



POLICIES

TENANT PARTICIPATION and CONSULTATION POLICY

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Introduction

Interest in tenant participation has grown since the early 1970's when housing authorities began to invite tenant representatives onto housing committees. A right to consultation was demanded by many tenant organisations in the 1970's during debates on the idea of a tenant charter or rights. In 1980 this led to the granting of a right to individual tenants in England and Wales to be consulted about changes in major housing management matters.

The Housing Corporation recognises the importance of tenant participation and has included this as a performance standard for Housing Associations.

2 Tenant Participation Framework

Tenant participation is a two-way process involving sharing of information and ideas where tenants are able to influence decisions and encouraged to be involved with the organisation. The aim of tenant participation is to build confidence amongst residents and empower them. Effective empowerment in tenant participation should enable tenants to influence Stonewall Housing's decision making process, respond to staff or policy changes, and raise their concerns about Stonewall Housing in an effective and structured manner.

Effective tenant participation can minimise formal complaints, as tenants should be encouraged to approach frontline staff to discuss their concerns at a face-to-face meeting. Some benefits that may result from effective tenant participation are:

- Improved service delivery.
- Improved decision-making.
- Improved landlord/tenant relationships.
- Greater job satisfaction for staff.
- Tenant empowerment.

Tenant Participation is also an opportunity for tenants to be actively involved in managing their homes and this is a central feature of the way Stonewall Housing operates. We believe this is the best way of:

- Ensuring our services meet tenant's needs as effectively as possible.
- Being directly accountable to tenants and the Lesbian and Gay community that we serve.
- Helping us to make better decisions.
- Enabling tenants to have some influence over the way their housing is managed.

3. Consultation.

There are various levels of consultation at Stonewall Housing. Tenants will be made aware of the level of involvement they can expect and at what stages:

Landlord seeks tenants view when making decisions.

Tenants have genuine opportunity to influence decisions.

Tenants have right to make some decisions.

Landlord tells tenants the decisions made.

The policy plan recognises that Stonewall Housing will vary the degree of influence according to the subject area e.g. in the review of a organisation policy should aim to seek tenant views but would not delegate control or decision making.

Tenants have the right to be allowed the opportunity to be involved in the work of the landlord and will have some influence over the services they receive. Tenants will have the right to influence and make decisions about Stonewall Housing's service delivery and some Housing Management Policies.

Areas where Stonewall Housing will not delegate decision making e.g. financial strategy, staff policies and contracts, rent policy, allocations and equal opportunities policy. This list is not exclusive and other options can be added. Whilst consultation with tenants about these issues would be encouraged and tenant views may be regarded when making decisions, Stonewall Housing would not be prepared to give tenants the right to make decisions regarding these issues.

4. Staffing Resources

4.1 The implementation of effective tenant participation is dependent upon staff resources in terms of workload and expertise. It is important that tenant participation is an integral part of all work and service delivery and all staff must be committed to this. Staff will be expected to undertake specific projects, tasks and training relating to tenant participation if and when necessary.

5. ACTION PLAN

5. 1. Tenant Participation Initiatives.

Stonewall Housing will look at introducing and updating initiatives that are tenant focussed with the aim of sharing information that supports and involves them.

5.2 Tenants Newsletter

The tenant's newsletter is published on a quarterly basis and is available for all tenants of Stonewall Housing and is free of charge. An Editorial Group will be set up to discuss topics and articles to be written in the forthcoming newsletter. The group will consist of the, Housing Services Manger, Supported Housing Staff, Administrator and tenant representatives.

5.3 Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

This survey is aimed at all current tenants of Stonewall Housing. The questionnaire will be sent to all tenants on a six monthly basis. Response and comments will be published in the tenant's newsletter and reported to the Management Committee. Tenant satisfaction surveys are anonymous so tenants can feel free to be honest with their views.

5.4 Tenant Representation.

5.4.1 A Tenant Working Group will be set up with the aim of creating a forum for tenants to discuss tenancy issues. Representing current tenants it would be ideal to have a representative from each scheme (6 in total). Stonewall Housing will aim to have at least one representative from each house, however the exact number and structure of the Tenants Working Group will be agreed at the initial meetings.

5.4.2 Tenant representation at Management Committee meetings should be Welcomed by Stonewall Housing. Members of the Tenant Working Group will be encouraged to attend Management Committee Meetings.

5.4.3 There would be a Stonewall Housing representative - this will never exceed two people. Stonewall Housing are committed to the Working Group and would ensure that members receive the appropriate training to ensure the group is run effectively and the group can work together. The meetings should be held on a monthly basis at Stonewall Housing's main office. The major focus of the groups work would be to make some decisions about the service tenants receive from Stonewall Housing and how to improve services. Tenants will be required to work in accordance with the organisations Confidentiality and Equal Opportunities Policy. The agenda for meetings will be agreed and by the group and the staff representative informed. Stonewall Housing would like the group to be a positive addition to the organisation.

6 Conclusion.

Some of the tenant participation initiatives are already in place (newsletter, survey and house meetings) and have proved a useful tool in gauging tenant satisfaction and tenant expectation.

Stonewall Housing are committed to tenant participation and will always ensure all current tenants receive relevant and sustained information in accordance with the Tenants Charter, Supporting People, Customer Care and Best Value.