

Rural Housing Association Tenant Panels Annual Review 2020





Tenant Participation in Rural Housing Association

Rural Housing Association is committed to ensuring the needs of tenants are at the heart of everything we do.

We want to make sure that we take on board the views of our tenants to continually improve service delivery.

This Annual Review helps identify what has changed as a result of tenants becoming involved in the Tenant Panels and the work of the Association.

Our Tenant Participation Strategy 2020 to 2023 details our commitment to working with tenants and our local communities. We are engaging on a regular basis with our Tenant Champions and with our Tenant Panel Groups, spread across Northern Ireland, and see both as important elements to our Tenant Participation Structure within the Association.



Purpose of our Tenant Panels

The Tenant Panels work closely with the Association to help ensure that we are delivering a high-quality cost-effective service to our tenants.

The Tenant Panels are a voice for all tenants and residents in Rural Housing Association schemes.

THEIR MAIN AIMS ARE:

- To provide feedback to tenants and Rural Housing Association.
- To be the voice of tenants and ensure proper structures are in place to represent tenants effectively.
- To engage in a meaningful two-way process with Rural Housing Association.
- To act as a consultative panel for Rural Housing Association.
- To monitor performance of Rural Housing Association.
- To participate in specific working groups / task groups.

We have currently six Tenant Panels geographically spread across our Housing Stock in Northern Ireland. The Tenant Panels meet twice a year to help monitor, scrutinise and review the delivery and performance of services provided by the Association.



Tenant Panels are providing good opportunities for tenants to get involved in shaping the services provided by RHA.

The Tenant Panels held regular meetings throughout the year with an average attendance of six members representing six areas across Northern Ireland.

We have had 28 Tenant Panel meetings to date across 6 Tenant Panel Areas in Fermanagh, Omagh, Castlewellan, Newry, Causeway Coast and North West.

Additional panel members have come on board throughout the year.

The 6 Tenant Panels operate within an agreed Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct.

The Tenant Panels have received several presentations from external agencies including the NI Consumer Council on consumer issues and presentations in relation to Welfare Reform/Benefits.

FEEDBACK FROM TENANT PANELS TO DATE:

- New friendships formed.
- New Skills learned.
- Better Understanding of the work of RHA and how it operates.
- Tenant Panels involved in decision making and scrutiny of RHA services.
- Better engagement with RHA staff.
- Feel involved in decision making.

Areas of Work and Outcomes

Tenant Panels can make valuable contributions to ensuring the tenants receive the services they want and need.

Tenant Panels can challenge how things are done and can help resolve local scheme issues.

HERE ARE JUST SOME EXAMPLES OF THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF THE WORK TO DATE FROM THE 6 TENANT PANELS

Contractor services issues in schemes overseen by Tenant Panels.

Servicing issues in the North West Area.

Additional boiler maintenance works in Upperlands, Kilrea.

External works and dumping cleared from schemes in the Fermanagh, Newry and North West areas.

Excavation and clean up works undertaken jointly with Strabane Council to address problems in Cranagh, Plumbridge.

Managed to have Abandoned Vehicles' removed.

Street lighting / additional gates installed due to health and safety concerns.

Grass cutting / trees cut back in Castlewellan and Mayobridge.

Council bin lorries and road sweepers issues resolved in Newtownstewart, Strabane and Mayobridge.

Queries regarding defect periods addressed.

Indoor Boilers re-located outside of properties in the Newtownstewart area.

Properties in Fermanagh cleaned up and painted.

Manhole Covers re-set in all Castlewellan schemes.

General Tidying of Gardens in identified schemes - further action initiated by the Association.

Pest Control visits in the Causeway Coast Area.

Guttering cleaned in identified schemes.

Additional signage erected in communal areas of identified schemes.

HOUSING ISSUES

Complaints in relation to overgrown gardens in schemes in Fermanagh and Castlewellan.

Complaints procedures reviewed.

Anti-Social Behaviour issues addressed.

Rents / rent consultation with Tenant Panels and tenants.

Key Performance Indicators monitored.

RHA Publications: Tenant Input into annual tenant newsletters / input into ensuring contractors leave job completed cards.

Discussions on forthcoming Department for Communities (DfC) consultations.

Received updates on Rural Housing Association Tenant Satisfaction Survey results.

Tenant Panels updated on the role of the Business Development Manager within the Association and the opportunities to avail of expertise to help access external funding.

WELFARE REFORM

Rural Housing has been working hard with its Tenant Panels to improve awareness of welfare changes and help them understand the impact that this will have on Rural Housing Association tenants.

Many of the welfare reform changes proving to be major concerns for our tenants include changes to housing benefit, benefit cap, bedroom tax, universal credit and changes to the rates system.

BEDROOM TAX

Through the Tenant Panels, the association is continuing to keep all tenants informed about bedroom tax and mitigations. The association has communicated with all tenants affected and has tried to help in terms of outlining options for tenants come March 2020.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Through the Tenant Panels, the Association is continuing to keep all tenants informed about Universal Credit and updating tenants on changes as they are being implemented.

Other Issues raised and discussed at our Tenant Panel Meetings include:

Rates Issues

Housing Benefit Rules

Tenant Vulnerabilities

Mental Health

Equality Issues

Disabilities



What's Next?

Continue to promote the work of the Tenant Panels and to encourage more tenant representatives to join Panels in their areas.

Continue to monitor the Associations' performance to ensure cost effective services are provided.

Continue to receive updates on the development of any planned maintenance works.

Key policies and initiatives will continue to be presented to the Tenant Panels.

Continue to monitor the outcomes of estate inspections

Continue to be involved in decision making with the Association.

Continue to receive key presentations from external organisations on issues around welfare reform, consumer rights, mental health and well being.



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