

# Together with Tenants – lessons from the early adopter programme

20 October 2020

## Summary

Together with Tenants is a sector-wide initiative focused on strengthening the relationship between residents and housing association landlords.

We have been working with residents and our members to establish a four-point plan for change, including a new charter that sets out in clear terms what residents can and should expect from their landlord.

Over the last 12 months, 130 early adopter organisations have been working with their residents to test out the charter. Now, our ambition is for all housing associations to support our plan and consider adopting the Together with Tenants charter.

To support our members to do this, this report provides:

- **An overview of the Together with Tenants work so far**, including developing the plan, charter and revising the NHF Code of Governance.
- **Lessons from the early adopter programme**, which ran from April 2019 to March 2020. Through the programme, 130 housing associations tested out the plan, with a focus on the Together with Tenants Charter.
- **Next steps** for Together with Tenants – including further information on the sector-wide rollout.

## Foreword

The last six months have presented challenges we could not have predicted, nor prepared for. Our ways of working and living have been impacted in ways that previously seemed unimaginable and, as organisations and individuals, we're all working through trying times.

The urgency of the coronavirus pandemic meant housing associations have had to operationalise new staff and resident services practically overnight. We are now entering a period where we need to strike the balance between responding to the most urgent challenges, and looking ahead to building a resilient future.

We need to connect with residents, and work with them to establish relationships grounded in trust and accountability, so that we can support our communities through the challenges that lie ahead.

Together with Tenants is a framework to do that.

We've been working with our members and their residents over the last two years to devise a framework to strengthen the relationships between landlords and residents. I am grateful to everyone who has helped develop and test the Together with Tenants plan, including those who participated in the consultation exercises, the organisations that signed up as early adopters, the members of our steering group, and the residents on the Tenant Advisory Panel.

This report summarises what we learned from the early adopter process, during which 130 of our members tested and fed back on the Together with Tenants plan and charter. Their experiences have helped us identify the challenges we need to overcome to ensure the successful implementation of Together with Tenants, so that it can drive change where needed. We also explain how we're rolling Together with Tenants out across the sector.

This is a chance for us to put residents at the heart of strategic decision-making, strengthen our accountability, and work together to deliver positive change for housing associations and residents.

Kate Henderson  
Chief Executive  
National Housing Federation

“There are decades of deep-rooted and institutionalised stigma around social housing, which will take quite some time to alter. We need to work together to tackle this. We need a long-term plan to introduce, develop and plant a strong foundation for Together with Tenants, with scope to keep on learning and improving. Working in partnership should not be feared but fully embraced.” – **Valerie Oldfield, Chair of the Together with Tenants Tenant Advisory Panel**

“No single organisation has the solution to strengthening these relationships, so we need to come together, not to force unity – one size does not fit all - but to hold space where collaboration and innovation can happen. Together with Tenants is about the culture of our sector. Simply signing up to the charter doesn’t necessarily mean a housing association is doing all it could and should. It is all about intention and direction.” – **Mark Henderson, Chair of the Together with Tenants Member Steering Group**

# An overview of the Together with Tenants work so far

## Background

- **Do you genuinely involve residents in decisions that affect their homes and communities?**
- **Are you as open and responsive as you can be when listening to and communicating with residents, even when things have gone wrong?**
- **Have you recognised the needs of residents, and skills they bring in finding solutions?**

These are some of the long-standing questions facing our sector about our relationship with residents, particularly around accountability. They have become more prominent since the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017, and throughout the subsequent inquiry.

Further to this, the ministerial roadshows leading up to the Social Housing Green Paper, published in 2018, exposed real differences in the way residents feel about social housing and their landlords. Despite being generally positive about social housing and housing associations, the green paper set out a clear expectation for change in the relationship between residents and housing associations.

These are valid questions, and we want to show leadership in addressing them. Regulation is important as a backstop to protect the interests of residents, but it is not up to the government or the regulator to define our members' relationship with their residents.

We want to embed a culture across our sector that values the voice and experience of residents. We want to be open to challenge and honest about where we need to improve.

## Developing the Together with Tenants plan

We worked collaboratively with our members and their residents to develop the four-point Together with Tenants plan, which we believe will address the questions being asked of our sector.

We consulted on the plan in spring 2019, speaking to more than 500 housing association representatives and residents through meetings and events, and gathering online feedback from a further 2,500 respondents – 80% of whom were

housing association residents. In light of the consultation feedback we revised the plan, and established a programme of further testing with a group of housing associations who volunteered as early adopters.

The early adopter programme focused in particular on the charter element of the plan, and the oversight from residents. This was so that we could gather feedback from our members on the practical implementation and application of the charter, to enable us to prepare for a sector-wide rollout.

## The four-point plan

### 1. A new requirement in the National Housing Federation Code of Governance for boards to be accountable to their residents.

We have produced a new Code of Governance, currently in draft form, which we have written in collaboration with partners and stakeholders, including residents. The new code builds on earlier versions to include provisions that the views and needs of residents and other customers must be at the heart of strategic decision-making.

### 2. A new Together with Tenants charter.

The charter is designed to ensure all residents know what they can expect from their housing association landlord, regardless of where they live, what type of home they live in, or who their landlord is. The charter is intended to ensure a more consistent experience for residents, while being flexible enough for residents and housing associations to agree more specific standards and targets on the issues that are important to them.

### 3. Resident oversight and reporting of progress against the charter.

Resident oversight and public reporting against the commitments set out in the charter will give residents a stronger role in holding their landlord to account. This aims to prevent Together with Tenants from becoming a 'tick-box' exercise that does not drive change. Boards will be expected to respond and take action where required.

### 4. Giving residents a stronger collective voice with the regulator.

Resident oversight and reporting against the charter may uncover issues of interest to the regulator, including potential non-compliance with consumer standards. Linking the Together with Tenants approach to regulation in this way will ensure that action is taken where necessary to protect the rights and interests of residents.

You can read more about each of these actions below.

## Action 1: The Code of Governance

The first action in the four-point plan is a change to NHF Code of Governance to ensure that being accountable to residents becomes a characteristic of a well-governed organisation.

Introducing a stronger requirement at board level to involve residents in decision-making will help ensure organisations value the voice and experience of residents. Ultimately, it supports the aim of Together with Tenants to build stronger relationships between residents and housing associations.

As set out in the regulator's governance standards, organisations will have to demonstrate that they comply with this new stronger requirement, or explain any non-compliance.

Members of the Tenant Advisory Panel and the Member Steering Group were represented on the Code of Governance Advisory Group to ensure continuity and consistency between these two areas of work. We expect to publish the new NHF Code of Governance in November 2020.

Although the code is still being finalised, the relevant requirements of the latest draft read:

**1.1. Mission:** the board sets the organisation's mission, ambitions and values, and at least annually reviews and reaffirms their relevance and achievability.

**1.2. Resident focus:** the views, needs, safety and aspirations of the organisation's residents and other customers are placed at the heart of the board's decision-making.

(1) There are policies, frameworks and opportunities that enable, encourage and support residents and other customers to engage with, influence and contribute to strategic decision-making, and in particular to decisions that affect their interests.

(2) The board is regularly provided with insights and concerns from its residents and other customers and uses these to inform decisions where appropriate.

(3) Ensuring the safety of residents and other customers (and that of the workforce and the wider public) is an overriding priority.

(4) The organisation regularly reports to its residents on how its commitments to resident focus have been delivered.

**1.7. Accountability:** the board operates openly and transparently, and demonstrates accountability to key stakeholders including residents, other customers, partner statutory bodies, and its workforce.

(1) The board publishes an annual report of the organisation's activities, performance and plans for future improvements which is accessible to its key stakeholders, and covers the matters referred to in this code.

(2) The organisation systematically identifies and regularly communicates with its key stakeholders and receives feedback about their views. In doing so it has regard to the communication needs of the diverse groups and communities it serves.

(3) Opportunities and information are provided for residents and other customers independently to scrutinise the work of the organisation and to hold it to account, and the board reviews these at least every three years to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

....

(5) The organisation publishes clear and up to date information about its board members, committees and governance.

(6) The organisation responds in a considered, open and transparent way to requests for information about its work, activities, and decisions made by the board; where it cannot provide certain information, it gives clear reasons as to why this is the case.

## **Actions 2 and 3: The charter and resident oversight**

In spring 2019, we presented the initial draft of the Together with Tenants Charter for consultation to our members and their residents. For many, this marked the starting point of their journey, as organisations that would go on to become early adopters started to gather feedback from their residents on the draft charter. Overall, we engaged over 500 people through meetings and events, and received more than 2,500 online responses to the consultation – 80% of which came from residents.

In partnership with the Tenant Advisory Panel and Member Steering Group, we used the consultation feedback to revise the charter. The revised charter set out a series of six commitments designed to address what residents told us was important to them, in language that made sense to them. The charter commitments are not about process or structures, but focus on outcomes for residents.

Our ambition was to make the commitments be clear, universal and easy to understand. We also wanted them to be open enough for housing associations to

make them their own, and to work with residents to make them relevant in their particular community.

It is the charter, and establishing mechanisms for resident oversight of the charter's commitments, that we asked early adopters to test by implementing it in their organisations.

## The charter commitments

- 1. Relationships** – housing associations will treat all residents with respect in all of their interactions. Relationships between residents and housing associations will be based on openness, honesty and transparency.
- 2. Communication** – residents will receive clear, accessible and timely information from their housing association on the issues that matter to them, including important information about their homes and local community, how the organisation is working to address problems, how the organisation is run, and information about performance on key issues.
- 3. Voice and influence** – housing associations will seek and value the views of residents, and will use this information to inform decisions. Every individual resident will feel listened to by their housing association on the issues that matter to them and can speak without fear.
- 4. Accountability** – collectively, residents will work in partnership with their housing association to independently scrutinise and hold their housing association to account for the decisions that affect the quality of their homes and services.
- 5. Quality** – residents can expect their homes to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.
- 6. When things go wrong** – residents will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress. Residents will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.

### Action 4: The role of the regulator

The final action in the four-point plan was to establish links between Together with Tenants and the Regulator of Social Housing. The stronger requirements in the new NHF Code of Governance for boards to be accountable to



residents – which housing associations adopting the code will need to comply with or explain why they haven't – build links between the aims of Together with Tenants and the regulator's governance standards.

We do not yet know what the anticipated Social Housing White Paper is going to say about strengthened consumer regulation. However, we believe that Together with Tenants provides a unique opportunity for resident voices to help uncover where there may be significant issues of interest to the regulator. We are committed to furthering this aspect of the plan with the government and the regulator.

## The Tenant Advisory Panel

For Together with Tenants to succeed, we need to design and deliver it in partnership with residents. The Tenant Advisory Panel represents a diverse group of housing association residents, bringing with them a wealth of experience and skills. The panel is independent of the NHF and plays a crucial role in guiding and shaping the Together with Tenants work.

The panel is clear that for residents to genuinely feel that their views are important to their landlord and guide decision-making, housing associations must fully embrace Together with Tenants. For the panel, this goes beyond organisations implementing the four-point plan, including adopting the charter commitments. It is about organisations using these actions as an opportunity to challenge themselves to ensure they are doing all they can to value the voice and experience of residents.

The panel's priorities are to ensure that as many residents as possible know and understand Together with Tenants, and that boards are open to being held to account for delivering the commitments they have made to residents and this is delivered throughout the organisation.

## The Member Steering Group

Members of the steering group represent a range of different housing associations, in terms of size, the type of housing they provide, and their geographical spread. The group has been driving Together with Tenants forward and making sure it is deliverable from a housing association perspective.

The group regularly provides feedback, challenge and direction for the Together with Tenants work. This group now meets alongside our Tenant Advisory Panel, and the two work closely together to guide the implementation of Together with Tenants.

# Lessons from the early adopter programme

We invited our members to join the Together with Tenants initiative as an 'early adopter' in early 2019. We asked the early adopters to test the Together with Tenants Charter, working in partnership with their residents to understand how this could be implemented, and to involve residents in meaningful oversight.

We encouraged the early adopters to share their learning with each other and with us. This enabled us to identify whether any changes needed to be made to the commitments, and to establish a clear picture of what support we could provide for the rollout of Together with Tenants.

In April 2019, a cohort of 130 early adopter organisations was established. We engaged an external research consortium to work with the early adopters and capture their learning over the course of the six-month testing period.

The research consortium used mixed research methods, including calls for evidence, surveys, interviews and workshops, to gain insights into the early adopters' journeys.

Primarily, they used an online platform, Loomio, as an 'implementation diary' to understand the process early adopters went through during the testing period. In total, 127 early adopters signed up to the platform and, out of these, 70 maintained regular engagement (10 or more contributions) with most of the discussion topics.

The researchers conducted 30 interviews between October and November 2019 with staff, board members, directors, and stakeholders from a group of early adopter housing associations. They also used webinars and co-design workshops to gain deeper insight into the work of a smaller number of early adopter organisations.

In addition to this, we engaged with early adopters and their residents and board members through conferences and events, webinars, regional and local resident meetings, individual visits and interviews with staff members, board members and residents.

## Findings from the early adopter process

The researchers worked with the early adopters between August 2019 and March 2020. While this has not been long enough to definitively establish the long-term impact of changes made by the early adopters, it has yielded useful insights and provided a foundation to take Together with Tenants forward.

What is clear is that adopting the Together with Tenants Charter has led to clearer, more collaborative decision-making for most early adopters. Many early adopters rewrote their strategies, policies and customer commitments to incorporate and reflect the charter. Our aim was for the charter to be flexible enough for every housing association, regardless of size, location or type, to be able to adopt it in a way that worked for them and their residents.

Together with Tenants has reinvigorated resident engagement for the vast majority of early adopters, as they used the charter to start conversations and listen to new voices throughout their consultation exercises. Early adopters commented that Together with Tenants provided a ‘rallying call’ to the sector, which gave them the momentum to revisit their approach with their residents and their board.

Together with Tenants has acted as a catalyst for many early adopters to rethink their scrutiny mechanisms, with a strong emphasis on accountability and resident oversight.

“The key [to Together with Tenants] is organisations going back and reminding ourselves of the ‘why’ we do what we do, and therefore why the relationship [with residents] needs to be one of mutual trust and respect.” –  
**Together with Tenants early adopter**

## Testing the charter

The main objective of the early adopter process was to test the Together with Tenants Charter. We wanted to understand whether the commitments are applicable across the early adopters, and whether there is enough flexibility to make them useful and whether they reflect what residents would like to see from their landlord.

“The charter commitments are the right ones. They are tangible and down to earth.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

“It’s good to see landlords talking about what matters to us. I think they’ve got it right on this.” – **resident**

“We [found] a low percentage of customers feel comfortable giving their feedback. Often behind this is a fear of losing their home or a fear of losing support. Hence why we welcome the areas of focus in the charter commitments around accountability and when things go wrong.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

## How early adopters used the charter

Early adopters used the charter to inform their work and conversations with residents, staff, board members and strategic partners.

### With residents

For many early adopters, the charter served as a starting point to open up conversations across their organisations and with their partners about resident voice and oversight.

Early adopters:

- Held open-invitation resident consultation events as a first step to demonstrate commitment to involving residents in the new initiative – these took place at a regional and local level, from individual neighbourhoods to nationwide events.
- Worked with residents to edit the language of the charter so it made sense to their residents, often linking the charter to new or existing strategies within the organisation.
- Worked with residents to develop reporting mechanisms on the charter commitments to ensure oversight that was meaningful in their local context.
- Co-produced videos with residents to share key messages and invite their residents to contribute.

“I took the basic charter and developed user-friendly posters, including simplifying the language so that everybody can understand.” – **resident**

Early adopters said they found the most fruitful conversations and interactions took place when the charter was presented as an idea to be tested, rather than as a defined solution in its own right. Being open to challenge and suggestions for how it could be delivered, and how performance could be reported, were key to involving

residents and developing relevant versions of the charter that work for their communities.

“We need to listen, really listen, to our tenants’ experiences and thoughts. Once we know the problems we can build solutions together.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

“Our new website launches soon and we’re focused on increasing the range of information we provide about our organisation and performance. Customers are being asked which areas of our performance they want to be kept informed about and those indicators will form part of a quarterly online update.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

“[The charter] was the hook, it was the start on an honest two-way conversation with tenants. It allowed us to negotiate local solutions as part of an ongoing conversation.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

There are several [blogs on our website](#) that detail different approaches taken by early adopters.

### **With colleagues**

Some early adopters commented that they were initially unsure of how to introduce the charter internally.

“It was hard to get this work off the ground and consider how it was going to impact everyone. The challenge of getting the message across to the wider business was tough in particular. We are trying to push Together with Tenants through every channel – the Together with Tenants work sits with the customer experience team but [senior leadership] now see that it has to be much wider than this, and needs involvement from all areas of the business.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

“Together with Tenants comes up at all meetings now, with a focus on how the work impacts that area of business/service. [Senior leadership] want to ensure that in any project, Together with Tenants is in the background: involving residents, communicating that project/changes, and getting meaningful feedback.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

Early adopters:

- Met with teams within the organisation and used the charter as a basis for discussion about changes to ways of working.
- Ran internal communications campaigns to raise awareness – putting up posters, posting blogs on the staff intranet, holding in drop-in sessions or lunchtime briefings for colleagues.
- Spoke to different departments to explore the need for and benefit of resident voice for their specific area of work.
- Acknowledged and tried to unpick an ‘us vs them’ culture.
- Established transparency about how the organisation operates and how decisions are made.

“Tenant scrutiny is not about trying to bring the organisation down. It’s about lifting it up together. Trying to make it better for everyone.” – **resident**

“We are very much trying to refocus our whole engagement model. [Together with Tenants] will be central, absolutely central. It’s the framework for how we listen to our tenants, [and] how we respond.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

### **With their boards**

Some early adopters engaged their boards early in the process of adopting the charter, but others waited until they had consulted with residents and staff first. The commitments in the Together with Tenants plan around accountability and resident oversight were the main areas of interest to board members.

“We’re looking at how to incorporate the charter into our annual reporting cycle as a start. Going further, we need to think about we can most usefully capture resident voice in our planning and decision making.” – **board member**

“The approach of a new, national, important initiative, and charter, enabled us to find language and start a discussion with board about how to work collaboratively with tenants.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

The new draft NHF Code of Governance sets out a clear requirement that boards adopting the code must ensure they comply with the following requirements:

- The views and needs of their residents and other customers are at the heart of strategic decision-making.

- That there is robust oversight of measures to keep residents, other customers and staff safe

We will be producing guidance for members that supports their board to achieve this, in-keeping with the objectives of Together with Tenants.

### **In partnership**

A number of early adopters wanted to use the charter as an opportunity to create a collective approach in their region, and establish a regional resident voice.

Early adopters:

- Worked with other housing associations in a specific geographical area to hold joint resident events.
- Established informal networks to share practice and ideas between early adopters and other partner organisations.
- Worked with residents to scope out and set up regional resident voice panels.

“We established a collaborative multi-landlord group, the Customer First Group, which includes organisations that both are and are not Together with Tenants early adopters. The group’s aim was to focus on the Together with Tenants charter and, using a joint approach, to ascertain with residents what the charter means to them and how they would like to see it put into practice at a local level in the areas they live.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

### **Barriers to involvement**

The coronavirus pandemic, and the lockdown and social distancing rules that followed, changed the way we work almost overnight. The early adopter programme was carried out before the pandemic, and wrapped up just as offices were asked to close and the public were told to stay at home.

These measures were unprecedented, and our sector found innovative ways of continuing to deliver services with residents in new and trying times. The move to online service delivery was rapid, and housing associations expedited their plans for digitalisation, often implementing long-term strategies within a matter of months.

The learning from the early adopters captured in this report refers to a pre-pandemic time, but is still useful and valid as our sector takes time to reflect on the rapid changes that have taken place.

The overall aim of Together with Tenants is to strengthen the relationship between residents and their landlords. Involving residents, so landlords understand their needs, views and priorities, is a crucial first step to doing this.

There are many practical and measureable advantages to engaging with residents. It is clear from the Social Housing Green Paper and the Building Safety Bill that housing associations will be expected to demonstrate their engagement more clearly as part of the new regulatory regime. However, the challenges to meaningful interaction are well rehearsed and include issues such as digital inclusion, diverse representation, geographical and transport network challenges, and resources. The initial learning from the early adopters can be used to demonstrate how to overcome or avoid these barriers in a holistic way.

A common message from residents was that effective engagement is not necessarily about having a large variety of ways to interact with the organisation, but rather that the organisation is genuine in their approach to engagement and has the right intentions.

“A resident should feel comfortable in saying "this isn't working", so should the housing association – and together they should then come up with a new plan. Both parties should scrutinise periodically how resident involvement is working to adjust, improve or even start again.” – **Tenant Advisory Panel member**

For organisations, it is about seeing the reasons to engage beyond a transactional or regulatory ones.

“We must make sure that the awareness around the purpose [of Together with Tenants] remains strong. We should strongly and vocally be against defaulting to same old gimmicks and tokenistic practices. [We] need to try and get across in messaging and communications that this is a movement, something is really happening, and that it must be in the psyche of every provider.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

## Diversity and inclusive practice

A common point of discussion among early adopters was the challenge of representative resident participation – including diversity of residents on boards or committees, as well as ensuring diverse voices are sought out, and listened to, in decision-making.



Early adopters shared practical advice, such as:

- Rather than asking residents to tell you what they need, ask them what the issue is. Then work together to find a solution. People might not be aware of the range of options available, or the limitations. For example, the barrier to participation might be: “I don’t like travelling at night,” and the solution could be to hold meetings in the daytime, or provide options for joining a meeting online.
- Make venues and encounters physically accessible by default, so individuals don’t feel discouraged by having to ask for modifications.
- Consider where you are asking people to engage. Are you asking people to come to your offices, or a formal space? Are there less formal options available? These can be both physical and online spaces. Consider things such as whether residents more comfortable using software that is familiar to them, rather than having to interact with software your organisation uses.
- Work with community champions or well-known figures to build trust. Where relationships are non-existent or dysfunctional, it can be hard to draw people into conversations. Instead, look for trusted intermediaries who can support open dialogue.

Some early adopters also stressed the need to take a more fundamental look at diversity as a whole, and encouraged others to reflect on:

- Understanding the barriers that might exist for residents, including the practical (like childcare), physical (like hearing loops), but also structural barriers (like perceived or real prejudice). After careful reflection and dialogue with residents, ways of working can be jointly established between residents and housing associations.
- Are you thinking about diversity and inclusion for the right reasons? For the mutual benefit of the organisation and those you are asking to participate, rather than just to benefit your organisation? Consider ways to reassure volunteers that their input is valuable and will be acted upon.
- Does your workforce reflect the community you work with? Are your recruitment, retention and talent-growth practices diverse and inclusive – and how do you demonstrate this to residents?

## Next steps – sector-wide rollout

The four-point plan that established Together with Tenants in 2018 focused on a revised Code of Governance, the charter, resident oversight and a commitment around regulation.

We have now revised the NHF Code of Governance to include stronger requirements on accountability, decision-making and transparency – the principles that also drive Together with Tenants.

We will publish the new code later this year. There will be guidance that supports housing associations to adopt the code, and we will look to emphasise how implementing Together with Tenants can help organisations demonstrate their commitment to meeting the requirements in the code. We believe this will create a golden thread that links Together with Tenants to organisational governance and regulatory compliance.

We will also continue to look to build links between Together with Tenants and consumer regulation, particularly if changes are brought forward in the Social Housing White Paper, which is due to be published later this year.

However, it is also important to remember that Together with Tenants is about more than compliance. It is about organisations developing a culture and an intent to build strong and trusting relationships with residents.

Feedback from housing associations and residents on the potential for Together with Tenants to drive change has been positive. As the early adopters have progressed through their implementation journey, both the principles and the operational realities have been tested. The outcome of the early adopter programme demonstrated that the charter commitments are helpful, applicable, and clear. Early adopters also commented that the charter provides a focal point – but that the success of Together with Tenants is in housing associations collaborating with their residents to ‘make it their own’.

“The key for this to work is that it needs to be authentic or genuine to the housing association rather than a top down approach from the NHF.” –

**Together with Tenants early adopter**

“Together with Tenants is not one-way communication – either pushing tenants’ views upwards, or imposing structures downwards. It’s about collaboration.” – **Together with Tenants early adopter**

We are now rolling out Together with Tenants across the housing association sector. We are asking organisations to adopt the charter, put the commitments into practice, and work with residents to ensure they have a strong role in overseeing the implementation of the charter and the commitments, with a strong direct link to boards.

To support this, as well as encouraging as many housing associations as possible to sign up as Together with Tenants adopters, we will put in place a framework of networks and learning opportunities that will help housing associations and residents share what works with each other.

There will be a particular focus on putting effective and robust resident oversight arrangements in place. Feedback from residents on how organisations are doing against the commitment in the charter will be key to ensuring Together with Tenants is more than just a tick-box exercise.

We will also ask housing associations to raise awareness with their own residents when they become adopters, highlighting opportunities for residents to provide feedback on the charter commitments. Many residents will be aware of how they can get involved with their housing association, and still chose not to engage. The challenge for organisations is how to design a call to action, working with their residents, that will interest and inspire others to participate.

Together with Tenant is about developing strong relationships between residents and housing associations over the long-term. Signing up is just the first step for the sector. Both the Tenant Advisory Panel and the Member Steering Group are clear that adopting the charter on its own is not enough. Housing associations must deliver on the commitments in the charter, and evidence it to their residents, continually striving and challenging themselves to put residents at the heart of what they do.

- Find out more about signing up to become a Together with Tenants adopter on our website: [www.housing.org.uk/our-work/together-with-tenants/](http://www.housing.org.uk/our-work/together-with-tenants/)
- To express an interest in signing up as an adopter, or to find out more, please email us at [togetherwithtenants@housing.org.uk](mailto:togetherwithtenants@housing.org.uk)