

Tenant Participation Strategy 2016- 2019



Your Voice Group



Argyll Tenants Panel

Our Commitment

Argyll Community Housing Association is committed to provide equal opportunities across all services and to avoid discrimination. This strategy is intended to assist ACHA to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this strategy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

This strategy can be made available in other formats, for example in large print, audio-format or Braille: the document may also be available in other languages, in full or summary form, as appropriate

Endorsements of this Strategy

The Argyll Tenants Panel

The Tenants Panel has been involved in the production of this strategy from day one and is proud to put our name here. We look forward to working in true partnership with ACHA and building on the existing good partnership working.

James Milne, Chairman of ACHA's Board of Management

Without your involvement as a tenant it will be very difficult for ACHA to make improvements to our service that you, and other tenants, would wish to see. As the Chair of your Housing Association I am able to assure you that the ACHA staff welcome your involvement, in particular with regard to any constructive criticism you may have. Our aim is you are able to live in a warm and comfortable home, safe in the knowledge that ACHA is there to respond to any worries you may have in connection with your home. Please help us to achieve that aim.

Alastair MacGregor, Chief Executive

We welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with tenants and recognise the importance of good quality participation. By working together we can build a strong and successful organisation that meets and hopefully exceeds the needs of tenants. Involving tenants is at the core of ACHA's principles and we will always strive to give communities as many opportunities as possible to work with us. We are keen to wherever possible incorporate the outcomes of tenant engagement in our priorities going forward so please input if you feel strongly about something.

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Section 1 Context

- 1.1 This document explains how tenants can become involved with ACHA and the mechanisms we can use to encourage this to happen. We work closely with tenants to make sure there are opportunities to influence the services we provide at every level.
- 1.2 ACHA is a Tenant led organisation and becoming a member of our Governing body by joining our Board of Management or one of the Local Area Committees is an ideal way to get involved and participate in the decision making process. However, this strategy is aimed at tenants who wish to take a more independent role in the review and development of our services.
- 1.3 Tenant participation is about tenants taking part in, and influencing the decision making processes which relate to:-
 - Housing policies;
 - Housing standards
 - The scope and standard of overall service delivery.

Tenants are welcome and encouraged to participate in discussions and consultation on all of our services.

- 1.4 Whilst this strategy is primarily designed to promote tenant participation and involvement, the Association welcomes its obligation to engage with the wider community, particularly where we have mixed tenure estates.
- 1.5 Principles of good tenant participation
We have adopted a set of key principles to guide our work in tenant involvement. In particular we will:
 - Involve tenants as partners in considering matters affecting our communities and respond positively to enquiries, ideas and suggestions, both individually and collectively.
 - Encourage and support the development of effective, representative and geographically viable tenants' organisations in all parts of Argyll & Bute.
 - Keep under review the level of funding that is available to sustain and promote effective tenant participation. Commit resources to promote good tenant participation practice.
 - Recognise and respect the rights of properly constituted tenants' organisations to be independent of ACHA.

- Ensure that staff are provided with adequate information and training to work in partnership on matters affecting tenants and other customers.
- Take practical steps, such as providing language interpretation, help with childcare, or help with transport and subsistence costs, to enable everyone to take up opportunities to participate.
- Take into account the particular problems facing small, rural, dispersed or island communities in terms of participation.
- Plan work to allow reasonable time for consultation and participation.
- Provide training and support for staff and committee /group members

Section 2 The Law and Good Practice

2.1 Housing Scotland Act 2001

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 created a legal framework for tenants who have a Scottish secure tenancy or short Scottish secure tenancy to take part in the way their housing is managed. Landlords must develop a tenant participation strategy and put it into practise. Landlords must also support and consult with Registered Tenant Organisations (RTO's) and hold a register of these organisations.

2.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 - Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Charter was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2012 as a tool to enable tenants to monitor the standards and the performance of the services that their landlord provides. It is also used by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to monitor the performance of Registered Social landlords. The Charter has been broken down into sixteen outcomes and outcome number three is all about Participation and states:

Social Landlords manage their business so that:

“Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.”

This outcome describes what landlords should achieve by meeting their statutory duties on tenant participation. It also covers:-

- How social landlords gather and take account of the views and priorities of their tenants;
- How they shape their services to reflect these views and

- How landlords help tenants and other customers become more capable of involvement.

Section 3 Links to other Policies and Strategies (www.acha.co.uk)

3.1 Argyll & Bute Council Local Housing Strategy

Communications Strategy *

Complaints Policy

Customer feedback strategy *

Customer Care Charter

Data Protection Policy

Equal Opportunities Policy

Gypsy Travellers' Strategy

Membership Policy

*These strategies are due to be reviewed and combined late 2016

Section 4 Our Strategy Objectives

4.1 Tenant Participation - Mission Statement

This strategy is aimed at anyone with an interest in tenant participation in Argyll and Bute. The purpose of this strategy is to;

- Create opportunities for tenant participation and involvement
- Raise awareness of tenant participation
- Remove barriers that may prevent people from getting involved.

4.2 This strategy is intended to meet and exceed the legal requirement expected of social landlords. We aim to offer high quality tenant participation opportunities and recognise that tenants not only have the right to be involved, but that by doing so will help ACHA continue to improve as an organisation.

Section 5 Implementing our Strategy Objectives

5.1 Opportunities for Tenant Participation

We aim to provide a range of flexible options which give tenants choice and opportunities to be involved with us. It is particularly important to provide flexibility given the large geographic area of Argyll and Bute, and the diversity of all tenants' needs, aspirations and circumstances.

Out with our Governing Body, we currently have four main ways in which tenants can become involved in what we do. It is very important that any form of tenant participation is independent from ACHA in order to enable tenants to properly scrutinise the work that we do.

These participation opportunities are listed below and further details on how you can be part of any of these groups can be found in Appendix 1 on page 13.

- Registered Tenant Organisations

We currently have a number of Registered Tenant Organisations. These are independent constituted organisations which meet regularly and report progress to residents at their Annual General Meeting. They are supported with an annual grant, given development support and help to access other funding, if appropriate

- The Argyll Tenants Panel

The Panel set their own agenda and regularly have guests attend including senior ACHA staff. The Panel also has representatives attending the Regional Networks (Scottish Government administered tenants bodies) so there is good knowledge and understanding of issues affecting local Argyll communities to Scotland-wide policy matters

- Tenants Consultation Register

Joining a tenants' and residents' association does not suit every tenant so we have created a consultation register of actively interested tenants who would like to be consulted on issues which may affect them.

- Your Voice Group

Our scrutiny group is independently advised, supported by dedicated staff & chooses its own service areas to examine.

In addition to the above there are lots of more informal ways to get involved, such as:

- Taking part in surveys or consultation by post, email , Web , in person or via the telephone
- Attending Public meetings, conferences and seminars
- Taking part in 'Walkabouts' with tenants/staff to look at particular areas
- Open days/ exhibitions/ road shows
- Becoming a member of ACHA

OR

- Simply by contacting ACHA with any concerns, suggestions or ideas regarding our services.

5.2 We will always aim to offer a variety of participation opportunities to suit different lifestyles, personal circumstances and capabilities.

Section 6 Monitoring ACHA's Performance

6.1 ACHA is committed to improving performance and satisfaction levels across all aspects of service delivery. In order to achieve this we routinely collect, analyse and report on performance relating to a wide range of services including:-

- Rent arrears
- Void (empty properties) management
- Repairs performance
- Complaints

6.2 Performance Information is monitored 6 weekly by ACHA's Senior Management Team and Quarterly by the Board of Management. The Argyll Tenants Panel and ACHA's Area Committees are also provided with Performance information at each of their meetings.

Specific performance information is also reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Your Voice tenant scrutiny group will also test and scrutinise a range of Policies and procedures to ensure that they are "fit for purpose". The Group will report back their findings and make recommendations to ACHA's Board of Management.

- 6.3 ACHA will carry out an annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey during which the views of our tenants are sought. The outcomes from this survey are reported to the Board of Management and the Scottish Housing Regulator. Each year an action plan will be developed to help tackle areas of tenant dissatisfaction.

In addition to the main Tenant Satisfaction survey we also carry out annual bespoke satisfaction surveys with tenants on our Gypsy Travellers sites and also with tenants from our Sheltered Housing complexes.

Tenants using our repairs service also have the opportunity to provide feedback following the completion of their repair.

- 6.4 Feedback from tenants who take part in surveys is vital to ACHA and assists with the on-going development of services.
- 6.5 We will publish information relating to performance and satisfaction in our Tenants' Newsletter which is issued to all tenants twice per year. We also publish a suite of performance and satisfaction information, every October, in our Landlord Report.
- 6.6 Tenants and other customers can compare ACHA's performance with other Registered Social Landlords via the Scottish Housing Regulators website:-
www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

Section 7 Resources

- 7.1 We recognise that to fully support tenant participation it is vital that adequate resources are made available. Budgets are available to provide support for:-
- Registered Tenant Organisations
 - The Argyll Tenants Panel
 - Your Voice Tenant scrutiny group
 - The production of the Tenants Newsletter
 - Satisfaction surveys
 - Consultation exercises

- 7.2 Staff will be available to attend meetings with the various groups and where appropriate will provide training, guidance and information on ACHA's services.
- 7.3 ACHA will also assist groups with procuring relevant external training or support in order to help them meet their aims and objectives.
- 7.4 We will provide support and guidance to groups who are considering setting up a new Registered Tenant Organisation.
- 7.5 Where appropriate ACHA will provide groups with administrative support from within our own staff resources.

Section 8 Dealing with Complaints

- 8.1 We value complaints and endeavour to use information from them to improve our services. If a tenant or other customer is unhappy with our Tenant Participation arrangements or the way we deliver this service we will deal with the matter through our Complaints handling procedure.
- 8.2 Independent advice on Tenant participation can be obtained from:-

[Scottish Government – Social Housing, Regulation & Tenant Priorities](#)

Housing Policy Unit

Housing, Regeneration and Welfare Directorate

Victoria Quay

Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

[Tel:- 0300 244 4000](#)

[Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

Europa Building

450 Argyle Street

Glasgow

G2 8LG

[Tel:- 0141 242 5642](#)

[TPAS Tenant Participation Advisory Service](#)

74-78 Saltmarket,

Glasgow G1 5LD

[Tel:-](#) 0141 552 3633

[TIS Tenants Information Service](#)

Suite 128 Baltic Chambers

50 Wellington Street

Glasgow G2 6HJ

[Tel:-](#) 0141 248 1242

[Shelter Scotland](#)

4th floor, Scotiabank House

6 South Charlotte Street Edinburgh, EH2 4AW

[Tel:-](#) 0808 800 4444 (calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.)

Section 9 Consultation and Review Procedures

9.1 This strategy will be reviewed every three years. The review will be carried out in consultation with, but not limited to:-

- The Argyll Tenants Panel
- All ACHA Registered Tenant Organisations
- Your Voice tenant scrutiny group
- The Tenant Consultation Register
- ACHA Area Committees
- All tenants who express an interest in being consulted
- Staff

9.2 The outcome of the review process will be made available via the Tenants newsletter

Section 10 Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 10.1 The identities or personal information of tenants and other customers taking part in consultation or participation exercises will not be passed onto any third parties.

- 10.2 Our Tenant Participation Strategy will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2002

Appendix 1

Options for Tenant Participation

	Who Can Join?	How to Get Involved	Purpose and Main Functions
Tenants Consultation Register	Any Tenant	Ask for an application form from any ACHA office or communications@acha.co.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those on the register are sent questionnaires, draft policies or strategies by e-mail (or by post with a 'reply-paid' envelope). • Enables tenants to contribute to the work of ACHA from their own home and overcomes the difficulties of a large geographical area. Members can choose to take part in as many or as few consultations as they wish.
Registered Tenant Organisation	Tenants and Residents within a defined area	ACHA can help you if you want to start a group or supply contacts of existing groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier access to and sharing of information • Representation of the wishes of the local community or individuals • Constituted groups can apply for funding • Recognised groups can be consulted by ACHA or others • Can work in partnership with others
Argyll Tenants Panel	Representatives from Tenants Groups or anyone on the	Contact your local ACHA office or ACHA's communications team who will arrange for a member of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet 6 times per year • Review ACHA's Key performance information • ACHA staff including Chief Executive invited to attend • The Panel set their own agenda each year

	Tenants Consultation Register	the Tenants Panel to contact you. communications@acha.co.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involved in all major consultations including those from Scottish Government or Housing Regulator Represented at the Argyll and Bute Housing Forum Includes updates from the Regional Network (network of tenants reps which meet to discuss national housing policy and practice issues.
'Your Voice' Tenant Scrutiny Panel	Any Tenant (with the exception of Board members)	Contact your local ACHA office or ACHA's communications team who will arrange for a member of staff to contact you with more details: communications@acha.co.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinises ACHA's policies and procedures to check if they are "Fit for purpose" Makes recommendations for change or improvements to the Board of Management
Register your interest in reviewing policies	Any Tenant	If you have a particular interest in any of our services and would like to be part of the consultation process let us know by contacting any area office or communications@acha.co.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can take part in consultation from the comfort of your own home. Your views will be considered and taken into account whenever possible. You can choose what consultation you would like to take part in – we will publish lists of forthcoming reviews in our newsletter and our website.
Register your phone number or email address to	Any Tenant	If you register your phone and email address you may be contacted during our annual Tenant Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take part in surveys from the comfort of your own home. You can choose whether or not you participate. Your comments and views will be taken into

allow us to contact you about new surveys		Survey. You don't have to take part but it would be great if you did! Complete our household questionnaire and register your contact details at www.acha.co.uk	consideration.
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