

Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Policy

August 2024

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1. Version control

Date	Details	Updated by
January 2024	V1	Kelly Kinnair
September 2024	V2	Kelly Kinnair

2. Introduction

Torbay Council recognises the benefits of having tenants who are involved in decisions about how services are provided and how the organisation is run. This policy sets out how we will involve our tenants in our service provision and gather their views.

Through this policy, Torbay Council aims to ensure that tenants feel that they are provided with sufficient opportunities to influence how Torbay Council Social Housing is run, and that we have

appropriate structures and processes in place to gather tenants' views to continuously improve its service. Torbay Council is committed to making the voices of its tenants heard.

3. Approach

This policy covers all tenants of Torbay Council's social housing properties.

The Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard requires Registered Providers to ensure that customers are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- the formulation of their landlord's housing-related policies and strategic priorities.
- the making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards.
- the scrutiny of the landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved.
- the management of their homes, where applicable.
- the management of repairs and maintenance services.
- agreeing local offers for service delivery.

4. Supporting Tenant Involvement

To support the involvement and empowerment of tenants, Torbay Council will:

- seek to consult tenants when making decisions.
- provide timely and relevant performance information to tenants to support effective scrutiny of Torbay Council's performance. This will include the production of an annual report detailing our performance against various key metrics, and any upcoming changes to services.
- provide tenants with a variety of channels through which they can provide feedback, including via telephone and email or face to face.
- areas where Torbay Council may seek to gather the views of tenants include (but are not limited to):
 - rent levels.
 - housing management services and service standards (e.g. Tenancy Agreements).
 - property management services and service standards (e.g. standard of repairs, response times).
 - governance issues.
 - non-housing issues (e.g. security, social inclusion).
 - the content and implementation of this policy.

5. Formal Feedback Gathering

In addition to establishing and maintaining a range of channels through which tenants can provide ad-hoc feedback to Torbay Council, the association will establish formal regular processes for gathering tenant feedback through:

Tenant satisfaction surveys: Torbay Council will undertake an annual tenant satisfaction survey. This survey will invite tenants to provide their views on a range of service provisions and will provide tenants with an opportunity to give suggestions to the us. The outputs of this survey will be analysed, and a report produced by the Housing Manager for presentation to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Board.

Meetings with tenants: Torbay Council will arrange and facilitate a meeting with our tenants at least once per year. These meetings will be open to all Torbay Council tenants and will be attended by the Housing Manager.

6. Other Forms of Tenant Involvement

Torbay Council is mindful that, in addition to providing feedback, some tenants may wish to become more closely involved. Should there be an opportunity for a tenant to apply to be part of a tenant participation group we will ensure that all tenants are made aware of the opportunity and supported in applying, should they so wish.

7. Equality & Diversity

Torbay Council is committed to promoting equality and inclusion and to ensuring that our communities thrive. We complete equality impact assessments (EIAs) to help us understand the possible impacts that our decision may have on different groups. This toolkit guides you through the different stages of the equality impact assessment process to help ensure that your EIA is meaningful and robust.

The Equality Act 2010 provides legal protection from discrimination across nine 'protected characteristics' which are: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnerships.

Under the Act, the Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that we must take steps to actively promote equality. The PSED requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The PSED requires us to give 'due regard' to equality when making decisions and delivering services. This is to ensure our actions actively promote equality and do not directly or indirectly adversely affect people with protected characteristics.

8. Appeals & Complaints

Any tenant who feels that they have not been treated in accordance with this policy can use the complaints procedure.

9. Monitoring & Compliance

All feedback provided by tenants will be analysed by the Housing Manager quarterly.

In observing this Policy, Torbay Council will comply with all legal and regulatory expectations outlined in the Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard 2024, which replace the Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard 2017.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the Housing Manager in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member.

Equality Impact Assessment – Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

The Council has a public sector duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have ‘due regard’ to equality and to advancing equality of opportunity between those persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Act also seeks to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and promote cohesion. It is important that you carefully and thoroughly consider the different potential impacts that the decision being taken may have on people who share protected characteristics.

It is not enough to state that a proposal will affect everyone equally. There should be thorough consideration as to whether particular groups or individuals are more likely to be affected than others by the proposals and decision. Please complete the table below. If you consider there to be no positive or negative impacts state ‘there is no differential impact’.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age	<p>18 per cent of Torbay residents are under 18 years old.</p> <p>55 per cent of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old.</p> <p>27 per cent of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.</p>	<p>Torbay Council should ensure that involving customers in the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard is extended to all age brackets, also factoring in all technical abilities.</p> <p>Opportunities for all ages must remain accessible. Various platforms such as the Torbay Council website and social media outlets will cater to a younger demographic, or links to Tenant Satisfaction Measures via email or</p>	<p>The Housing Management team will continue to ensure visits are carried out in line with applicable policies (Access, Repairs and Maintenance etc.)</p> <p>Torbay Council will strive to understand the diverse needs of our tenants (at the point of pre tenancy</p>	<p>Pride in Place</p> <p>Communications Team</p>

		<p>smartphone links encourages them to follow the link and give their views.</p> <p>Torbay Council should clearly advise customers that Tenant Satisfaction Measures Surveys, or applications to sit on a Tenant Participation Panel at Torbay Council can be completed via email, in person with a staff member, in writing and over the telephone (in addition to online via our website and social media outlets as outlined above) to ensure they capture the needs of our older or more technology restricted demographic of customers.</p>	<p>application, throughout the tenancy) and apply this knowledge to our Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy.</p> <p>Torbay Councils Housing management team will liaise with the Communications team regularly to ensure we are optimising online presence and contact methods for customers in our social housing. This may also include the implementation of interpretation where necessary.</p> <p>Torbay Council will seek to identify barriers to tenant involvement at all stages of tenancy and any identified barriers will be regularly reviewed and communicated to other</p>	
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			relevant departments of Torbay Council.	
Carers	At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these provided 50 hours or more of care.	Torbay Council social housing residents whose household includes unpaid carers will be given access to our Tenant Involvement and Empowerment strategy via their elected means of communication. On a case-by-case basis, further investigation should be undertaken to enquire if the household would like to take part in Tenant Involvement and Empowerment activities.	<p>Torbay Council will have a flexible approach in our working, particularly for our households that have caring obligations. The Housing Management team will have an empathetic approach and will assess household needs on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Torbay Council will seek to identify barriers to tenant involvement at all stages of tenancy and any identified barriers will be regularly reviewed and communicated to other relevant departments of Torbay Council.</p>	

Disability	<p>In the 2021 Census, 23.8% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.</p>	<p>Some customers with learning difficulties, hearing or sight impairments or mental health issues may not understand the importance of our Tenant Involvement and Empowerment strategy, or the obligations placed on us as a registered Provider of social housing. Torbay Council must ensure guidance and inclusion is offered in all aspects of tenancy support. Similarly, Torbay Council should let customers know that they have a choice on whether they take part in Tenant Involvement and Empowerment activities.</p> <p>Torbay Council will work with Support Workers or appointed persons on behalf of the customers if applicable. This ensures accessibility of the service as well as making any other reasonable adjustments where required (such as letters in alternate formats or specified methods of contact).</p>	<p>Torbay Councils Housing management team will liaise with the Communications team regularly to ensure we are optimising online presence and contact methods for customers in our social housing. This may also include the implementation of interpretation where necessary.</p> <p>Torbay Council will seek to identify barriers to tenant involvement at all stages of tenancy and any identified barriers will be regularly reviewed and communicated to other relevant departments of Torbay Council.</p>	
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Gender reassignment	In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth. This proportion is similar to the Southwest and is lower than England.	There is no differential impact anticipated.	Not Applicable	
Marriage and civil partnership	Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.	There is no differential impact anticipated.	Not Applicable	
Pregnancy and maternity	Over the period 2010 to 2021, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 63.7 per 1,000) than England (60.2) and the South West (58.4). There has been a notable fall in the numbers of live births since the middle of the last decade across all geographical areas.	There is no differential impact anticipated.	Not Applicable	
Race	In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described	Although it is expected there would be little or no impact (Torbay Council would	Torbay Councils Housing management team will	

	<p>their ethnicity as white. This is a higher proportion than the South West and England. Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.</p>	<p>be aware of any language barriers upon the point of a tenancy being offered), it should be advised that assistance by way of an interpreter can be organised by prior arrangement and will continue to be offered throughout and Tenant Involvement and Empowerment activities.</p>	<p>liaise with the Communications team regularly to ensure we are optimising online presence and contact methods for customers in our social housing. This may also include the implementation of interpretation where necessary.</p> <p>Torbay Council will seek to identify barriers to tenant involvement at all stages of tenancy and any identified barriers will be regularly reviewed and communicated to other relevant departments of Torbay Council.</p>	
Religion and belief	<p>64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.</p>	<p>There is no differential impact anticipated.</p>	<p>Not Applicable</p>	

Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male	There is no differential impact anticipated.	Not Applicable	
Sexual orientation	In the 2021 Census, 3.4% of those in Torbay aged over 16 identified their sexuality as either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or, used another term to describe their sexual orientation.	There is no differential impact anticipated.	Not Applicable	
Armed Forces Community	In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. In Torbay, 5.9 per cent of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces.	There is no differential impact anticipated.	Not Applicable.	
Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)		Torbay Council understands that many unpaid carers also have work commitments. Dedicating time to activities outside of the workplace or household could contribute to loss of income.	Torbay Council will ensure we have opportunities for all tenants to become involved and have influence over the	

			<p>management of their home, although we understand that tenants can, and do decline such opportunities for their own reasons.</p> <p>Torbay Councils Housing Management team will keep up to date with welfare benefits and Council led financial schemes (e.g., Household Support Fund, Welfare Support Fund) and take the opportunity to signpost unpaid carers to these schemes, and if required, support in making applications.</p> <p>Torbay Council Housing Management team will keep up to date with all Safeguarding training, ensuring they are well versed to make</p>	
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			Safeguarding referrals when applicable.	
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)		There is no differential impact anticipated.	Not Applicable	
Human Rights impacts		There is no differential impact anticipated.	Not Applicable	
Child Friendly	Torbay Council is a Child Friendly Council and all staff and Councillors are Corporate Parents and have a responsibility towards cared for and care experienced children and young people.	There is no differential impact anticipated.	Not Applicable	