaning schedule is being followed. Findings could be reported to the housing management team to make any necessary contract improvements.

Consultations and surveys

Responding to consultations and surveys. This allows tenants the option to participate as and when suits.

Example: After the recent Tenant Engagement and Influence Consultation survey, the Council received feedback that the strategy was difficult to understand. Following this feedback changes have been made to remove jargon and add real life examples of how tenants can get involved.



Tenant Influence Panel (The Panel)

The Council will help tenants review the landlord service. The Tenant Influence Panel is a space for tenants to discuss issues and join in decision-making to improve housing services. Any tenant can apply, and members will be chosen based on their skills and expertise.

The main purpose of the Panel is to:

- Regularly review risks associated with the Housing Landlord service.
- Examine finances ensuring transparency and accountability in how rent is spent.
- Review health and safety matters.
- Drive continuous improvement of housing services.

The Panel will oversee tenant scrutiny and organise activities (like Tenant Scrutiny groups) to review housing policies and practices. Based on evidence, they will identify areas needing improvement and set scrutiny topics for the year. All tenant scrutiny activities will be integrated into formal Councillor scrutiny as outlined in the Housing Governance arrangements.

Example: If the panel notices that complaints are taking too long to handle, they will ask a tenant scrutiny group to investigate the service. This group will look into how complaints are managed, including how quickly they are addressed and how well the communication is handled. After their

investigation, the group will create a report with their findings and suggestions for improvement. This report will be shared with the panel and the housing management team. The panel will then keep an eye on the changes made based on the group's recommendations, making sure that improvements are actually happening. Regular updates will be provided to everyone involved to keep things transparent and accountable.

Tenant Scrutiny groups

The aim of these groups is to carry out investigations of housing related services and use the findings to challenge and shape the landlord service. These sessions will be accessible to all members of the Tenant Forum, giving everyone a chance to take part.

Example: A tenant scrutiny group could be established by the Panel to investigate the effectiveness of the current repairs service. Gathering data from surveys and feedback, the group could identify areas for improvement. The group would present their findings back to the Panel and the housing management team.



Who can get involved?

- Any tenant or resident on a South Holland District Council estate.
- Any other person who has a connection with these people, for example a carer or relative.
- We may also involve other residents or existing community groups who can offer suitable skills, experience, or perspective.

How we support tenants to be involved

Delivering this strategy requires us to make sure that staff and involved tenants have the necessary skills to be involved at a level that suits them. This is critical to making sure we can achieve our vision and deliver worthwhile involvement.

How we will give training and support

Training and support will be provided to tenants through various ways. Some examples include:

- We will pay reasonable out-of-pocket expenses such as bus fare, car parking.
- We will arrange transport by taxi if public or private transport is not possible.
- We will choose accessible venues for people with disabilities.
- We will offer translation services, where required.
- We will arrange events at convenient times and offer alternatives if needed.
- We will teach effective communication and negotiation skills, helping tenants to feel confident in challenging the service.
- We will hold question and answer sessions with tenants and officers to build tenant confidence in asking questions.
- We will provide guides and resources with important questions tenants should ask.
- We will support tenant-led activities with venues, funding, and training.
- We will train staff to support tenant involvement, use plain English and promoting accessibility and inclusion.

What success looks like

Increased Trust: Tenants will experience clear, transparent, and timely communication. Tenants will see their voices being valued and acted upon.	Consistency: Tenants will experience regular updates and reporting back on tenant feedback. Tenant concerns will be addressed promptly and effectively with empathy.
Visible Tenant Impact: Tenants will see tangible changes in services and policies that reflect their feedback and experiences. There will be a rise in tenant participation in engagement activities and an improvement in tenant satisfaction. .	Empowered Tenants: Tenants are equipped with skills and knowledge required to be actively involved with influencing service delivery. Tenants are engaged in shaping services and are empowered to participate in decision making.

Monitoring the impact

It's important to monitor and share the impact of the strategy and tenant involvement. This shows we are listening and respecting those who contribute.

Communication: Tenants will be regularly updated on the progress of delivering the strategy through sharing of documents such as newsletters, annual reports, and dedicated updates on the council's website. This will provide detailed information on achievements, upcoming events, and any opportunities for more tenants to get involved.

Oversight and Monitoring: The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing and the Assistant Director - Housing will have oversight of the delivery of the strategy. They will ensure that the strategy is implemented effectively and that any issues are promptly addressed. The Housing Landlord Board will play a role in monitoring the delivery of the strategy and its associated action plan. The board will review progress reports, evaluate progress of the strategy, and provide recommendations for improvement.

Feedback: Tenants will be encouraged to share feedback and suggestions regarding Tenant Engagement through different ways, including surveys and direct communication with Officers. This feedback will be used to improve the strategy and ensure it meets the needs of the community.

Our priorities to ensure we deliver against this strategy

We have identified some key areas of development, which will improve how we engage with and respond to the views of tenants.

Our Priorities	We will achieve this by
Ensuring that trust and respect towards tenants is a part of all aspects of the landlord service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring that tenant experience is embedded in all service delivery and is captured within staff appraisals.• Fostering a strong organisational culture of fairness, courtesy, and respect.• Clearly communicate landlord services through various channels.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish guidelines with Officers around setting expectations and reviewing these in partnership with tenants. • Providing information such as what happens next, timescales and closing the feedback loop.
Create a way for tenants to review and give feedback on the service and make sure their feedback is used to improve how services are delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committing to formalising tenant scrutiny arrangements by seeking to adopt a Tenant Influencing Vehicle (Panel). • Train and develop tenants to undertake effective scrutiny. • Establishing arrangements to co-ordinate tenant scrutiny functions, feeding into Member scrutiny. • Developing a programme of scrutiny that is agreed annually reflecting service delivery and transformation workstreams. • Update the Housing Governance Framework to reflect these changes.
Promote a culture of inclusivity, enhancing the value of tenant engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through training and development, we will promote equality and equal relationships to remove barriers. • Developing processes to ensure tenant voice and impact is a key part of service design and delivery. • Tracking tenant influence and measuring the impact in all activities, providing reports to staff and Councillors. • Through staff appraisals we will recognise the right behaviours and celebrate contributions of tenants and staff who promote inclusivity.
Effective communication across the landlord service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a consistent approach to feeding back to tenants on the outcomes from tenant influence. • Enhancing communication to keep our tenants up to date on what matters to them, tailored to tenant preferences. • Make better use of social media and online methods to make it easier for residents to have their say. • Continue to offer an offline tenant engagement presence, recognising that tenants may prefer a phone call/meeting. • Providing fair and easy access to our services and keeping tenants up to date on their enquiries. • Providing details to tenants on the positive impact of tenant engagement activity. • Ensure tenants know who their housing officer is and how to report repairs.

Conclusion

A strategy to guide our engagement is crucial, for regulatory reasons and more importantly for our tenants. We will listen, understand, and work together to improve our services. This strategy aims to create an outcome focused framework that prioritises tenants, ensuring we provide the homes and services our tenants deserve, putting them at the heart of decisions.

