

Tenant Involvement Commission: report of written submissions

Contents

Introduction and next steps	2
Background	2
The call for written submissions	3
Terminology	4
Challenging housing associations to be more responsive to the aspirations of their residents and other customers	4
Boosting satisfaction and customer intelligence	4
Having a say and holding to account via residents' groups	5
Tenant management and control	6
Involving groups who have been traditionally excluded	6
Opening up opportunities for residents to have more choice	7
Changing cultures and motivations	7
No one size fits all	8
Practice examples	9
Challenging housing associations to be more accountable for their performance in terms of what matters to residents, other customers and local communities	10
Getting the right information to people at the right time	10
Putting things right that have gone wrong	10
Holding associations to account: payment & grant incentives	10
Holding associations to account: resident scrutiny & feedback	11
Role of tenants on boards and in management	12
Practice examples	13
Challenging housing associations to do more to open up opportunities for communities to have a greater say over local service provision and shaping of their neighbourhood	14
Working with communities to enable them to have a say over other services and to broker access to resources	14
Delivering wider neighbourhood services and tackling poverty	15
Boosting social capital and cohesion	16
Practice examples	17
How should progress be judged?	18
Appendix A: the Commissioners	19
Appendix B: the letter seeking submissions & the questions posed	20
Appendix C: Submissions (alphabetical)	23

Tenant Involvement Commission: report of written submissions

Introduction and next steps

This report highlights the main issues raised by those who submitted views and ideas to the Tenant Involvement Commission. It looks at what individuals and organisations said needed to happen for housing associations (associations) to meet the challenges set by the Commission. The report also includes a snapshot of the practice examples submitted. They show how residents are having a say, not just about their housing service, but also in relation to what else is happening in their neighbourhood.

The Commissioners having considered the submissions wished to put a report of the ideas they received in the public domain before commenting on them or reaching their conclusions. They felt that by airing the views expressed they could stimulate further discussion. The Commissioners intend to go onto report their findings and recommendations in September 2006.

The written submissions are shaping the Commissioners' thinking alongside the discussions they are having with a number of organisations and individuals. They are holding a tenants' and residents' forum in June to hear more from associations' customers about what they would like to see happen to drive service improvements, responsiveness and accountability¹.

The Commissioners also intend to continue to meet a number of other organisations and individuals to shape their thinking further. And there is still time for organisations to send in written ideas and views².

Background

The Tenant Involvement Commission was established by the National Housing Federation to challenge housing associations:

- to be more responsive to the aspirations of their residents and other customers;
- to be held more accountable for their performance in terms of what matters to residents, other customers and local communities, and

¹ The forum will bring together 100 residents in a deliberative forum in Leeds on 23 June to delve into what residents would like to see happen. To hear more about the forum please contact Terry Jones (Terryj@housing.org.uk or 020 7067 1092).

² To send in ideas and views please write to the Commissioners, care of Helen Jeffery (helenj@housing.org.uk or 020 7067 1086).

- to do more to open up opportunities for communities to have a greater say over local service provision and the shape of their neighbourhood.

Ed Mayo, chief executive of the National Consumer Council was invited to chair the Commission and has been joined by 10 other Commissioners from within and beyond the world of housing associations and tenants³. The Commissioners are independent of the Federation and the approach they are taking and the conclusions and recommendations they will make in their final report will be their own.

The Commission is supported in its work by a secretariat from the Federation⁴.

The call for written submissions

In order to capture ideas the National Housing Federation invited a range of individuals and organisations to make submissions, including associations, residents and their membership organisations, central and local government and other bodies who work with associations or have an interest in what they do⁵. It was open to any individual or organisation to send in their ideas⁶.

At the time this report was written 116 submissions had been received. The majority of these were from associations, followed by residents. Submissions also came from representative organisations, government agencies and others.

Federation staff, acting as the secretariat to the Commission, summarised the submissions and wrote this report on behalf of the Commissioners. Full copies of the submissions were also made available to the Commissioners and the Chair and other Commissioners read in full alongside the summaries.

In addition the chair and fellow Commissioner James Tickell prepared a think piece that is being published along side this report. *The Consumer Interest in Housing: Tenants, Service Users and Communities*. It maps out some of the ground in considering issues of service and accountability for residents. It goes beyond the remit of the Commission by also looking at the issues for residents of local authorities.

³ A full list of Commissioners is attached at Appendix A.

⁴ Helen Williams (helenw@housing.org.uk or 020 7067 1088) has lead responsibility for the Federation's team and input.

⁵ The letter seeking submissions and questions posed are attached at Appendix B.

⁶ A full alphabetical list of those who made submissions is attached at Appendix C.

Terminology

Throughout this report the term “resident” is used to cover tenants and leaseholders of associations’ properties and other residents of an area, including those who use specialist services (such as care and support or employment projects) delivered by an association but who might not live in a property owned by an association.

The submissions showed that respondents have strong and differing views on the appropriate lexicon of involvement. A number asserted that associations should not shy away from using the term “customer” and that its adoption could help avoid perpetuating the stigma associated with being a tenant. Others suggested this term was inappropriate and pointed out that when they had asked people they had preferred to be known as “residents” or “service users”.

For some the term “tenant involvement” triggered a focus on residents’ groups and what has become known as the ladder of tenant involvement⁷.

Challenging housing associations to be more responsive to the aspirations of their residents and other customers

Boosting satisfaction and customer intelligence

Many of those who responded looked at ‘responsiveness’ in terms of associations gathering information about the needs and aspirations of residents and using this intelligence to shape their services. Some argued that associations should focus primarily on delivering good quality services to meet residents’ needs in an efficient manner. Some thought that there had been an historic focus on traditional methods of resident involvement (such as tenants’ meetings) at the expense of broader engagement. As one respondent put it “to act with information that is gathered solely from an active few is a risky and flawed business”.

One association said it was scaling down the use of traditional involvement methods in favour of more direct customer contact. Many submissions emphasised the benefits of the personal touch in delivering truly responsive services. Some homed in on the importance of staff attitude and approachability and the value of face-to-face contact over computer generated letters. A few submissions argued for either mandatory or more training for staff on customer awareness.

Some responses argued that if services are to be responsive to the needs of different communities then the staff employed by associations need to reflect the communities they serve more.

⁷ The ladder of tenant involvement can be described as going from providing tenants with information; consultation, tenants formally contributing in the decision making process up to tenants managing their housing.

Some argued that residents should be involved in interviewing perspective staff or delivering staff training and induction to help focus hearts and minds on being responsive and the customer perspective.

Some stressed that associations should see residents as “customers” and invest much more in research and development of consumer expectations. Some explored how associations could improve their market research, questioning whether existing periodic survey methods were working and challenging associations to dig deeper into individual or local experiences. A few stressed the importance of external conduct or verification of surveys. Some said associations should learn more from commercial companies on “understanding their customers”. Some explored how developments in ICT could open up new ways of having a dialogue with individuals. A few cited examples, such as seeking feedback on a repair via text messaging. A number thought more should be made of modern methods of communication via for example web sites and community TV.

Having a say and holding to account via residents’ groups

Many associations talked about how they supported local residents’ associations, held focus groups to discuss particular issues or had a residents’ panel to act as a sounding board for new policies or proposals and to give feedback on how the organisation was doing (the latter is explored more fully below). Some used residents’ compacts or involvement statements to set out what support residents’ groups could expect. Many encouraged resident board members (this is explored below more fully).

Many respondents focussed primarily on how residents’ groups could be encouraged and sustained. Many cited social events, such as bingo or tree planting as a good way of drawing more people in. Many showed how they had worked with residents’ groups to draw up local action plans with an emphasis on service and neighbourhood improvements. Some demonstrated how they had involved residents in best value type service reviews alongside staff. In these ways residents were involved in setting priorities, targets, budgets and shaping improvements to services.

Many respondents, including individuals who were involved in residents’ groups, looked at what would make traditional methods of involvement work better. They often argued for more training and support for residents’ groups backed up by government funding. Some asked for the National Housing Federation or Housing Corporation to develop more tools to assist them.

Others questioned the view that residents should be involved in the work of their landlord when most of them just wanted to get on with their lives like other people. Nevertheless, many added that it was important that those residents who were interested in getting involved had opportunities to do so. And as explored above, some looked at other ways, such as

market research and face to face contact to ensure a broader range of residents have a say.

Some were concerned about consultation fatigue where associations relied on the same individuals or groups to turn up to meetings. One suggested that a way around this was to consult on a number of issues at the same time.

A number of respondents stated that residents should be remunerated for their involvement activities. However, there were concerns that the benefits system deterred involvement in residents' groups and volunteering in general.

Tenant management and control

Some argued that tenant management organisations were well placed to deliver responsive quality services. Some tenant management and ownership organisations and their umbrella bodies argued for more "carrots and sticks" from government and its regulators to spread tenant control. Some argued that the right to manage should be extended to associations' tenants. In doing so they expressed disappointment with the level of tenant management and control in the sector.

Organisations that were run by residents asserted that through collective ownership or management control residents are better placed to ensure services are responsive and of a high quality. Such organisations said they offered a model of democratic accountability that others should learn from. Some suggested there should be a duty on other associations to consult.

Involving groups who have been traditionally excluded

A number of specialist organisations delivering services to people who are vulnerable provided examples of creative ways of involving people with care and support needs. These responses also sought to challenge the perception that people with such needs could not play an active role. They showed how their residents were shaping services and giving valuable feedback. Some challenged general needs associations to do more to learn from their approach.

A number of respondents argued that more needs to be done to ensure that black and minority ethnic (BME) people are involved. They often explored how arrangements for meetings needed to be more culturally sensitive. One response spoke of the prejudice that BME people had faced when trying to join a local resident's group and how they had successfully supported BME tenants who wanted to get involved and worked with the wider group to ensure that it embraced diversity and was inclusive. Some suggested that by adopting more informal methods of involvement associations could talk to a more diverse range of residents. Some stressed the importance of translating materials and using interpretation services.

A number of submissions raised the issue that it is often older people who turn out for meetings or join focus groups. This was linked to concerns that it was difficult to engage younger residents and to ensure that associations talk to a range of people reflective of the local community. Others showed how they had worked with young people to get them engaged in addressing their concerns, for example on the environment and personal safety.

Opening up opportunities for residents to have more choice

Some argued that the choices associations could offer were restricted by various government policies, for example efficiency targets and rent restructuring. A few, nonetheless spoke of how it was possible for residents to be given more choice and drew on the lessons of choice-based lettings. A few suggested residents should be able to opt for a different contractor if they were failed by the one initially sent by an association. A few suggested that tenants should be able to collectively opt for another association. For some this meant an opening up of opportunities for collective management or ownership.

Some said they wanted to be able to adopt more sophisticated pricing mechanisms to deliver individualised services to residents and other customers. In doing so they noted the restrictions placed on this by the national policy framework for rent setting and services charges. A few made the links between choice and debates around direct payments of housing benefit to residents.

Some respondents were not sure about the capacity of the sector to provide more choice. Others were not comfortable with some residents receiving additional paid for services while others receive a 'standard' service. They felt it could lead to the marginalisation of those unable to buy into more services.

Some respondents explored models of collective choice, for example where ground maintenance, cleaning or estate improvement budgets are devolved locally to a residents' group.

Changing cultures and motivations

The need for a change in the culture of organisations was frequently cited as necessary if associations are to be more responsive. The message coming through is that boards, chief executives and other senior personnel need to take more of a lead by demonstrating their commitment. It was argued that it was not enough to have a vision and mission statement. Some showed how they had worked to ensure that their employees were conscious of how their individual role related to achieving resident satisfaction and what more they could do to maximise this.

One submission drew on research funded by the Housing Corporation into what worked in terms of involvement by examining the motivations of tenants and landlords. The research concluded that certain factors

shaped motivations, including people's attitudes, confidence, local issues, power and priorities of residents and landlords. It also showed that while residents may express dissatisfaction about their landlord's accountability, they were more concerned with wider neighbourhood issues. The research indicated that while associations were generally committed to resident involvement, "a significant minority questioned its value." For these the feeling was that the motivation for accepting resident involvement was based on regulatory and government expectations.

One response suggested it was time for a debate on the rights and responsibilities of tenants and their relationship with their landlord.

One response promoted the community gateway model as a method for exploring with residents how they wanted to be involved including through collective management and ownership options.

No one size fits all

A common argument was that "no one size fits all" and that associations should find out what works best in different situations. Some respondents raised questions on the cost implications of supporting residents' groups or getting one-to one feedback. Some questioned whether small associations could afford to do this. Others suggested that smaller organisations were closer to their customers. One group of small associations spoke of how they collaborated to improve their individual service delivery and that this should count for more than whether or not they had adopted traditional involvement structures.

Many stressed that associations should adopt a wide range of methods to identify residents' preferences and to allow people to have a say over their services. A recurring theme was that associations may have to look beyond tried and tested techniques to reach more residents and to break down the barriers to getting involved. This was related to the need to recognise that people's propensity to complete questionnaires or turn up to meetings depends on literacy, interests, or lifestyles or how much they feel part of a local community.

Some stressed that what would work where associations had concentrations of properties might not work where stock was scattered. The examples submitted showed that local circumstances often shaped how associations engaged with residents.

Practice examples

- A housing association is developing its market research to gain a better understanding of the social, demographic and economic make-up of the areas it works in. This is used to anticipate the needs and aspirations of existing and future customers in relation to the design and delivery of services.
- An association issues all residents with a communication book to record their views on the delivery of services. This enables the organisation to tailor services according to residents' feedback.
- A specific resident satisfaction survey was designed by an association to reach under-represented groups. This was part of the organisation's profiling work to identify the needs and aspirations of particular groups, and to deliver targeted services.
- An association routinely takes draft policies and procedures to its vulnerable residents in its supported housing schemes for comments.
- An association working with people with learning disabilities uses visual and pictorial techniques to provide information and seek feedback from residents.
- An association has a number of forums including specific ones for elderly people, leaseholders, BME groups and young people to ensure that the views of different groups are captured.
- An association involves residents in recruiting staff and contractors.
- An association sends automatic text messages to residents after repairs are carried out to get feedback on the quality of work.
- An association has made customer awareness training compulsory for all staff.
- An association, in partnership with the local authority, trained and employed BME residents to carrying out research into the housing needs and aspirations of their communities.
- An association is trying to ensure that its products and services are relevant to customers' future needs and aspirations by establishing a 'futures group' to review services.
- An association sets service priorities with residents during an annual away day.

- Residents of an association can choose to have repairs and gas servicing on Saturday mornings.
- Residents of another association are able to purchase additional security, cleaning and gardening services.
- Residents of an association's supported housing scheme are able to choose the level of support they get through individual support plans.
- An association is developing a tenure blind estate where people can choose which home to occupy and what tenure to occupy it on.

Challenging housing associations to be more accountable for their performance in terms of what matters to residents, other customers and local communities

Getting the right information to people at the right time

Respondents gave many examples of how they used newsletters or leaflets to set out the standards of service residents should expect and to report on how they were doing against those standards. Many stressed that information needs to be timely, relevant and easy to understand.

Many argued that residents should determine how they receive information. Many stressed the need for information to be available in a range of formats and languages. Some felt more could be made of modern methods of communication, such as text messaging (as explored above).

Putting things right that have gone wrong

A large number stressed the importance they attached to responding to complaints, citing practices such as bringing in a fresh pair of eyes from a different section at an early stage. Some argued that good complaints policies needed to be underpinned by well trained and motivated staff empowered to explain why things went wrong, what the organisation would do to make amends and to make compensatory payments. Some had introduced systems of action planning or tracking complaints to ensure that residents have appropriate and timely feedback. Some involved residents' panels or juries in deciding and scrutinising an association's response to complaints.

Holding associations to account: payment & grant incentives

Some respondents suggested that performance-related pay for chief executives should be more widely introduced and linked to residents' satisfaction. One organisation showed how it had linked staff pay to this. Some thought that the allocation of capital funding, such as via the

Housing Corporation's New Affordable Home Programme (NAHP), should be linked to an organisation's performance on residents' satisfaction. And, that grants should be withdrawn from under-performing associations. One posed the view that for arms length management organisations (ALMOs) the link between funding for decent homes and management performance (as judged through the Housing Inspectorate's star rating system) had driven up performance.

Holding associations to account: resident scrutiny and feedback

Many submissions said that associations could demonstrate their accountability to residents by providing meaningful feedback. For example, by showing how a residents' group or survey had influenced a decision. And, many submissions suggested associations should be open about why their decisions might be at odds with some of the views received.

Many saw feedback as critical to the mechanisms they had adopted for ensuring residents shaped their services. Thus residents were not only involved in setting service standards, through for example local action plans or best value service reviews (as explored above), but also in monitoring performance against those standards. Some reported their performance locally against estate/neighbourhood agreements. Many said they reported their performance to all residents (via newsletters for example) against organisational wide customer service standards.

Many felt that associations should be transparent about their performance (good and bad) by providing information to residents on how they were doing against the performance indicators set by their various regulators. And, how they were doing against other organisations through benchmarking and peer review.

Many used mystery shopping as a way of exploring the residents' experience of the service. Some employed residents as mystery shoppers.

Many also raised the need to build the skills and knowledge of residents in order to build a pool of residents able to scrutinise the work of associations. A few explored a more formal role for residents as inspectors, many were doing this on a neighbourhood or estate basis (often focussed at identifying problems and checking effective action had been taken). A couple of responses explored the possibility of a bigger role for resident inspectors in examining an association's performance across the piece. Some raised questions on how this would fit with the current Audit Commission inspection regime. Others raised concerns about the demands this would place on the pool of active residents.

Some asserted, as explored above, that tenant management or ownership models provided the best model for holding associations to account.

Role of tenants on boards and in management

Some respondents were enthusiastic about the value of residents on boards as bringing a customer perspective to overseeing and scrutinising an association's performance. Some felt more should be done to support tenant board members, one suggesting that the National Housing Federation should develop an accreditation programme. Some suggested there should be at least one tenant per board. Others argued that while there is a case for having residents on the boards of service delivery organisations this is different to having residents on a group board.

There were a number of submissions that sounded a note of caution and queried whether residents on boards offer an adequate model of responsiveness and accountability of associations to residents. In doing so, they stressed that board members must act in the best interests of the organisation and were not constitutionally there to represent other residents. A few submissions raised concerns about the performance of resident majority controlled organisations. For example, arguing that people who make up management boards need to possess specialist skills to ensure that associations remain on a "steady, financially viable course".

Others challenged what they saw as a misconception that residents were unable to control or manage their homes appropriately. Some went on to show how they felt their resident owned or managed organisation were well run and provided a model of responsiveness and accountability to residents.

Some gave other ways of residents' views being reflected at board meetings, for example by ensuring that residents had had the chance to comment on policy proposals before they went to the board, through for example scrutiny panels. Some suggested that every board paper should then record residents' views on the issues under consideration.

Practice examples

- An association has a resident-led editorial panel that comments on information in newsletters, annual reports, leaflets and website.
- An association produces a report for residents that outline in clear language what it promised to deliver and how the promises have been met.
- An association involves residents in developing a residents' quality promise framework which sets out service standards.
- An association developed a 'repairs and maintenance pact' with residents to set out respective responsibilities for repairs.
- A specialist association providing care and support services has a board advisory panel of residents, holds policy focus groups and involves tenants in staff recruitment. It has developed tailored training and toolkits to build the skills of residents to have a say over services and to make more informed choices on the individual services they receive.
- Residents of one housing association can visit local offices to discuss any issue without prior appointment.
- An association has linked the pay of its entire staff, through bonuses, to the organisation's performance in the eyes of residents on repairs, housing management and supported housing services.
- An association has established a number of service review groups made up of staff and residents to look at how to drive continuous improvements.
- An association has developed a disabled residents' forum to monitor the quality of services for residents with disabilities.
- An association group is developing a local management trust in each of its subsidiary associations to enable residents to influence the shape of services. The key objectives of the trusts will be to review policy, practice and performance on housing management and maintenance issues, thereby helping to bring improvements in the design and delivery of services.
- An association's housing committee has a tenant majority, including a tenant chair.

- An association's service level agreement with residents determines that performance information will be published in the residents' newsletter.
- An association has established a scheme for residents to act as street and village representatives.
- An association translates all its published documents in the main community languages, and has 24-hour access to outside interpreters and translators.

Challenging housing associations to do more to open up opportunities for communities to have a greater say over local service provision and the shaping of their neighbourhood.

Working with communities to enable them to have a say over other services and to broker access to resources

Many respondents thought associations should do more to work with local people to agree priorities for action in improving local areas. Some challenged associations to focus more of their efforts on being "community players" on the basis that neighbourhood issues were what mattered most to people. Many sent in examples of what they were doing.

Local strategic partnerships and local area agreements were seen by a number of respondents as the main route to linking with other local service providers and influencing what happens in an area. Others focused on partnership working at a more local level with voluntary and community organisations and local businesses.

Many talked about the need for associations to build the capacity of residents to have more opportunities to have a say on non-housing issues. Some local government respondents and their umbrella bodies felt that there needed to be a bigger dialogue between local authorities and associations on how the work of associations fitted with the local authority strategic role. Some saw the forthcoming review of local government as an opportunity to look afresh at the relationships between local authorities, residents, associations, other service providers and community groups.

Some associations talked about how they used their clout to act as an "irritant" to help residents hold other services to account, for example by inviting the local police service to residents' meetings or taking up concerns about street lighting or transport with the local authority or other service providers.

Community councils, resident run organisations or collectively owned facilities were also seen as ways of giving people opportunities to get the

local services they wanted. Some also explored the value of collective ownership of land and facilities in generating revenue to sustain community services for local people.

Some suggested associations should carry out more public consultation exercises to hear the views of a range of local people (beyond the association's tenants) on for example the facilities they would like to see alongside the new homes being built or as part of a neighbourhood regeneration scheme. Many gave examples of community facilities, such as playgrounds or centres they had built and managed. Some, including local government bodies, proposed that the Commission should look at ways of getting local authorities and housing associations to work together to build more community facilities.

A number of respondents thought associations should use their experience of accessing external funding to support local voluntary groups. A few submissions highlighted the relative advantage that large associations have in securing funding and in building partnerships with key local service providers. On the other hand, others pointed to the advantage that many smaller associations have in being locally focused and linked into community groups. Others mentioned how some associations seemed remote from local people, their community organisations and concerns.

Some gave examples of improving the access of residents to other services by allowing other service providers to run surgeries from an association's building or by building and leasing space aimed at drawing in other service providers.

Delivering wider neighbourhood services and tackling poverty

Many associations gave examples of the work they were doing, for example to run youth activities or boost local employment. A few told of how they had fostered social enterprises employing local residents to deliver services such as ground maintenance.

Many suggested that the National Housing Federation's ***IN Business for neighbourhoods*** agenda had boosted associations' drive to deliver more for communities and raised the profile of this work. However, some felt that the regulatory and inspection framework held this work back rather than supported it. Some called for an overhaul of the regulatory framework to free associations to do more housing plus activities.

Some highlighted the need for associations to play a role in wider neighbourhood management and in doing so to work with other local service providers to share collective responsibility for delivering better quality of life outcomes that matched local people's aspirations. They put forward a vision of different service providers adding value to one another rather than acting in isolation or indeed cutting across each other. Some thought such an approach could help ensure that local people could hold service providers to account.

Others sought to tackle poverty by opening up access to residents to services such as more affordable home insurance or credit. Some explored how bulk purchasing could give residents access to more affordable goods.

The capacity of associations to deliver beyond housing management was given consideration in some of the submissions. Some drew on the LIFE model (lead, influence, follow, and exit) trialled in different neighbourhoods in Liverpool and Manchester. Thus, arguing that whilst some associations should take the strategic lead in improving a neighbourhood and joining up the delivery of local services; others should focus on delivering housing services to people living in the houses they own and influencing other service providers, and others might seek to transfer the management or ownership of their homes especially where they were thinly represented in a community.

Some suggested that more radical approaches were needed to get associations to do more, for example through requiring them to ring fence a proportion of their rental income to be invested on a neighbourhood basis in a way that is determined by and accountable to local people. Or requiring them to “profit share” whereby efficiency gains were reinvested in the local community in accordance with what local people want.

Boosting social capital and cohesion

The role of associations in building social capital was a theme in a number of submissions. They gave examples of how by opening events to the wider community they had helped foster neighbourliness, mutual support and a respect of different cultures. Some talked about how associations could foster a sense of local pride and encourage people to take more active responsibility for what was happening in their area through the creation of quality public spaces and events that maximised social interactions. Some gave examples such as estate clean up days that brought together people with the common purpose of improving their area. Some had successfully involved young people in such activities and seen an increased respect for the local environment. This was seen as creating a virtuous circle of people committing less anti-social behaviour and being more willing to challenge and report it.

A few submissions raised the need for mixed income or tenure communities to avoid the stigmatisation that could arise where vulnerable people were concentrated on large mono-tenure estates. Some went on to explore the strengths of mixed communities in terms of having the clout, income and capacity to influence and hold service providers to account.

One submission focussed on Investors in Communities as a model for driving improvements in different neighbourhoods by working in partnership with residents and other local players. One submission felt

that a community accreditation scheme should be developed to support and show how associations are involved in communities. A number of submissions stressed that wider neighbourhood issues were what mattered most to people.

Practice examples

- An association developed a play and learning project in partnership with other local organisations for local children.
- An association operating in rural areas uses a 'community vehicle' not only to engage with residents on its housing management service, but also to deliver training such as IT and literacy.
- An association leases a building to Sure Start to maximise access to its services for local people.
- An association has developed a community involvement grant for resident groups.
- An association is working in partnership with a local college to enable people to secure NVQ credits in community volunteering.
- An association responded to tenants' aspirations to own their own home by opening up opportunities through the sale of equity stakes. The organisation runs workshops on becoming a home owner covering mortgages and debt advice amongst other issues. Its annual residents' survey will be amended to capture home ownership aspirations.
- An association set up community forums of young people to gather their views on local issues.
- An association worked in partnership with a Premiership football club to develop a project aimed at engaging young people through football.
- An association has developed an anti-poverty action group which is developing home insurance packages with financially attractive rates for residents.
- An association has developed local play strategies in response to residents' concerns safe play areas for children.
- A 'Respect and Reward' scheme was developed by an association for young people to encourage them to show respect to one another and their environment

- An association has a dedicated community fund designed for residents' groups to run community projects on environmental issues.
- A housing association provides training on negotiating skills for residents and local groups to help them influence the delivery of local services, including giving presentations to councillors on service improvements.

How should progress be judged?

A number of submissions thought residents' satisfaction with their home, or services and opportunities for getting involved should be the key performance indicators (PIs). Some challenged whether existing regulatory PIs were up to the task of capturing the issues that residents rate as important and called for more work to develop PIs that were fit for purpose. Some championed local PIs and action plans set by different communities.

Some suggested the need to find better indicators to measure and benchmark performance on accountability to residents.

Some believed that the inspection or regulation regime should be used to judge individual performance. Often going on to argue that this would require a shift in the approach of inspecting and regulating bodies to ensure more of a focus on service outcomes for residents. One said that a three star service would only be awarded where residents could be seen to be driving what the organisation did. Some raised concerns that performance is and will continue to be judged on whether or not you have active residents' groups when this might not be the best way of involving residents. Others queried the value of existing methods of surveying residents as explored above.

A number saw a role for resident inspectors in judging individual success (as explored above). Some felt residents should be able to trigger inspection by external inspectors, such as the Housing Inspectorate where they had concerns over performance.

One organisation suggested that success should be recognised via a beacon scheme.

Appendix A: the Commissioners

Mr	Ed	Mayo
Ms	Diane	Bellinger
Ms	Mary	Burke
Mr	Richard	Clark
Mr	Pat	Conaty
Ms	Julie	Fawcett
Mr	Mervyn	Jones
Ms	Carla	Keegans
Mr	Martyn	Kingsford
Ms	Victoria	Showunmi
Mr	James	Tickell

Appendix B: the letter seeking submissions and questions posed

Tenant Involvement Commission to investigate the relationship between housing associations, their tenants, other customers and neighbourhoods

We are seeking your views to feed into the above Commission, chaired by National Consumer Council chief executive Ed Mayo, to challenge housing associations:

- to be more responsive to the aspirations of their tenants and other customers;
- be held more accountable for their performance in terms of what matters to tenants, other customers and local communities; and
- do more to open up opportunities for communities to have a greater say over local service provision and their neighbourhood.

We know that there is much good work out there amongst associations and an ethos of putting customers and communities first and we want to hear about what is being done. But, we also recognise that more could be done to ensure that tenants and local communities truly drive what associations do. That is why we suggested a Commission.

The chair, Ed Mayo is being joined by commissioners from within and beyond the housing association world. We have asked them to report by September on:

- a vision for housing associations of responsive services, accountability for performance and community engagement and empowerment;
- actions associations should take to make the vision a reality;
- what else needs to happen realise the vision; and

- how progress and success might be judged collectively and individually.

They are looking for written submissions to help shape their recommendations. You may find the questions on the attached sheet helpful in putting together a response, but you do not have to follow that format. We want you to draw on things you have already done or know associations to do well, but also things you wish you had done or think associations should do.

We want the submissions to generate debate and stimulate others to act, so unless you tell us otherwise in your response, we may make your submission available to others in addition to the chair, commissioners and Federation staff.

The chair and commissioners are also looking to hold discussion forums with associations' tenants and other customers, as well as with housing associations and other organisations to explore some of the issues in more depth. So if you make a submission you may be invited to one of these sessions. We will publicise these events once they are set up.

Please send your submission to Fola Ogunjobi at the National Housing Federation, Lion Court, 25 Procter Street, London WC1V 6NY by 13 April 2006. If you would like to discuss any aspect of the work of the Commission please contact Fola Ogunjobi at the National Housing Federation in the first instance (Folao@housing.org.uk or telephone 020 7067 1087).

We look forward to hearing your ideas and passing them onto the chair and other commissioners.

Yours sincerely,



David Orr
Chief Executive
National Housing Federation

**Appendix B continued: questions attached to letter:
Tenant Involvement Commission investigating the relationship between
housing associations, their tenants, other customers and their
neighbourhoods**

You may find the bulleted questions under the three challenges helpful in making your response but feel free to answer the challenges in other ways.

Also, please tell us about what works well within your own association (where relevant) or from what you know of the work of other associations or organisations.

Challenging housing associations to be more responsive to the aspirations of their tenants and other customers

- how do people best have a say in relation to the housing (including access to housing), care support and neighbourhood services they get from associations?
- what can associations do to improve people's satisfaction with the services they deliver, including people who might not get a fair deal at the moment and people who are vulnerable?
- how can people have more choice in relation to the housing, care, support and neighbourhood services they get from associations?
- what needs to change to spread responsiveness across associations and how should progress be judged individually and collectively?

Challenging associations to be held more accountable for their performance in terms of what matters to tenants, other customers and local communities

- how can associations ensure people get the right information, at the right time and in ways that work for them?
- if people believe things have gone wrong for them, what are the best ways of putting them right?
- how should associations be held accountable for their performance in terms of what matters to their tenants, other customers and local communities?
- what needs to change to spread such accountability across associations and how should success be judged individually and collectively?

Challenging associations to do more to open up opportunities for communities to have a greater say over local service provision and their neighbourhood:

- how should associations work with communities to enable them to best have a say over the local services provided by others and have a greater say on what happens in their neighbourhood?
- how should associations work with local communities to give or broker access to resources, for example, land or community facilities?
- what needs to change for this to happen across the sector and how should progress be judged?

Appendix C Submissions (alphabetical)

Name	Sub #	Sector
Affinity Housing Group	62	Housing Association
Aldwyck Housing Association	88	Housing Association
Alison Ewart & Prof Richard Tomlins	72	Other
Anchor Trust	100	Housing Association
Aragon Housing Association	14	Housing Association
Association of Local Government	97	Other
Audit Commission	96	Government and Agencies
Banks of the Wear Community Projects Ltd	116	Other
Bjorn Howard	18	Individual
Black Country Housing Group	52	Housing Association
Bournville Village Trust	38	Housing Association
Bradford Community Housing Trust	67	Housing Association
Bromford Housing Group	58	Housing Association
Broxbourne Housing Association	79	Housing Association
Building and Social Housing Foundation	95	Private
Carr-Gomm Society Ltd	91	Housing Association
Cedarmore Housing Association	83	Housing Association
Central and Cecil	63	Housing Association
CESSA HA	7	Housing Association
Chislehurst & Sidcup Housing Association	98	Housing Association
Chris Wilson	5	Individual
City of Westminster	90	Local Authority
Colne Housing Association	16	Housing Association
Community Housing Association	114	Housing Association
Confederation of Co-operative Housing	104	Representative Body

Cosmopolitan Housing Association	34	Housing Association
Council of Mortgage Lenders	8	Representative Body
Crowebridge Housing	36	Housing Association
Croydon Churches Housing Association	1	Housing Association
Dane Housing	39	Housing Association
David Moreland	68	Individual
Dominion Housing Group	42	Housing Association
Drum Housing Association	35	Housing Association
East Dorset Housing Association	65	Housing Association
East Midlands Housing	43	Housing Association
Elmbridge Housing Trust	40	Housing Association
Festival Housing Group	69	Housing Association
Government Office for the East Midlands	37	Government and Agencies
Groundwork UK	80	Other
Guinness Trust	48	Housing Association
Harvest Housing Group	60	Housing Association
Hastoe Housing Association	70	Housing Association
Havebury Housing Partnership	92	Housing Association
Home Group	86	Housing Association
HomeZone Housing	55	Housing Association
Housing Corporation	110	Government and Agencies
Housing Hartlepool	107	Housing Association
Hyde Housing Group	73	Housing Association
I&DeA	33	Government and Agencies
John Doughty	66	Housing Association Tenant
Keith Peacock	11	Housing Association Tenant

Kensington and Chelsea TMO	17	Housing Association
Kingfisher Housing Association	82	Housing Association
Knowsley Housing Trust	54	Housing Association
London and Quadrant Housing Trust	113	Housing Association
London Borough of Greenwich	61	Local Authority
Longhurst Homes	24	Housing Association
Look Ahead Housing and Care	109	Housing Association
Maggie Ramadam	10	Housing Association
Malcolm J Connigale	3	Local Authority Tenant
Mendip Housing Ltd	13	Housing Association
Moat Housing Group	56	Housing Association
Mobysoft (with Blackburn LA)	6	Private
Mosaic Homes	111	Housing Association
Mosscafe Housing Ltd	106	Housing Association
National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations	19	Representative Body
New Charter Housing Trust	50	Housing Association
New Charter Tenants Federation	51	Housing Association
New Progress	47	Housing Association
News to Use	23	Private
North Somerset Housing	22	Housing Association
Northern Counties Housing Association	94	Housing Association
Notting Hill Housing	105	Housing Association
Nottingham Community Housing Association	85	Housing Association
Orbit Housing Group	29	Housing Association
PCHA Housing Association	21	Housing Association
Peter Coleing	77	Housing Association Tenant
Places for People	46	Housing Association

PPCR Associates	76	Private
Raven Housing Trust	102	Housing Association
Redditch Friends Housing Association	4	Housing Association
Riverside Housing	78	Housing Association
Roger Farrell	30	Housing Association Tenant
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	45	Local Authority
Ruth Kiddle	9	Local Authority Tenant
Sanctuary Housing	93	Housing Association
Sarsen Housing Association	59	Housing Association
SHAPE	53	Housing Association
Shepherds Bush Housing Association – Tenants Committee	32	Representative Body
Soha Housing	101	Housing Association
Somer Community Housing Trust	71	Housing Association
South Somerset Homes	44	Housing Association
South Warwickshire Housing Association	75	Housing Association
South Yorkshire Housing Association	99	Housing Association
Southern Housing Group	49	Housing Association
Sovereign Housing	41	Housing Association
SPH Housing	103	Housing Association
Spinnaker Housing Group	64	Housing Association
St Anne's Community Services	2	Housing Association
Sussex Oakleaf	115	Housing Association
Teign Housing	74	Housing Association
Tenant Participation Advisory Service	112	Representative Body
Terry Moralee	12	Individual
Tony Cook	25	Individual
Trafford Hall	28	Other

Trent and Dove Housing	84	Housing Association
Ujima Housing Association	57	Housing Association
Vectis Housing Association	87	Housing Association
Volanti	27	Private
Walsall Housing Group	89	Housing Association
Walterton and Elgin Community Homes	26	Housing Association
Weaver Vale Housing Trust	20	Housing Association
West Kent Housing Association	31	Housing Association
William Sutton Trust	15	Housing Association
Worcester Community Housing	108	Housing Association
Yarrow Housing	81	Housing Association