


Tenant Participation Strategy

If you have difficulty with sight or hearing, or if you require a translated copy of this document, we would be pleased to provide this information in a form that suits your needs.

Glen Oaks HOUSING ASSOCIATION 	Policy number:	C01
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Our Vision, Mission Statement and Values

Glen Oaks' vision statement '**Where Communities Thrive**' and our mission statement '**Our aim is to provide good quality affordable housing and an excellent service. We will encourage resident participation and work with other agencies to regenerate our community**' provide the foundation for Glen Oaks Housing Association's commitment to its residents and the communities they live in.

This commitment is also demonstrated in the Association's values which were agreed following discussions with the Board, staff and tenants. Glen Oaks' values are fundamental to how we carry out our day-to-day activities.

Our values are:

respectful

we trust and respect our customers and each other

dedicated

we will give 100% commitment to our work

transparent

we will be open and honest about what we do

aspirational

we will strive to achieve the best we can for our communities

Equality & Diversity Statement

The Association is intent on ensuring people or communities do not face discrimination or social exclusion due to any of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; sex; marriage & civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; pregnancy & maternity.

This document complies with the Association's equality & diversity policy.

The Association will regularly review this document for equal opportunities implications and take the necessary action to address any inequalities that result from the implementation of the policy.

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1.0 Introduction by Chief Executive

Tenants and other customers have a key role to play in our decision-making process. This document sets out how they can get involved, how we can support them and work together to deliver the services that matter most to them. This is even more important than ever as we have had to adapt our services following the Coronavirus pandemic. We want to make sure there is open and clear communication with our tenants and other customers and will always be open to hearing how we can improve. Above all, we want to make it easy for them to participate in and influence our decisions.

We are also committed to embedding human rights in everything we do. A person's home plays a big role in shaping their dignity, health, wellbeing, and safety. We therefore want to encourage tenants to shape and improve our services for the future. We will ensure people are treated with respect, fairness and dignity. We will use formal and informal methods of engagement to be as inclusive as possible and maximise levels of participation within our communities.

2.0 Background to the Strategy

- 2.1 Tenant participation is the name given to the way social landlords like Glen Oaks involve tenants in decisions about housing services, housing policies and housing conditions. It is a two-way process that involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and service. Participation is at the heart of what we do and all of our staff are fully committed to working together with our tenants.
- 2.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a legal duty on local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (housing associations) to have tenant participation strategies in place, and to maintain a register of tenant organisations (RTOs). The Act introduced a right for tenant groups and individual tenants to be consulted by the landlord on housing and related services.
- 2.3 The Scottish Social Housing Charter, which came into effect in April 2012, aims to improve the quality and value of services tenants receive. It sets out 16 outcomes and standards that social landlords should aim to achieve.

- 2.4 We are required to submit information to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) each year to demonstrate that we are meeting the outcomes of the Charter. We issue an annual report on our performance to tenants and other customers and provide comparisons to previous years and to other social landlords (Annual Report on the Charter - ARC).
- 2.5 The SHR has one statutory objective, to “safeguard and promote the interests of current and future tenants of social landlords, people who are or may become homeless, and people who use housing services provided by local authorities and housing associations”.
- 2.6 The SHR is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on how well social landlords achieve the outcomes and standards in the Charter. Their reports show every landlord’s performance on the areas that matter most to tenants such as repairs and quality of the home. In terms of tenant participation, the landlord report details how satisfied tenants are with their landlord keeping them informed about their services and the opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.
- 3.0 The Tenant Participation Strategy is related to the following policies:
- Equality & Diversity
 - Complaints
 - Customer Service
 - Communication Strategy
 - Community Regeneration Strategy

4.0 **Aims and Objectives of the Strategy**

- 4.1 Our Tenant Participation Strategy aims to meet three key outcomes set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter:
- **Equalities** - 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.
 - **Communication** - 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.
 - **Participation** - tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Effective participation should lead to an improvement in housing services and standards. This will be achieved by working closely with our scrutiny group and other tenants. We will ensure that tenants are given sufficient opportunities to influence decisions.

4.2 In order to ensure tenants' individual needs are recognised, we will:

- Identify any special requirements at the start of a tenancy and record them on our IT system
- Make available a translation / interpreter service where required
- Provide assistance for visually or hearing-impaired people on request
- Make all our events fully accessible
- Provide transport to events and meetings
- Offer online access to meetings

4.3 In order to improve communication, we will make sure:

- It is clear, concise and easy to understand
- It is designed for all customers who use our services
- Printed material is in plain language and jargon free
- Staff members responsible for dealing with specific matters are clearly identified
- We undertake regular surveys to find out how well we are communicating

4.4 In order to maximise opportunities for tenants to participate we will:

- Encourage them to join our Board or scrutiny group (Service Improvement Group)
- Consult them on setting rent and service charges
- Carry out a full survey every three years to gain an up-to-date insight into our tenants' priorities and satisfaction with all aspects of our service
- Involve them in decisions that relate to our service delivery
- Seek feedback on the service we deliver through a range of satisfaction surveys and our complaint procedure
- Regularly promote the benefits of Registered Tenants Organisations
- Continue to develop our tenant portal to encourage more digital participation

5.0 Development of the Strategy

5.1 The Strategy was developed in consultation with the Service Improvement Group (SIG). They compared our previous document with updated guidance and best practice. Consultation was open to all tenants and was promoted on social media and in our newsletter.

6.0 Benefits of Tenant Participation

6.1 Tenant participation delivers clear benefits for tenants, staff and landlords. These include:

- Better service delivery and improved outcomes for tenants which provide continually improving 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
- Increased tenant satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood
- Identifying actions for service and performance improvements and working together to implement these recommended improvements

7.0 Tenant Participation Opportunities

7.1 There are many ways for tenants to get involved in influencing our decisions and shaping our services. These include:

Board membership

The Board is made up of 15 members and we always encourage representation from tenants and other customers. They have an important role as they control our business by:

- Setting the policies to be followed by staff
- Making sure that staff are carrying out our legal and financial responsibilities
- Giving authority to staff to carry out the decisions of the Board and to attend to the day-to-day business

Tenant Scrutiny

Tenant scrutiny is an important aspect of participation. It involves tenants in reviewing our services and standards to identify if any change or improvement is required. It provides a mechanism to ensure that we are delivering the services tenants want. This means we can tailor services to reflect local needs and priorities.

We set up a Service Improvement Group (SIG) to listen to the experiences and opinions of our customers. This group consists of tenants and/or applicants who come together to discuss specific issues and tell us how they perceive services are provided. They will propose improvements to service delivery which will subsequently be considered by the Corporate Management Team and Board. They will agree which recommendations can be implemented and, if they can't be taken forward, they will explain why not. The results of their reviews are published in our newsletters and on our website.

The SIG has been very successful in contributing to many improvements in our services and standards. Their commitment and enthusiasm were formally recognised when they received an award for “Most inspirational tenant scrutiny group” at a Tenants Information Service (TIS) national conference. They have influenced many decisions and aspects of our service delivery including: the lettable standard, customer service standards, design and content of the tenant handbook, format and content of rent increase communication to tenants.

The SIG works closely with our Corporate Services staff and receives independent advice and support from TIS. They meet regularly either in person or online. Tenants and other customers are welcome to join the SIG and are encouraged to do this through articles printed in newsletters and regular satisfaction surveys. Meetings are relaxed and the members are very supportive of each other and motivated to achieve service improvements. There are also opportunities for training and development and networking with tenants from other organisations.

Home Newsletter

The newsletter is produced every quarter to keep tenants/residents informed of the Association's activities and performance, and to notify them of policy reviews or changes to policies and/or procedures. Various competitions and events are included to encourage tenant participation and involvement.

Satisfaction Surveys

The Association also places emphasis on consulting with customers through satisfaction surveys. This form of tenant participation is important to gain their opinion of our service. This in turn can lead to informed decisions that improve our customer service. Information from surveys is used in a variety of ways. We discuss the results and agree relevant action plans with our Board and staff team. Many service improvements have been introduced as a result of tenant feedback and these are published in our newsletters and on the website. The Association currently undertakes the following surveys:

Residents' Satisfaction Survey

This is carried out every 3 years and will reflect any requirements set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator. The survey will seek the opinions of a representative sample of the Association's customers and will be carried out by an appropriately qualified consultant. The survey will gauge customer satisfaction on many of the Association's services. In approaching this survey the Association will seek customer input to ensure that it reflects relevant issues. This survey has previously been carried out face-to-face but other methods may be used to engage with tenants in the way that suits them best.

Operational Satisfaction Surveys

These are used to monitor customers' experience of our service. The outcomes from the feedback received are reported and distributed to each department on a monthly basis to ensure that we continually review our service delivery. We survey the following services: repairs, stair cleaning, cyclical and planned maintenance e.g. new kitchens & bathrooms. We have often been able to make changes to our service delivery as a result of comments from satisfaction surveys. We also encourage tenants to consider joining our Service Improvement Group by asking a question about this in each survey.

Complaints Handling Procedure

When tenants or other customers complain about aspects of our service, we follow up the issues in line with the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman's procedures. Information from complaints provides us with valuable feedback and opportunities for improvement. We include details of complaints received in every newsletter, highlighting how we have changed aspects of our service as a direct result of tenant feedback.

Digital communication

The Association has a website which provides a lot of useful information for our tenants and other customers. We are increasingly using social media and text messaging as an instant method of getting in touch with our customers. The majority of our short satisfaction surveys are sent by text and this has proved to be very popular with our tenants. We continually seek out new ways of communicating with our wide and diverse tenant population. Text messaging has proved to be an effective way of reaching them and provides an easy way for them to give us feedback.

Tenant Portal

A tenant portal is available on our website which allows our tenants and residents to access the personal information we hold about them and to leave feedback on our services.

Community activities

The Association is keen to involve its residents in a range of community activities during the year including:

- Annual Residents Event
- Annual Fun Day for all of our communities which is held in Arden
- Darnley Gala Day and Fun Run
- Garden Competitions
- Over 60's Party
- Santa's Grotto (every two years)

These events build community spirit and present opportunities for staff to find out if tenants want to get involved in different ways e.g. join the Board or SIG.

Consultation on policy changes / rent increases

We will consult tenants where significant changes in policy are about to take place. The process and levels of consultation will vary dependant on the issue being discussed. We welcome feedback from tenants in this process as it will be used to further improve services. Information on policy reviews is published on our website. The Association's website is available at www.glenoaks.org.uk

We have a legislative responsibility to fully consult with tenants prior to any proposed rent increase, giving at least 4 weeks' notice in writing.

8.0 How do we Help you to Participate

8.1 We want to ensure that tenants, owners and sharing owners have access to information on our services and policies. We do this by:

- Holding an annual Residents' Event
- Producing an Annual Report with information on the Association's performance
- Providing a handbook for tenants
- Issuing quarterly newsletters to tenants, owners and sharing owners
- Marketing Gold Service to all new tenants and advising of its benefits
- Ongoing development of the website including the tenant portal
- Providing translated information where appropriate
- Subscribing to Happy to Translate and other relevant support agencies
- Carrying out estate walkabouts
- Organising local events/ gala days / garden competitions
- Regular updates on social media
- Sending text messages about certain events

9.0 Promotion and Support of Tenants' Groups

9.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced the concept of Registered Tenants Organisations (RTO). This gave tenants a recognised role in participating with their landlord.

We keep a register of all tenant organisations that:

- are supported by and represent Glen Oaks tenants and customers
- adhere to simple criteria set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- have chosen to become registered with us

We currently have no RTOs. Anyone who is interested in setting up an RTO should speak to their Housing Services Officer or send us a message online. The creation of a new group can be time consuming and daunting for customers. To assist in developing local groups, the Association will:

- Provide reasonable start-up grants to assist with costs of set up
- Provide practical assistance for example help with letters, leaflets and meeting arrangements
- Make staff available to help with routine constitutional and record-keeping matters
- Make office premises available for group meetings
- Promote opportunities for training and development
- Provide information about the Association
- Provide, help, advice and support

10.0 Training

10.1 The Association will ensure Board and SIG members, staff, tenants, sharing owners and owners are equipped to engage in meaningful participation by:

- Providing induction training and information on participation for all new Board members, SIG members and staff.
- Helping tenants to identify and receive training in relevant skills and knowledge.
- Implementing ongoing training for staff as the strategy evolves.

11.0 Resources

11.1 To allow tenants/residents to participate in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods the Association will allocate resources to ensure that they are supported in their participation. This will include for example: provision of meeting rooms, creche facilities, access to IT & support networks, providing tea, coffee, lunch, staff time and training.

12.0 Compliance with Equalities Legislation

12.1 We have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure we do not discriminate against people with any of the specified protected characteristics: age; disability; sex; marriage & civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; pregnancy & maternity.

12.2 In developing tenant participation, the Association will take account of the requirements of all tenants/residents/groups who may have an interest in the process.

12.3 Specific tenant requirements will be identified at the start of the tenancy using an equality and diversity questionnaire.

12.4 We will use this information to ensure that we remove any perceived barriers to participation. Such barriers include:

- Methods Used: for example, by relying on methods which use IT, or which focus only on written communication.
- Physical Barriers: inaccessibility of venues, or lack of facilities at events.
- Attitudinal Barriers: the ways in which staff approach or respond to groups and individuals and the assumptions made.
- Financial: many equalities groups lack resources and this can affect their ability to respond.
- Cultural: for example, using inappropriate facilities or language.

Appropriate steps will be taken to maximise response rates, whether this is in the form of face-to-face meetings or incentives for returning surveys.

13.0 Review and Monitoring

13.1 We will measure outputs by examining areas that tenants have influenced, the range of decisions in which they have been involved and the expenditure on tenant participation compared with budget provision.

13.2 We will also monitor the number of individuals participating as a proportion of housing stock and their representation in terms of age, gender & ethnicity. We will review the number, variety and frequency of different methods of communication and engagement. This information will be used to improve future activity.

13.3 We will review the Tenant Participation Strategy every 3 years.