

Managing in Partnership: Enabling Tenant Participation in Housing Estate Management



GOOD PRACTICE IN HOUSING MANAGEMENT

GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES



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**MANAGING IN PARTNERSHIP:
ENABLING TENANT PARTICIPATION
IN HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT**

Produced in conjunction with



The Department of the Environment and Local Government

and

The City and County Managers Association

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FOREWORD

Over the past two decades the task of managing local authority housing has become more challenging from a range of perspectives. Although living standards in Ireland have generally improved over this period, the level of dependence on social welfare benefits among tenants of public housing has remained stubbornly high and significant problems of criminal and anti-social behaviour have developed on some estates. Residents of local authority estates have also begun to demand a greater say in the management of the areas in which they live and like most modern consumers have developed higher expectations about the standards of service which they should receive from their local authority. At the same time, management practices within the public sector have changed dramatically, and Department of the Environment and Local Government statements of policy on housing have repeatedly exhorted local authorities to reform their traditional practices so that they can meet the new challenges of public housing management and keep in step with this wider reform process.

The establishment of the Housing Management Group in 1996 and the publication of its two reports in 1996 and 1998 marked a watershed in the development of local authority housing management practice in Ireland. These reports sketch out the broad framework that this reform process should follow. In the *First Report*, the Housing Management Group makes a series of recommendations in relation to housing management systems, tenancy matters, repairs and maintenance, lettings, rents and tenant participation – all of which are intended to help local authorities achieve good practice in housing management. On the basis of the recommendations of its *Second Report*, the Housing Unit was established in order to continue and develop the work commenced by the Housing Management Group in identifying good practice in housing management.

The development of good practice guidelines on a range of aspects of housing management is a central step in this process. These guidelines build on the reform framework which is outlined in the Housing Management Group reports, by providing more in-depth guidance on the steps that local authorities should implement in order

to achieve good practice in the various aspects of their housing management function. Furthermore, the guidelines also suggest a wide range of actions which, depending on their individual circumstances and resources, local authorities may strive to implement in order to achieve best practice in housing management.

These guidelines are intended to be a practical working tool for local authority housing managers and, with this in mind, the guidelines have been laid out in a user-friendly style, drawing on practical examples of reforms that have been put in place in different authorities around the country, and they provide checklists of the different stages that should be followed in implementing good practice. In the development of these guidelines, every effort has also been made to strike a balance between being overly general and overly prescriptive. Each local authority must decide on its own approach, having regard to the size and type of housing stock, the level of housing policy development, and the changing nature of the local housing environment. Some aspects of the guidelines will only apply to the larger housing authorities, with complex staffing structures; other parts are more relevant to rural authorities with a more dispersed stock of dwellings. However, it is hoped that all public housing practitioners will find in them some relevant suggestions which they can utilise in their own local authority.

These guidelines draw on an extensive process of consultation with local authority housing practitioners across the country. This consultation was carried out by the Housing Unit staff and through the medium of the five Regional Housing Practitioner Networks which were established in 1998 in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas on good practice among local authority housing staff. The compilation of the good practice manuals was directed by a sub-committee of the Housing Unit Consultative Committee, which is made up of representatives of the key stakeholders in social housing in Ireland. The details of the process of compiling these guidelines are included in the acknowledgements to this document.

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SECTION ONE

The past two decades have seen a radical change in the extent to which tenants of local authority estates are involved in housing management. Department of the Environment and Local Government (DoELG) policy statements on local authority housing management have repeatedly emphasised that consulting tenants is central to achieving good practice in housing management and building sustainable communities, and a multitude of projects have been established by local authorities, voluntary and co-operative housing associations and tenants organisations in order to enable tenant participation in housing management. Although these schemes vary greatly, both in terms of organisation and in the level of influence over housing management decisions afforded to tenants, they all involve groups of tenants working with the local authority, to harness resources for their estate, improve its social or physical environment and enhance social interaction within their community. However, enabling tenant participation is a challenging task for housing practitioners, since it requires them to reform the traditionally centralised and bureaucratic approach to housing management and adopt more flexible and customer-focused ways of working, which treat tenants as partners who have a valuable contribution to make to estate management. Thus this area of work can be demanding for the local authority staff who have specific responsibility for tenant participation, but also for the wider housing service and indeed for the entire organisation.

Section One of these Good Practice Guidelines highlights the reasons why enabling tenant participation is such an important housing management task; it outlines the challenges that local authority housing practitioners must overcome, and the issues and policies that they should consider if they are to improve the effectiveness of this aspect of the housing management service. On the basis of this discussion, objectives are identified and priorities for action are outlined, in order to achieve good practice in enabling tenant participation in housing estate management.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN TENANT PARTICIPATION

Enabling the participation of tenants in the management of local authority estates is a key aspect of achieving good practice in housing management. Evidence from the tenant participation schemes which have been established around the country indicates that investment in this area will often pay for itself in decreased housing management costs, by reducing vandalism, anti-social behaviour and rent-arrears and helping to improve the efficiency of estate services such as repair and maintenance and void management.

At the broader level, local authorities are often concerned about enabling tenant participation primarily out of a sense of service to the tenant. Tenant participation schemes can add a community development thrust to the local authority housing management service by harnessing the skills and good-will of tenants; this can help to create more cohesive communities in local authority estates and lead to better integration with private estates and with commercial/industrial interests.

Tenant participation schemes are also a means of responding to the demands of tenants for greater involvement in housing management and of ensuring higher standards of customer care. To a significant extent increased interest

in this issue on the part of central government and local authorities can be attributed to growing demands from tenants for consultation in decisions regarding the management of the estates in which they live – the advent of which reflects the wider growth in community development activity in this country, as well as concerns among tenants that problems such as poor maintenance of dwellings and anti-social behaviour are not being addressed effectively by local authorities. In addition, tenant participation schemes can help local authorities to achieve higher standards of customer care, by generating feedback from tenants on the effectiveness of the housing management service; which is a useful aid to the design of programmes for the reform of service delivery.

As mentioned above, Department of the Environment and Local Government policy on social housing also emphasises the importance of involving tenants in the management of local authority estates. The DoELG's 1991 statement of policy – *A Plan for Social Housing* – argues that 'Good management practice encourages tenant participation and helps to counteract tenant alienation'. The 1992 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act requires local authorities to adopt a statement of policy on housing management and the associated DoELG *Memorandum on the Preparation of a Statement of Policy on Housing Management* specifies that tenant participation should receive particular attention in these documents. This Act also allows local authorities to delegate some of their housing management and maintenance responsibilities, including rent collection and maintenance, to a designated body which can be a tenants association.

1.2 FOCUS OF THESE GUIDELINES

Widespread take-up of tenant purchase schemes means that, in the vast majority of local authority estates, not all residents rent their homes from the local authority. Furthermore, the implementation of Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 will ensure that, in future, most new local authority dwellings will be located in estates which contain many tenures, including: owner occupied, voluntary and co-operative housing and affordable housing.

Although the title of these guidelines refers solely to involving tenants in housing management, local authorities should ensure that arrangements for tenant participation are sufficiently flexible to facilitate the participation of all local residents in housing estate management, while taking account of the fact that some aspects of the housing management service are not relevant to those residents who do not rent their homes from the local authority.

As was mentioned above, enabling tenant participation in housing estate management is a challenging process, which demands a wide range of skills from housing practitioners. It was impossible to cover all of these issues in this short publication and for this reason these guidelines focus principally on organisational issues, including the management procedures and supports which local authorities should put in place in order to enable tenant participation and the types of tenant participation schemes which can be set up. The process of establishing tenant participation schemes is important is also an important issue which will be addressed in future Housing Unit publications.

1.3 **ACHIEVING GOOD PRACTICE IN TENANT PARTICIPATION: ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

Achieving good practice in the enabling of tenant participation in housing estate management is a challenging task and many issues and policies need to be considered in the development of a programme to improve procedures in this area. Some of these issues and policies are relevant only to the issue of tenant participation; others apply to the wider local authority housing service and indeed to the entire public service.

In common with all public service management reform programmes, plans to improve tenant participation practice should take account of the following issues:

- ◆ The Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) identifies the issues of maximising the contribution of public bodies to social and economic development, providing an excellent service to the public and ensuring the efficient use of resources, as the key aims of public sector reform in this country. Furthermore, under the terms of the SMI a range of priority actions to achieve these aims are identified. These include: delivering quality services to customers and clients; reducing 'red tape'; delegating authority and accountability; improving financial management and ensuring value for money; enhancing the use of new technology and improving co-ordination between public agencies.
- ◆ The SMI also identifies the establishment of systems of performance monitoring as the key to achieving good practice in public sector management and, since May 2000, the Department of the Environment and Local Government has required local authorities to monitor their performance in a range of services. Therefore, the identification of a set of performance indicators as the basis for assessing the quality of the service and to inform strategic management decisions should be a central element of any proposed strategy to achieve good practice in tenant participation in housing estate management. These indicators should reflect DoELG standards on performance monitoring, be related to the specific local needs and requirements of each local authority, include provision for assessing customer satisfaction and addressing customer complaints and be regularly reviewed, updated and monitored to meet changing conditions and circumstances.
- ◆ Management information systems should be established in order to collate all of the information necessary for performance measurement. This management information should relate directly to the chosen performance indicators, be easily

collected, readily collated, clearly presented, and regularly reviewed. It should also aid problem-solving and decision-making and assist in policy formulation. Tenant participation management information systems should, ideally, be linked to the information systems relating to the other main elements of the housing service, e.g. tenancy updates, rents, lettings, finance, maintenance, and budget control.

A range of recent developments which have impacted on the entire local authority housing service also have implications for the reform of tenant participation in housing management. These include the following:

- ◆ The programme for the reform of the management of the local government system, particularly the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), to develop policy on each of the main functional areas within all local authorities. In most cases this process has included the appointment of a Director of Service with responsibility for housing and the establishment of an SPC that focuses on the housing area. One third of the membership of SPCs should reflect sectoral interests such as farmers, the business sector, trade unions and community and voluntary organisations. The community and voluntary sector representatives on the SPCs are normally nominated by a community and voluntary forum which includes all agencies of this type which operate in the local authority area. Tenants associations have often been nominated to housing SPCs by this mechanism.
- ◆ Initiatives to localise housing management structures through the establishment of estate management schemes, which have become widespread as a means of reforming housing management. The *Second Report* of the Housing Management Group identifies a number of types of estate management schemes, including: estate-focused management which involves designating an official with responsibility for the management of an individual estate or group of estates; estate-based management which is concerned with establishing a local housing management presence in estates by way of a local housing management office or sub-office, and estate-based strategies which involve examining an estate or an area in order to identify problems and develop proposals leading to improvements in living conditions. However, the Housing Management Group emphasises that the establishment of systems to involve tenants in housing management is an essential element of each of these estate management schemes.

- ◆ The recent expansion of the remit of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) to include local authorities. This has obvious implications for public housing management since local authority tenants are more likely, than any other householders to be living in poverty. Under the terms of the NAPS, public agencies are required to 'poverty proof' their services, i.e. to ensure they do not create or perpetuate inequality and that they contribute to achieving a fairer distribution of resources and opportunities.
- ◆ The provisions of the Local Government Act, 2001. This Act empowers local authorities to set up a separate 'community fund' to support specific community initiatives such as amenity, recreational, cultural or heritage facilities, environmental or community development, and social inclusion projects.
- ◆ The provisions of the Equal Status Act, 2000. This Act outlaws discrimination in a range of areas including employment and the provision of goods and services and other opportunities to which the public generally have access. Discrimination is described in the Act as the treatment of a person in a less favourable way than another person is, has been, or would be treated. Nine distinct grounds for discrimination are identified in the Act. These are: gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, and membership of the Traveller Community.
- ◆ The identification of the need for closer co-ordination between the different housing management services. The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group identifies the dispersal of the functions that go to make up the housing management service across different sections within local authorities as one of the main factors which impede good practice in public housing management. As a result of this method of organisation, the delivery of services on estates is often characterised by lack of co-ordination, conflicting priorities and unsatisfactory standards. Good practice requires that the tenant participation service should come under a single management structure and should be effectively co-ordinated with the other aspects of housing management in order to ensure that the entire housing management service can respond speedily and effectively to any concerns or requests raised by tenants.

Finally, in developing programmes of good practice in tenant participation, local authority housing practitioners should also take account of the following issues, which are particularly relevant to this housing management task:

- ◆ The first step in achieving good practice in tenant participation in housing estate management is the development of a strategic policy on the subject. Before housing practitioners initiate tenant participation schemes, or begin to establish partnerships with existing tenants associations, they should consider the level of resources, in terms of both funding and staffing, which are available for this area of work, and should determine the level of involvement in housing management which the authority is prepared to afford tenant's groups. On this basis, they should develop a menu of potential models for tenant participation which could be established in local estates. This statement of policy on tenant participation should be reviewed and undated at regular intervals, to take account of evaluations of the tenant participation service, changes in housing policy, emerging issues and problems on estates, and the views of tenants, staff and elected members.
- ◆ When establishing tenant participation projects housing practitioners should ensure that tenants are treated as equal partners, and that the extent of tenant participation in housing management is decided in consultation with tenants themselves. The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group makes the point that the tenant participation '... process is essentially one of negotiation between the local authority and tenants as a body to discover ways in which a new partnership involving the sharing of some management/maintenance responsibilities can be forged'.
- ◆ Housing practitioners should also take account of the need to provide practical support to tenants associations to enable them to deal effectively and on an equal basis with the local authority. Authorities should therefore make every effort to provide a meeting place for associations and funding to support their activities. Supports such as these will also help to ensure that tenants associations survive and are successful in the long term.
- ◆ Training and information for residents is also central to achieving good practice in tenant participation. The Department of the Environment and Local

Government 1995 statement of policy – *Social Housing, the Way Ahead* – recommends that local authorities should introduce a programme of tenant development and information courses, particularly for tenants of new schemes, to acquaint them with the duties and responsibilities of the local authority and of the tenants themselves, and enable tenants to actively participate in the management of their estates.

- ◆ In some cases, evidence of consultation with tenants is a requirement for receipt of funding under Department of the Environment and Local Government schemes of support for housing authorities. It is required for instance in the case of estate refurbishment projects funded under the DoELG's remedial works scheme.
- ◆ Like all other aspects of public housing management, effective management of staff resources is the key to improving practice in tenant participation. Good practice in tenant participation requires that suitable members of staff are designated with specific responsibility for this area of work and that these staff receive adequate training and support in order to enable them to effectively carry out this complex and stressful brief. Tenant participation staff have often built up considerable knowledge of the training and supports required by tenants groups and their expertise in this regard should be utilised to inform policy development.
- ◆ In order to establish a solid foundation on which structures for tenant participation in housing estate management can be built, local authorities should establish the minimum standards of service which customers of the housing service have a right to expect. This customer care code, which should be developed in partnership with tenants and tenant associations, should specify minimum service standards for all local authority housing and estate management services, including tenant participation. Assessments of the extent to which these minimum standards have been reached should be carried out regularly and tenants should be centrally involved in this process.

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN TENANT PARTICIPATION

The primary purpose of these guidelines is to help local authorities to facilitate the level of participation in housing management which is desired by tenants; to ensure that structures for tenant participation are sustainable over the long term and that the housing management service can respond effectively to any issues or concerns which are raised through the tenant participation process.

These guidelines are also intended to help local authorities to develop strategies for tenant participation which will achieve the following objectives:

- ◆ Achieve high standards of customer care and ensure accountability to the customer in the management of the service
- ◆ Achieve value for money for all expenditure on the service
- ◆ Develop a strategic tenant participation policy which will provide a firm foundation on which to develop sustainable projects which will enable partnership between tenants and local authorities in housing estate management
- ◆ Identify performance indicators that will help to assess the quality of the tenant participation service on an ongoing basis, with reference to performance in all other relevant aspects of the housing service
- ◆ Establish management information systems in order to collate the information necessary for performance measurement
- ◆ Ensure that procedures for involving tenants in housing management do not create or perpetuate disadvantage or inequality among local authority tenants or applicants for housing
- ◆ Maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of tenant participation staff, protect their health and safety, provide appropriate opportunities for staff training and development, and facilitate and encourage staff participation in decision-making regarding the management of the service
- ◆ Co-ordinate tenant participation with the other elements of the public housing management service, in order to provide a comprehensive and responsive service to tenants
- ◆ Promote good relations between tenants and the local authority.

1.5 **ACHIEVING GOOD PRACTICE IN TENANT PARTICIPATION**

This manual is not intended to be an all-embracing guide to tenant participation. Each local authority must decide on the details of its own approach, having regard to the size and type of housing stock, the level of housing policy development and the changing nature of the local housing environment. However, several key elements of the tenant participation service can be singled out as particular priorities for reform in the majority of local authorities, and it is these priorities for action which are the focus of the guidelines.

These key issues are examined in Sections Two to Five of these Guidelines:

- ◆ Section Two examines the strategic management of tenant participation projects. It sets out the steps involved in the development of a statement of policy on tenant participation, and examines the supports which are necessary for the effective implementation of this policy in terms of management, staffing and resourcing.
- ◆ Section Three provides more in-depth guidance on the organisation of schemes to enable tenant participation in housing estate management and the areas of housing and estate management which are appropriate for resident participation.
- ◆ Section Four examines the establishment and development of tenant participation schemes.
- ◆ Section Five considers how tenant participation service can be strategically evaluated in order to aid its development in the long run and to ensure high standards of customer care; it also includes a range of recommendations relating to the effective training and development of tenant participation staff and other relevant housing management officials.

In the case of each of these priority areas, the guidelines suggest a range of reforms that each local authority should implement in order to achieve good practice in tenant participation. These 'Good Practice Recommendations' identify a base-line level of service that all local authorities should aim to achieve in order to provide a satisfactory level of service to tenants. Furthermore, the guidelines also include a number of 'Best Practice Suggestions' – intended to provide ideas on reforms that local authority housing practitioners may wish to implement in order to achieve excellence in tenant participation.

SECTION TWO

The Introduction to these guidelines pointed out that enabling tenant participation is a challenging task for the housing practitioners who work in this area and for the entire housing service, since it requires the reform of the traditional approach to housing management and the adoption of more flexible and customer-focused ways of working. However, tenant participation is also challenging for tenants of local authority estates. They may feel that they lack the knowledge of the operation of the housing service, or the experience of participating in committees necessary to work on an equal basis with local authority officials. In addition, in some cases, the relationship between tenants and the local authority is poor; this can stifle efforts to establish and sustain tenant participation projects. If tenants believe that the local authority is unresponsive to their complaints about the standard of the housing management service, they will logically conclude they have nothing to gain from the tenant participation process.

In order to overcome these challenges, local authorities need to adopt a more strategic approach to tenant participation in housing estate management, based on the development of a detailed statement of policy on tenant participation which will form a firm foundation for the establishment or further development of services and projects in this area. This policy statement should address the areas of housing management which are appropriate for tenant participation, the level of influence over housing management decisions which will be afforded to tenants, and the schemes which could be used to facilitate this participation. The adoption of this policy statement should be accompanied by the instigation of a range of reforms to the management, staffing and resourcing of tenant participation in order to aid the efficient implementation of this policy.

2.1 **DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC POLICY ON TENANT PARTICIPATION IN HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT**

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND RESOURCING OF TENANT PARTICIPATION

The 1992 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act requires local authorities to adopt statements of policy on housing management and the accompanying DoELG *Memorandum on the Preparation of a Statement of Policy on Housing Management* specifies that tenant participation should receive particular attention in these documents.

There is evidence, however, that many of the housing policy statements produced by local authorities do not meet the aims and objectives demanded of them by this memorandum. Many statements provide an inadequate basis for the strategic management of the housing service – they are mainly concerned with describing the service, the aims which they set out for improving the service are largely aspirational, they do not specify how these aims will be achieved, or how the authority's performance in meeting these aims will be measured, and they exhibit a lack of appreciation of the need for high standards of customer care.

Furthermore, inadequate statements of policy can create major difficulties for the tenant participation service. As mentioned in the Introduction to these guidelines, the tenant participation process is essentially one of negotiation between the local authority and tenants. In order to participate effectively in this process it is essential that tenants

participation staff are clear about the extent of tenant influence over decision-making which is acceptable to the elected members and management of the local authority, the areas which they consider appropriate for tenant involvement and the resources which are available to support this work. A detailed written statement of policy on tenant participation will also enable tenants to make a fully informed decision on whether they wish to participate in projects of this type and will ensure that unrealistic expectations are not raised about the tenant participation process.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 1:

Developing Statements of Policy on Tenant Participation
in Housing Estate Management

- ◆ Local authorities should revise their statements of policy on housing management with a view to developing statements that will provide a framework for the strategic monitoring and management of the resident participation service.
- ◆ These statements should address the following issues:
 - the strategic objectives of the tenant participation service
 - the staffing and management structure of the tenant participation service
 - procedures for resourcing tenant participation
 - the aspects of housing management and of estate management that are appropriate for tenant participation
 - the level of influence over housing management decisions that will be afforded to tenants
 - the methods of organisation that will be utilised to enable tenant participation in housing estate management
 - the supports that will be made available to individual tenants and tenants associations who are involved in housing estate management
 - procedures for strategic evaluation of the tenant participation service and for assessing customer satisfaction
 - procedures for addressing customer complaints
 - procedures for monitoring the performance of the service.

- ◆ The details of the statement of policy on tenant participation should be determined by each local authority on the basis of a consideration of the strategic needs of the organisation and of consultation with elected members, tenants and staff.
- ◆ Local authorities should also ensure that tenant groups play a central role in the development of the statement of policy on tenant participation. In the case of those authorities in which in-depth participation by tenants groups in the development of the strategy is not realistic at this stage, housing practitioners should ensure that they revise their statement of policy in partnership with tenant's groups as soon as the tenant participation service has reached a reasonable level of development. Procedures for the strategic evaluation and review of statements of policy on tenant participation are set out in Section Five of these guidelines.
- ◆ In order to aid the development of their tenant participation policy, housing practitioners may wish to consult the checklist of suggested items for inclusion in this statement, which is provided on page 20.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 2:

Communicating Tenant Participation Policy to Tenants and Staff

- ◆ Each local authority should ensure that its policy on tenant participation is effectively communicated to tenants and staff, using the procedures that are set out in Sections Four and Five of these guidelines respectively.

**STATEMENTS OF POLICY
ON TENANT PARTICIPATION
IN HOUSING ESTATE
MANAGEMENT –
CHECKLIST OF CONTENTS**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND MANAGEMENT

- ◆ The strategic objectives of the tenant participation service ✓
- ◆ Specific aims for the development of tenant participation in housing estate management ✓
- ◆ Timescale for the achievement of these aims ✓
- ◆ The management structure of the tenant participation service ✓
- ◆ The staffing structure of the tenant participation service ✓

TENANT PARTICIPATION PRACTICE

- ◆ Statement of policy on the initiation of tenant participation projects ✓
- ◆ List of the aspects of housing management and of estate management which are appropriate for tenant participation ✓
- ◆ Statement of the level of influence over housing management which will be afforded to tenants ✓
- ◆ Details of policy and procedures for promoting equal opportunities in tenant participation ✓

TENANT PARTICIPATION SCHEMES

- ◆ Details of the tenant participation schemes which the local authority plans to use ✓

TENANT PARTICIPATION

- ◆ Policy and procedures for providing information to tenant on the housing management and tenant participation services ✓
- ◆ Policy on the provision of tenant participation training to individual tenants and members of tenants associations ✓
- ◆ Policy on the provision of grant aid for the running costs of tenants associations ✓
- ◆ Policy on the provision of premises or capital grant aid to tenants associations ✓

CUSTOMER CARE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- ◆ Procedures for the strategic evaluation of the tenant participation service ✓
- ◆ Procedures for assessing customer satisfaction with all elements of the tenant participation service ✓
- ◆ Procedures for making a complaint about the tenant participation service ✓
- ◆ Procedures for addressing customer complaints, including target response times and policy on the provision of compensation ✓
- ◆ Procedures for assessing the performance of the tenant participation service ✓

2.2 **GOOD PRACTICE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TENANT PARTICIPATION SERVICE**

The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group identifies the dispersal of the functions that make up the housing management service across different sections within local authorities as one of the main factors which impede good practice in public housing management and contributes to lack of co-ordination of the different elements of the service, conflicting priorities and, ultimately, unsatisfactory standards of service to the customer. Ensuring that the housing management service is effective and responsive to the needs of the customer is a vital prerequisite for developing sustainable tenant participation. Tenants will quickly become disillusioned with the process if the local authority fails to respond speedily to their complaints or suggestions for the reform of housing management.

In order to ensure that the wider housing service can respond effectively to the concerns of tenants, a formal system for feed-back of issues raised through the tenant participation process to relevant sections and departments should be established. It is reasonable to assume that the housing service will respond more effectively to issues raised through the tenant participation process if the elected members and senior management of the authority are fully committed to this area of work.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 3:

Tenant Participation Service Management Structure

- ◆ In order to ensure that the housing service can respond effectively to any concerns or suggestions which are raised through the tenant participation process, as far as possible all housing management functions, including tenant participation, should operate under a unified management structure, with a single line of command over all aspects of the service.
- ◆ In order to achieve this, all housing management functions including tenant participation should be based in the housing department and, as far as practicable, all staff of these services should be accountable to the head of the housing department.
- ◆ In those authorities in which the location of the tenant participation service within the housing department is impractical, housing practitioners should ensure that regular liaison meetings are held between tenant participation staff and housing department staff in order to feed back any concerns or

suggestions raised by tenants to the relevant sections of the housing department.

- ◆ In addition, systems to monitor the effectiveness of the housing department in responding to issues raised through the tenant participation process should be established.

Best Practice Suggestion No. 1:Commitment of Senior
Management and Elected
Members

- ◆ The commitment of elected members and of senior management to the tenant participation policy can be a significant aid to its effective implementation. It can help ensure that the service is effectively resourced and that the concerns and suggestions raised by tenants are treated with due priority by all sections of the housing service.
- ◆ In order to ensure the commitment of elected members and senior management to tenant participation, local authorities may wish to consider developing their statement of policy on tenant participation through the medium of it's Strategic Policy Committee with responsibility for housing.
- ◆ As mentioned above, the statement of policy on tenant participation forms part of the wider Statement of Policy on Housing Management, the adoption of which is a reserved function of the elected members of the local authority. Housing practitioners should consider using the adoption of the statement as an opportunity to provide information and training for elected members and senior management on tenant participation, or to arrange for them to meet with tenant participation staff and members of tenants associations.

2.3 GOOD PRACTICE IN STAFFING THE TENANT PARTICIPATION SERVICE

As mentioned above, tenant participation is a challenging area of work for local authority staff. Good practice in tenant participation requires that this service is adequately and appropriately staffed and that the terms and conditions of employment are appropriate to the demands of this brief.

In addition, it is important to ensure that officials working in the tenant participation service are adequately trained to carry out their duties. Recommendations for the training and development of tenant participation staff are set out in Section Five of these guidelines.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 4:

Tenant Participation Staff

- ◆ Good practice in tenant participation requires that where possible officials should be designated specific responsibility for enabling tenant participation in housing management.
- ◆ Whatever method of recruitment is chosen it is vital that the tenant participation staff are suitable for this challenging brief. Tenant participation staff should ideally have good verbal and written communication skills, be good at working with people on a one-to-one basis and in groups, have good networking skills, be self-supporting and capable of making decisions on their own initiative, be capable of coping with the stresses of the job, be committed to this area of work and to working with tenants on a partnership basis.
- ◆ The number of staff appointed to the tenant participation service will depend on a range of considerations including the availability of resources, the extent to which the housing stock is dispersed or concentrated in one geographic area, the level of problems on estates which could be addressed through the medium of tenant participation, the level of interest among tenants in becoming involved, and the level of influence over housing management decisions which they will be afforded.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 5:

Terms and Conditions of Tenant Participation Staff

- ◆ The unique challenges associated with tenant participation work, in comparison with other aspects of the housing management service, should be reflected in the terms and conditions of the officials working in this area.

- ◆ In particular it is important that tenant participation officials are appointed at a grade which is senior enough to allow them to make decisions necessary for the smooth day-to-day operation of tenant participation projects without recourse to senior management. Tenant participation officials will quickly lose credibility in the eyes of tenants if they are seen to have no decision-making power in their own right.

2.4 GOOD PRACTICE IN RESOURCING THE TENANT PARTICIPATION SERVICE

As well as planning, management and staffing, adequate resourcing of tenant participation projects is also central to achieving good practice in this area. Before initiating tenant participation projects or making contact with existing tenants associations, local authorities should consider the resources which can be provided to support tenant participation.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 6:

Resourcing Tenant Participation Projects

- ◆ Local authorities in partnership with other relevant agencies, should endeavour to provide adequate resources to fund the day-to-day running costs of tenant participation projects and the training and development of participating tenants. Further details of the resources required by tenant participation projects are set out in Section Four of these guidelines.
- ◆ In the case of tenant participation projects which have reached a reasonable level of development, it is appropriate that they should be provided with assistance from the local authority and other appropriate sources including those provided by government departments and local development agencies to fund their day-to-day running costs and new initiatives which they wish to establish. The spending of this assistance should be subject to appropriate monitoring.
- ◆ In addition, encouraging self help and joint effort among tenants should also be a feature of every local authority's approach to tenant participation.

Best Practice Suggestion No. 2:

Resourcing Tenant Participation in Providing Community Facilities and Combating Social Exclusion.

- ◆ In order to achieve best practice in enabling tenant participation in housing management, tenant participation staff should provide support, advice and encouragement to members of tenants associations who wish to apply on their own behalf for social inclusion projects or community facilities funding to relevant organisations.

2.5 TENANT PARTICIPATION PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In common with all other aspects of the local authority housing service the establishment of a system of performance indicators is a vital step to achieving good practice in enabling tenant participation in housing estate management. The exact indicators chosen are a matter for each authority. However, in order to aid the development of their policy on performance monitoring, local authority housing practitioners may wish to consult the recommendations and suggestions outlined below.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 7:

Tenant Participation Performance Indicators

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in the management of the tenant participation service, local authorities should monitor the following issues on an annual basis:
 - numbers of staff designated with specific responsibility for tenant participation compared to the size of the housing stock
 - resources allocated for funding tenant participation projects as compared to the size of the housing stock
 - the effectiveness of the housing department in responding to issues raised through the tenant participation process.



SECTION THREE

Once the systems for support of tenant participation, e.g. staffing, resources and management, are in place, the next issue for consideration is how tenant participation will be enabled in practice. Housing practitioners need to reach a view on the aspects of housing management and of estate management which are appropriate for tenant participation, the level of influence over housing management decisions which can be afforded to tenants and the methods of organisation which will be utilised to enable tenant participation in housing estate management. It is these three intrinsically linked issues which are the focus of this Section.

As in the case of most other aspects of tenant participation in housing management, these organisational issues should be decided primarily on the basis of local considerations, including the amount of resources available to support tenant participation and consultation with tenants. The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group points out '... there is no single model of tenant involvement; each community has its own special needs and requirements which must be taken into account ... The extent of tenant involvement must be decided on in consultation with the tenants themselves and must take account of their stated needs and their capacity to undertake the commitment involved.'

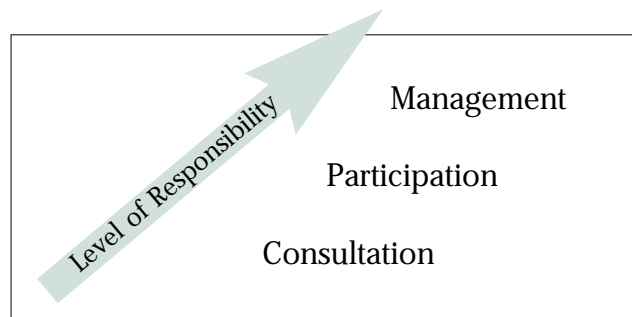
ENABLING TENANT PARTICIPATION IN HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT

3.1 LEVELS OF TENANT PARTICIPATION IN HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Generally speaking, it is helpful to conceptualise the participation of tenants in housing estate management at three levels. These levels of tenant participation are set out in a simple diagram below, and organised in terms of the level of influence over housing management decisions which they afford tenants.

As the diagram below illustrates, tenant participation can involve efforts to consult tenants about the housing and estate management service, although the local authority may not necessarily choose to act on the findings of this consultation. In other cases tenants actively participate in housing estate management. Tenants and the local authority work together in order to reach mutually satisfactory decisions, although the local authority retains ultimate control over housing management.

LEVELS OF TENANT PARTICIPATION IN HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT



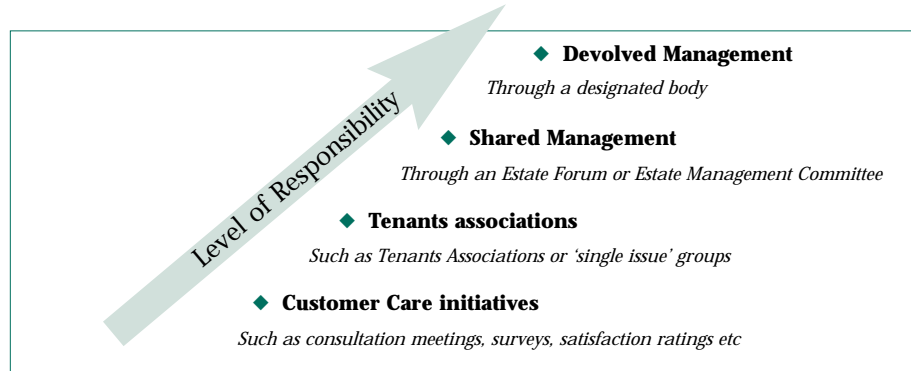
Tenant management schemes afford tenants the greatest degree of influence over housing management decisions, and therefore, also the greatest level of responsibility.

Although these levels of tenant participation in housing management are set out in ascending order in the diagram, this is not meant to indicate that any of the levels of tenant involvement are preferable or superior to others. The arrow is intended to indicate only an increase in responsibility and commitment on the part of tenants.

3.2 **TENANT PARTICIPATION**

Local authorities across the country have used a wide variety of arrangements in order to enable these different levels of tenant involvement in housing estate management to happen in practice. Broadly speaking the most common arrangements can be grouped into four schemes or methods of organisation. These schemes are set out in the diagram on page 31. As in the case of the previous diagram on page 29, the way in which the schemes are presented in ascending order is not meant to indicate that any of the schemes are superior to others.

TENANT PARTICIPATION SCHEMES



The most basic tenants participation scheme identified in this diagram is that of customer care initiatives. This tenant participation scheme is intended to enable consultation with tenants on their satisfaction with the housing management service, which is usually achieved by means of meetings or surveys. This information can be used by the local authority to inform the development of programmes of housing management reform. Tenants association schemes involve liaison between the local authority and tenant associations or other community groups on local authority estates, and, like customer care initiatives, they usually enable consultation with tenants regarding housing management. Shared management schemes, on the other hand, are intended to enable the active participation of tenants in housing management, in partnership with the local authority. This is usually achieved by means of an estate forum or committee. Finally, devolved management schemes afford tenants the greatest degree of influence over housing management. However, setting up schemes of this type can be complex and usually requires the establishment of designated body.

3.3 CUSTOMER CARE INITIATIVES

Each of the sets of good practice guidelines which have been produced by the Housing Unit has identified improved customer care as a key aspect of achieving good practice in housing management, and in order to achieve this, have recommended that local authorities should develop customer care codes which set out the rights and responsibilities of tenants and the authority in relation to housing management and maintenance. The establishment of systems to consult with tenants regarding their satisfaction with the quality of the housing service should be the starting point for the development of customer care codes.

Improved customer care in relation to all housing services is also a vital prerequisite for achieving sustainable tenant participation. Tenants will quickly become disillusioned with the tenant participation service if the local authority fails to respond speedily to their complaints or suggestions for the reform of housing management. In addition, housing practitioners should also consider the need to establish and monitor standards of customer care in relation to the tenant participation service.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 8:

Customer Care Codes

- ◆ Local authorities should develop a customer care code which covers all aspects of the housing service including tenant participation in housing estate management.
- ◆ Recommendations regarding the content of customer care codes for the repair and maintenance, rent assessment, rent collection, accounting and arrears control and void management services are set out in previous guidelines on good practice in the management of each of these services which have been produced by the Housing Unit.
- ◆ Recommendations regarding the content of a customer care code for the tenant participation service are set out on the following page.

**Tenant Participant
Customer Care Code –
Checklist of Contents**

BEHAVIOUR OF TENANT PARTICIPATION STAFF

- ◆ Treat tenants with respect and courtesy at all times ✓
- ◆ Treat tenants as partners in the housing estate management ✓
- ◆ Provide reasonable levels of support to tenants groups ✓
- ◆ Carry out this work with tenants groups at mutually suitable times and venues ✓

RIGHTS OF TENANTS

- ◆ Tenants should be consulted on the aspects of housing management about which they are concerned ✓
- ◆ Tenants should receive the support necessary to achieve the level of participation in housing management to which they aspire ✓

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TENANTS

- ◆ Treat tenant participation staff with respect and courtesy at all times ✓
- ◆ Work in good faith with the local authority ✓
- ◆ Accept that the authority has responsibilities to other groups as well as tenants, including responsibilities in relation to applicants for housing and to the wider community ✓

TENANT SATISFACTION WITH THE RESIDENT PARTICIPATION SERVICE

- ◆ Details of a formal complaints procedure for residents who are dissatisfied with any aspect of the tenant participation service ✓
- ◆ All complaints should be investigated promptly and details of expected response times to complaints should be included in the customer care code ✓
- ◆ Local authorities should establish procedures for accessing feedback from individual tenants and members of tenants associations on the performance of all aspects of the tenants participation service ✓

Good Practice Recommendation No. 9:

Developing Customer Care Codes

- ◆ The starting point for the development of these customer care codes is the establishment of procedures for surveying the satisfaction of tenants regarding the quality of the housing service. This can be done by means of a simple questionnaire or short interview.
- ◆ In the case of some housing services, e.g. repair and maintenance, these surveys could be carried out at the time when the customer uses the service. In other cases, such as the rents service, it may be more appropriate to survey a random sample of all customers at regular intervals, while a survey or consultation exercise with tenants associations is the logical basis for the development of a tenant participation customer care code.

Best Practice Suggestion No. 3:
Customer Panels

- ◆ In order to achieve best practice in customer care, local authorities should consider forming a 'customer panel', composed of representatives of various tenants associations or estates.
- ◆ This panel would meet on a regular basis, perhaps three or four times per year, in order to review the extent to which high standards of customer care are being achieved in all aspects of the housing service.
- ◆ local authority staff could also help members of this customer panel to organise consultation meetings with tenants in the areas which they represent, followed perhaps by an annual estate meeting in order to review the local authority's progress in meeting customer expectations and to discuss any other mutually agreed issues or concerns.
- ◆ Customer Care panels and meetings can be viewed as a 'first step' in tenant participation in that they facilitate an input from tenants without requiring any on-going participation in a tenant participation structure or work programme.

3.4 **TENANTS ASSOCIATIONS**

In many cases, local authority tenants decide themselves to form a tenants association or set up an ad-hoc action group for specific purposes, such as to lobby for better services for the estate or to provide services themselves. In some cases these groups are initiated by the local authority to improve the estate, but are more usually formed by tenants who may view themselves as a independent advocacy group, campaigning on behalf of themselves and their fellow tenants.

Establishing liaison between the local authority and groups of this type can be an effective means of enabling tenants consultation on housing management issues. This method of tenants consultation has the added advantage that it does not require labour-intensive support from local authority staff, and it allows tenants groups to retain complete independence from the local authority. In addition, building links with tenants associations and ad-hoc action groups will help to foster a collaborative relationship with the local authority. Where such groups are not supported by the local authority a different relationship and emphasis often emerges, which can be more combative than collaborative.

Contact between local authorities and tenants associations often starts off relatively informally. Local authority staff may be invited to address a meeting of the association, for example. If this contact becomes more regular over time a more structured relationship may develop, where the authority consults the association about specific housing management issues on a regular basis, or works with the tenants to access resources for the estate. When the relationship evolves to this level, housing practitioners may develop concerns about how representative the tenants group is of the wider community, and in some cases these concerns are reinforced by competing claims of representation by different groups within estates. In order to rectify this problem tenant participation staff should support and encourage tenants associations to adopt transparent and democratic structures. A useful method of achieving this is to encourage the group to develop a written constitution.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 10:

Tenants Association Constitutions

- ◆ Local authorities should encourage and help tenants associations to develop written constitutions.

- ◆ Although the exact content of the constitution is a matter for the tenants themselves, as a minimum it should contain the following elements:
 - name of the association
 - statement of aims and objectives
 - details of how these aims and objectives will be achieved
 - definition of membership: who can join
 - details of procedures for the democratic election of officers and committee and of their functions
 - provision for association meetings, including the annual general meeting, and details of how members will be notified of the meeting
 - quorum for the annual general meeting and other meetings
 - procedures of meetings, including agendas, minutes and decision-making
 - procedures for the management and auditing of finances
 - a clear statement that membership policies will not discriminate on the basis of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, and membership of the Traveller Community
 - programmes for ensuring that the association is, or endeavours to become, as representative as possible of the whole estate in which it is situated
 - procedures for liaison with local authorities in respect of common issues
 - procedures for amending the constitution.

3.5 SHARED MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

Shared management projects are usually initiated by the local authority, which invites tenants and sometimes other statutory agencies to identify and negotiate on issues of concern to both tenants and the local authority, in order to formulate a mutually agreeable development programme for the estate. This should result in the development of an appropriate democratic representative structure, which enables tenants to work with housing practitioners to implement the programme of work. This structure, which is often called an estate management committee or forum, can be developed from an existing tenants association or ad-hoc group.

The estate development programme should be based on both tenants and the local authority agreeing to carry out certain tasks, and on the sharing of certain agreed functions if possible. In addition it is important that the details of any proposed partnership are transparent – they should be negotiated on the basis of an in-depth process of consultation between tenants, the local authority and any other partner agencies, and they should be clearly set out in a written document which should be made available to all residents in the relevant estate. Producing a written estate management agreement also avoids confusion in the case of changes to local authority personnel or tenants who are participating in the project.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 11:

Estate Management Agreements

- ◆ Local authorities that wish to share the management of a particular estate with an estate management committee or forum of tenants, should ensure that this process is based on a written estate management agreement.
- ◆ The details of the estate management agreements should be determined by negotiation between the local authority, the tenants and any other partner agencies. However, as a minimum it should contain the following elements:
 - details of a work programme which will be implemented by the local authority, the tenants and any other relevant partner agencies
 - details of any funding which will be made available to the tenants for the implementation of this work programme
 - an agreed list of targets and a timeframe for the implementation of the work programme.

- ◆ In addition, the estate management committee should develop a written constitution, the content of which should be broadly similar to the tenants association constitution, set out in Good Practice Recommendation No. 10 above.
- ◆ The estate management agreement should be written in a clear, easily understood style, and a copy should be made available to all tenants of the relevant estate.

Best Practice Suggestion No. 4:
Use of External Facilitators

- ◆ In many cases tenant participation staff can effectively manage the negotiation of estate management agreements. However, in some cases external facilitators are more appropriate for this task. The employment of external consultants is particularly appropriate in cases where the relationship between tenants and the local authority is poor. External facilitators can help to ensure that the concerns and assumptions of both sides are heard and addressed. This will help to create trust and will form the basis for partnership working in the future.

3.6 **DEVOLVED MANAGEMENT APPROACHES**

Devolved management schemes include many characteristics of the shared management approach which was discussed above, but enlarge on its scope and mandate. In the case of devolved management schemes the local authority delegates or devolves certain agreed housing management and maintenance functions and a corresponding dedicated budget to a designated body. This body is usually composed of tenants, local authority personnel and in some cases invited representatives from other statutory and voluntary agencies. However, overall responsibility for, and ownership of dwellings and of the estate is retained by the local authority.

The transfer of such management functions is enabled by means of a delegation order which is provided for under the terms of Section 9 of the 1992 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions), Act. This delegation order should be based on a delegation agreement which is negotiated between the local authority and the tenants, and sets out the specific responsibilities being transferred to the designated body, the funding arrangements envisaged and the procedures to be followed by both parties in the operation of the agreement. As in the case of estate management agreements, local authorities may find that employing external consultants to facilitate the negotiation of the delegation agreement can make the process more manageable.

Devolved management projects presuppose a high level of knowledge, competency and skill on the part of tenants as well as preparedness by the local authority to make the procedural adjustments necessary to enable this new arrangement. In addition, the provision of a local estate centre, which incorporates offices and meeting rooms for the designated body, is usually necessary for the effective operation of projects of this type.

Good Practice Recommendation No. 12:

Delegation Agreements

- ◆ Local authorities that wish to delegate responsibility for the management of a particular estate to an estate management organisation should ensure that this process is based on a written delegation agreement.
- ◆ The details of the delegation agreement should be determined by negotiation between the local authority, the tenants and any other partner agencies. However, as a minimum it should contain the following elements:

- the dwellings to which the delegation agreement applies
- the membership of the designated body to which the delegation agreement applies
- procedures for the election of the executive committee of the designated body and the appointment of any sub-committees
- procedures for calling and running meetings of the designated body
- the functions being delegated to the designated body, which can include any or all of the following: maintenance and repair of dwellings, environmental improvement or ancillary works and rent collection
- any other work that the designated body will carry out
- assistance by the local authority to the designated body; this can include financial and other support such as the provision of office space, and could be resourced by the payment of all or part of the rents paid in the estate to the designated body
- statement that the authority has the right to inspect any records of the designated body.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 13:

Delegation Orders

- ◆ In order to enable the delegation of functions to a designated body to take place, a delegation order should be developed on the basis of the delegation agreement. Under the terms of the 1992 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, the adoption of this delegation order is a reserved function of the elected members of the local authority.
- ◆ In drawing up the delegation order, particular consideration should be paid to the issue of a suitable form of limited liability status for the designated body. Recommendations for achieving good practice in the area are set out in Good Practice Recommendation No. 29 below.

Best Practice Suggestion No. 5:

Sub-committees of
Designated Bodies

- ◆ In order to achieve best practice in enabling tenant participation in housing estate management, tenant participation staff should encourage designated bodies to set up sub-committees to focus on issues such as environmental improvements, training, youth work and childcare.
- ◆ Sub-committees such as these will help to involve more tenants in the work of the designated body, and enable it to address a wider range of issues and problems apart from housing management.
- ◆ It is appropriate to invite representatives from the relevant statutory and community agencies to become members of the sub-committee in order to provide support, information or training.

3.7 AREAS APPROPRIATE FOR TENANT PARTICIPATION

Like most other aspects of tenant participation in housing management, the areas of housing management in which it is appropriate to involve tenants should be decided primarily on the basis of consultation with tenants and consideration of their needs, requirements and capacity to undertake the commitment involved. However, in order to aid the development of their policy on this issue, local authorities should also take account of the recommendations outlined below.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 14:

Areas Appropriate for Tenant Participation

- ◆ The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group identifies the following housing services as appropriate for tenant participation:
 - refurbishment of estates
 - provision of new facilities
 - management and maintenance
 - environmental matters and general estate services such as:
 - clean-up campaigns, grass cutting
 - refuse collection, provision of skips
 - anti-social behaviour.
- ◆ In addition, previous Good Practice Guidelines issued by the Housing Unit on *The Repair and Maintenance of Dwellings, Rent Assessment, Collection, Accounting and Arrears Control* and *Void Management* also include a number of recommendations on how tenants can be involved in the management of these services.
- ◆ However, local authorities should take account of the fact that some of the above mentioned areas may not be directly relevant to residents who are not renting their dwellings from the local authority.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 15:

Tenant Participation and the Legal Responsibilities of Local Authorities

- ◆ In considering the aspects of housing management and maintenance in which tenants could be appropriately involved, local authorities should also take account of the full range of responsibilities and obligations on housing authorities under the Housing Legislation.

3.8 **TENANT PARTICIPATION PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

In common with all other aspects of the local authority housing service the establishment of a system of performance indicators is a vital step to achieving good practice in enabling tenant participation in housing estate management. The exact indicators chosen are a matter for each authority. However, in order to aid the development of their policy on performance monitoring, local authority housing practitioners may wish to consult the recommendations and suggestions outlined below.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 16:

Tenant Participation Performance Indicators

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in the management of the tenant participation service, local authorities should monitor the following issues on an annual basis:
 - the types and numbers of tenant participation schemes which have been established
 - numbers of tenants involved in each scheme
 - the number of tenant participation schemes which have developed written constitutions or estate management agreements or delegation agreements
 - the aspects of housing management in which tenants are involved.



SECTION FOUR

Section Two of these guidelines examined the strategic management, staffing and resourcing of the tenant participation service, while Section Three addressed the aspects of housing management which are appropriate for tenant participation, the level of influence over housing management decisions which can be afforded to tenants, and tenant participation schemes which could be established.

This section moves on from these general management considerations and focuses instead on the practical concerns associated with developing tenant participation schemes. It looks at the essential prerequisites for tenant participation, the process of initiating participation, the steps involved in developing projects after their establishment, and the training, financial and infra-structural supports which must be provided to tenant participation organisations if they are to be successful.

4.1 **ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR TENANT PARTICIPATION**

DEVELOPING TENANT PARTICIPATION SCHEMES

The provision of relevant information to all tenants on the operation of the housing service is an essential prerequisite for the establishment and development of resident participation in housing management. Tenants will not be able to make an informed decision about becoming involved in tenant participation schemes unless they have some knowledge of housing management. A range of methods can be used to convey relevant information to tenants, including tenants' handbooks, leaflets and tenant induction programmes.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 17:

Tenants' Handbooks and Leaflets

- ◆ Local authorities should issue all tenants with tenants' handbooks which provide relevant information on all aspects of the housing management service.
- ◆ Good practice guidelines previously issued by the Housing Unit on the repair and maintenance of dwellings, rent assessment, accounting, collection and arrears control and void management, include recommendations on the information regarding these services which is appropriate for inclusion in a tenants' handbook.
- ◆ Tenants' handbooks should be published in a clear, attractive, easily understood and updateable format.

- ◆ More detailed leaflets on specific aspects of the housing service, such as procedures for the collection of rent arrears, for example, should also be provided to complement the basic information included in tenants' handbooks.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 18:

Designing Tenant Induction Programmes

In order to achieve good practice in the design of tenant induction programmes, housing practitioners should bear in mind the following points:

- ◆ Programmes should be of reasonable duration – long enough to cover all the material required but short enough to reflect the other demands on the time of participants.
- ◆ Programmes should focus on the practical issues associated with maintenance and management of the dwellings. This should normally include:
 - local authority housing management services
 - the letting agreement
 - dwelling layout and contents
 - method of rent calculation and collection, money advice and sources of help in the case of rent arrears.
- ◆ Tenant induction programmes also provide a forum where new neighbours can meet one another before they move in and where they can discuss their hopes for their community and reach a consensus about how good neighbourhood relations can be achieved and maintained.
- ◆ Tenant induction programmes should operate on the guiding principle that tenants are partners in the management of their estates, not that they require instruction in household management or on the basic standards of personal conduct that are acceptable in their estate.
- ◆ If tenant induction programmes are well designed, relevant and of short duration, it is reasonable to expect that attendance at these programmes should be a requirement for all new tenants.

Best Practice Suggestion No. 6:
Tenants' Handbooks and
Leaflets

- ◆ In order to achieve best practice in the provision of information to tenants, local authorities should consider posting a copy of tenants' handbooks and leaflets on the authority's website. Provision of this service is particularly appropriate in those local authorities where tenants can access the internet through the public library service.

4.2 **INITIATING TENANT PARTICIPATION**

The question of who initiates participation is at the core of developing and implementing a strategy for tenant participation. In some cases local authorities have become involved in this area of work as a response to action from within the estate from either tenants associations or single issue groups. In other cases, the local authority proactively initiates tenant participation, where no significant level of participation previously existed. This is most commonly done in estates subject to an extensive refurbishment programme.

Whether the local authority adopts a proactive or reactive approach, a cohesive strategy for initiating tenant participation is essential. This strategy should ensure that consistent criteria are used in reaching decisions regarding the initiation of tenant participation schemes, and that the local authority reaches a preliminary view on the model of tenant participation which would be most appropriate to a particular estate before entering into detailed negotiations with tenants. This will ensure that tenants' expectations are not raised to a level which, the local authority discovers later on, cannot be met or sustained. In addition the evidence from the tenant participation projects which have been established around the country suggests that offering tenants a potential model of tenant participation will encourage them to engage with the local authority, because it demonstrates that the local authority is committed to the tenant participation process.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 19:

Initiating Tenant Participation

- ◆ Each local authority's statement of policy on tenant participation in housing estate management should specify the procedures that will be followed for initiating tenant participation projects. Local authorities may decide that projects will only be established in cases when the local authority is approached by an interested group of tenants, for example, or that decisions regarding the initiation of tenant participation projects will be reached solely on housing management criteria, which could mean that projects are only set up in difficult-to-let estates, or estates subject to remedial works schemes, for instance.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 20:

Estate Profiles

- ◆ In order to reach a preliminary view on the tenant participation scheme that would be most appropriate to a particular estate, housing practitioners should put together a basic profile of the estate in question.
- ◆ The level of detail of the profile will depend on available information. However as a minimum it should address the following issues:
 - demographic profile of the estate
 - profile of the dwellings and the quality of the built environment
 - details of any local housing problems
 - whether there is an existing tenants association or group, and if so the level of development of the group
 - the quality of the existing relationship between tenants and the local authority
 - the incentives for the local authority and tenants to become involved in a tenant participation project
 - whether these incentives can be increased.
- ◆ This profile could be put together in conjunction with the tenants association if one exists on the estate in question.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 21:

Selecting a Suitable Tenants Participation Scheme

- ◆ In order to reach a preliminary view on the tenant participation schemes which could be established on a particular estate, housing practitioners should compare the information revealed by the estate profile and its own statement of policy on tenant participation with the requirements and functions of the various tenant participation models. Housing practitioners may find the checklist of selection criteria which is set out on pages 50-51, a useful aid to this process.
- ◆ Meetings of tenant participation and housing department staff and senior management should be held in order to select the most appropriate scheme.
- ◆ To be effective, the scheme chosen should reflect the preferences, needs and resources of both the local authority and the residents of the estate in question. Tenants who have no experience of working in a tenants association or an ad-hoc group will find taking on management responsibilities from the local authority very challenging. It is also likely that local authorities that have not put in place a well-developed system of management, staffing and resourcing for the tenant participation service will also find shared or devolved management schemes impossible to sustain.
- ◆ Local authorities that have little experience of tenant participation in housing management should therefore consider establishing customer care and tenants association projects in the first instance. If these are successful, further management responsibilities can be devolved to tenants at a later stage.

Selection Criteria	Customer Care Initiatives	Tenants Associations	Shared Management	Devolved Management
What does the scheme involve?	Consultation with tenants regarding their satisfaction with the housing management service.	Liaison between the local authority and tenants associations or other community groups regarding housing estate management. Can involve the establishment of joint projects.	The active participation of tenants in housing management in partnership with the local authority.	The delegation of specified housing management functions to a designated body which can be a tenants association.
What set-up support is required?	Organise formal/informal consultation meetings in order to invite views of tenants and provide feedback on previous agreements. Possibility of setting up 'Customer Panel' in the future.	One-off or occasional meetings with tenants/single issue groups. Possible support provided by local authority community/tenant participation officer.	Requires time-consuming set-up process over a number of weeks/months, to enable the local authority and tenants to negotiate on new joint structures and work programmes.	A facilitated process is essential here with significant preparation from the local authority. It can be run over a number of weeks/months to allow the landlord and tenant negotiate a work programme and constitution. Setting up a designated body is time consuming.
What ongoing support from the local authority is required?	Little on-going representation and commitment required from local authority.	Little on-going commitment required from the local authority apart from grant aid and attendance at meetings.	Significant ongoing financial support; requires attendance at regular monthly meetings.	Significant ongoing financial support and attendance at regular monthly meetings is required.
What written agreements are required?	None	Constitution for tenants association.	Constitution for estate management committee and estate management agreement required.	Delegation agreement with tenants required. In addition, a delegation order must be adopted by elected members.
What reforms to local authority housing management systems are required?	Agreed response levels to concerns raised through customer care process.	Agreed response levels to concerns raised by tenants associations.	Agreed response levels to concerns raised by estate management committees.	Local authority housing management procedures must be adapted to allow for the delegation of functions. Staff will require a good understanding of how the delegation will operate.

Selection Criteria	Customer Care Initiatives	Tenants Associations	Shared Management	Devolved Management
What support from public representatives is necessary?	Not essential, but desirable. Public representatives should be kept informed of all developments.	Not essential, but desirable. Public representatives should be kept informed of all developments.	Is highly desirable.	The formal approval of council is required.
What skills are required from tenants?	None.	Committee skills. Campaigning/advocacy skills.	Committee skills. Understanding of the housing management system and of tenant participation. Negotiation skills. Mediation skills.	Committee skills. Understanding of the housing management system and of tenant participation. Negotiation skills. Mediation skills. Leadership/management skills.
What are the incentives for the landlord to become involved?	Improve the existing relationship with tenants through effective responses to concerns and complaints.	Empowerment and capacity building for tenants. Some ad-hoc work may be arranged to improve physical environment and to combat social exclusion	The new structure provides for the sharing of responsibility between the tenants and the local authority, for discussing the problems of estates and for developing solutions to these problems.	This new structure provides for the sharing and, in some areas, devolving of responsibility to the tenants/residents, from the local authority, for management of an estate. Can lead to more effective housing management.
What are the incentives for the tenants to become involved?	Local authority will be more responsive to their concerns.	Mutual support and solidarity around important local issues.	Opportunity to make decisions about the estate jointly with the local authority.	Tenants' representatives have a high level of influence over decisions regarding the management of their estate. The designated body has specified budgets and resources.

4.3 **TENANT PARTICIPATION SCHEMES**

Once the local authority has reached a preliminary view on the tenant participation scheme which could be established in a particular estate, the next step is to initiate a process of consultation with the tenants. This consultation will determine what scheme will be established and how the process of participation will be progressed.

This consultation with tenants can be carried out by means of networking with interested tenants or tenants groups by calling local estate meetings or using a mix of both methods.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 22:

Starting the Process of Participation

- ◆ In order to start off the process of establishing a tenant participation scheme, local authorities should call meetings of tenants of the target estate or network with interested tenants or tenants groups.
- ◆ Local tenants meetings should be managed in an open and transparent fashion and communication with the local authority should be clear and frank. In order to achieve this, housing practitioners should take account of the checklist of good practice considerations in relation to initial tenant participation meetings which is set out on page 54.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 23:

Encouraging Democratic Representation

- ◆ Local authorities should encourage members of new tenant participation schemes to establish a balanced and democratic representative structure as soon as possible. This representative group can then work with the local authority to establish a mutually suitable tenant participation scheme.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 24:

Staffing New Tenant Schemes

- ◆ In order to ensure the successful establishment of tenant participation projects, it is vital that a member of the local authority staff is charged with managing this process, and that this official remains centrally involved in the project throughout the period of its establishment and medium- to long-term development.
- ◆ In addition, senior management staff of the housing department should also be available to attend these initial meetings and answer relevant questions from tenants.

Organising Local Meetings –

Checklist of Good Practice Considerations

INITIATIONS TO TENANTS

- ◆ All tenants of the estate should be invited to the meeting, together with members of any tenants groups and local community groups ✓
- ◆ Suitable methods of raising awareness of the meeting include the following:
 - meeting small groups from particular streets, blocks or floors, to explain the purpose of the general meeting ✓
 - issuing verbal or written invitations to each dwelling ✓
 - poster campaigns in churches, schools and community buildings ✓
 - targeting of specific individuals/organisations on the estate who may act as a catalyst for wider resident interest ✓
- ◆ Verbal invitations and written posters, notices and leaflets should specify exactly what the local authority wishes to discuss ✓
- ◆ Invitations should not raise tenants' expectations to unrealistic levels but should not be too low key ✓

CHOOSING AN APPROPRIATE VENUE

- ◆ The venue should be comfortable and properly heated ✓
- ◆ Have good acoustics so that participants can communicate easily ✓
- ◆ Have sufficient space to allow participants to sit in a circle if possible ✓
- ◆ Have sufficient space to allow participants to break into small groups ✓
- ◆ Be accessible and suitable to the needs of all tenants ✓

MANAGING THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- ◆ All communication with tenants at the meeting should be polite, clear and unambiguous ✓
- ◆ All participants should be given an opportunity to voice their views in full; which may require that the local authority holds more than one public meeting ✓
- ◆ In some cases it may be appropriate to appoint an independent chair or facilitator to manage the meeting; this will give officials an opportunity to devote their full attention to the questions and concerns of tenants ✓

4.4 **GETTING TENANT PARTICIPATION SCHEMES ESTABLISHED**

The content and structure of the initial consultation between the representative group of tenants and the local authority will vary depending on the model of tenant participation which it is planned to establish. However, two tasks are central to this process in every case. These are: the negotiation of the details of the tenant participation structure for the estate, and the training which is necessary to enable this process to take place effectively and to put in place firm foundations for the development of tenants participation in the longer term.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 25:

Agreeing Ways of Working Together

- ◆ In order to ensure that the process of agreeing an appropriate tenant participation scheme runs smoothly it is appropriate to agree some ground rules governing this process at an early stage.
- ◆ For instance, regular attendance at meetings and respect for all individuals are vital prerequisites for the success of this process. In addition, the tenants' representatives should be encouraged to feed back decisions reached at the meetings with the local authority to the wider estate on a regular basis, in order to ensure widespread support for the initiative.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 26:

Initial Tenant Participation Training

- ◆ An appropriate skills base is vital if local authority staff and tenants are to participate effectively in this stage of the process of establishing tenant participation projects.
- ◆ In particular it is vital that participants are provided with information and training on all aspects of tenant participation in housing management.
- ◆ In addition, training in the skills necessary for working effectively in a committee, such as the roles of committee members, procedures for conducting meetings and basic accounting procedures, is also appropriate at this stage. If tenant and staff participate jointly in this training, this may help to increase understanding about their respective roles and responsibilities, break down barriers and facilitate the participation process.

4.5 SUPPORTING TENANT PARTICIPATION

Once the tenant participation scheme has been agreed and a representative group of tenants has been elected to work with the local authority in order to establish this scheme, a programme of support for the long-term development of the scheme must be put in place, if it is to survive and develop. Appropriate supports include training, funding and office space. Some further relevant recommendations on the strategic review and reform of tenant participant schemes in order to ensure that they survive in the long run are set out in Section Five.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 27:

Ongoing Tenant Participation Training

- ◆ Training courses for residents are vital in order to build the skills necessary to sustain and develop tenant participation projects in the long term.
- ◆ Appropriate topics for training of this type include the following:
 - in-depth committee skills training
 - working effectively in groups
 - training on relevant legal issues
 - mediation and conflict resolution
 - strategic planning
 - community development.

Best Practice Suggestion No. 7: Assessment of Training Needs

- ◆ In order to achieve best practice in the ongoing training and development of tenants and staff involved in tenant participation in housing management, local authorities should carry out an assessment of their training needs.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 28:

Ongoing Resourcing of Tenant Participation

- ◆ Once tenants have reached an agreement with the local authority about the model of tenant participation that is most appropriate to their needs and tenants have established formal management structures, which should include as a minimum the adoption of a constitution and the election of a committee, local authorities and other relevant agencies should provide grant aid towards the running costs of the tenants group.
- ◆ The spending of this grant aid should be supervised by an appropriate local authority official and the tenants group should be required to furnish the local authority with accounts on an annual basis.
- ◆ It may also be appropriate to earmark some of the grant aid for specific purposes such as training.
- ◆ In the case of tenants groups who are working to develop shared management or devolved management schemes in partnership with the local authority, it is also appropriate to provide the group with an estate management office and meeting room to help them conduct business more effectively.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 29:

Insurance and Limited Liability

- ◆ If tenant participation schemes carry out housing management services on behalf of the local authority or provide services of any type for their community it is vital that they are adequately indemnified in case of accidents.
- ◆ In particular local authorities should ensure that where arrangements have been made for shared management of estates involving responsibilities undertaken by an estate management committee; or where devolved management arrangements have been made with a designated body, steps are taken to establish a suitable form of legal incorporation with limited liability status (e.g. a limited company formed by guarantee of the members and without a shareholding) and that there are adequate public liability and other relevant insurances put in place.

4.6 TENANT PARTICIPATION PERFORMANCE MONITORING

In common with all other aspects of the local authority housing service the establishment of a system of performance indicators is a vital step to achieving good practice in enabling tenant participation in housing estate management. The exact indicators chosen are a matter for each authority. However, in order to aid the development of their policy on performance monitoring, local authority housing practitioners may wish to consult the recommendations and suggestions outlined below.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 30:

Tenants Participation Performance Indicators

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in the management of the tenant participation service, local authorities should monitor the following issues on an annual basis:
 - the percentage of new tenants who have participated in pre-tenancy induction programmes
 - the numbers of tenants who have participated in initial and ongoing tenant participation training
 - the number of tenant participation schemes that received grant aid or other resources.



SECTION FIVE

Strategic evaluation of the early tenant participation initiatives in which local authorities engage is vital for the effective development of this service over the long term. If local authorities do not carry out an objective evaluation of the outcomes achieved by schemes, there is a danger that mistakes will be repeated, or methods and structures which were successful in one estate will automatically be applied elsewhere without due consideration of their appropriateness. This section of the guidelines examines how the tenant participation service can be strategically evaluated, and reformed in order to improve its effectiveness.

The staff of the tenant participation service are among the main determinants of the quality of the service that is delivered to tenants by local authorities, and this section also considers how the management of staff resources can be improved. In order to achieve good practice in the management of tenant participation, local authorities need to adopt a strategic approach to personnel management and development. This approach should be based on the development of a policy which ensures that the service is managed in an integrated fashion, and that suitable staff are recruited to the service, provided with the training necessary to carry out their job and encouraged and facilitated to play a role in decision-making regarding the management of the service.

STRATEGIC EVALUATION AND PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

5.1 **STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EVALUATION**

An evaluation is an attempt to measure the outcomes achieved by a service against previously set aims and objectives. The aims and objectives of the tenant participation service are set out in the local authority's statement of policy on tenant participation in housing management and this should provide the reference point for any evaluation of the service. On the basis of the evaluation the local authority should revise its statement of policy on tenant participation in housing estate management and if relevant reform the structures and objectives of tenant participation schemes in order to ensure their long-term sustainability.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 31:

Strategic Evaluation of the Tenant Participation Service

- ◆ Local authorities should carry out a strategic evaluation of the tenant participation service on a regular basis – every three to five years would be appropriate.
- ◆ The evaluation should examine all levels of the tenant participation service. In order to aid the design of

evaluations, housing practitioners may wish to consult the checklist of suggested items for inclusion which is set out on page 63.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 32:

Strategic Reform of the Tenant Participation Service

- ◆ On the basis of the evaluation the local authority should revise its statement of policy on tenant participation in housing estate management and if relevant reform the structures and objectives of tenant participation schemes in partnership with tenants in order to ensure their long-term sustainability.

TENANT PARTICIPATION SERVICE EVALUATIONS –

CHECKLIST OF ISSUES FOR INCLUSION

ORGANISATIONAL EVALUATION

- ◆ Are staff sufficiently informed about the local authority's policy and strategy for tenant participation? ✓
- ◆ Are staff sufficiently trained to initiate tenant participation schemes? ✓
- ◆ What do housing officers do differently as a result of any training or involvement in tenant participation work? What should be done differently from now on? ✓
- ◆ Is there customer services training provided for counter staff and are they aware of the tenant participation initiatives currently underway within the local authority? ✓
- ◆ What staff are involved in tenant participation outside designated tenant participation officials? ✓
- ◆ Is there sufficient support at senior level within the local authority for tenant participation initiatives? How is this demonstrated in practical terms? ✓
- ◆ Have tenants' perceptions changed as a result of being more involved in the work of the local authority? ✓
- ◆ Is there liaison between different local authority sections so that requests for information and participation can be monitored? ✓
- ◆ What is the annual budget for tenant participation? Is this money spent effectively? ✓

LOCAL AUTHORITY-WIDE EVALUATION

- ◆ Do tenants understand the full range of services provided by the local authority? ✓
- ◆ Do tenants know what happens to a complaint or maintenance request and which council section or officer deals with each issue? ✓
- ◆ What has been done to involve elected members in tenants participation initiatives? ✓
- ◆ How representative are tenants participation schemes? ✓
- ◆ Do tenants participation schemes have an equal opportunities policy? ✓
- ◆ What liaison arrangements are in place between the tenants participant schemes and other agencies and how effective are these arrangements? ✓

ESTATE-LEVEL EVALUATION

- ◆ What formal agreements are currently in place on estates? ✓
- ◆ Is there a formal evaluation of any programmes of work for these estates? ✓
- ◆ How representative of wider estate population are tenant participation schemes? ✓
- ◆ Are elected members aware of the extent of participation and any agreement reached? ✓
- ◆ If tenants have been allocated a budget have they been trained in money management? ✓
- ◆ What other local authority resources are available to support these tenant participation structures? ✓
- ◆ Has a training needs analysis been carried out for each estate? ✓

5.2 PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group raises some concerns about personnel management within local authorities and includes a number of suggestions for improving practice in this area. The report identifies the establishment of effective arrangements for the training and development of local authority staff as a vital prerequisite to achieving good practice in housing management, and it suggests that such training should address both housing management policy and the skills necessary to provide a better service, including the development and improvement of the interpersonal skills necessary for good customer care. As was mentioned in the Introduction to these guidelines, the report also identifies the dispersal of the different functions that go to make up public housing service across different sections within local authorities as one of the main factors impeding good practice in public housing management particularly in relation to tenant participation.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 33:

Personnel Management and Development Policy

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in the tenant participation service, local authorities should develop and implement a policy on the management and development of the staff of this service.
- ◆ As a minimum, this policy statement should contain the following information:
 - the skills and competencies that are expected from the different staff of the service
 - details of training plans to update and develop the skills of all grades of staff
 - details of the authority's arrangements for staff participation in policy development
 - the authority's disciplinary policy
 - any staff welfare or support services that it may provide.
- ◆ The details of the personnel management and development policy should be determined by each local authority on the basis of consultation with staff and a consideration of the strategic requirements of its tenant participation service. However, in order to aid the development of their policy, local authorities may wish to consult the checklist of items for inclusion which is provided on page 65.

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY –

CHECKLIST OF CONTENTS

STAFF SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

- ◆ Details of the skills and competencies that are expected from the main grades of staff who work in the tenant participation service ✓

STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- ◆ Procedures for surveying staff regarding their training needs ✓
- ◆ Information programmes on developments in tenant participation and housing management policy ✓
- ◆ Skills up-dating programmes ✓
- ◆ Interdisciplinary workshops and seminars, including joint training with staff of other sections of the housing service ✓

STAFF MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

- ◆ Details of the procedures for the management and supervision of staff, including the 'line of command' in the tenant participation section ✓
- ◆ Details of the authority's procedures for dealing with staff grievances and complaints ✓
- ◆ Disciplinary procedures covering the following areas:
 - absenteeism ✓
 - poor performance ✓
 - breaches of the customer care code ✓
 - breaches of health and safety policy ✓

STAFF INFORMATION AND PARTNERSHIP

- ◆ Procedures for consulting staff on the development and reform of tenant participation policy and procedures ✓

STAFF WELFARE

- ◆ Staff welfare policy and services ✓
- ◆ Details of the authority's health and safety policy ✓

5.3 INFORMATION FOR TENANT PARTICIPATION STAFF

Section Three of these guidelines discussed the need to provide information to tenants on the operation of the housing service, in order to ensure that they have the knowledge necessary to participate in tenant participation initiatives. If the tenant participation service is to be managed effectively it is also vital that procedures are put in place to clearly communicate the details of the authority's policy to staff who deliver the service on a day-to-day basis.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 34:

Resource Packs for Tenant Participation Service Staff

- ◆ Local authorities should provide resource packs for all staff who work in the tenant participation area.
- ◆ The exact content of these resource packs is a matter for individual authorities. However, as a minimum, they should contain the following information:
 - the authority's statement of policy on tenant participation in housing estate management
 - the content of any tenants' handbooks which the authority issues to tenants
 - the authority's customer care code
 - the authority's personnel management and development policy
 - details of procedures for monitoring the performance of all aspects of tenant participation.

5.4 STAFF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group identifies the provision of training for staff as a vital prerequisite to achieving good practice in public housing management.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 35:

Staff Training and Programmes

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in the management of the tenant participation service, local authorities should develop and implement a training programme for relevant staff. Although the details of this programme will depend on local circumstances, as a minimum it should address the following issues:
 - all aspects of the authority’s tenant participation policy
 - conflict resolution and mediation
 - working with groups
 - community development
 - customer care
 - strategic planning and evaluation
 - interpersonal skills
 - health and safety procedures including personal health issues such as stress management skills.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 36:

Customer Care Training

- ◆ In order to ensure that the housing service responds quickly and effectively to any issues or concerns about housing management which are raised through the tenant participation process, local authorities should provide customer care training for all housing staff. Training of this type is particularly important for staff who deal with the public on a daily basis, e.g. counter staff and receptionists.

Best Practice Suggestion No. 8:
Interdisciplinary and
Interdepartmental Staff
Training

- ◆ In order to ensure widespread commitment to tenant participation among the entire housing service staff, local authorities should ensure that all staff are provided with basic training and information on tenant participation, and receive regular updates from the tenant participation service on their activities.

5.5 STAFF PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TENANT PARTICIPATION SERVICE

No one has a more intimate knowledge of the operation, and especially of the inefficiencies, of the tenant participation service than the staff who provide the service. Achieving good practice in the management of the tenant participation service requires that staff are consulted about any proposed reforms to the service and are afforded an opportunity to influence these reforms and play a role in the development of the authority.

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 37:

Developing Partnership Arrangements with Staff

- ◆ Local authorities should develop an active internal partnership with staff which ensures that staff of all grades are afforded a full opportunity to influence policy formation and operational strategy and are consulted regarding all changes in policy or operational matters.
- ◆ Consultation with staff can make a particular contribution to policy development in the following areas: the development of policy on tenant participation; the formulation of customer care codes; the development of training programmes for tenants and staff; the strategic evaluation and reform of the service; the identification of performance indicators.
- ◆ Staff should be kept informed about the results of performance monitoring and be given an opportunity to play a role in planning to address any inefficiencies identified by performance monitoring.
- ◆ Procedures to survey staff satisfaction on a regular basis should also be established.

5.6 STRATEGIC EVALUATION AND PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In order to achieve best practice in tenant participation, local authorities may wish to implement a programme to measure the performance of their personnel management and development programme for this service.

Best Practice Suggestion No. 9: Personnel Management and Development Performance Indicators

- ◆ Indicators of the authority's performance in the area of personnel management and development could include the following issues:
 - percentage of tenant participation staff involved in specialist training
 - percentage of general housing department staff who have participated in tenant participation training
 - number and percentage of hours lost among tenant participation staff
 - (a) casual sick leave
 - (b) certified sick leave
 - (c) industrial injury
 - (d) special leave
 - number of staff satisfaction surveys carried out on policy, operation, service delivery
 - number and percentage of staff expressing
 - (a) satisfaction with service
 - (b) need to change aspects of service
 - (c) need to overhaul entire service.



APPENDIX

This section summarises the main provisions of the legislation on tenant participation in housing estate management and of other legislation which is relevant to achieving good practice in this area. It also lists some further readings and contact details of organisations, which can provide useful advice to local authorities on enabling tenant participation.

6.1 TENANT PARTICIPATION MANAGEMENT LEGISLATION AND GUIDELINES

LEGISLATION, PUBLICATIONS AND USEFUL ADDRESSES

HOUSING (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS ACT), 1992

The majority of legal provisions relating to tenant participation are contained in Section 9 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992.

- ◆ *Section 9(1)* – requires local authorities to develop a statement of policy on housing management and the Department of the Environment and Local Government's (1992) *Memorandum on the Preparation of a Statement of Policy on Housing Management* specifies that the tenant involvement in housing management should receive particular attention in these statements.
- ◆ *Section 9(2)* – allows local authorities to delegate some of their housing management, maintenance and control functions to a designated body.
- ◆ *Section 9(3)(a)* – specifies the matters which should be contained in a delegation order. These are:
 - (i) the designated body for the purposes of the delegation
 - (ii) the functions being delegated to the designated body
 - (iii) the dwellings to which the delegation applies.
- ◆ *Section 9(3)(b)* – lists a number of matters which a delegation may specify. These matters are broad-ranging and the list includes 'any other related or incidental matters which the housing authority consider appropriate'.

- ◆ *Section 9(5)* – allows a local authority to revoke a delegation agreement.
- ◆ *Section 9(6)* – states that a delegation of the functions under the Act, and the revoking of delegations, is a ‘reserved function’ of the elected members of the local authority.
- ◆ *Section 9(7)* – defines a designated body as an association, council, committee or other body whether corporate or un-incorporate which is:
 - (A) (i) established by and represents tenants of an area within which are located dwellings that are to be the subject of a delegation under this section, or,
 - (ii) established jointly by such tenants and the housing authority and any other person or body (whether corporate or incorporate) approved of by the authority, and,
 - (B) declared by the authority by resolution to be a designated body for the purposes of this section.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2001

- ◆ *Section 109* – empowers local authorities to set up a separate ‘community fund’ to support specific community initiatives such as amenity, recreational, cultural or heritage facilities, environmental or community development, and social inclusion projects. Contributions to the community fund may be made by local voluntary, business or community groups, by the local authority itself or by means of a scheme adopted under Section 110 of the same Act which empowers local authorities to collect an annual contribution from members of the local community.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS,
MEMORANDA AND GUIDELINES**

Circular LG 9/00 – instructs local authorities to establish procedures to monitor their performance in a range of service areas including vacant dwellings. Under the terms of this circular and the associated DoELG policy statement – *Service Indicators in Local Authorities* – local authorities are required to collect information on the percentage of their dwellings that are vacant and are (a) available for letting or (b) other, together with information on the average time taken to re-let dwellings available for letting or awaiting minor repairs. The Circular suggests that these performance indicators should be measured on a monthly basis with the average monthly measurement shown at year-end.

Circular HRT 3/01 – sets out the provisions of the Department of the Environment and Local Government's scheme of funding for childcare facilities in local authority and social housing projects.

Circular HS13/01 – sets out a framework for the involvement of public private partnerships (PPPs) in housing. It suggests that local authorities should consider the scope for the application of PPP type arrangements to the management of their rented housing stock. This might entail the involvement of the private sector, other social housing providers, or, if appropriate, in the opinion of the local authority, the tenants themselves, working through a well established and effective tenant organisation.

Circular TAU 0/01 – sets out the provisions of the Department of the Environment and Local Government scheme of grants for pilot initiatives for the management of Traveller accommodation. The circular identifies Traveller tenant participation as an appropriate focus for a pilot initiative.

Guidelines: Remedial Works Scheme for Local Authority Housing – outlines the conditions for receipt of funding from this DoELG scheme. The guidelines emphasise that tenants should be centrally involved in the development of proposals for remedial works projects.

6.2 TENANT PARTICIPATION PUBLICATIONS

COMBAT POVERTY AGENCY PUBLICATIONS

Clarke, J. (1993), *Managing Together: A Guide to Working Effectively as a Committee*, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

Clarke, J. (1996), *Becoming A Limited Company*, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

Clarke, J. (1996), *A Guide to Self Evaluation*, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

Clarke, J. (1997), *Strategic Planning*, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

Cousins, M. (1994), *A Guide to Legal Structures for Voluntary and Tenant Organisations*, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

Cullen, B. (1989), *Tenant Organisations and the Media*, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

Harvey, B. (1998), *Working for Change: A Guide to Influencing Policy*, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

Power, M. (1997), *Financial Management for Tenant and Voluntary Groups*, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

Prendiville, P. (1995), *Developing Facilitation Skills: A Handbook for Group Facilitators*, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

Rudd, J. (1996), *Studying Your Local Area, A Guide to Information Sources*, Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

COMMUNITY WORKERS CO-OPERATIVE PUBLICATIONS

Community Workers Co-operative (1998), *Strategies to Encourage Tenant Participation: Strategy Guide 3*, Galway, Community Workers Co-operative

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Department of the Environment and Local Government (2000),
Modernising Government: The Challenge for Local Government,
Dublin, Department of the Environment and Local Government

Department of the Environment (1999),
Guidelines: Remedial Works Scheme for Local Authority Housing,
Dublin, Department of the Environment

Department of the Environment and Local Government (2000),
Service Indicators in Local Authorities,
Dublin, Department of the Environment and Local Government

Housing Management Group (1996), *First Report*,
Dublin, Department of the Environment and Local Government

Housing Management Group (1998), *Second Report*,
Dublin, Department of the Environment and Local Government

Housing Unit Publications

Brennan, B. (2000), *Good Practice in Housing Management: Guidelines for Local Authorities – Repair and Maintenance of Dwellings*,
Dublin, Housing Unit

Clarke, J. and Norris M., (2001), *Good Practice in Housing Management: Guidelines for Local Authorities – Rent Assessment, Collection, Accounting and Arrears Control*,
Dublin, Housing Unit

Norris, M. (2001), *Managing Voids: Co-ordinating the Monitoring, Repair and Allocation of Vacant Dwellings*, Dublin, Housing Unit

IRISH COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL HOUSING PUBLICATIONS

Irish Council for Social Housing (1996), *Tenant Participation in Housing Management: Handbook*, Dublin, Irish Council for Social Housing

SOUTH DUBLIN URBAN INITIATIVE PUBLICATIONS

Duff, S. (2000), *Consultation Techniques for Planning and Implementing Environmental Improvements with Local Communities*,
Dublin, South Dublin Urban Initiative

6.3 USEFUL ADDRESSES

Department of the Environment and Local Government
Custom House, Dublin 1
Tel: 01-8882000
Fax: 01-8882888
Website www.environ.ie

Combat Poverty Agency
Bridgewater Business Centre
Conyngham Road
Islandbridge, Dublin 8
Tel: 01-6706746
Fax: 01-6706760
Website: www.cpa.ie

Irish Council for Social Housing
50 Merrion Square
Dublin 2
Tel: 01-6618334
Fax: 01-6610320
Website: www.icsh.ie

Respond!
Head Office
Airmount, Dominic Place
Waterford
Tel: 051-357901
Fax: 051-304007