

Tenant Participation Strategy 2019 - 2022

MONITORING FORM	
Department	Housing
Department Director	Operations
This policy is applicable to	Housing Management
Author	Housing Manager
Date of approved by board	
Date of last review	14/11/2016
Version number	V2
Date of minor modification	27/05/2019
Period of Review	3yrs
Date of next review	01/05/2022
Internal/external consultees (if required)	

1. Your Tenant Participation Strategy 2019 - 2022

Weslo Housing Management is committed to involving you in the future of Weslo Housing Management and any decisions which might affect you and your home. Weslo recognise that there are many challenges to overcome in encouraging involvement as our homes are dispersed over a wide area.

2. Our strategic aims

Our Tenant Participation Strategy aims to ensure we meet our legal obligations by ensuring that:

- Tenants are actively involved at all levels and across all areas of our Housing Management and other service areas.
- We support local housing forums and tenants who wish to form a local group.
- There is a range of opportunities for involvement at all levels to suit everyone, no matter where you live.
- We listen to, act, and give feedback on what you tell us.
- Our staff are trained in Tenant Participation and the “Weslo way”.
- We involve you in the review of this strategy and our performance.
- We involve you in scrutinising how we perform and how we can improve.
- We provide resources, such as staff time and funding to support any participation activities.

As part of our commitment to Tenant Participation we will provide all tenants with:

- Clear, easy to understand and accurate information about our services.
- A range of involvement options to enable you to influence decisions.
- Opportunities to scrutinise our services to help improve our performance.
- Easy access to our staff.
- Easy ways to communicate with us.

3. Legal Requirements

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed duties on social landlords to, for example, consult tenants and registered tenants groups on a range of housing issues and to have a tenant participation strategy. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 established the Scottish Social Housing Charter and provided the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) with a new regime of inspection and regulation for all Scotland’s social landlords. The SHR also requires greater tenant involvement in the scrutiny of their landlord’s performance.

This strategy has been developed by tenants working in partnership with Weslo and TPAS Scotland, a national social enterprise organisation.

This strategy was formulated in consultation with tenants through a series of surveys and events. Every tenant was given the opportunity to shape the strategy. On our behalf TPAS spoke to tenants face to face, conducted an email survey, arranged information events and the tenant participation working group developed a tenant's survey which was distributed via our newsletter. The strategy is up to date and reflective of ideas on how tenants want to be involved with Weslo.

This strategy was approved by the Tenant Participation working group on 25 August 2016. It is a "living" document which will change over time to take on tenants' ideas and new initiatives.

3.1 The Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter; it was developed by tenants, for tenants, and came into force in April 2012. The Charter sets out the outcomes and standards that all social landlords are expected to meet. The Charter sets down the levels of service tenants should expect from their landlord. The Scottish Housing Regulator expects landlords to ensure there are opportunities for tenants to get involved.

There are 16 Charter outcomes that cover our housing activities. Our performance in achieving these outcomes is monitored annually by the Scottish Housing Regulator. We will work with you to ensure you can get involved in monitoring our performance and locally agreed performance targets in a number of our services.

4. What is tenant participation?

Weslo Housing Management believes that tenant participation is about tenants taking part in decision making and influencing decisions relating to:

- Our policies.
- Housing conditions.
- Your housing services.
- Issues that affect you and your community.

Tenant participation is a two way process it involves sharing information with you and giving you opportunities to have your say and influence our decisions, which will help us improve housing standards, conditions and services.

5. Why get involved?

When tenants are involved in partnership working with their landlords it brings benefits to tenants, staff and can help shape and enhance the services Weslo provides. What kind of benefits?

- Improved services to tenants.
- Improved communications between tenants and staff.
- Opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge leading to an increase in personal confidence.

- Tenants monitoring performance and recommending improvements.
- Increased satisfaction with homes and communities.
- Increased satisfaction for staff.
- Tenants taking part in decisions which affects the future of Weslo.

6. Getting involved with Weslo

We want to make sure that there is a range of options available to enable you to get involved with us. Every tenant will be encouraged to get involved with us when they sign up for their new home or during their annual visit. For more information contact the Housing Manager, your local office or go to www.weslo-housing.org

6.1. Tenant Participation Committee (TPC)

TPC is a tenant's forum which any Weslo tenant can join and is the main way for tenants to influence decisions on how services are provided. The forum is made up of individual tenants, who have been working with Weslo for many years to help improve our information to tenants, policies and our services; it's not just a talking shop. The TPC are involved in assessing our performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter's outcomes.

The TPC gets things done, it is taken seriously, and it is helping Weslo improve its performance. For example the TPC has:

- Created the new report card for tenants.
- Had a say in choosing kitchens, bathrooms and doors.
- Consulted on the annual rent increase.
- Developed, in partnership, the new participation strategy.

TPC meets approximately every 6 weeks. The meetings are informal and tenants discuss issues which are important to them as well as Weslo.

6.2. Weslo Scrutineers - Your Voice

This group monitors and scrutinises our performance which in turn helps us improve our services. The Scrutineers in partnership with Weslo, decides the service area that they want to get involved in based on their interests, and the level of involvement that suits them. Typical methods of involvement would be:

- Completion of surveys.
- Meetings with staff.
- Read information.
- Estate inspections.
- Policy review.
- Performance reporting.

The Scrutineers are supported by our staff to ensure the members have expert advice when needed. Tenants can contribute to the work of the scrutineers by

attending local meeting or taking part in short surveys or being part of our register of interested tenants.

6.3. Tenants' groups

If you would like to set up a tenants group in your area, we can help you. Weslo will support and consult with tenants' groups. We can help them become a Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO). To become a RTO the group must have a formal written constitution, a Committee with elected members who meet regularly, office bearers, published accounts. We will provide support and resources to groups such as grant funding, support from staff and training. We will also support groups who prefer a more informal set up.

6.4. Local meetings and working groups

On occasion we may set up a working group or hold a local meeting if, for example, we want to discuss a particular issue in more detail, or if there is a matter which affects your community.

6.5. Surveys

Every three years an independent tenant satisfaction survey is carried out and this goes to all tenants. We must include questions from the Scottish Housing Regulator's guidance; we will ask members of the TPC if there are any particular areas/questions they would wish to include. We regularly survey tenants who have received a service, for example, repairs to enable ongoing monitoring of our Customer Satisfaction levels.

We will report the findings to you in our Newsletter and on our website. We will consult with the TPC and the Scrutineers on the results from surveys, priorities for action, scrutiny opportunities and how best to take these forward.

6.6. Register of Interested Tenants (RIT)

We can consult with you by telephone, letter or email for your views, for example, when we are consulting on new initiatives or updated policies. You can join the RIT by contacting your local housing office who will provide you with more information.

7. Weslo's Board

There are 2 places for Tenant Directors on our Board. The Board meet every 6 weeks and general expenses and transport costs will be met.

8. Information

We will provide you with quality information, which is up to date, accurate and easy to understand; this could be by post, email and/or through our website, and include:

- Your tenancy agreement.
- Our newsletters.
- Our Annual Report.
- Information about our Complaints Procedure.
- Information leaflets.
- The 'Get Involved' section on our website.
- An annual tenant report card, that shows how we are performing against the Charter Outcomes, it is produced with tenants and is published in October every year.

8.1. Website - www.weslo-housing.org

We publish performance information on our website. This information is updated annually. The 'Get Involved' section of the website will include regular feedback, information from consultations, comments from the Scrutineers and the TPC. We will also use our website to seek your views and provide feedback.

9. Communication

We will use different ways to communicate with you and seek your views; we will take account of your needs and preferences, and provide feedback.

For example –

- Newsletters – at least twice a year.
- Personal letters with reply slips.
- Emails and texts.
- Local events and Open Days.
- Local tenant meetings.
- Working groups.
- Email group.
- Weslo Scrutineers – Your Voice.
- Tenant Participation Committee.
- Surveys.
- Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs) and informal tenants groups.

10. Consulting you, seeking your views

We will seek your views and opinions on a range of topics such as:

- A range of policies and procedures.
- Service standards.
- Annual rent increase and service charges.
- The Tenant Participation Strategy.
- Priorities for Capital Works Programmes (this concerns improvements to your home and the environment).

- Proposals from the Scottish Government to change housing law.
- Any other issues which might affect you or your community.

10.1. Prior to asking you to make a decision we will ensure that:

- You have the necessary information.
- You have sufficient time and ways to give us your views. (normally a four week consultation period)
- We offer you training and advice if requested.
- We listen to your views.
- We provide feedback on decisions taken and the reasons why (through the Newsletter and on our website).

11. How we support tenant participation

We will provide you with support and resources to enable you to get involved. We have a tenant participation budget to cover costs such as:

- Reasonable meeting, venue and refreshment costs.
- Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses.
- Reasonable care costs.
- Start up and annual grants for tenants and residents groups.
- Special grants for special items or events.
- Attendance at conferences and seminars.
- Stationery, pre-paid envelopes when consulting by post, photocopying, etc.
- Staff and tenant training.
- Access to independent advice.
- Publications/publicity including leaflets, newsletters and flyers.
- Support for tenant groups including any group wishing to become an RTO.
- Staff time to support and facilitate participation.

12. How to Become a Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO)

An RTO is a local tenants/residents group which has a formal constitution and gives the group a recognised role in our decision making processes, RTO's may also be invited to be involved in consultations by the Scottish Government.

Weslo has established a registration process which aims to be as simple as possible while ensuring that groups who wish to, have the correct elements in place to become an RTO.

12.1. What are the criteria for registration?

Your group must have a publicly available written constitution that sets out:

- Your objectives and your area of operation (streets, or local area, or sheltered complex).
- How people can become members.
- How the committee will operate, numbers, etc.
- How people can become committee members/office bearers.
- How decisions will be reached democratically.
- How your grant and funds will be managed.
- Arrangements for public meetings.
- Arrangements for an annual general meeting (AGM).
- How changes can be made to the constitution.
- Your commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities.
- Your commitment to the promotion of the housing and housing related interests of tenants.

12.2. How to register with us

If your group wishes to register you should contact your local office for a registration form. You have six weeks to submit your form with any additional information and a copy of your constitution. We will write to you within five working days to acknowledge receipt of your form. We will let you know the outcome within ten working days.

We will send you a re-registration form every year along with the annual grant application form.

If you need help to register, please contact your local housing office, who can guide you through the process.

12.3. What happens if Weslo refuse to register my group or de-register us

If you have not given us correct information, we can help you through the process to register, contact the Housing Office who will give your group support to help you become registered.

If you no longer meet the registration criteria we will inform you in writing. You can appeal to us in writing within 28 days.

Your appeal will be considered by the Housing Manager within ten working days of receiving your appeal. The Housing Manager will write to the group secretary informing you of the decision and if required offer support.

If your group is not satisfied with the decision, you can appeal to the Chief Executive, who will advise you of the outcome of your appeal within twenty working days.

13. Register of Registered Tenants Groups

We must hold a Public Register of RTOs; the register will be available for inspection during office hours at our Bathgate office. This is a public document and may contain some personal information relating to the group members details. The information available to the public will be:

- The name of the group.
- Area of operation.
- Main contact details for the organisation including telephone number, e-mail/website (where appropriate), address (a box number may be acceptable) dates of regular meetings.

14. Equalities

Weslo will actively encourage and promote measures to ensure that all our tenants have equal access to participation. We will consult and involve tenants from all our communities regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation. We will use a range of ways to consult and enable participation, which reflects and respects the diversity of our tenants.

We recognise that there may be barriers that prevent people from participating; we will take positive steps to try to address any barriers. We will ensure all tenants are able to participate in meetings, discussions, surveys etc. On request we will:

- Provide information in a range of formats, such as Braille, large print, CDs, different languages on request.
- Hold activities in locations and venues that are accessible.
- Provide transport or pay reasonable expenses to get to activities.
- Provide access to digital hearing systems for meetings for those with additional hearing needs.
- Meet reasonable care costs, including child care.
- Ensure all our staff are trained in equalities.

15. Monitoring and reviewing

Tenant participation in Weslo is continuously developing and evolving. Tenants have a key role to play in shaping and increasing the levels of tenant participation. This strategy is a working document and is monitored regularly by the TPC. The strategy will be reviewed with tenants every three years.

An action plan will be developed and agreed with the TPC and any other interested tenants. It will be used as a means of assessing the level of tenant involvement. Areas to be monitored may include:

- The number of tenants involved in the different types of participation activities.
- The number of events held and the numbers attending.
- Survey returns and feedback and follow up on surveys.
- Topics/issues raised by tenants.
- Tenant and staff training.
- Are the level of support and funding sufficient?

We will monitor the ways we communicate with you and the methods of participation to ensure it is effective for those who wish to be involved and to encourage others to consider becoming involved.

Regular reports on progress will be provided to the Senior Management Team, the Board and reported to tenants through the Newsletter and on our website.