

# Interim Tenant Participation Strategy 2011-2012



**LINKHOUSING**

## Link Housing tenant foreword

A very warm welcome to every Link Housing tenant. I have been involved with Link Housing Tenant Participation activities for the past ten years and have enjoyed acquainting myself with the staff. I have found that the meetings I have attended have been very beneficial to me and I also have been able to pass on the knowledge that I have gained to other Link tenants.

There is a great need for more tenants to become involved and participate. Meetings are held in a friendly environment, allowing you to express your views and opinions with each other and members of staff.

I would be more than pleased if many more tenants could find some time to come and have an informal chat with us. The level of involvement is up to you, you can participate as much or as little as you want.

Thank you and looking forward to meeting you soon.

**Wilma Thomson, Link Housing tenant**



## Foreword by Link Housing Association Chair

This is my second year as chair of Link Housing Association and it has proved to be an exciting and challenging role. I am committed to the provision of good quality housing services that are informed by the views of our tenants. This strategy has been produced with the active participation of our tenants panel, tenants groups and in consultation with a number of individual tenants. It aims to be clear and comprehensive, with measurable outcomes detailed in our action plan.

I am particularly pleased that Link has recently been recognised as an accredited member of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service. This reflects not only the importance Link attaches to participation but also the range and diversity of this activity.

I, the Board of Link Housing and Link Group Board, look forward to reviewing the progress of the strategy during the course of the coming years.

**Angela Currie, Link Housing Association Chair**



**working together, providing homes, building communities, valuing people**

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# Contents

1.	Review of tenant participation strategy 2007-2010	3
2.	How we developed this strategy and who was involved	4
3.	Benefits of tenant participation and what makes good tenant participation	4
4.	Outcome based approach—what are the results we want to see?	5
5.	How the outcomes and priorities fit into other Link strategies	5-6
6.	Our priorities for tenant involvement 2011-2013	7
7.	Policy Reviews	8
8.	Performance measuring and monitoring—how will we know if we are successful?	8
9.	How tenants can get involved	8
10.	How to keep each other informed	9
11.	Equality and diversity	9
12.	Resources and training	9
13.	Tenant participation activities	10
14.	Tenant participation action plan	11-12

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## About Link

The **Link** group of housing, support and regeneration companies offer a wide range of services to 10,000 families and individuals. Link takes an active role in the creation of sustainable communities, by developing partnerships with tenants, local people and other agencies to build low cost homes and community and health facilities. Link is committed to the principles of social justice and inclusion.

Link comprises a parent company - **Link Group Ltd** – and its subsidiaries Link Housing Association Ltd, LinkLiving Ltd, Larkfield Housing Association Ltd and Horizon Housing Association Ltd.

**Link Housing Association Ltd** is one of the largest organisations of its kind in Scotland. It provides quality housing management services, including property management, to 6,500 tenants in social rented accommodation - both general needs and sheltered - with bases in east, central and west Scotland and the Highlands. Link Housing also provides first class Advice Services that combat poverty by means of assistance and advocacy. We have seventeen Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs) and several non registered groups that act as a collective voice representing the interests and views of tenants. We have an active tenants panel that meets regularly to participate in consultations and in the planning of tenant participation activities.

### Vision

Link's vision is to be a provider of choice and excellence in the delivery of a wide range of socially inclusive regeneration, housing and support services.

### Mission Statement

Working together, providing homes, building communities, valuing people

### Values - Our values underpin all our activities, working practices and strategies

Equality  
Diversity  
Sustainability  
Wellbeing  
Customer engagement  
Service quality  
Value for money

# 1. Review of Tenant Participation Strategy 2007-2010

In our Tenant Participation Strategy 2007 - 2010 we detailed the outcomes we wanted to achieve. By working together and regularly reviewing progress, we have succeeded and the outcomes are detailed below:

What we promised to achieve from 2007 - 2010	What we achieved
We shall implement a recording system for feedback from tenants, service users and other customers, integrated with our housing management IT system	We commissioned a new system which will be up and running by January 2012.
We shall make home visits to one third of our tenants during each year	This was achieved and provided a valuable service; linking into our main sustainability strategies, we were able to identify and offer support to tenants who are vulnerable and required support - For example: - 6% of tenants received financial advice through referrals to Links dedicated advice team. - 60% of tenants were identified as having no contents insurance
We shall provide staff representatives to attend, by invitation, meetings of Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) and other tenant groups. We shall promote the formation of new groups	Link now has 17 RTOs and 3 areas represented by "Village Voices". Staff have attended meetings by invitation
We shall involve tenants in four localities in the preparation of pilot neighbourhood plans	This has been achieved and all housing officers have now been tasked with community profiling of their areas of responsibility
We shall invite tenants to contribute to reviews of policies and the ways they are implemented	Tenants have made a major contribution to policy and strategy development and will continue to do so
We shall invite tenants to take part in planning, choosing and supervising of works to be done each year	This was achieved and tenants contributed to the selection and criteria required when Link changed to one single preferred repairs contractor to kitchen choices and to our five year maintenance plan
We shall report on the extent of participation each year	This was reported on a quarterly basis to Link Housing Association Board and every six months in the Tenants Newsletter and Sheltered Housing Newsletter

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## 2. How we developed the Tenant Participation strategy and who was involved

The preparation of this strategy started as soon as the 2007-10 strategy was published and distributed to our tenants. The strategy is an ongoing “working” document and is subject to continuous review to ensure that it meets our objectives. This is achieved by staff and tenants working together in a variety of ways such as:

- Armchair Consultation
- Focus Groups
- Briefing Sessions
- One to One Consultation
- Village Voices
- Registered Tenants Organisations
- Meetings
- Newsletters
- Surveys and Questionnaires.



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## 3. The benefits of Tenant Participation

When working successfully, tenant participation delivers clear benefits for tenants, staff and landlord alike, creating a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership.

The benefits of effective tenant participation include:

- Improved service delivery and efficiency
- Good communication between staff and tenants
- Informed and knowledgeable tenants who have the skills and confidence to influence decisions
- Shared accountability and better decisions.
- Tenant empowerment
- Staff and tenants being more aware of each others’ perspectives and organisational and financial limitations
- Minimising misunderstandings, helping to build trust, understanding and mutual respect between landlords and tenants.
- Increased tenant satisfaction with their homes and neighbourhoods
- Increased job satisfaction for staff
- Improved community relationships and neighbourhoods

Our tenants say that good tenant participation is:

- Listening to - and acting on - feedback
- Having access to accurate information
- Being able to challenge in a constructive way
- Support to develop skills and knowledge
- Never be out of pocket for participating
- Making friends and having fun at tenant participation activities
- Having good relationships with staff
- Getting the right staff involved—those who take decisions and those who deliver services
- Encouraging new people to get involved and passing on our knowledge and experience
- Having a range of ways for people to get involved that suits their interests and needs

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## 4. Outcome based approach

The Scottish Social Housing Charter will come into effect in March 2012, and will set out the outcomes and standards that tenants can expect their landlord to achieve. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) performance will be monitored against these outcomes on an annual basis by the new independent Scottish Housing Regulator.

Outcomes are the results that landlords and tenants want to happen. Rather than focus on process or outputs, monitoring will focus on the end result for tenants. Tenants and service users will be involved in discussing how Link will implement the outcomes in the Charter later this year. In preparation for this change, we have reviewed the tenant participation strategy in line with the shift towards an outcome based approach.

On an interim basis, we have developed 5 outcomes. These will be reviewed once the Charter is finalised in 2012. We also have an action plan which sets out how we plan to deliver these outcomes.

- Outcome 1**    **Tenants participate in and influence discussions and decision making processes on service delivery and service planning.**
- Outcome 2**    **There will be a range of opportunities and methods developed for tenants to participate effectively and to meet their needs.**
- Outcome 3**    **Information and communication material will be accurate, timely and accessible.**
- Outcome 4**    **Tenants will be supported and offered training to enable them to participate in an effective way. We will have informed, supported and knowledgeable tenants who have the skills and confidence to influence decisions**
- Outcome 5**    **Tenants will review and evaluate how we support and develop tenant participation.**

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## 5. How the outcomes and priorities fit into Link policies, strategies and plans.

<b>Policies</b>	<b><i>How it fits in</i></b>
Tenant Participation Policy	Link is committed to providing a service of the highest standard and believes this is best achieved through consultation and participation with its tenants. We want to give our tenants a choice of what level of participation suits them. Whatever level tenants are involved, they will have the means where they can influence the decision making process meaningfully.
Equality and Diversity Policy	We are committed to the promotion of equality and embrace diversity across the group because we believe that this makes us stronger as an organisation. This underpins two key elements of our Mission Statement: "Working Together" and "Valuing People".

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>How it fits in</b>
Energy Strategy	<p>The Link group of companies will minimise its impact on climate change by reducing energy consumption. To achieve this overall aim the Energy Strategy sets out four objectives:</p> <p>Objective A - Identify level of energy consumption and carbon emissions and measure progress towards their reduction.</p> <p>Objective B - Reduce energy consumption</p> <p>Objective C - Actively promote energy awareness; Link and tenants and their households all have important roles to make the energy strategy successful. Link will work closely with tenants to encourage their participation in energy saving actions and to plan for energy related home improvements.</p> <p>Objective D - Develop alternative energy supplies and technologies</p>
Affordable Warmth Strategy	<p>The Affordable Warmth Strategy focuses on our role as a landlord and supports the Scottish Government's 2016 target to abolish fuel poverty.</p> <p>Link aims to do this with direct intervention by increasing the energy performance of the dwellings, supporting tenants to improve lifestyle energy efficiency in the home and maximising their incomes.</p>
Tenant Sustainability Strategy	<p>To assist tenants to remain in their homes by offering advice and assistance in a manner that promotes improvements to the quality of life for all Link customers.</p>

<b>Plans</b>	<b>How it fits in</b>
Developing Self Assessment	<p>Tenants will be encouraged to take an active role in developing our self assessment framework and putting it into practice. External consultants facilitated this work in 2010 following which a long term programme of continuous self assessment is being implemented. This will involve tenants, staff and board members.</p>
Tenants' Service Charter	<p>Agreed jointly between tenants and Link in 2009. This Charter sets out key commitments by Link about the way we deliver services and communicate with tenants.</p>
Link Housing Association Business Plan	<p>Link Housing Association is responsible for all housing management functions on behalf of Link Group Ltd. LHA's business plan explains how it contributes to the Group's overall business objectives. The plan is updated each year.</p> <p>The plan details how it will encourage involvement by tenants in service monitoring and increasing the range of tenant participation activities.</p>

## 6. Our priorities for tenant involvement for 2011 - 2013

	2011-12	2012-13
Update on 2010 Housing Bill and its implications for landlord and tenant including Self Assessment	•	•
Scottish Social Housing Charter consultation	•	
Design guide consultation	•	
Future repairs service planning	•	•
Neighbourhood Planning	•	•
Tenant Led Inspection	•	•
Mystery Shopping	•	•
New Staff - Interview Participation (Sheltered Housing Tenants only)	•	•
Pre-planned maintenance plan	•	•
Visit one third of our tenants	•	•
Tenant Satisfaction Survey	•	
Repairs Survey	•	•
Tenant Handbook Update	•	•
PR Group participation	•	•
Developing framework for monitoring and evaluating strategy success framework	•	•
Tenant Participation Strategy Working Group to plan 2013-16 TP Strategy		•
Working group to achieve TPAS Accreditation 2013-16		•
Tenant Training		
- <i>Committee skills</i>	•	•
- <i>Desk Top publishing</i>	•	•
- <i>Mystery shoppers</i>	•	•
- <i>Tenant led inspectors</i>	•	•
- <i>Recruitment panel</i>	•	•
- <i>Interview Participation (Sheltered Housing Tenants only)</i>	•	•
- <i>Equality and Diversity</i>	•	•
- <i>(any other training identified)</i>		

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## 7. Policy Reviews

The policy reviews proposed in this section are based on current requirements for Link Group. During the period of the strategy, steps will also be taken to increase the adoption of common policies in key areas of service delivery by Link Group, Larkfield HA and Horizon HA. Link will encourage and coordinate this, and the timing of reviews for some policies may change. There will be a number of policies under review each year and Link looks forward to continuing support from tenants' representatives in this area of work.

2011/2012

Allocations Policy

Equalities and diversity Policy

Further policies to be confirmed

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## 8. Performance measuring and monitoring

Link will demonstrate the impact of tenant participation on a 'You said, we did' basis. We will use the VOICE (Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement) tool to make an honest appraisal of the impact of tenant participation.

This strategy will be monitored on an annual basis to check the progress of the strategy as it evolves. Link is monitored on tenant participation by the Scottish Government (this transfers in April 2012 to the new independent Scottish Housing Regulator) and is continuously looking at ways for tenants to be involved in discussions about service improvements.

Tenants will be involved in developing a monitoring and evaluation framework. Monitoring will be done to check the progress of the Strategy as it evolves. Evaluation will be done to measure the effectiveness of the Strategy by assessing the success of the outcomes of tenant participation.

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## 9. How to become involved

We will build on the positive way Link and tenants already work together. We aim to make sure the information we give you is useful and easy to understand. We will tell you the kind of service you can expect from us, and let you know if we change the way we work, based on what tenants tell us.

There are many ways for you to get involved. Link will do all it can to ensure that those of you who wish to get involved in tenant participation activities are accommodated by using whichever method of communication suits you. Below is a menu of options detailing how you can become involved at the moment:-

- Armchair Consultation
- Tenant panel
- Tenant-led inspections
- Focus groups
- Mystery shopping
- Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)
- Village Voice
- Tenant Surveys and face-to-face Interviews

## 10. How to keep each other informed

Sharing and exchanging information is crucial to the success of this strategy. The following lists the various methods that Link and tenants can use to communicate:-

- Via our dedicated website section 'Get Involved' at [www.linkhousing.org.uk](http://www.linkhousing.org.uk)
- Email us at [csc@linkhaltd.co.uk](mailto:csc@linkhaltd.co.uk)
- Newsletters, both Housing News and Sheltered News
- Leaflets
- Meetings (informal and formal)
- Telephone us on 08451 400 100
- Annual calendar of events
- Mail shots
- House visits by Housing and Maintenance Officers
- Registered Tenant Organisations and Village Voices
- Social Media - Facebook



## 11. Equality and diversity

Link believes that equality and diversity is about recognising differences, respecting each other as individuals and tailoring the services we offer to meet differing needs. We aim to promote an atmosphere where people are valued and respected. All tenant participation activities will be inclusive and we are committed to barrier - free participation. This means we will make any adaptations to tenant participation that are required to make them accessible to all that want to take part.

## 12. Resources and Training

Link will ensure that sufficient funds to support its Tenant Participation Strategy are set aside within its annual budget. Tenants will never be out of pocket for participating, Link will cover all reasonable expenses, including;

- Support of Registered Tenants Organisations (start up grants and top - up grants)
- Meeting costs
- Travel and subsistence expenses
- Stationery, photocopying, etc
- Training costs
- Carer costs
- Publications including leaflets, newsletters and flyers



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## 13. TP activities April 2011 - March 2012

Please note that some of these dates mark the start of activities that run over several months. Some of these activities are still to be confirmed and some to be added – policy reviews.

<b>April 2011</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant summer newsletter (planning)</li> <li>• PR group meeting</li> <li>• Joint tenant conference</li> </ul>	<b>May 2011</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTO introductory visits by new Tenant Liaison Officer</li> <li>• New RTO set ups</li> <li>• Tenant participation recruitment</li> </ul>	<b>June 2011</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New tenant participation recruits get together</li> <li>• Tenant led inspection feedback session</li> <li>• Committee Training</li> <li>• Summer newsletter published</li> <li>• Tenant satisfaction survey feedback/action planning</li> </ul>
<b>July 2011</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant Summer Outing</li> </ul>	<b>August 2011</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee Training</li> <li>• Equalities and diversity policy consultation</li> </ul>	<b>September 2011</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant consultation newsletter</li> <li>• Scottish Social Housing Charter consultation</li> <li>• Future repairs service consultation</li> </ul>
<b>October 2011</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TPAS conference</li> <li>• Tenant Christmas newsletter (planning) - Newsletter group meeting</li> <li>• Scottish Housing Regulator consultation</li> </ul>	<b>November 2011</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant led inspection training</li> <li>• Tenant Participation Strategy evaluation and monitoring meeting</li> <li>• Tenant led inspection – follow up inspection</li> </ul>	<b>December 2011</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant Group get-together</li> <li>• Design Guide consultation</li> </ul>
<b>January 2012</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocations Strategy Review</li> <li>• Tenant Handbook review</li> </ul>	<b>February 2012</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant conference</li> <li>• Older peoples strategy consultation</li> </ul>	<b>March 2012</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newsletter group meeting</li> <li>• Tenant Participation Strategy evaluation and monitoring meeting</li> </ul>

These dates will be announced on our website, if you are interested in participating in any of the above please contact the Tenant Liaison Officer on [tlo@linkhaltd.co.uk](mailto:tlo@linkhaltd.co.uk) or our Customer Service Centre 08451 400 100. Further Tenant Activities will be added throughout the year. Please check our website for any changes and additions to the calendar.

# 14. Tenant Participation Action Plan 2011/2012

**OUTCOME 1: Tenants participate in and influence discussions and decision making processes on service delivery and service planning.**

Action	Who is responsible	Timescale	Measure of success
Deliver tenant consultation on allocations strategy review	Tenant Liaison Officer (TLO) and Housing Services Manager	January	Use VOICE (Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement) method
2 new tenants recruited and supported to serve on Link Housing Board	TLO and Housing Director	April – March	Examples of changes to policy and procedures as a result of tenant participation. Based on the 'You said, we did' template for feedback/recording evidence
Deliver repairs service consultation	TLO and Business Development	September	Evidence of the range of decisions in which tenants are involved
Tenant consultation on policies (detail to be confirmed)	TLO and Policy Manager	April – March	Increased tenant satisfaction in general service improvements
Deliver tenant led inspection (topic to be confirmed)	TLO	November - March	

**OUTCOME 2: There will be a range of opportunities and methods developed for tenants to participate effectively and to meet their needs**

Action	Who is responsible	Timescale	Measure of success
Methods will be developed that are fit for purpose, inclusive and interactive.  Compile a register of tenants who wish to participate in the activity of their choice  Develop the tenants panel to work with the policy forum and board approval process.  Increase the number of groups that become RTOs  Increase youth involvement in tenant participation activities.  Organise tenant conference	Tenant Liaison Officer	April -March	Increased number of registered and non - registered groups  Representation of tenant group membership for example, geographic areas covered, age, gender, ethnicity of participants  % increase of individuals participating as a proportion of housing stock

**OUTCOME 3: Information and communication material will be accurate, timely and accessible.**

Action	Who is responsible	Timescale	Measure of success
<p>Consultation material will be in plain language, and will be provided in advance of meetings.</p> <p>We will develop a tenant approved standard for communications materials.</p> <p>Support tenants to be involved in PR group</p> <p>Develop publicity material for tenant participation activities</p> <p>Feedback will be provided to tenants on the impact and results of their participation.</p>	Tenant Liaison Officer	<p>All year</p> <p>March</p> <p>October</p> <p>August</p> <p>All year</p>	<p>Materials produced</p> <p>Increased number and variety of different methods of communication</p> <p>Tenant satisfaction levels of communication materials and methods</p>

**OUTCOME 4: We have informed and supported knowledgeable tenants who have the skills and confidence to influence decisions**

Action	Who is responsible	Timescale	Measure of success
<p>Tenants will be offered formal and informal learning opportunities to develop skills and participation input.</p> <p>Training needs assessment will be carried out with RTOs and consultation groups and relevant training organised eg Committee skills, Equalities, Mystery shopping etc</p>	Tenant Liaison Officer	All year	<p>Number of training sessions delivered</p> <p>Participant evaluations that demonstrate training and support has an impact on their participation</p>

**OUTCOME 5: Tenants participate in review and evaluation of how we support and develop tenant participation.**

Action	Who is responsible	Timescale	Measure of success
<p>A monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed. To include equalities monitoring to ensure we are including a diverse range of opinions and perspectives in tenant participation activities. This will be in line with the self assessment model to assess and demonstrate what level of influence tenant involvement has.</p>	Tenant Liaison Officer	November and March	VOICE method to record Impact.