



Tenant Participation and Engagement Strategy

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This document can be produced in different formats, for example, in larger print or audio-format, and in other languages, as appropriate.

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Notes: New Gorbals Housing Association is generally referred to as “we” throughout this document.

Section 1: Foreword

New Gorbals Housing Association committee members and staff are absolutely committed to ensuring that our tenants influence our decision making processes. We want our customers to be involved in designing the services they receive so that we create and deliver services that meet their needs, and our performance continually improves.

Our committee members are a mixture of volunteers from many walks of life and experiences. Tenants serve on our committee to make sure that their “front-line” knowledge of our housing and support services influences our most important strategic decisions. Our committee’s commitment to customer engagement is a fundamental part of how we function as an organisation.

All our staff work in a customer-focussed, person-centred way. Our tenants and customers acknowledge that their opinions can have a significant influence on the service they receive. Our tenant satisfaction survey carried out by Research Resource in 2018 included questions about tenant participation. Our tenants told us that:

- 91% of them were happy with how we kept them informed about our services and decisions, and
- 93% were satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in our decision making process.

As one of our tenant panel member’s told us:

“Since I have become involved with the tenants panel, it has been very positive to see how committed to engagement the staff and committee members are, and how seriously our recommendations and comments have been taken by everyone. The tenant panel want to build upon our success and develop a scrutiny panel. We are also aware that tenants have busy lives and the formal structures of Registered Tenant Organisations doesn’t work for everyone. We want to make sure that our engagement plan gives as much opportunity for tenants to get involved individually and at a time when it suits them so that a wider group of tenants can influence decisions that affect their homes and services.”

We are delighted to endorse this Tenant Participation and Engagement Strategy and look forward to working with our tenants to make sure it is implemented in the most effective way possible over the next few years.

Linda Malone, New Gorbals Housing Association Chairperson

Section 2: Context

Our strategy has been developed with our Tenants Panel to ensure that our tenants are fully informed of our activities and have a genuine opportunity to participate in the development of our services, the review of our policies and procedures and the monitoring of our service delivery.

Participation and engagement is at the heart of what we do and all of our staff are fully committed to working together with our tenants. We are a tenant led organisation and becoming a member of our management committee is an ideal way to get involved and participate in the decision making process. However, our strategy is aimed at tenants who wish to take a more independent role in the review and development of our services.

Our strategy is a practical document and explains how we plan to deliver our legal duties and regulatory responsibilities, and to place participation at the centre of everything we do. Our strategy is complemented with our participation and engagement action plan which will be reviewed annually.

Our strategy applies to all tenants who live in a New Gorbals Housing Association property.

Section 3: Equality

We are committed to providing fairness and equality of opportunity in order to prevent discrimination. Our tenant participation and engagement strategy will try to ensure that no person is discriminated on the grounds outlined in the Equality Act 2010. This includes the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Our strategy will be flexible and where possible, take into account the individual needs of our tenants and their households. We will ensure that the relevant arrangements are made for communicating with our tenants with particular needs. This may include those with sight, hearing or learning difficulties, or those who find it difficult speaking or understanding English.

Section 4: Law and best practice

Our approach to managing participation and engagement with our tenants is determined by our statutory and contractual obligations as well as best practice.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 is the main Act that sets out the main requirements of our policy. The specific parts of this legislation that are most relevant to participation and engagement are:

- Chapter 3, Sections 53 and 54 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 sets out the requirements for tenant participation. (Appendix 1)

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter in 2012. The Charter sets out outcomes which our tenants can expect to receive among which are:

- **Outcome 1 - Equalities**

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

“every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.”

- **Outcome 2 - Communication**

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

“tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.”

- **Outcome 3 - Participation**

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

“tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.”

- **Outcome 13 - Value for money**

“tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay”

Our tenancy agreement also confirms our contractual responsibilities to consult with our tenants. The relevant section is:

- section 8: Information and consultation (Appendix 2)

The Scottish Community Development Centre has produced a set of good practice standards called “The National Standards for Community Engagement” that can be used by organisations when working with communities. We will have regard to these principles in the design and implementation of this Strategy.

During 2015/2016, the National Standards for Community Engagement were reviewed and updated. The aim of the review was to reflect the developing policy and legislation relating to community empowerment in Scotland, and to build on the growing range of practice.

When working in partnership with tenants, residents and the community we will ensure that we adopt the standards as our own.

The 7 standards are:

- **Inclusion:** We will identify and involve the people and organisations that are affected by the focus of the engagement.
- **Support:** We will identify and overcome any barriers to participation.
- **Communication:** We will communicate clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communities affected by the engagement.
- **Methods:** We will use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.
- **Planning:** There is a clear purpose for the engagement, which is based on a shared understanding of community needs and ambitions.
- **Working Together:** We will work effectively together to achieve the aims of the engagement.
- **Impact:** We will assess the impact of the engagement and use what we have learned to improve our future community engagement.

Section 5: Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of our tenant participation and engagement strategy are influenced by our vision and core values.

Our vision is to:

- provide the highest possible quality housing, environment and services to all of our customers
- maximise our contribution to the overall regeneration of the Gorbals, addressing wherever possible the needs of those in the community who are disadvantaged

In delivering our vision and in every aspect of our business our core values will guide our behaviour:

- we will be representative of and accountable to the local community
- we will be open and accessible
- we will be fair and equitable, treating every individual with courtesy and respect
- we will be innovative and creative, and work in partnership with others, to achieve the best possible outcomes

- we will be customer-focused in delivering our services, providing the best quality possible for our tenants
- we will found upon the strengths and potential of the Gorbals community in our approach to community engagement and development work

The aim of our strategy is to ensure that our tenants have the opportunity to engage effectively and help us to challenge, change and improve how we operate and deliver services.

We encourage participation and engagement through taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about:

- Our housing policies
- Our housing conditions and standards
- All of our housing services.

Our participation and engagement is a two way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Through our strategy we aim to meet and exceed the legal requirement expected of social landlords.

Section 6: The benefits of participation and engagement

We recognise the benefits of tenant participation and engagement for our tenants, staff and organisation.

Effective participation and engagement can lead to:

- Better service delivery and improved outcomes for our tenants which give value for money.
- Working together for common goals with respect and understanding.
- Informed and knowledgeable tenants who have the skills and confidence to influence decisions.
- Increase tenant satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood.
- Identifying actions for service and performance improvements and working together to implement these improvements.

We are confident that the benefits of tenant participation and engagement and the improvements in service delivery they bring will evolve over time as our information, communication and participation structures strengthen.

Section 7: Our strategy

Our strategy has been reviewed by our tenants panel. Although we have no formally registered tenants groups operating within our area, there are two tenant and resident groups in Laurieston and Hutchesontown who meet regularly to discuss

services. These groups will be encouraged to give feedback and influence our tenant and participation action plan.

Our tenants panel reviewed our Tenant Participation and Engagement Strategy over a series of meetings in 2019. Their key comments and decisions will be fully taken into account within our approach

Section 8: Implementing our strategy

Out with our Governing Body, we aim to provide a range of flexible options which give our tenants choice and opportunities to be involved with us.

We will achieve this through:

- Providing information
- Consultation
- Giving feedback
- Participation

Providing information

We aim to provide good quality, accurate, up to date and easily understood information. In all our communications we encourage feedback so that we can improve and meet the expectations of our tenants.

Our 2018 tenant satisfaction survey asked tenants which methods of being kept informed and getting in touch with us would they be happy to use. Telephone was the method respondents were most happy to use (92%) followed by newsletter (54%) and visiting the office (48%). Our tenants told us that the majority of them would prefer us to contact them by telephone (78%) and 13% in writing.

Our main methods of communication are:

- Annual report and our performance
- Information leaflets and guides
- Letters and telephone calls
- Newsletters and information bulletins
- Notice boards
- Open days and exhibitions for passing on information
- Tenants handbook
- Texts and emails
- Website and twitter

Consultation

We regularly consult with our tenants. Every three years we also carry out tenant and owner satisfaction surveys. Our satisfaction surveys help us to understand our tenants' priorities and allows us to reflect their changing needs and expectations in what we do and how we do it.

We will consult our tenants on:

- Our performance
- Policy and procedure reviews
- Rent increase proposals
- Service delivery
- Any other housing issues

Our main methods of consultation are:

- Community and local events
- Tenants panel
- Consultation register (see section 8)
- Feedback questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Knocking doors
- Open days
- Public meetings
- Satisfaction surveys
- Telephone calls
- Texts and emails
- Website

Our participation and engagement action plan will be reviewed annually with our tenant panel who will agree priorities and timescales for consultation.

Giving feedback

We recognise that feedback is a two way process. We are committed to making sure that we listen to the opinions and ideas of our tenants and they know how their contribution has shaped policy and service delivery, and where it has not, we explain the reasons for this. By keeping participants informed of the outcome of their contribution, we are potentially encouraging a willingness to continue to be involved or get involved in future consultation. We will agree our method of feedback through our tenant panel and tenant groups.

We will give feedback through the following methods:

- Individual letters
- Meetings and focus groups
- Newsletters and information leaflets
- Text messages and emails
- Website

Participation

We have several participation opportunities for our tenants where they can become involved and make a difference in what we do.

- **Tenant panel**
 The aim of our tenants' panel is to give tenants a collective voice over local housing and community issues and to act as a sounding board for any new ideas or proposed changes to the housing service. The panel meets a few times a year to discuss and influence key decisions, such as our policy reviews, rent increases, performance, and content of tenant's handbook and information leaflets.
- **Hutchesontown area association**
 The Hutchesontown Area Association (H.A.A.), through its formally elected management committee, acts as a key forum to consult with tenant representatives within the Hutchesontown estate. The group has been formally constituted and entered into a minute of agreement with ourselves. They are interested in service standards, rent and service charges and any other related housing and neighbourhood issues.
- **Laurieston estate action group**
 The action group meet monthly to discuss service standards with us and other service providers (for example, Glasgow City Council). Members are local tenants, owners and residents who have an interest in their area. Their meetings are open to local people.
- **Waterside residents association**
 The Waterside residents association is a group of owners who meet to discuss service standards with us and any other related housing and neighbourhood issues.
- **Paragon residents association**
 The Paragon residents association is a group of owners who meet to discuss service standards with us and any other related housing and neighbourhood issues.
- **Consultation register**
 Joining a tenants' and residents' association does not suit every tenant so we have created a consultation register of actively interested tenants who would like to be consulted on issues which may affect them.

We will support the setting up and work of local tenant/resident groups if there is an identified demand for them. As well as providing on-going support and consulting with any groups that are established, we will also support any group to become a Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO).

We will use focus or working groups when we want to discuss a particular issue in more detail or where there is a matter of local concern. Details about the focus or working groups and topics reviewed will be publicised by different methods.

We will hold residents meetings to provide information and get views on specific issues affecting the local area. We will ensure that the topics being discussed are

well publicised at least two weeks in advance and there is an opportunity to suggest areas for discussion.

We will continue to promote membership of the Association which gives members the opportunity to attend and vote at general and special meetings and to seek nomination to the Management Committee.

We also encourage participation through our wider action activities, Gorbals Regeneration Group and attending, on request, community council meetings.

We are fully committed to participation and will take all reasonable steps to encourage involvement. We will develop links with individual tenants and residents who do not have time or are unable to attend meetings. However, we also recognise that many of our tenants, residents and the wider community do not want to participate. When this is clearly expressed to us we will respect their decisions and will only provide the information specified by them.

Section 9: Register of tenants organisations

We will keep an up to date register of any local tenants and residents groups. At present there are no formally registered tenants groups operating within our area. However, we have produced a procedure for formally registered groups in line with the requirements of housing law (see appendix 3). The register will be reviewed and developed to ensure that it is consistent with requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Section 10: Tenant scrutiny panel

The purpose of a tenant scrutiny panel is to critically review our organisational performance and standard of services with the aim to identify improvements. At present we don't have a scrutiny panel. Our tenant panel looks at most of these areas but prefer to be known as a tenant panel. Members recently through the development of this strategy expressed an interest to establish a scrutiny panel and therefore our action plan includes this as an aim. We will support any new tenant members interested in scrutiny.

Section 11: Resources and training

Our staff in housing services and community regeneration will help to support any new, developing and established tenant organisations.

We recognise that to fully support our participation and engagement strategy monetary resources also need to be available. Budgets are available to provide support for:

- Registered tenant organisations
- Tenant and resident groups
- Tenants panel

- Focus groups
- Satisfaction surveys
- Consultation exercises

The budgets will help pay for:

- Childcare at meetings and seminars
- Conferences, training and seminars
- Hiring of meeting rooms
- Newsletters, posters and publications
- Refreshments
- Any other relevant costs associated with participation and engagement

Section 12: Monitoring progress and performance

We will monitor, review and measure the effectiveness of our participation and engagement strategy.

We will publish information on our activities and feedback in our newsletter which is issued to all residents twice per year. Our tenants using our repair service also have the opportunity to provide feedback following the completion of their repair. We will publish our performance every October.

We will carry out an annual review with our tenant panel which will consider:

- Action plan progress and outcomes
- Charter performance
- Consultation and feedback outcomes
- Training for our tenants and staff
- The number of events and attendance levels

Section 13: Gorbals residents and the wider community

As a community based tenant led housing association we are also committed to making sure that our mid-market tenants, other residents, owners and the wider community of the Gorbals have opportunities to engage and participate. We acknowledge that their experiences and knowledge can help shape our housing policies, conditions, standards and services.

Section 14: Links to other policies

Our tenant participation and engagement strategy links to the following policies and strategies:

- Communications strategy *
- Complaints handling policy

- Customer service standards policy *
- Data protection policy
- Equality policy
- Membership policy

*These are being reviewed and developed in 2019.

Section 15: Complaint handling procedure

We use a complaint handling procedure that was developed for housing associations throughout Scotland. This complaint system was developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

In line with housing law, we provide all tenants with detailed information about our complaint policy when they become tenants. We also advise all service users about their right to complain.

A complaint is defined as being:

“An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the housing association’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the housing association.”

Our complaint handling procedure, including advice on how to make a complaint, is available from our offices or via our website.

Section 16: Policy Review

We review our organisational policies every five years, or earlier if required. For example, we may review sooner to reflect changes in law or, if guidance changes occur. We may also decide to make changes requested by our tenants.

Our tenant participation and engagement strategy will be reviewed by our tenant panel with contributions from our tenant groups and interested individual tenants.

Appendix 1: Extract from Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Chapter 3, sections 53 and 54

53 Tenant participation

- (1) Every local authority landlord and registered social landlord must, by such time as the Scottish Ministers may direct, prepare a strategy (a “tenant participation strategy”) for promoting the participation of tenants under a Scottish secure tenancy or a short Scottish secure tenancy in the formulation by the landlord of proposals in relation to the management of housing accommodation and the provision of related services by it, so far as such proposals are likely to affect such tenants.
- (2) Such a strategy must include, in particular—
 - (a) provision as to—
 - (i) the arrangements for obtaining and taking account of the views of registered tenant organisations and tenants as to the matters on which the landlord should make proposals of the type referred to in subsection (1) and the nature and content of such proposals,
 - (ii) notifying registered tenant organisations and tenants of the matters on which the landlord expects to be making such proposals, and
 - (iii) information to be provided to registered tenant organisations and tenants about such proposals and their likely effect, and
 - (b) an assessment of the resources (including financial and other assistance to bodies comprised of or representing tenants) required, and a statement of the resources proposed, to give effect to the strategy.
- (3) Every local authority landlord and registered social landlord must maintain a register of tenant organisations and keep it open for public inspection at all reasonable times.
- (4) The Scottish Ministers may by order make provision as to—
 - (a) the criteria to be satisfied by a body seeking registration in the register or removal from the register,
 - (b) the procedure to be followed in relation to applications for registration and removal from the register.
- (5) A body which is aggrieved by a decision of a landlord—
 - (a) not to register it in the register, or
 - (b) to remove or not to remove it from the register,

may appeal against the decision to the Scottish Ministers, who may confirm or reverse the decision.

- (6) In this Act, “registered tenant organisation”, in relation to a landlord, means a body for the time being registered in the register of tenant organisations maintained by the landlord.

55. Consultation with tenants and registered tenant organisations

- (1) A local authority landlord and a registered social landlord under a Scottish secure tenancy or a short Scottish secure tenancy must notify the tenant and every registered tenant organisation of—
- (a) any proposal to which subsection (2) applies, and
 - (b) the likely effect of the proposal on the tenant,
- and must have regard to any representations made to it, within such reasonable period as is specified in the notice, by the tenant or any such organisation in relation to the proposal.
- (2) This subsection applies to a proposal by the landlord concerning—
- (a) its policy in relation to housing management, repairs or maintenance, where the proposal, if implemented, is likely significantly to affect the tenant,
 - (b) the standard of service in relation to housing management, repairs and maintenance which it intends to provide,
 - (c) its tenant participation strategy under section 53,
 - (d) a disposal which would result in a change of landlord or, if different, of owner of the house which is the subject of the tenancy.
- (3) This section is without prejudice to section 53.

Appendix 2: Extract of section 8 NGHA Scottish secure tenancy agreement

8 INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

8.4 We will consult you about making or changing:

- policies regarding housing management, repairs and maintenance if the proposal is likely to significantly affect you;
- proposals for changes in rent and service charges;
- proposals for the sale or transfer of your house to another landlord;
- decisions about the information to be provided relating to our standards of housing management and performance;
- performance standards or targets in relation to housing management repairs and maintenance;
- our tenant participation strategy.

We will take into account any views that you have before making a final decision. Any consultation with you will include giving you comprehensive information in an accessible form and reasonable time to express your views.

Appendix 3: Procedures for registration of tenant organisations

The Housing Scotland Act 2001 has at its tenant participation core, the registration of tenant organisations. This is important as it gives local tenant groups recognition and a crucial role in the ongoing tenant participation process.

The registration of tenant organisations places additional responsibilities on New Gorbals Housing Association as a landlord. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires New Gorbals to consult all registered tenant organisations on issues that affect them. We must also have regard to any representations made by registered tenant organisations.

Register of Tenants Organisations

New Gorbals Housing Association's register of tenant organisations is a public document and as such is available for inspection in our office. Copies of the register will also be sent to any registered tenant organisations.

Registered tenant organisations will have the right to view the published register and any associated information available to tenants prior to it being distributed. Such organisations will have the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of information on the register.

The published list will contain the following information:

- The name of the group
- The area of operation
- The names of committee members
- A contact address, telephone number or e mail address
- Dates and venues of regular meetings

Where groups are concerned about the publication of this information, a box office address will be supplied or contact through our office may be used.

Registration Criteria

In order for a tenants and residents association to be registered, the following criteria must be met:

The focus of the association must be on the tenant/landlord relationship
The Association must have a written constitution that is available for inspection by the public. The constitution must set out the following:

- Its objectives and area of operation
- How people can become members
- The way the committee will operate
- How the business of the organisation will be conducted
- How decisions will be reached democratically
- How funds will be managed (if involved in financial dealings)

- Arrangements for public meetings
- Arrangements for an Annual General Meeting
- How changes can be made to the constitution
- Its commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities
- Its commitment to the promotion of the housing and housing related interests of tenants

Committee

The Association/organisation must have a committee that:

- Is elected at an Inaugural meeting (in the first year), and an AGM (after the first year)
- Consists of at least three members who may co-opt other members on to the committee during the course of a year
- Has elected office bearers
- Holds meetings that are open to any member of the organisation
- Reaches its decisions democratically as set out in its constitution
- Promotes equal opportunities

Area of operation

The Association/organisation must operate within:

- A geographical area clearly defined in the written constitution; and
- An area that includes housing stock owned and managed by New Gorbals Housing Association.

The boundaries that the organisation covers must be clearly defined within the constitution and must not overlap any other existing Tenants Association area.

The minimum number of Association houses within an Association boundary is fifty. Consideration will be given to a smaller number in exceptional circumstances, e.g. sheltered housing complex, special needs housing.

Membership policy

Membership of an Association and participation in its activities must be open to all tenants within its defined area of operation regardless of ethnic origin, special needs, language difficulties, learning difficulties, age, sexual orientation or disability.

Accounting

If involved in financial dealings an Association must have appropriate accounting records and present an annual financial statement to the AGM.

Consultation and representation

The organisation must demonstrate that it is committed to representing the interests of its members and that when consulted by New Gorbals Housing Association, it can represent the views of the tenants of New Gorbals Housing Association in its defined area of operation.

We will offer advice, support, training and assistance to any Association to ensure that they are in a position to meet the registration criteria.

Procedures for Registration

The following process has been designed to be both clear and straightforward. Should you require any assistance please contact our Area Housing Manager at 187 Crown Street, Glasgow G5 9XT or by telephone 0141 429 3900.

Any existing Tenant and Resident Associations within New Gorbals are encouraged to register. An application form should be completed every 3 years. New organisations may apply for registration, as soon as they meet the criteria. New Gorbals Housing Association will offer advice, support, training and assistance to ensure that new organisations are in a position to meet the criteria set out.

An Association should include the following with their application for registration:

- A copy of the written constitution
- A list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of committee members (identifying the office bearers)
- A description of the Association's area of operation
- A statement setting out how the Association plan to engage with its members and how it will represent their views.
- Details of any other landlords the Association will be registering with

On confirmation of the above criteria being met, the Area Housing Manager will authorise registration of the Association. The Association will be notified of this decision in writing within 28 days of submission.

Once an association has been registered, it will be:

- Included in our "Register of Tenant Organisations",
- Eligible to apply for Grants
- Eligible to apply for training courses which are funded by the tenant participation budget.

Amendments to Register

If an Association's constitution, office bearers, membership or area of operation changes, they are required to inform us. Providing the changes mean that the registration criteria are still met, the Register of Tenants Organisations will be amended accordingly. The failure of a registered group to meet the criteria for registration would constitute grounds for deregistration.

Removal from the Register

An Association can be removed from the Register due to any of the following circumstances:

- The Association no longer meets the registration criteria; or
- The Association ceases to exist or does not operate; or
- There is mutual agreement between New Gorbals Housing Association and the Association.

An Association will be notified by New Gorbals Housing Association 28 days in advance of them being removed from the Register of Tenant Organisations.

Appeals

An Association may appeal against New Gorbals Housing Association's decision:

- Not to register the organisation; or
- To remove the organisation from the register; or
- Not to remove the organisation from the register

Any appeal against New Gorbals Housing Association's decision on the above must be submitted in writing within 28 days of written confirmation of the Association's decision to the Area Housing Manager. The appeal will be dealt with in accordance with New Gorbals Housing Association's standard complaints policy.

An Association, if still dissatisfied with New Gorbals Housing Association's decision, may have a subsequent appeal considered by the Regulation & Inspection Division of Communities Scotland. An appeal should be presented to Communities Scotland only after the Association's internal appeal procedures have been exhausted.