

Tenant Participation Workout

Aim of the project

To develop, pilot and evaluate new tenant accredited training courses that would respond to a Best Value in Housing approach to tenant participation.

Outcome of the project

Did the project work?

Yes it did! All the partners pulled together in a tremendous team effort to make the project work – 4 years work!

The two main phases of the project; development and implementation have been completed and the final evaluation is under way.

Did the project go as we expected?

No! We developed and delivered 3 OCN Accredited courses instead of 1! Each course takes about 30 hours from start to completion. This comprises of time attending a training workshop and then some time completing some at home learning. At home learning sounds a bit tough, but for this course it is more like finding out about things in your neighbourhood.



Match funding was provided by all the partner agencies, this included staff time and the use of meeting facilities and administrative support. The level of commitment provided by individual staff and volunteers was vital for the success of the project as the amount of in kind resources needed was underestimated in the planning phase.

The individual achievements of the participants involved in the training have been excellent. These fantastic results have seen some students go onto further qualifications not to mention the impact of increased tenant participation in real issues such as individuals

taking on new responsibilities in actual tenants' groups with increased confidence (the picture shows students and lead tutors at the certificate presentation at the DACP offices).

There was a challenge trying to involve younger tenants as the course attracted older participants.

Realism was needed in gauging the need for an adequate time scale and the level of commitment necessary to promote the project from all the partners involved as they also had to manage other strategic priorities. Essentially this meant understanding each organisation's capacity.

Housing Managers and other Housing Support managers were involved in the project by being invited to take part as guest tutors. This provided an opportunity for learning to take place on both sides through the natural intercourse between trainer/tutor and participants. There was support on how to prepare training sessions from training experts who had vast experience in running accredited courses. Both learners and tutors found the first course an empowering experience.

We did get some people drop-out of the course, in all these instances this was a result of particular individual's personal circumstances and not the course. A reasonable drop out rate was expected.

Who was involved?

- Agency for Community Empowerment (AfCE a community based social enterprise and approved ODPM Tenant Empowerment agency)
- Derby Association of Community Partners (DACP – the City wide tenants federation)
- Derby Homes (Derby City Council's Arms Length Management Organisation – the main social landlord)
- Learning and Development Consortium (LDC – a Derby City initiative to support the development of training and learning).

Approach to developing the Tenant Participation Workout

AfCE researched potential partners to establish who would fit the strategic aims of the local Tenants' Federation or umbrella organisation and the landlord.

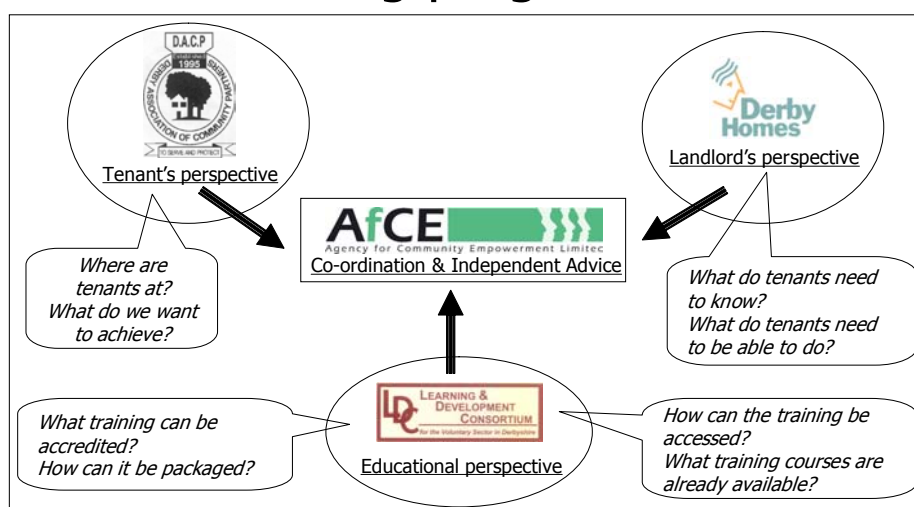
Development of the course content was informed by the establishment of an advisory group of all partners and we started with a blank sheet of paper!

The advisory group examined what training tenants needed, what relevant accredited training was available and if anything could be used or borrowed to make a complete course. The group decided to work from scratch since there was no available material that was comprehensive enough to match all the needs.

It is important to recognise that the training needs for the course were identified by a group of very experienced tenant activists. Their participation was a way of passing on their knowledge to the present and next generation of activists which was described as “their gift to the future”.

The training needs were too big to fit into one accredited unit hence the decision to separate the training course into three courses (units).

Approach to Development of the training programme



What is the Tenant Participation Workout?

Overview of course content

Unit 1 - What is the Housing Service?

- Introduce the elements of a local housing service.
- Explain letting systems.
- Explain issues about disrepair and liability for repairs.
- Outline the principles of rent setting and collection.
- Explain the law relating to tenancy.
- Present information on additional estate management functions of a housing service.
- Explain what strategies aimed at improving social housing.

Unit 2 - The Expert Tenant

- Provide information about the type of tenant support services, such as the tenants association.
- Provide an understanding of management structures aimed at tenant participation.

- Provide information about tenant involvement in Inspection.
- Help develop the skills required for effective communication and negotiation.

Unit 3 - Creating a Community

- Help develop the skills for planning and running meetings
- Provide help in understanding different Committee roles
- Provide information about constitutions, what they do and why they are different
- Help develop an understanding of team working
- Help develop an understanding of financial administrative tasks
- Help develop an awareness of inclusivity, discrimination and equal opportunities.

Format of Delivery for the pilot courses

The course was delivered locally at the DACP offices in the centre of Derby, so that public transport links from the surrounding district were good. The Lead Tutors were provided by AfCE & Derby Homes. A series of guest tutors used in delivering Unit 1 were provided by the landlord and the LDC provided a specialist to deliver a session on inclusivity and equality for Unit 3.

For Units 2 and 3 the lead tutors split the work of delivery and assessment. This effectively played to each of the tutors strengths and circumstances. AfCE did the bulk of the work in providing session plans and training materials. Derby Homes were on hand locally to provide support to learners and help assess the student's work. Tutor support and course moderation was provided by the LDC. Moderation is the process of outside verification of the assessment decisions made by the tutors. This ensures that students' work is fairly and consistently assessed.



The course was promoted in both DACP and Derby Homes publicity as well as through other landlord meetings such as the Tenant Participation Regional Forum for the East Midlands.

The recruitment of students involved an interview to ensure that all participants understood the expectations of the course. This opportunity was also used to identify any additional support needs, for example help with writing or the printing of handouts and worksheets in large print. Most support needs were easily catered for, but it was made clear that the ability to understand written and spoken simple English was a requirement of the course. The LDC provided support checklists and registration documents suitable for use with the NEOCN.

Course is delivered through a variety of means:

- Attending information workshops
- Find out things for yourself through practical assignments that can help tackle issues within your neighbourhood
- Participating in exercises like discussion groups
- Self assessments & reflective accounts

Accreditation and assessment format and the awarding body

The Project worked with the North East Midlands Open College Network (NEMOCN) to accredit the courses so that students would get their award or qualification from this body. NEMOCN is part of a large national network of colleges that covers a number of regions in England (National Open College Network). The OCN offers a framework for flexible learning through a number of approved training providers of which the LDC and AfCE are approved training providers with their local OCN.

Training was divided into Units representing about 30 hours work each which was made up of a mixture of training and the students' own work.

Training credits were awarded at different levels depending on its complexity (Entry, 1, 2, and 3 being the highest).

With the Tenant Participation Workout a training programme with one or more Units was developed so that the individuals involved could pick and mix which ones they wanted to do. Initially each course was capable of being assessed either level 1 or Level 2 as this increased the choice to the tenant participants and encouraged the maximum level of involvement. This was done as we did not want to pitch the level of the units too high as this would be a barrier to newcomers to the idea Tenant Participation or new to a structured learning programme.

The Accredited Training Programme was written in the format below. Each learning outcome has associated criteria for assessment. Each criterion can be assessed by different methods. The Learning Outcomes and Criteria for Assessment are available to approved training providers through the OCN.

Example taken from Unit 1:

<i>LEARNING OUTCOMES</i>	<i>CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT</i>
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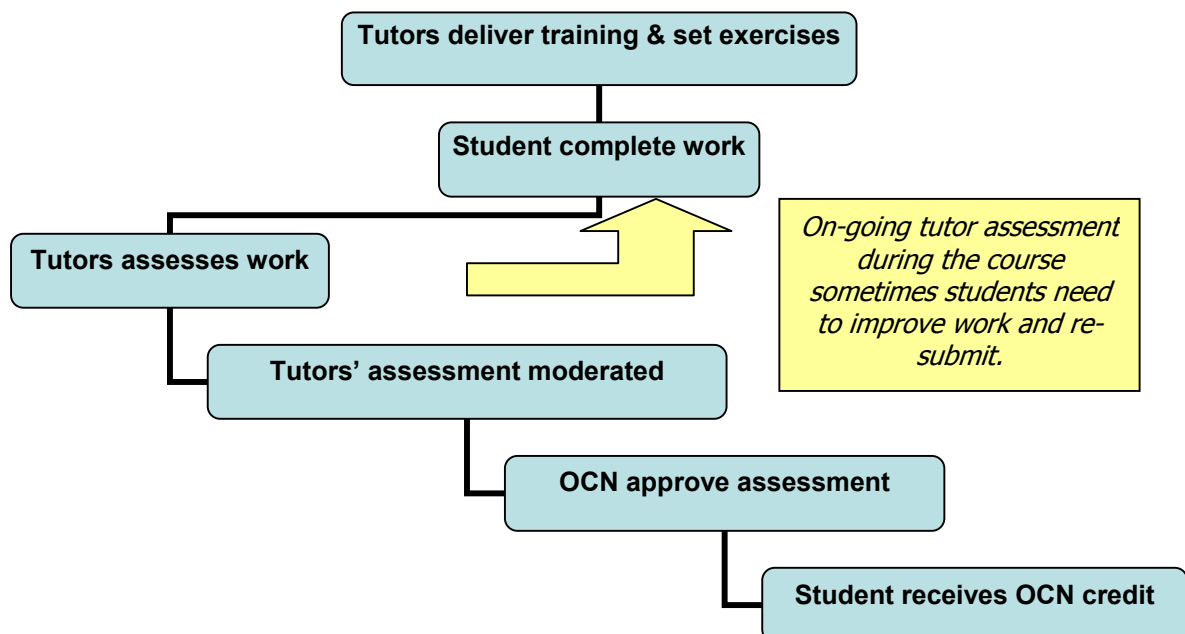
<p>Demonstrate an understanding of the issues of disrepair and liability for repairs.</p>	<p><i>Explain the terms: common standards, targets and categories with respect to repairs.</i></p> <p><i>Explain the difference between 'response or reported' and 'planned or cyclical' repairs.</i></p> <p><i>Describe the responsibility of the landlord and the tenant in disrepair cases.</i></p>
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METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

Worksheets, Written assignments and Oral assessments

Tutors would provide both verbal and written feedback on each piece of work that was assessed. Assessment was an on-going process during the running of the courses. Tutor set pieces of work in “bite-sized chunks” so that both students and tutors were not overwhelmed by the work load. On-going assessment allowed students to revisit work to make improvements, particularly if work had not met the assessment criteria.

Assessment judgements can be difficult and would sometimes involve looking at a range of different pieces of work that had been submitted. The process is summarised below.



Example training materials used

Some example materials are included in the appendix it is envisaged that others will be made available in the Autumn 2006 after the full evaluation has been completed.

Replicating the course

The course is registered with the OCN. A local training partner would be required that has been approved by the OCN. In order to deliver the pilot course training the partnership used the LDC (an organisation set up to support learning in the voluntary sector). Registration fees, tutor and moderation costs would need to be met.

Training material will need tailoring to each situations Government guidance and good practice is continually changing so this would need to be addressed. It is the intention to provide some example materials on the internet in the near future.

For added value the social landlords would have to commit some resources in providing guest tutors and a suitable venue for the training sessions to be delivered.

Ensuring the promotion is joined up with other strategic publicity and cooperation at a senior level is required to get the best results. Active tenants have to promote the courses themselves, word of mouth is one of the most powerful promotional tools in Tenant Participation and this course is no exception.

Accessible venues, committed tutors and a local tutor are all necessary to chase up students work and hold occasional one-to-one session to support learners. The time involved in this should not be underestimated.

The full project evaluation and materials will be available by the Autumn 2006 contact AfCE for details.

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Appendix – Example training materials

Session Plan from Session 1, What is the Housing Service?

Presentations slides from Session 1, Creating a community

Handout sheet from Session 2, The “expert” tenant

Exercise sheet from Session 2, The “expert” tenant

Best Value Jargon

Performance	How well something is working.
Plan	Work out how to do something.
Standard	Setting a minimum level of performance or quality of service or work.
Review	Looking at how well was the job done.
Indicator	A measurement of the amount or quality of work carried out.
Monitoring	Act of measuring standard of work.
Evaluation	Look at information to see how well a job is being done.
Resources	Staff time and money used to do a job.
Benchmark	Indicator of where the business is now!
Mystery Shopper	Consultant who pretends to be service users to make an assessment
Peer group	Other organisations of a similar nature and size used to make comparisons