

Tenant Participation Strategy 2013–2016



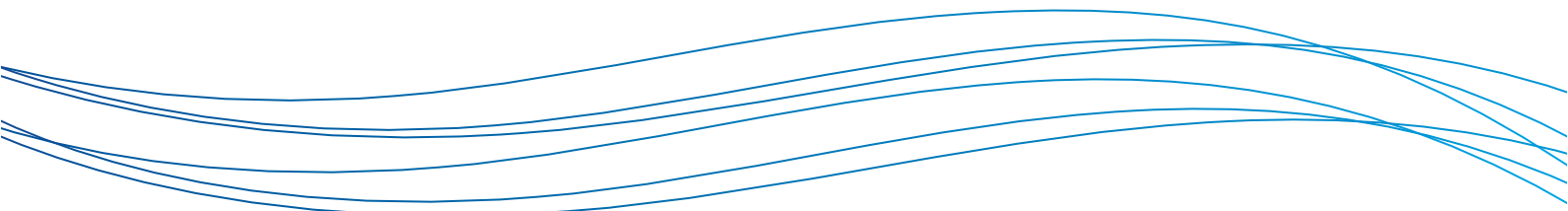
**Informing
tenants &
customers**

**Listening
to tenants &
customers**

**Responding
to ideas of
tenants and
service users**

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Welcome

Convener of Castlehill Housing Association Management Committee

The aim of Castlehill’s Management Committee is to ensure that the Association provides the best possible service to people in our communities. We recognise that customer feedback and participation are vital in assessing our performance and identifying improvements in how we work.

We wish to encourage people to participate in the activities of Castlehill in a way that suits them and hope that this Strategy document will provide a framework to make that happen.

Janice Lyon
Convener



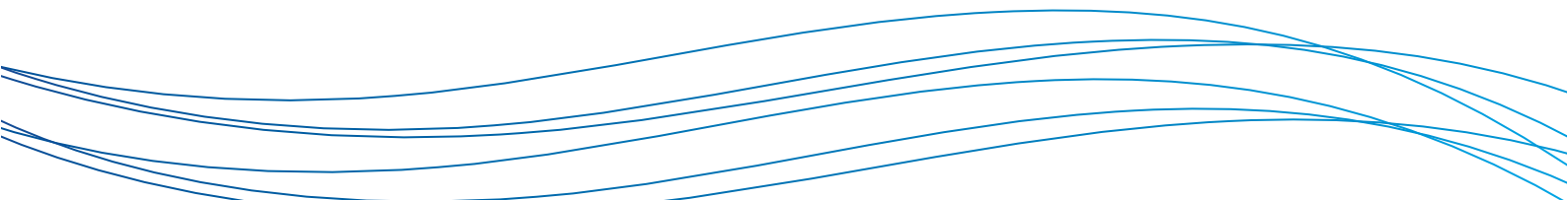
We want to get better at listening to you, our tenants, so we will:

- 01 Make the information you need to use and assess services more easily available
- 02 Inform, support and engage in ways that suit you
- 03 Respond to your ideas and provide feedback
- 04 Inform you about our performance
- 05 Make training and resources available



Many tenants are already involved but we need your help to make sure that all communities are able to have their say in Castlehill Housing Association’s services.

Every year, with your help, we aim to improve how we meet your needs as a tenant or service user of Castlehill Housing Association and that, in time we aim to have one of the best housing services in Scotland.



Introduction

Welcome to Castlehill Housing Association’s Tenant Participation Strategy 2013 – 2016. This Strategy sets out how we plan to help our tenants and customers to make a difference.

Your questions answered...

Definition of tenant...

The term tenant is used in this Strategy to cover all our tenants, applicants, sharing owners and their household members.

What is a Tenant Participation Strategy?

Our Tenant Participation Strategy is a plan showing how we will communicate with tenants and other customers and use what they tell us to improve.

What is tenant participation about?

TP is about tenants taking part in decision making processes & influencing decisions about their housing:

- Policies
- Conditions
- Related services

It is a two way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and decision making.

Its aim is to improve our housing service.

There are many ways to become involved.

We know people are different, and that it is important to provide a range of activities to suit everyone. Therefore, the Strategy offers flexible ways to get involved:

as an individual

as part of a group

on local issues

on issues that affect all tenants

in scrutinising our performance

for people from ‘harder to reach’ groups



We will make sure we involve the relevant people and service providers in discussions and decisions that affect them.

Legal background

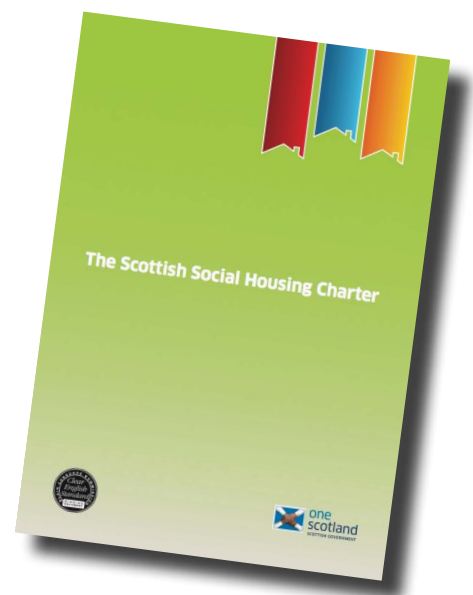
The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gives Castlehill Housing Association a duty to have a Tenant Participation Strategy, keep a register of Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) and consult its tenants and RTOs on rent setting and significant changes to housing services.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 established the Scottish Social Housing Charter and created the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) with a new regime of inspecting and regulating all Scotland's social landlords. The SHR also requires greater tenant scrutiny of social landlord's performance.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Parliament established the Scottish Social Housing Charter which the Scottish Housing Regulator will use to assess our performance. With our tenants we will:

- agree service standards
- include tenants in assessing our performance
- provide an honest assessment of our performance
- use tenants' feedback to improve our performance



Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

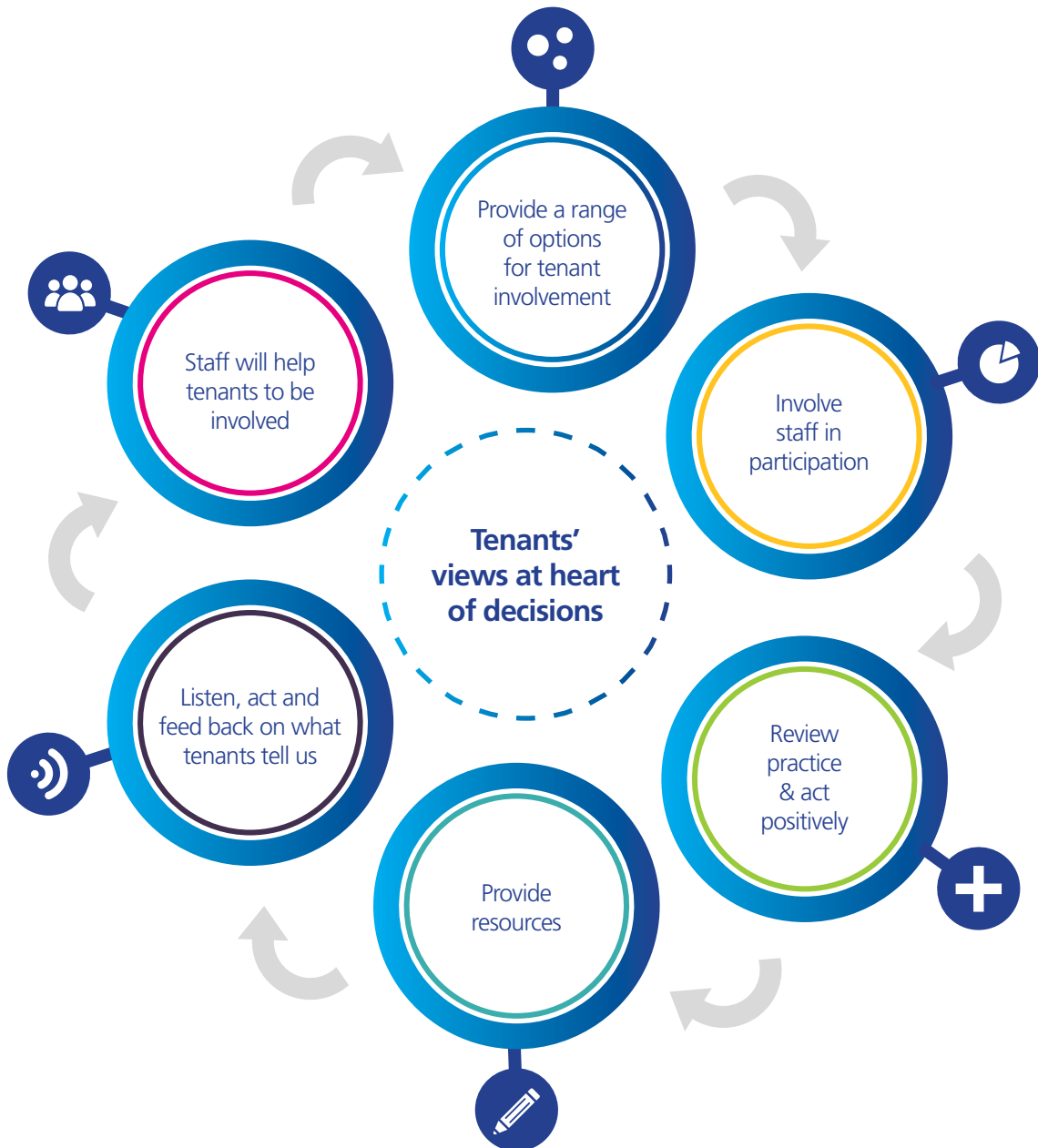
The SHR has introduced a self-assessment regulator regime so we can provide annual reports on how we are progressing towards achieving the Charter's outcomes. Castlehill Housing Association will:

- work with tenants to assess our performance against the Charter's outcomes;
- and
- annually report on our performance against the Charter's outcomes to tenants

This Strategy sets out how we will meet our duties.

Aim

We aim to put our tenants at the heart of Castlehill Housing Association’s decision making process. To help achieve this, we recognise that many different things are needed.



Informing our tenants

We will provide timely, relevant information so tenants are well informed, equipped to participate and given feedback showing the benefits of being involved.

Scheme notice boards: we will erect notice boards, if possible, where local tenants tell us they should be situated. Our staff will manage these boards to keep information relevant and interesting and provide space for local groups if required.

Annual Return on the Charter (ARC): by October each year we will publish an ARC to:

- highlight our performance;
- the actions we will take to improve; and
- celebrate successes

Sheltered Housing Magazine: we will work with tenants from our sheltered and very sheltered schemes to produce an annual magazine for our sheltered and very sheltered tenants.

Website: we will use our website to give details of our housing service and how to be involved as tenants/customers.

Newsletter: we will issue our newsletter, The Chain, twice a year with tenant involvement in its content where possible.

Leaflets & other formats: we will provide and distribute a range of leaflets and other information formats.

Local newsletters: we will support local newsletters to inform on local issues with funding (if appropriate), staff time and resources.

Tenants Handbook: will be updated regularly to provide relevant information.

Tenants Meetings: may be held where appropriate to provide and gather information.

Delivering this to you

We cannot meet the challenges set out in this Strategy without the input of our tenants and to make sure that everyone who wants to get involved in Tenant Participation can, we will:



advertise opportunities across all our communities



Make sure our information is attractive and available in relevant formats



Link to existing community groups to improve our communication with our tenants

Keeping you involved

We want to use your experiences to put you at the heart of decision making by providing a range of options for how to get involved in what affects you and your neighbours:

Local options

Groups

We can help you set up or introduce you to an existing group in your scheme. This is a great way of getting to know more people and improving your neighbourhood. We are happy to help and consult with formal and informal groups of our tenants.

Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)

We can help your group become a RTO. This gives more rights, access to funding, and ensures your group is consulted on a variety of issues. A formal constitution is required and a Committee with elected members who meet regularly. We work with our RTOs to help them represent their members. Contact your Tenant Participation Officer on 01224 625822 or email: info@castlehillha.co.uk We can provide support through staff time, funding, (start-up grants, annual grants) advice and training.

Scheme walkabouts at general needs schemes

We will organise twice yearly walks around your scheme to discuss and help progress any communal issues you may be having. We will advise you of these visits and welcome you to accompany us.



Local Events/Fun Days

Our staff will attend, where possible, local events to promote Castlehill's tenant participation. Whether it's a local mother and toddlers' group, a pensioner's club or a community gala day we'll be happy to attend.



Area wide options

Tenants Panel

Our Tenants Panel keeps you up-to-date and involved in improving services. The Panel's focus will be improving services, service standards & performance. Members' views feed into service improvements and our annual self assessment.

Panel members can say what services interest them and how they want to be contacted. A Sheltered/Very Sheltered Tenants Panel (a sub group of the Tenants Panel) will be asked to consider issues specific to sheltered/very sheltered housing.

We will consult Panel members via a variety of methods. These will include:

- tenant questionnaires on particular issues
- satisfaction surveys by post, phone, text, email, web & face to face interviews
- one off meetings, called focus groups, to focus on looking at specific issues
- tenant inspections to assess performance and recommend change where necessary
- a scrutiny group

Satisfaction Surveys

Satisfaction surveys can be issued to assess any part of our service. The results will be monitored and reported in our annual report to the SHR and through our newsletter to all tenants.

Focus groups

We invite Tenants Panel members to short, one off meetings to discuss a specific topic/issue.

North-East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT)

Castlehill staff and tenants are involved in this group which meets regularly to look at issues of tenant involvement in the North-East of Scotland. This ranges from introducing new skills to tenants to organising Tenant Open Days. We are always happy to invite interested tenants to attend.



Scrutiny Group

The Scrutiny Group's role is:

- to challenge our service standards and performance;
- assess our performance against the Charter's outcomes; and
- aid the Association to report our performance to SHR and tenants.

We provide training on performance standards, methods of gathering and reporting performance information and housing law and practices and offer practical opportunities to assess our services.

Tenant Inspections

Castlehill Housing Association will support tenants to undertake inspection of services. Here, a group of tenants will look at an area of our housing service to identify what works well and what could be done better or improved. This will include training, paying expenses and staff support.

Learning, training and conference attendance

We have a budget to provide tenants with training on relevant services and to go to housing conferences and other events to boost their knowledge and experience and feedback good practices.

Complaints

Tenants dissatisfied with any part of our service can use our complaints system. Our performance in dealing with complaints and how we use this information will be reported to the Scrutiny Group and in our newsletter.

To help you be involved



Provide transport/or pay the expenses to get to activities



Support use of crèche/ care arrangement so you can attend activities



Ensure activities are accessible



Provide information in different formats (e.g languages, audio, Braille etc as required)



Support tenants to access training



Provide information to keep you informed



Contact our Tenant Participation Officer or your Housing Officer for more information

Staff role

All staff we employ, regardless of which part of the service they deliver, have a responsibility to deliver this Strategy's aim. Making tenant participation part of everyone's job strengthens the staff/tenant relationship and improves services.

For most staff, their role is limited (most of the time) to encouraging tenants to take part in activities, listening to and passing on views and providing feedback on how tenants' views are used. Others will have more specific roles relating to groups or activities, which will be identified as required.

Our Tenant Participation Officer's key role is:

- supporting and organising training for tenants on TP activities;
- helping tenants establish groups;
- overseeing and planning participation; and
- monitoring and reporting progress towards achieving our Strategy's aims.

Calendar of events

To ensure our activities are well coordinated, we will develop and publicise a calendar of events to:

- prevent staff and tenants from being overburdened
- allow for proper advertising of activities; and
- combine activities where suitable



The calendar will be publicised on our web site, on local notice boards and in our newsletter.

Equality

We are committed to treating people respectfully, fairly and equally, tackling discrimination and harassment and ensuring our services are accessible irrespective of race, religious belief, disability, gender, age or sexual orientation.

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

We require all groups and individuals involved with tenant participation to act to promote equality and welcome participation from all our community.

An equality impact assessment has been completed for this Strategy to identify and mitigate any adverse impact it could have on a particular group(s) or people.

Tenant Participation budget

Our tenant participation budget will be reviewed with the Scrutiny Group and agreed by the Management Committee each year to ensure effective delivery of the Strategy's actions including:

- the work of the Scrutiny Group
- reporting our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to tenants:
- our newsletters and any local newsletters;
- costs of activities, including:
 - transport, care costs and out of pocket expenses;
 - venue hire and catering costs; and
 - advertising/promotional costs
 - translation and interpreting;
 - external conference places for tenants;
 - training for tenants;
 - independent surveys and consultancy; and
 - setting up and support (grants, printing, photocopying, etc) to local groups.



Monitoring and review

The Scrutiny Group will review our TP Strategy, performance, resources, and calendar of events. The Group will develop indicators to measure our Strategy's progress that link to standards developed for reporting to The Scottish Housing Regulator .



The results will be published as part of the Annual Return on the Charter report that the Association makes available to all tenants.

Castlehill Housing Association membership

The Association is run by a Management Committee made up of local people including tenants, working on a voluntary basis. They meet regularly to discuss and decide policies and to oversee the work of the Association.

Anyone who is interested in the work of Castlehill may apply for membership of the Association. The one-off membership fee is £1.00. Members can vote to elect the Management Committee at the AGM and be nominated themselves for election to the Committee.

Membership forms and further details are available at our office.

How we developed this strategy

We commissioned an audit of our tenant participation practices from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS).

Tenants and staff were consulted as part of the audit and the findings and a draft Strategy was produced and initially consulted on with tenants and staff, before being shaped into a finalised Strategy.

The Strategy will be available to tenants, our staff and other stakeholders.

We have developed a short summary version of the Strategy, which will be made widely available to inform on and publicise our Tenant Participation.

