

Together with Tenants – your questions answered

Version for tenants and residents

What is Together with Tenants all about?

Together with Tenants is about rebalancing the relationship between people who live in housing association homes and their landlords. It aims to do this by setting clear commitments for tenants and residents on what they can and should expect from their landlord, enabling them to hold their housing association to account on the issues that matter to them.

Together with Tenants is an initiative from the National Housing Federation, developed in partnership with its housing association members, tenants, residents and social housing stakeholders.

At a time when the housing association sector is coming under increasing public scrutiny, this work aims to address important questions around the extent to which housing associations listen and respond to their tenants' and residents' concerns, involve them in decisions about their homes, and can be held to account when they do not meet tenants' and residents' needs and expectations.

The Federation published a draft plan in February 2019, developed following extensive conversations with tenants, residents, housing associations and stakeholders, outlining four actions that together could strengthen the relationship between housing associations and the people who live in housing association homes.

At the heart of this work is a set of commitments – a charter – which housing associations can sign up to, setting out what their tenants and residents can expect in terms of engagement and their influence. Tenants and residents will have the opportunity to report on how well their landlord delivers on these commitments.

How will Together with Tenants make a difference for me?

The Federation has engaged with a large number of tenants and residents over the last year, in the development of the plan and in the consultation phase. One resident commented: "I am so pleased to see the National Housing Federation fighting the good fight for effective resident engagement. I really believe the work [the Federation is] doing will instigate some very positive change in our industry."

The ambition of Together with Tenants is to deliver real positive change for tenants and residents by sharing good practice, providing practical support, and linking the proposals to the regulations that govern housing associations to make sure landlords are held to account.

What does it mean if my housing association is an ‘early adopter’?

As an early adopter, your housing association will join over 120 other housing associations in being the first to test and evaluate the Together with Tenants proposals, before they are rolled out more widely across the sector.

Your landlord has volunteered to test, evaluate and report back on how it is implementing the proposals, including identifying any challenges and obstacles. Together with Tenants is about genuine partnership working so tenants and residents play a vital role in this process, and you’ll have the opportunity to work closely with your landlord to explore how the proposals can be implemented in practice.

How will my housing association support me to join in conversations about Together with Tenants?

Your relationship with your landlord is really important. As part of the Together with Tenants work, the Federation will be collecting and sharing ideas between housing associations about how they can help tenants and residents to get involved and have more of a say about what happens in their housing association.

Housing associations are being encouraged to hold open days, workshops and drop-in events where tenants and residents can get more information and contribute their thoughts and experiences. There may also be other opportunities for you to have your say via surveys or group discussions.

The Federation’s proposals include a charter and tenant and resident oversight, which would mean tenants and residents would monitor how their landlord performs according to the commitments they have signed up to. Tenants and residents will be tasked with reporting directly to the housing association board on performance, which will be an opportunity for you to raise any concerns and feedback about your landlord.

What makes this different from other work on ‘tenant engagement’?

The Together with Tenants approach is brand new, and the first time that there has been an initiative to improve tenant and resident engagement consistently across the housing association sector. We know there is some great work happening in housing associations around tenant engagement, and part of this project is to highlight what excellent services look like and to inspire the sector to make positive changes.

We also know that housing associations haven’t always got it right, and it is imperative that we learn from this, including the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower.

The new approach laid out in Together with Tenants also links closely to proposals from the Government about the future of tenant and resident engagement which it laid out in its Green Paper in 2018.

The approach aims to ensure that people who live in housing association homes up and down the country can experience a consistently positive and constructive relationship with their landlord.

How can I get involved?

If you'd like to get involved with Together with Tenants, or you'd like more information, get in touch with your housing association, and keep an eye on their website or social media for further updates. Tenant involvement is at the heart of Together with Tenants and so your input is so important in making the project a success.

You can also sign up to the Federation's mailing list for tenants and residents to get updates and insight as the project develops. You can sign up by sending your name, the name of your housing association and your email address to communications@housing.org.uk.

How will the actions for housing associations agreed by Together with Tenants be enforced?

We have consulted with tenants, residents and housing associations to determine the best ways that Together with Tenants can deliver long-term change in our sector.

The need for the proposals to have real impact came across clearly, as did the need to ensure that any new ways of working became established and embedded in the way housing associations work

Another vital part of the success of Together with Tenants will be ensuring the plans link to regulation, and we will explore how this can work best with early adopters, the tenant advisory panel and member steering group.

Delivering change at a local level is also likely to involve creating circumstances where residents feel empowered and equipped to work with housing associations to set expectations and to hold them to account in meeting them.

We will be using the early adopter phase of the project to collect and share examples from a broad range housing associations who are delivering excellent services in partnership with their tenants and residents, to inspire change across the sector.

If you have any more questions about Together with Tenants, please get in touch with the team: togetherwithtenants@housing.org.uk.