



# Resident Involvement Quality

**a Self-assessment  
Toolkit for Landlords**



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister  

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Creating sustainable communities



**tool | kit**

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## Executive Summary

The **Introduction** briefly discusses current resident involvement practice. It looks at the varying ways that residents influence decisions, from the local level to their involvement in governance. It considers the relationship between 'collective' and 'consumer' involvement and discusses how residents often aspire to broad change in their neighbourhoods. The second part of the introduction sets out the arguments for and against 'Chartermarks'.

- **TPAS undertook this project because there is no widely accepted quality standard for resident involvement.**

**Chapter 1: Developing the Approach**, describes the early stages of the project and its original aims. The project's key aim was to **provide landlords with a self assessment tool that will increase resident involvement**. The chapter also gives an overview of the framework against which landlords are assessed.

- A steering group was recruited.
- A shortlist of pilots was drawn up, and four pilot organisations recruited. The pilots are very diverse in size, location, resident groups and management structure.
- The project should require similar performance to the Audit Commission's 3\* star standard in KLOE 5 (Resident Involvement).

### **Chapter 2: Designing a Methodology for**

**Assessment**, shows how the assessment methodology developed through the project. The core components of a full assessment are:

- A self-assessment, completed by the landlord against the assessment framework.
- A desk-top review completed by an independent assessor using documents provided by the landlord. The desk-top review takes as its starting point the self-assessment.
- An on site 'reality check' consisting of:
  - Interviews with staff from all levels of the organisation
  - Interviews with experienced, involved residents.
  - Focus groups with staff.
  - Focus groups with residents.
  - Mystery shopping.
- A scrutiny panel in which the landlord's response and supplementary evidence is considered.

**Chapter 3: Working with the Framework**, looks at the framework in more detail. It considers some of the units which landlords found challenging. It also considers revisions that were necessary during the pilot.

- The framework is designed to assess each element of resident involvement as a separate unit, using 'traffic light' scoring.
- These units are grouped into themes.
- In order to achieve accreditation, the landlord must pass 5 criteria that measure theme performance and performance across the whole assessment.

**Chapter 4: Applying the Framework**, discusses the way that assessors have interpreted the evidence to ensure the assessment is balanced.

- It gives examples of how the context in which the landlord works can affect the way the assessment is made.
- It shows some of the ways in which the assessment was applied to a supported housing context.

**Chapter 5: Good Practice, Improving Practice, Positive Trends**, picks up some of the trends of good practice that were common to several pilots.

- Stating the business case for resident involvement.
- Focussing on Neighbourhoods.
- Using a Menu of Involvement.
- Working to involve under-represented groups.
- Embedding resident involvement in the organisation's culture.

**Chapter 6: Applying Learning**, talks about some areas of enquiry that some of the pilots found challenging.

- Defining boundaries to resident involvement.
- Communicating the strategic approach to resident involvement.
- Project managing resident involvement.
- Proving efficiency in resident involvement.
- Improving resident profiles.
- Change management.
- Ensuring good feedback.
- Ensuring local accountability.
- Working with the voluntary sector.

**Conclusion**, sums up the project. It looks forward to residents and landlords using the accreditation framework as a tool to drive improvement in resident involvement.

## Introduction

### TPAS Landlord Accreditation: A Quality Standard for Resident Involvement

#### Who Should Read this Report?

This report is primarily aimed at managers in social housing with responsibility for the delivery of resident involvement. It would also be of use, and interest, to frontline officers with responsibility for resident involvement, active residents who are involved in policy making and policy makers, particularly, ODPM, the Audit Commission and the Housing Corporation. The report will also be of use to organisations with a wider interest in social policy or community development such as Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships.

#### Introduction

Social landlords and the residents that live in their homes have a long history of working together. It hasn't always been a comfortable relationship but by negotiating they have found opportunities to learn from each other and to drive forward changes to services. Working, as partners active residents have sometimes been the eyes and ears of the landlord, they have drilled into decision making structures and increasingly they have formal roles in the governance of organisations. In some community led organisations, residents form the majority on the Board.

Despite the strong tradition of resident involvement in housing there are still considerable challenges in ensuring that people can be involved in ways and at the level they want to be. Some people don't want to attend meetings for any number of reasons. There are some groups of people whose voice hasn't always been heard through collective structures. The recently revised *National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts* (ODPM, 2005) makes it clear that finding informal ways to access a broad range of views has become a priority.

Of course, housing isn't a world in itself. Active residents want to make an impact on the *quality of life* for their communities. Often this means that they are concerned about issues that fall outside of a narrow

focus on housing policy and practice. Landlords, and other public services, are being encouraged to step outside of their traditional roles to consider how they can have a broader impact. Some people would argue that the best landlords have been working in a multi-disciplinary way for years. To paraphrase one interviewee on this project;

*'Housing has taken up the slack for community involvement. Because we have a more immediate relationship with residents, people will go to their Housing Officer before they ring the cleansing department.'*

Good landlords aspire to offer a broad range of ways to be involved in groups and as individuals. They recognise that some groups of people have not had a voice and want to ensure that those voices are heard. They want that involvement to drive improvements in their work and improve the quality of life of residents. In developing a quality standard for resident involvement TPAS hoped to provide a tool which will help the best landlords to demonstrate the value of resident involvement and to set a target for the rest.

#### About Quality Standards: Why TPAS wanted to investigate Accreditation

Recent development of government policy has put great weight on the role of target setting, regulation and inspection in driving up service quality. Quality standards have become popular because they demonstrate to stakeholders that organisations are achieving a high level of service. A couple of examples are *Investors in People*, which demonstrates quality human resource practice, and the *Plain English Crystal Mark*.

Of course, the value of quality standards is open to discussion. On the positive side they can deliver 'continuous improvement' if the candidate organisation is open to change. The rigour of an external, independent assessment can offer positive learning for the organisation. These standards signify quality; an important selling point for organisations in a competitive market place. They can support or develop positive public perceptions, re-assure stakeholders and reinforce staff morale. On the negative side the work to achieve a quality standard can be seen as an unwelcome distraction from the more important task of delivering the core job. Social housing is already highly

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regulated and the pursuit of a quality standard runs the danger of being just one more piece of bureaucracy.

At a practical level, the development of a quality standard for resident involvement offers some real challenges. The complexity of resident involvement, caused by the need to use multiple methods of engagement and achieve a wide range of outcomes, is increased by the diversity of housing provision. There are housing associations, Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) and charitable trusts with just a few homes. There are specialist landlords focusing on the housing needs of particular groups. There are big national organisations that cover multiple locations. There are Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Housing Associations (LSVT). There are Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) and 'stock retaining' Local Authorities. There are then a range of Supported Housing organisations, charities providing accommodation, and there will soon be private sector organisations receiving Housing Corporation grant. Resident involvement accreditation needs to be robust enough to produce results that everybody can be confident in. At the same time it needs to be flexible enough to cope with a large range of organisations and approaches. If efficiency and value for money can be demonstrated from resident involvement, there is no reason why it should not be adopted more widely by the private rented sector.

If a voluntary quality standard is going to work it has to dovetail well with the statutory inspection and regulation regimes. No one wants to spend time and money getting an independent assessment, only to find out that the statutory inspector disagrees.

Despite the challenges, we felt that, although almost all areas of service delivery are subject to close scrutiny, resident involvement does not receive adequate assessment. In order to drive forward improvement in resident involvement there is a need for clear targets for the best to achieve and the rest to aim for. The development of an accreditation standard fits well with the work TPAS England (and its sister organisations) have done to promote the core principles of resident involvement; most notably 'A UK Manifesto for Tenant Participation' (TPAS England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland Tenants Action Project (NITAP), 2004). It also fits with the growing awareness of resident involvement shown by the differing inspection and regulation regimes.

## About the report

The report that follows sets out how we have gone about developing a resident involvement quality standard through four pilots. It provides a self-assessment tool for landlords and residents to use in considering where they stand, which we provide as Appendix 1. The ideal for TPAS would be that self-assessment is resident led and as such the quality framework should be considered in conjunction with our earlier Innovation into Action funded report *A Toolkit for Tenant Auditors and Inspectors* (TPAS, 2003).

Chapters 2 through 4 describe how the approach to accreditation has developed during the project. As we have worked through the pilots, we have also noted trends of both good practice and challenges to involvement, which are set out in chapters 5 and 6.

## Chapter 1

### Key Information about the Project

#### About the project

The primary intention (and aim) was to develop an evaluation tool that could be used to assess whether social landlords' resident involvement policy and practice meets a high 'quality standard'. This was to be achieved by designing a framework and research methodology and establishing a process, to be tested in four pilots with a cross-section of social landlords.

The project had the following intended outcomes:

- Provide landlords with a self-assessment tool that will enhance and extend resident involvement.
- Enhance the quality of environment for residents through customer- centred policy and practice.
- Assist landlords in preparation for regulatory inspection by providing a commercial 'chartermark' product. (Dependant on support from the Audit Commission).
- Provide targeted feedback to landlords who use the commercial project (and pilot landlords) on how they might improve their resident involvement service.
- Drive up standards of resident involvement across social housing by designing a widely accepted quality standard.
- Assist in defining high professional standards for resident involvement.

The project was funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) Innovation into Action grant, administered by the Chartered Institute of Housing. A steering group was recruited to ensure the project's direction, which consisted of representatives from:

- The Audit Commission
- The Chartered Institute of Housing
- The Housing Corporation
- The National Housing Federation
- The ODPM
- The ODPM's Tenant Sounding Board
- The Tenants' and Residents' of England (TAROE).

The project started in January 2005, with the first pilot beginning in March. The on-site work with the fourth pilot was completed in early July.

#### Developing the approach

#### Terminology – “resident”, “tenant” or “community”?

The project used the term *resident involvement* rather than *tenant participation*, *tenant involvement* or *community involvement*. The term *resident* has been used for the following reasons:

- Landlords do not only work with their tenants;
  - they also have an ongoing relationship with other stakeholders, for instance leaseholders, the children of tenants and leaseholders, and the broader community.
- It is not now possible to think in terms of single tenure housing estates;
  - landlords find it increasingly important to think in terms of residents.
- *Resident* was used rather than *community*;
  - landlords by virtue of their function tend to think in terms of geographical or resident communities rather than other types of community (e.g. internet communities).
- The project was clear from the start that landlords should differentiate between resident stakeholders;
  - they are likely to devolve more power over decision-making to residents with a direct relationship to their services, rather than owner-occupying residents.

The project uses the term *involvement* because this implies a range of activities that are broader than *participation*. *Involvement* more easily takes in both information provision at one end of a continuum and devolved management control at the other.

The project has used the term *local* or *neighbourhood* to describe activities that happen in the smallest geographical areas that landlords work in (e.g. a tenants' and residents' association). It has used *area* to mean a geographical area that is smaller than the spread of the whole organisation but is larger than a *neighbourhood*.

Finally, the project has expected the landlord to have a resident involvement strategy that covers all of its activity. The project has described this as a *compact* (taking its lead from local authority and Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) terminology) or *the main resident involvement strategy* (reflecting the requirement for Housing Associations to produce an Involvement Policy).

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Although the project has adopted the term resident involvement, this should be qualified by the recognition that for most landlords their primary relationship is with those residents with whom they have a contractual relationship, i.e. tenants and leaseholders. Hence most landlords' primary resident involvement focus will be the development of services that are more responsive to tenants and leaseholders.

Many landlords also recognise that other issues, for instance crime, poor health and education, impact on the quality of life of their tenants and the other residents of neighbourhoods. Where landlords work with *residents* to resolve these 'broader than housing' issues the nature of the relationship is likely to be different as it is not simply based in the landlord/tenant contract.

## The level of performance required for accreditation

Housing Inspection by the Audit Commission has become the main measure of the performance and prospects for improvement of social landlords. The current Audit Commission inspection methodology puts assessing services from '*service user perspective*' at its core. The focus of the Audit Commission approach implies that resident involvement will be an important part of any inspection. Hence, this project needed to take careful note of the Commission's expectations. The Audit Commission has made considerable efforts to involve residents in the inspection process, not least by appointing 'tenant inspectors'.

The inspection methodology uses Key Lines Of Enquiry (KLOEs). These are documents that describe the types of evidence the Audit Commission will look for around any given area of service. The KLOEs provide an example of the level required for 1\* (Fair) and 3\* (Excellent) delivery of service. The project needed to take account of the Audit Commission's expectations and an early decision was taken to 'peg' the standard to the descriptions in KLOE 5 '*Resident Involvement*'. Therefore, the approach was cross-referenced with KLOE 5. However, it does not 'read across' exactly. This is because:

- The KLOE is designed to be used as part of a whole landlord assessment.
- Neither the KLOE or the Accreditation frameworks are designed to be static documents;
  - they need to develop as practice develops.

- In developing the methodology the project also considered approaches from a range of other sources including, the Housing Corporation's Involvement Policy and the ODPM's National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts;
  - for instance, the Accreditation framework includes a unit that is explicitly about collective resident management.

The initial intention of the project was to develop a standard that would denote an 'acceptable' level of delivery that the average landlord should aim for. This would equate to the Audit Commission 2\* rating. However, the steering group for the project was very clear that a quality standard should be exactly that, and asked for a standard equivalent to the 3\* rating.

There was, and has been throughout the project, some discussion as to whether the best way of approaching the project would be to provide graduated levels of accreditation (the equivalent of star ratings). However, the decision was made that it would be better to provide a simple 'pass/fail' system. The reason for this was three fold:

- The intention of a quality mark is to describe a high quality service;
  - given that the standard was to be set at around the Audit Commissions' 3\* level there was no need to provide levels below this.
- The funding of the project required the standard to be a simple as possible;
  - providing a graduated system requires more standards to be written and more data analysis.
- Unlike the Audit Commission there was no intention to provide a 'prospects for improvement' rating;
  - the accreditation is intended only to be a snapshot of where the organisation is at the time of assessment.

On the latter point, it was noted that, 'prospects for improvement' are in many ways the more important measure. It was agreed that, although the accreditation standard would not separate out the quality of service at the time and the prospects for improvement, it *would* provide measures that were related to the organisation's prospects (namely an evaluation of the organisation's resident involvement culture and its strategic planning) but that these would be incorporated into the total assessment.

Although the outcome of the assessment is simply a pass or fail, the assessment of each theme and unit does provide the landlord with evidence of strengths and weaknesses and is thereby a tool for improvement.

Returning to the question of a graduated system, it remains an aspiration for this work to be progressed.

## **The framework for assessment**

Any evaluation tool needs a benchmark. The project team considered a number of different existing frameworks as models, including *Investors in People* and *NVQ assessments*, before adopting a parallel approach to the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework.

The resident involvement accreditation framework sets out 7 key themes. Each of these themes is separated into units which look at different strands of work. Each of these units describes the strand of work with a table of '*the standard expected*' and '*indicative evidence*'. There are 30 units in total. The units and themes are summarised in figure 1 opposite.

**Figure 1: Summary of themes and units**

Theme	Unit
<b>Theme 1: Landlord demonstrates clear strategic commitment to resident involvement</b>	1.1 The landlord draws its resident involvement approach from its corporate aims and clearly responds to the view of residents while setting those aims.
	1.2 The landlord reviews and identifies what it wants to achieve towards its aims at least annually.
	1.3 The landlord's aims are influenced by residents and related to their aspirations. The response to resident feedback is communicated in the main strategy document (either its 'statement' or action plan).
	1.4 The landlord and residents know the boundaries to involvement.
	1.5 The landlord is positive about the principle of resident management.
	1.6 The landlord identifies how residents can be involved in strategic decision making across a wide range of forms of involvement.
	1.7 The landlord devolves decision making power to meaningful influence over local or area services.
	1.8 The landlord uses (or is investigating) formal local and community of interest agreements to direct its work.
	1.9 The landlord employs a broad 'menu of involvement'.
	1.10 The main strategy document communicates the landlords' approach to delivering equality of access, involving 'hard to reach' groups.
	1.11 The landlord communicates support available to residents.
<b>Theme 2: The landlord knows its residents and their aspirations</b>	2.1 The landlord has systems in place to survey its residents.
	2.2 The landlord 'diversity proofs' its research and has a clear view of its residents profile.
	2.3 The landlord uses survey data to assist with targeting resident involvement resources and sets its research programme with reference to resident views.
<b>Theme 3: The landlord has clear aims, measures and feeds-back outcomes</b>	3.1 The landlord provides core 'resident focussed' documents which inform about and enable resident involvement.
	3.2 The landlords' policies, service standards and other information are easily accessible by residents. The landlord does not rely entirely on its newsletters and tenancy handbook to inform residents.
	3.3 The landlord compares its performance (all households) with an appropriate peer group or other landlords and feeds back performance to the resident body.
	3.4 The landlord has a clear process for resident performance scrutiny.
	3.5 The landlord has robust processes to ensure its accountability to residents for services.
	3.6 The landlord uses resident evidence to target its involvement projects. Its projects have identified outcomes and are assessed against these outcomes.
	3.7 The landlord has a clear focus on efficiency.
	3.8 The landlord devolves power to ensure quick resolution of problems.
<b>Theme 4: The landlord has a partnership ethos which delivers 'broader than housing outcomes'</b>	4.1 The landlord is clear about how it works to deliver a 'broader than housing' agenda. It has a clear focus on community cohesion.
	4.2 The landlord has effective strategic relationships with key partners and stakeholders and particularly considers the value of community based solutions at a local level.
	4.3 Formal partnerships are governed by clear terms of reference.
<b>Theme 5: The landlord has effectively embedded resident involvement</b>	5.1 Staff are aware of the role of resident involvement, have resident involvement targets and are positive about resident involvement.
<b>Theme 6: The landlord is committed to training, development and resource support of resident involvement</b>	6.1 Staff are skilled in resident involvement.
	6.2 The landlord supports the development of resident skills.
	6.3 The landlord supports and celebrates resident involvement.
<b>Theme 7: Residents are involved in the governance of the landlord</b>	7.1 The landlord has a considered approach to resident involvement in governance.

Each unit is assessed on its own merits and is given a 'traffic light' score of 'Yes', 'Partial' or 'No'. The criteria for accreditation have been set with 5 scored thresholds which measure the performance of the landlord [fig. 2]. In order to reach the required standard the landlord must pass all five thresholds.

**Figure 2: Table of thresholds**

<b>Threshold 1</b>	The landlord achieves at least 22 'YES' scores across the whole assessment (30 units)
<b>Threshold 2</b>	There are no more than 5 'NO' scores across the whole assessment (30 units)
<b>Threshold 3</b>	The landlord achieves at least 9 'YES' or 'Partial' scores in theme 1 (11 units)
<b>Threshold 4</b>	The landlord achieves at least 8 'YES' or 'Partial' scores in themes 2 & 3 (11 units)
<b>Threshold 5</b>	The landlord achieves at least 6 'YES' or 'Partial' scores in themes 4, 5, 6 & 7 (8 units)

At each stage of the process the scoring of the units is based upon a written assessment which covers the evidence gathered of positive and negative aspects of that area of the service. As the information about the landlords' resident involvement grows, the written assessments build on each other in order to achieve a balanced picture of the 'score' for each unit.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, it proved challenging to get the assessment framework right. Criteria thresholds, evidence required and number of units fluctuated throughout five versions of the framework as the pilots provided more learning for the project. This caused some issues for the assessments and a decision was taken early that the full results would be published anonymously. The reasoning behind the themes, groupings of themes and the level of the thresholds is described further in chapters 3 and 4. The assessment matrix is reproduced in full Appendix A. The pilot study reports appear in Appendices B to E.

## Conclusion

This section has looked at the initial aims of the project and the terminology that the project has used. It also considers the degree to which the level of resident involvement performance is 'pegged' to the 3\* standard in the Audit Commission's KLOE for resident involvement. It is important at this point to note that the Audit Commission's method is not static, and as performance improves in social housing the Commission continuously review it's expectations and 'raises the bar'. It is likewise intended to continuously improve the Resident Involvement accreditation framework. It will respond to changes within regulatory inspection, housing and social policy. Possible early actions for a future phase of work will include the two issues noted above, and raised by the projects' pilot partners:

- developing a measure for '*prospects for improvement*'
- developing a 'graduated approach'.

## Chapter 2

### Designing a Methodology for Assessment

#### Selecting the pilot landlords

The initial project funding provided for between four and six pilot studies. Detailed project planning showed that the available funding was likely to be insufficient to deliver adequate work on the framework and on site time for six studies. It was therefore decided to undertake four pilots.

It was important that the framework was tested against as wide a range of landlord characteristics as possible. The Steering Group discussed the type of landlord management structure that might be relevant including:

- Local Authority
- Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)
- Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Housing Association
- Mainstream Housing Association.

A range of landlord stock distribution, stock sizes and specialisms were also identified:

- Rural stock
- Urban stock
- Mixed urban and rural
- National and multi-regional stock
- BME specialist
- Support specialist.

It was important that the pilot landlords were already identified as having at least a 'reasonable' to 'good' quality of resident involvement, to allow for robust testing of the standards. The project researchers needed to be sure in advance that some landlords would pass, in order to establish an effective baseline.

A shortlist of landlords who were known either to TPAS or to the Steering Group were approached. It was decided that one pilot should be a housing association specialising in supported housing. This was to test whether the framework could be applied to a landlord with residents who may have particular challenges to involvement, such as communication problems or social exclusion.

The pilots that were chosen provided a diverse group of

landlords who work in different ways with their residents.

They were:

- **Pilot Study 1** - A medium sized Inner London ALMO (11,000 units approx).
- **Pilot Study 2** - A large mixed rural and urban ALMO in the North (24,000 units approx).
- **Pilot Study 3** - A rural Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Housing Association in the South West (4,500 units approx).
- **Pilot Study 4** - A small and highly dispersed support specialist 'traditional' Housing Association working across the Midlands and South (1,500 units).

At the time of the project most retaining authorities were completing their stock options appraisals. This meant that there were major challenges for stock retaining local authorities in being able to provide the resident or staff resources to participate. In the event it proved impossible to recruit a Local Authority to take part.

### The initial method

#### Background Reading

The main reference points for the accreditation framework were the KLOE 5 'resident involvement' of the Audit Commissions' Housing Inspectorate and the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework. This is described in Chapter 2. However the project also referred to the following documents for background information:

- Audit Commission/Housing Corporation; Resident Involvement in Housing
- HQNS: Inspections Uncovered – Resident Involvement
- HQNS: Efficiency Briefing
- HQNS: Star Ratings Toolkit
- National Community Housing Forum (Australia): Standards Manual (*Section 3: Tenant Rights & Participation, Section 4: Working with the Community*)
- Quality Housing Standard
- National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts
- The Housing Corporations' Involvement policy for the housing association sector

- Commission for Racial Equality Statutory Code Of Practice on Race Equality In Housing for England (draft).

## Desk Top Review

The study intended to take a two staged approach. The initial assessment would be by desk top review. The desk top review would give special consideration to:

- The relationship between the landlord's corporate aims and its Tenant Participation Compact.
- Key policies on diversity and equality
- A clear and accountable action plan.

It was decided to mirror the Audit Commission Inspection process by asking the landlord to complete a self-assessment questionnaire. This would guide both the desk top review and later on-site work.

## On-Site Reality-Check

The second, and more important, phase was to reality-check the desk top review against the experiences of residents and staff, at all levels, of the pilot landlord. It was decided to take a qualitative approach using in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

## In-Depth Interviews

Although there were concerns around the comparability of data gathered across the pilots, it was decided to tailor the number of in-depth interviews and focus groups to the size and characteristics of the organisation. The arrangements for this were agreed with the landlords in advance.

The number of interviews we felt were required for a small/medium sized organisation (up to 4000 units) is given below. All interviews were to be half an hour long, and were structured around questions that TPAS had previously used in reviews of tenant participation strategies.

Ten Interviews with:

- The Chief Executive/Chief Officer
- A senior manager with responsibility for resident involvement.

- A Board Member/ Councillor
- A frontline officer with direct responsibility for resident involvement.
- A randomly selected manager within Housing Management with some responsibility for resident involvement (eg. Estate Manager)
- A randomly selected manager from another service area without direct resident involvement responsibilities.
- 3 senior/experienced involved residents.

## Focus Groups

The assessors expected to attend a focus group or focus groups with 6 frontline staff randomly selected from all departments. The focus group was to be, as far as possible, weighted towards customer service and/or housing management staff members. This would test the level of commitment and understanding of resident involvement within the staff base.

In order to assess the level of understanding of resident involvement within the resident body, it was intended to hold four 'general' focus groups of up to ten residents.

- 2 focus groups with a cross section of residents active at a local level, and interested members.
- 2 focus groups with a cross section of residents that were not presently involved – randomly selected from the entire resident body.

If the landlord was able to provide data sorted by ethnicity, gender, age and disability, the assessors sought to ensure that focus groups provided a representative sample of the resident body.

Special consideration was to be given to including members of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. As stated above, ideally, focus groups would reflect the diversity of the resident body. If it proved impossible to obtain data that allowed for balanced focus groups, then different avenues of enquiry would be pursued in consultation with the landlord.

## Ethical Considerations

- Selection of residents and staff members for the survey was undertaken with due regard to third party access to information.

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- Although the assessors wished to select participants themselves (to avoid 'coaching'), approaches to staff and residents were facilitated through the landlord staff member liaising with the TPAS team.
- All interviews were recorded. This was undertaken with the express permission of participants.
- Participants were advised that all comments in reports would be anonymised.
- It was intended to monitor the ethnicity of all participants, with their permission.

## Revisions to the method – changes to the process

The pilots demonstrated that the methodology worked well. There were some inevitable tensions with pilot landlords, where they felt assessors had asked for too high a standard of evidence, disputed the relevance of the framework or felt that the assessors had misapplied the framework. This was seen as both a result of the pilot process, and the inevitable impact of any external assessment. There were few issues with the methodology and it produced consistent results and identified cross-pilot trends. Revisions to the method were made to ensure that the process was transparent. Other changes were made to resolve issues with data collection.

## Self – Assessment

By the end of the second pilot, it was clear that the approach to self-assessment was resource intensive for both the assessors and staff. The desk top review required the provision of large quantities of printed material. There was much work involved for the landlord to collate the documents. The assessors found that they were analysing large policy documents for limited references to resident involvement. The self-assessment questionnaire provided good general background to the organisation's resident involvement approach, but it did not provide the detail required to direct the on-site lines of questioning.

It was decided to add a self-assessment section to the framework, which landlords would be required to complete. When independent assessment was sought, the landlord would return the self-assessment questionnaire, along with desk top review documents that *they* had selected to evidence how they met the

accreditation standard. This would result in a more targeted approach for both assessors and landlord, as well as flagging up how well the landlord knew their own paperwork (e.g. rather than referring assessors to the landlord's website, the landlord would suggest pages of the website that evidenced particular units).

This approach was not implemented, as the later pilots had already started working to provide the requested documentation. However, the assessors are confident that this is the best approach

## Adding a 'Quality Control' phase – the Scrutiny Panel

The early pilots also demonstrated that landlords need the opportunity to question assessors' findings and provide further information.

In response to this an independent 'scrutiny panel' was added into the process. Their remit was to:

- Consider the landlords formal response to initial assessment;
  - including supplementary evidence provided by the landlord
- Question the assessors' judgements and
- Ensure that the framework is applied consistently across all assessments.

The 'scrutiny panel' for the pilot was made up of:

- a TPAS *tenant* executive member
- a TPAS senior manager
- a TPAS regional manager.

Scrutiny panels in any future TPAS independent assessments will be regionally based and will include:

- TPAS Regional Manager, who will chair the panel.

Two of the following selected according to the characteristics of the organisation (the Housing Corporation would be invited to attend scrutiny of housing associations).

- A Member of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) local Branch and/or Regional Practitioner Representative of the National Housing Federation
- A Representative from the ODPM regional office

- An Audit Commission Tenant Inspector (in a personal capacity)
- A representative of TAROE
- A representative from the Housing Corporation.

On receipt of the *interim* assessment (the 'scored' view of the assessors after the on site work) the pilots were invited to provide formal feedback on the assessment, within two working weeks. They were asked to provide further evidence that could support their views or modify the assessment. Landlords were asked to involve residents in this review of the assessment. A face-to-face meeting between assessors and landlord improved both sides with understanding of the way the evidence had been applied and what further evidence would be relevant. Face-to-face meetings should be built into the accreditation process at this stage.

The two-week timescale for formal response is a tight one and is a guideline for future assessments. In planning an independent assessment, both landlord and assessor should take a realistic and negotiated view about the time needed to complete the assessment. For instance, meetings of a suitably qualified scrutiny panel may take time to arrange. In order to keep the process focused the agreed timescale should not exceed one month.

The results of the follow-up interviews and further evidence were reported to the scrutiny panel. The panels took the landlords' views into account when considering the assessment. The scrutiny panels worked well, making some changes to the framework, robustly challenging the assumptions of the assessors, and suggesting the re-grading of units.

### Figure 3: The process in brief

- The landlord self-assesses against the framework using either the suggested methodology or its own.
- A decision is taken as to whether the landlord wishes to pursue independent assessment.
- The detail of on-site assessment is agreed with the landlord based on its characteristics.
- The feed-back arrangements agreed (as a minimum this should include the distribution of an accessible summary report to all residents).
- The preliminary (desk top) assessment takes place, based on evidence provided by the landlord at its self-assessment.
- The interim assessment of desk top and on-site evidence takes place.
- An interim assessment report is provided giving:
  - the detail of each assessed unit
  - an overview of performance against the assessment criteria
  - summary information on 'Partial' and 'No' grade assessments
- A meeting to discuss findings between assessor and landlord takes place (if initially agreed).
- The landlord responds to the interim report, on an agreed timescale (ideally within two weeks and not longer than one month).
- The scrutiny panel considers the interim report and landlord's further representations and evidence.
- A final report is provided giving:
  - an executive summary of the landlord's performance on resident involvement
  - examples of good practice
  - detail of the interim and scrutiny assessments for each unit
  - an overview of performance against the assessment criteria at both stages
  - summary information on why 'Partial' and 'No' grades were assessed as such
  - learning points that had no effect on unit grades but could improve practice. (Example reports are provided in Appendices B & E)
- The results of the assessment are fed back to residents by the landlord.

## About Group Structures

Housing practitioners and experienced active residents know that a key trend in housing associations in recent years has been the growth of group structures. TPAS has noted that many of their members have felt distanced from the 'top' board in such arrangements. None of the accreditation pilots were in group structures; although one shortlisted organisation was.

Group structures are not all the same. As the Audit Commissions' report *Group Dynamics: Group Structures and Registered Social Landlords* (2001) points out, a group can be strong (having close ties between group members and subsidiaries and acting according to tightly controlled central policy) or weak (members of the group having a great deal of autonomy but sharing common goals and the financial muscle of a larger organisation) and all points in-between. There is no consistent rule about which types of group, or members of a group, will have effective resident involvement. Hence, future independent assessments should consider group structures on their own merits. During discussions with the landlord about the assessment method for Groups, it may be appropriate to look at a sample across all organisations in the Group. If assessors are considering a subsidiary group member they will also need to consider the relationships with the parent company. For instance under *Theme 1* the assessors will expect evidence from the tenant participation compact that shows how the overall business aims are reflected and influenced and under *Theme 7* the assessors will consider the arrangements for resident representation on the top board.

## Changes to the on-site approach - the focus of interviews

It proved difficult to conduct the interviews using only standard questions. Assessors needed to probe responses, explore new evidence, or seek further clarification. In practice, while the set questions provided a starting point, the assessors agreed the key areas of enquiry after analysis of the desk top material. In large part they directed their questioning around these areas. Generally interviews produced good information. In most cases two assessors were present at each interview. In most cases, to ensure objectivity, the interviewer did not write-up the notes.

## Observing resident involvement in action

The original assessment plan did not include observation of resident involvement in action. However, an assessment of resident involvement needs to consider how it works in practice, and this was apparent following the first pilot. The three subsequent pilots involved an assessor taking notes while observing the real life operation of resident involvement. In the three subsequent pilots, an assessor attended a tenant-led event as a non-participating observer. A business meeting of a tenants' and residents' association, or similar group, was observed. This provided invaluable background information to the level of capacity of residents, the attitude of staff to resident involvement, and the openness of the landlord to collective involvement. Future accreditation exercises will include observation as a matter of course, ideally including observation of 'consumer approaches' such as focus groups or citizens' juries.

## Focus Groups

For all pilots there was a prior discussion with the landlord on the most appropriate way of delivering resident focus groups. In each pilot there were no less than two focus groups, generally, but not exclusively, organised by geography. Most focus groups produced good results and produced consistent themes.

Focus groups were generally self-selecting. A number of residents were invited to attend and small cash incentives were normally offered to encourage attendance. Inevitably, this meant that, although the target number for focus groups was ten, numbers fluctuated. The self-selecting approach meant that some focus group attendees often had particular issues that they wished to resolve or views that were clearly personal. One focus group was dominated by discussions around anti-social behaviour (ASB). This discussion provided useful information about residents' level of understanding of ASB policy and practice. It also demonstrated the particular challenges the pilot landlord faced in involving residents in this issue.

One of the advantages of the focus group is that it is 'self-levelling'. Isolated voices can, relatively quickly, be identified. While these voices are valid, if they are at odds with the consensus within the group they are apparent as such. Inevitably, the assessors made

judgements where they felt that individual views were idiosyncratic. The only way to resolve the weakness of self-selecting focus groups would be to increase the number of sessions to provide a bigger sample and 'smooth out' any anomalies. While a larger sample would potentially provide a more accurate picture, there is an inevitable balance to be struck with the cost of more time on-site. Given that the results across focus groups within each pilot were generally consistent, the assessors are confident that the balance was right.

## Gaining the views of currently uninvolved residents

One of the perennial challenges of resident involvement is to find out what non-active residents think about their opportunities to be involved.

The project initially intended to hold focus groups aimed specifically at such residents. Only one such focus group was held. It showed a low level of understanding of resident involvement opportunities, but did not clarify whether this was due to resident apathy or badly communicated policies.

Alternative approaches were suggested for future assessments.

- Random telephone surveys could provide objective data, but there are privacy and data protection issues that would make this approach difficult.
- Assessors could conduct a mystery shopping survey of the accessibility of resident involvement information.
- Residents attending housing offices with queries could be invited to participate in supplementary interviews with assessors.
- A limited postal questionnaire could be undertaken in connection with the accreditation.

## Diversity

Sections 5 and 6 show some of the positive practice and challenges evident in the pilot. One aim of the assessment methodology was to sample the views of diverse communities. In the event this proved problematic. In one pilot a focus group was targeted specifically at this group. In every pilot, assessors either interviewed the staff member charged with leading on diversity issues, or that person was involved in the staff

focus group. However, a diversity balanced approach was not achieved in every pilot. It proved difficult to monitor the ethnicity, age and gender of participants. This will need careful planning in future assessments.

## Conclusion

The pilot assessments have shown that the following points need careful consideration in the planning for an independent assessment.

- The need for a face to face debriefing exercise between the landlord and the lead assessor after the initial assessment.
- The need to tailor the timescale to each employer.
- The need to establish appropriate ways to assess the views of non-involved residents.
- The need to monitor diversity more robustly during the assessment.

## Chapter 3

### Working with the Framework

#### Introduction

The previous section looked at information gathering for the pilot assessments. The assessors are confident that the methodology captures sufficient information to make an accurate judgement. This section describes the assessment framework.

#### The framework

##### Units

The assessment framework developed for the pilots identified different components of resident involvement. It then identified the organisation culture, activities and outcomes that were required to achieve these. Each of these individual 'task packages' have been described as a 'unit'

- For instance, unit 1.1 requires that *the landlord draws its resident involvement approach from its corporate aims and clearly responds to the views of residents while setting those aims.*

Resident involvement is a very qualitative area of work and can be hard to pin down. So the units provide the *expected standard* that assessors consider demonstrates success in this area of work and *indicative evidence* that would be required to achieve the standard.

For example, Unit 1.1 requires that:

- The landlord has a compact (or alternative resident involvement strategy), which states:
  - what the aims of the business are
  - how resident involvement helps achieve those aims.

It also requires that

- The landlord works with its residents to set its business aims
- The compact focuses clearly on delivering equality
- Resident involvement extends beyond negotiating and monitoring the compact into influence over other policy and practice within the business.

In some contexts the landlord may have taken a different approach that does not fit the standards.

- A support specialist may experience particular barriers to involvement that limit progress in resident participation.

In these situations the overall objective of the unit takes precedence. Assessors would look for a reasoned argument why the landlord has taken this approach. They would also look for evidence that this approach has/will lead to the same outcome. We discuss some actual examples of such variations in below.

Each unit is assessed on its own merits. However, in the practical operation of the framework, some units are linked together either because they look at the same things from different angles, or because one depends on the effective operation of another.

##### Themes

Lots of separate 'task packages' (units) don't add up to the whole view of resident involvement. Certain units cluster together around similar types of work or approach. Units are therefore grouped together in themes. For example,

- *Theme 2* (made up of three units) has its main focus on how well the landlord uses consumer involvement (customer research) techniques to identify areas of strength and weakness (and by implication future resident involvement work).

Effective consumer engagement is required elsewhere in the framework and this is expressed through the '*expected standards*' and '*indicative evidence*'. However the theme 2 units are the only ones where these approaches are the primary focus.

##### Groups of themes

Just as some units cluster together to form themes, some themes tend to have similarities, in approach or outcome. For this reason the project grouped compatible themes together as criteria for accreditation.

## The Scoring system

The scoring for accreditation may be summarised as follows.

- Performance on each unit is assessed against the 'expected standard' and the 'indicative evidence'.
- Performance on each unit is assessed against a 'traffic light' coded system:
  - 'Yes' (green) – the landlord has demonstrated that it meets all the expectations for the unit.
  - 'Partial' (amber) – the landlord has demonstrated that it meets most of the expectations for the unit.
  - 'No' (red) – the landlord has met no or few expectations for the unit.

For most units both *documentary* and *interview* evidence is required. In the majority of the units some documentary evidence was required to achieve a 'Yes'. When interview evidence was in conflict with documentary evidence the assessors weighed the *amount* of interview evidence. If one or two interviewees suggested views that conflicted with the documentary evidence the assessors discounted this view. If there was a widely consistent difference from the paperwork the assessors gave a lower grading. Some of the anomalies and how the assessors dealt with them is described in section 4.

## Detailed description of the themes

### Theme 1: The Landlord demonstrates clear strategic commitment to Resident Involvement

The first theme looks at the way that resident involvement fits into the decision making structure of the organisation. It seeks to verify that the landlord has placed resident involvement at the centre of what it does. Landlords should demonstrate that their decisions and priorities are influenced by residents. The theme puts particular weight on the compact (or similar strategy document). The compact should show good 'read through' from the priorities set out in the business plan. The compact's action plan should show how the business priorities (which have been influenced by residents) are going to be delivered.

Assessors put particular weight on documentary evidence for this theme. Their reasoning was that, while

staff and residents need to participate in and interpret the development of the strategy, setting strategic direction is generally a formal (written) process. People new to resident involvement will want to know how it contributes to improving services or quality of life. Clarity of thought and purpose around this theme would suggest that 'prospects for improvement' are positive.

The following examples have proved challenging for landlords, required much revision through the development of the framework or have distinctive expectations.

**Unit 1.2:** In the public (local authority) sector landlords are expected to provide an annual action plan for their compact. In the housing association sector the Housing Corporation requires an annual rolling 'impact assessment'. In order to perform well, assessors will require action plans to include an order of priority for tasks, and *the reason* for undertaking particular tasks. There should be evidence that planned reviews of services include 'read across' to the action plan, and that involvement activities for these reviews are planned. The action plan should show evidence that it has not been written in isolation from other work plans.

**Unit 1.3:** If the action plan drives resident involvement work forward, the main compact sets the context. This unit seeks to confirm that the compact is at the centre of the policy making framework. Assessors will require evidence that work happens with reference to the compact. The compact should reflect the priorities in the business plan (not just the corporate aims) and show how both have been adapted to resident aspirations.

**Unit 1.4:** There are boundaries to resident involvement. It must both raise aspirations and manage them. This unit requires evidence that the landlord and active residents know and communicate what can be done, by whom and under what circumstances. These boundaries will inevitably be subject to negotiation at times.

- For example, a landlord cannot consider devolving budgetary responsibilities to tenants and residents associations if this cannot happen because of audit control.

**Unit 1.5:** One of the areas of enquiry for accreditation is the landlord's commitment to the principles of collective

tenant management. TPAS' background as a Section 16 agency, supporting the development of Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) informs this unit. However, the unit doesn't just look for the full TMO model. The assessors require evidence that there are a range of options for devolved control. It may not be appropriate to pursue resident management. The unit can be achieved by demonstrating that resident management has been promoted, considered by residents and discounted.

- For instance, in one pilot organisation both the landlord *and* residents were clear that for them that they get better results by sustaining a strong and independent Tenants' Federation but did not aspire to direct management of services. There had previously been at least one Estate Management Board in existence and this had received support. Throughout the interviews residents were aware that resident management was an option but they preferred not to pursue it.

#### Units 1.7 & 1.8

- In order to achieve **unit 1.7 (devolved power)** the landlord should evidence that it has several methods in which residents take a role that is more *active* than simple scrutiny.
- In order to achieve **unit 1.8 ('local' compacts)** there is a need to demonstrate that the landlord and residents have a positive approach to negotiating service levels, and the involvement approach across:
  - Neighbourhoods
  - Issues (e.g. ASB)
  - 'Communities of interest' (e.g. faith groups).

The assessors would not necessarily expect these agreements to be in place. Different organisations are at different points or have different needs. Some organisations may have decided that this model is not right for them. Assessors *would* expect Compact commitments to be honoured or programmed, and that the establishment of local compacts (or not) has been discussed.

**Unit 1.9:** Much discussion has taken place in resident involvement about the need to provide a '*Menu of Involvement*' or a wide range of ways for people to be involved. Unit 1.9 specifically looks for the compact to show a wide menu, evidence that this happens in reality, and evidence that the level of resident commitment and capacity for any given involvement technique is well communicated.

## Theme 2: The landlord knows its residents and their aspirations and

## Theme 3: The landlord has clear aims, measures and feeds back outcomes

Themes 2 and 3 clearly fit together as a group.

**Theme 2** looks explicitly at the organisation consumer engagement structure. It seeks to ensure that the landlord deploys surveys, focus groups and other 'market research' techniques to learn about its residents' aspirations. It requires evidence that this information is used to enable a negotiated resident involvement approach.

**Theme 3** considers issues around accessibility of information, quality of feedback, scrutiny of corporate performance, local accountability of services and the way resident involvement is managed to deliver results. The two themes together cover the day-to-day delivery of an effective resident involvement service.

The design of the framework brought some relatively recent thinking around resident involvement into play. This resulted in the pilots finding it quite challenging to achieve three units. Despite this, the assessors believe the standards are appropriate. The assessors have adjusted the threshold for achieving the criterion for themes 2 and 3 on the assumption that the pilots were likely to be in the upper quartile of resident involvement performance.

**Unit 2.2:** The framework requires that the landlord can 'profile' the diversity characteristics of its residents by household or by plotting on a Geographic Information System at a neighbourhood level. Landlords holding this information by area or across the whole of the stock will receive a 'partial' score. The assessors believe that this sort of detail at household level is crucial in order to target services to those that need or aspire to them.

- For instance in one pilot the landlord provides an 'extra care' gardening service to people with mobility problems. One interviewee told us that a neighbour on one side received this service while an equally immobile neighbour on the other side didn't. Well plotted 'resident census' data would avoid this problem.

As practice develops the framework bar will be raised to expect that resident profiles include a record of the types of involvement they want and the areas of service that interest them.

**Units 3.4 and 3.5:** As with units 1.7 and 1.8 these two units have been split from a single unit in early versions of the framework. Initially one unit looked at resident scrutiny at a landlord-wide level and how the landlord ensures services are accountable to residents at a local level. The pilot showed that these issues require different approaches. The two issues were too important to effective resident involvement (as described by resident interviewees) to be combined.

**Unit 3.6:** This was another challenging unit for the pilots, which resulted in an adjusted threshold. The review of the *National Framework of Tenant Participation Compacts* suggested that compacts should move away from a focus on process. The Housing Corporation's Involvement Policy requires that housing associations produce annual *impact assessments* of their resident involvement. In order to achieve these aims and requirements the assessors require that resident involvement should be seen as a series of projects with identifiable outcomes (e.g. changes to services, increased resident capacity). In order to track these projects they should be mapped from the beginning. This means that project plans need to show:

- which techniques will be used
- how much the activity should cost
- what changes will be produced at the end.

The pilots all set an action plan and put timescales to it. However for some pilots it was *not* clear that a systematic approach is used or intended outcomes communicated. This approach should also ensure that the positive impacts of resident involvement can be effectively fed back to residents. The assessors would only give a 'yes' score if there are several pieces of documentary evidence that show that action plan tasks are planned from the outset.

**Unit 3.7:** This unit needed to be changed from its initial draft. With the current focus on efficiency, the framework requires documentary evidence of the ways that resident involvement has delivered cost savings or 'value added' improvement. Interviewees consistently pointed to the efficiency benefits of resident involvement but no pilot assessed or recorded these benefits.

## **Theme 4 : The landlord has a partnership ethos which delivers 'broader than housing outcomes'**

## **Theme 5: The landlord has effectively embedded resident involvement**

## **Theme 6: The landlord is committed to training, development and resource support of resident involvement**

## **Theme 7: Residents are involved in the governance of the landlord**

This group of themes are all related to whether the culture of the organisation is conducive to delivering effective resident involvement.

**Theme 4** considers the relationship between resident involvement and other forms of community involvement. The theme focuses on 'broader than housing' outcomes. It assesses how well the landlord acts to support residents in achieving those aims that are not directly related to the housing function. The theme inevitably examines the approach to forming networks and partnerships. The framework assesses how well landlords define the boundary between action that is part of their 'core function' and action that would fall outside of their remit. The framework also requires evidence related to how the landlord supports residents (or signposts more appropriate providers) in 'community based' projects. The pilots were very good at flagging up their corporate partnerships. Often they needed prompting to evidence community based partnerships.

**Theme 5** a single unit theme, is the most important of the whole assessment. It considers whether all staff understand resident involvement, are positive about it and are actively involved in its delivery. Assessors have not expected every member of staff to be a resident involvement expert. They *have* expected a positive approach from the majority of staff they have spoken to.

**Theme 6** looks at capacity building for both staff and residents. It also considers whether the landlord and residents take a proactive role in promoting what they do.

**Theme 7** considers governance. It requires landlords to have residents on their Board. In certain contexts the

assessors would waive this requirement providing that the landlord has a clear plan to achieve board representation (see *Chapter 4*). It also requires the landlord and residents to have considered and reviewed the role of resident board members, to ensure that it is well understood and is meaningful. It requires that landlords put in place 'succession strategies'.

## Unit 7.1: Governance and Local Authorities

Clearly, this theme is problematic for local authorities as they have no company board and hence no possibility of resident board members. However, that does not mean that residents cannot be involved in local authority governance. There can be residents on the Housing Committee and Sub-Committees. Councillors can be tenants. Local authorities will be assessed on governance against the following criteria:

- Local Authorities must have good devolution of power (achieve 'Yes' for unit 1.7)
- Effective corporate scrutiny (achieve 'Yes' for unit 3.4)
- Provide documentary and interview evidence that residents' views have been considered and appropriately acted upon.
- Failure to achieve 'Yes' for one of the units or the 'resident views' test will result in a 'partial' assessment. A 'partial' in two of the three tests or a 'no' in any of the tests will result in a 'No'.

## Conclusion

This section has set out how the framework is structured. It has looked at how it is applied against some challenging units. It has also considered some of the changes made to the assessment framework during the project.

The next section, the final one on the method of assessment, will consider how the assessors have tried to be flexible in their approach to assessment of organisations according to their context. Context is important because it defines how well the resident involvement will deliver the outcomes that both the landlord and residents want.

## Chapter 4

### Applying the Framework

#### Introduction

In a sector as diverse as social housing, where there are multiple customer groups and very different management structures and stock distribution, organisations need the space to be able to define what works for them. There is a tension between the specifics of the framework and the context the landlord works in. Throughout the study the assessors took an approach based on how likely the landlord was to achieve the aims and outcomes that it had (hopefully) negotiated with its residents. Assessment required that some units needed documentary evidence. Other units depended on interview evidence. All assessments had to consider the environment that the organisation worked in. This section gives some examples of the way that assessors achieved a good balance.

#### Documentary evidence

Theme 1 looks explicitly at the way the landlord develops its strategy. While the *delivery* of strategy goes beyond documentary evidence the paper-based strategy sets the direction. Hence, for much of theme 1 (and for unit 3.6 *project management* and unit 3.7 *efficiency*) assessors particularly looked for documentary evidence.

**Unit 1.3** expects that the compact is at the centre of the landlords' policy making framework. For one of the pilots, residents were central to policy making and had a good degree of influence. This was reflected in 'Yes' scores for unit 1.7 (devolved decision-making), unit 3.3 (corporate scrutiny) and unit 7.1 (governance). However, as far as the assessors could tell, the compact did not show explicitly how the work of residents was either influencing or contributing to the business aims. The unit was assessed as 'partial'. Given that the landlord achieved a high level of involvement in the direction of the organisation, this may seem a harsh assessment. The assessors' position was that newly active residents (and assessors) couldn't easily see in the compact how resident involvement was changing the service and/or resident capacity and skills.

#### Sometimes the same work demonstrates different outcomes on the framework

Resident involvement sometimes produces unexpected, multiple and/or contradictory outcomes. One piece of work can be effective on part of the service and ineffective for another. Similarly, the framework sometimes produced different outcomes for the same piece of work. This can show what needs to be done in a project to achieve multiple outcomes.

- One of the pilot organisations was in the process of reviewing its governance arrangements. The process involved:
  - a review of its stakeholding membership
  - a proposed reduction to the size of the board (although the proportions were staying the same as at transfer)
  - a new hybrid selection/election process for resident board members.

Against unit 7.1 (governance) it performed exceptionally well, as it was taking a well thought out and considered approach to its governance. However, against unit 1.5 (collective management) it performed less well. The landlord was not, and did not have any intention in developing any form of resident management. It was also aiming to reduce the proportion of shareholding residents. The outcomes for this one piece of work were different, depending upon the unit.

Although the landlord did not demonstrate that it was promoting resident management, the assessors considered that given the organisation's context, (resident capacity building issues and much scattered stock), it was not appropriate at this time to promote resident management. In their view once the consultation on changes to the governance arrangements (particularly the shareholding membership) had been completed this would establish whether there was any likely demand for resident management.

#### Some units require more evidence than others

Because of contextual issues, it is impossible to set a target *amount* of evidence for each unit. However, it is possible to draw some conclusions regarding the level of evidence that may be required, judging by the performance of the pilots.

# Resident Involvement Quality

a Self-assessment  
Toolkit for Landlords

The assessors loosely expected two pieces of verifiable verbal evidence, (i.e. the same evidence being used by more than one person) or one piece of documentary evidence, to give a 'Yes' for the unit 4.3 (terms of reference for partnerships). This reflects the fact that while we would all like all partnerships to be planned at a neighbourhood level, most grow organically out of more informal networks. The evidence from pilots was that neighbourhood partnerships can take some time to settle into well agreed roles. The fact that partnerships developed organically did not stop them being effective.

In comparison, the assessors looked for evidence for unit 1.6 of at least three ways of devolving control. One of these should be supported by documentary evidence. Assessors believe that devolved control is an important principle of resident involvement and needs to be clearly differentiated from scrutiny.

As the framework and assessment develops it should become possible to draw some clearer guidelines on the form and amount of evidence required for each unit. This aspiration relies on time and experience. There is simply not enough data available as yet to draw firm conclusions. It was one stakeholder's view that only after around 40 assessments and the quality control process that goes with them will it be possible to point to examples of evidence!

## Sometimes grey areas are inevitable

The framework requires landlords and residents to be very clear about the frame of reference they work in. Everyone should be clear about:

- the boundaries of roles
- what level of influence is possible for residents
- how far the landlords' 'broader than housing' responsibilities extend.

For every organisation these issues will be different and sometimes it is not possible to resolve all the grey areas.

- One of the pilots and its residents have a structure in which the independent Tenants' Federation employs its own field workers and the landlord employs tenant participation officers. This inevitably means that there is some overlap of roles. While the assessors felt that more could be

done to define how these roles relate to each other, they did not give lower gradings. They took the view that 'more is better than less' and that residents were positive about having two different channels to raise issues with.

## Issues for support specialists

One recurring concern for the support specialist was, that often, the regulatory and inspection regimes do not take into account the particular needs of support focussed organisations or their challenging environment. One interviewee stated;

*'We need to say to the world out there' – "you're asking us to do Board membership, forum meetings and we'll do that – but we actually think the quality of feedback comes from valuing, emphasising and working on those personal contacts".*

One of the reasons for including a support specialist was to see whether a tightly drawn assessment framework for resident involvement could work in supported housing. The pilot showed that the framework did produce accurate results for the organisation. However, for certain units there was a need for a contextual interpretation of the framework.

- There was little evidence that the pilot organisation had progressed collective resident management. The assessors considered that interview evidence around the pilots' carefully negotiated priorities for individual lets (e.g. One interviewee described a resident who had specified 'I need a home that has no garden but is close to transport'), demonstrated an exceptional commitment to increasing the life choices of residents. The same was true of its innovative shared ownership programme. However, the assessors considered that these approaches did not equate to *collective* resident management. The assessors recognised that resident management was extremely challenging for the customer group. However, they suggested that there may be scope for developing a menu of issues over which residents could exercise more control or at least say "we want things done this way", perhaps at a scheme or shared house level.
- Although the landlord did not have residents on the board, the assessors took the view that it would

not achieve better governance or resident outcomes if it had resident board members at this time. The landlord had mapped a clear process to achieve its aspiration of resident governance. This included:

- 'mentoring' of potential Board members by existing Board members
- targeted capacity building.

Focus group evidence suggested that the mentoring process was taking place. On this basis the assessors considered that the landlord was clearly progressing towards the intention of the unit (i.e. *it has a considered approach to resident involvement in governance*). The organisation received a lower grading because it was unclear to the assessors whether the steps to achieve its aims had been given timescales. The assessors required that even though the process should proceed at the residents' pace, some evidence that the project had been mapped and planned was necessary.

## Conclusion

The assessment process is objective and relies on the evidence presented. Throughout the pilots there were interviewees who gave 'off the record' opinions about both negative and positive aspects of the pilot organisations' resident involvement. The assessors did not include these views in their assessment, although at times they used these views to inform the direction that the questioning took.

There is little reliable quantitative data to measure resident involvement standards. Traditional Key Performance Indicators such as numbers of tenants' and residents' associations are now considered to give a poor indication of quality. Assessment requires the assessors to interpret the evidence according to the landlords' circumstances. There are challenges in this for the accrediting body as these views can (and should) be challenged. However, this approach offers the opportunity to mould the assessment to the particular circumstances of the resident involvement at that place and time, while building on core expectations and principles.

## Chapter 5

### Good Practice, Improving Practice, Positive Trends

#### Introduction

The next two parts consider some of the learning that has emerged from the four assessments. Common trends were noted across all the pilot landlords.

#### Resident Involvement is good for business

Many active residents give up their free time because they want to see change. In the interviews for this project, people often talked about wanting to drive up the quality of services or reduce what they perceived as waste. In this aim, residents and landlords want the same things. It should follow that being serious about involving residents will improve the business. It will flag up areas of concern, and it may produce some novel ideas about how to improve it.

The pilot landlords had all, to some extent, embraced this view. Over and over again staff talked about how active residents play a role at two levels. They bring an invaluable insight into the expectations of 'customers', and they often act as the eyes and ears of the organisation, checking and monitoring service quality.

- Three of the pilots routinely involve residents in the recruitment of staff, bringing a focus on the qualities of customer service that residents consider important.
- Two of the pilots use resident led 'mystery shopping' exercises to reality-check service quality.
- All four organisations set out the business case for resident involvement in the high level aims of their compacts.

However, in the detail of particular service areas or the action plan the persuasive business reasons for conducting resident involvement often began to disappear. They were replaced by blanket statements about '*involving more residents*'. In the assessors view the business case should be restated at every level of the strategy (see *opposite*).

#### Good Practice:

- State the 'business' case for resident involvement in your compact.
- Make sure you state a 'business case' for every area of resident involvement work.

#### It's about neighbourhoods

Interviews with residents clearly showed that change in the landlord was just one of the things they were interested in. Often residents also wanted to see positive change across a whole range of problems in their neighbourhoods. It was encouraging that the pilot landlords were acting to support these broader interests. There was a startling array of projects underway.

- The specialist landlord gave at least equal weight to its role in enabling 'community connections' with the wider community. It had set targets for all of its schemes to become members of their local *Council for Voluntary Services(CVS)*. The rationale for this was clear; 'community connections' would create support networks for the residents. As a welcome side-product the approach would challenge negative community preconceptions about the landlord's residents.
- Another landlord has worked with residents and a local college to deliver a series of training 'tasters' in a neighbourhood. It was beginning to develop links with faith groups so that it could find out more through them, about what its residents thought.
- Two of the landlords were using neighbourhood-level data to target their 'broader than housing' work. They had both looked at key indicators of deprivation to decide which areas needed most help and had either completed, or were in the process of doing, community based surveying to decide what the priorities for change were

#### Good Practice:

- Think 'broader than housing',
- but have a clear reason for doing what you do.
- Investigate whether you can develop a targeted approach that uses both quantitative and qualitative information.

## Develop a menu

In their joint study *Resident Involvement in Housing* the Audit Commission and Housing Corporation pointed out that resident involvement needs to have a 'menu of involvement'. People differ in the time commitment they want to make, the way they want to be involved and the level of influence they want to have. For the landlord to get a good overview of its priorities it needs to employ a broad set of techniques - from gathering survey data to residents on the board and all points in between.

- All of the pilots described in their strategy documents, a wide range of opportunities in which to become involved. Interviews tended to confirm that most or all of these techniques were in use.

Clearly, the pilot landlords have picked up on the message that to deal with complex customers you need to have a system that asks them questions and offers them influence in a variety of different ways.

One of the down sides to offering a wide range of choices is that the customer has to choose, which can be a challenge in itself. If residents coming in cold don't know how long something will take them or what skills they need to do the job, they may get lucky and find their involvement rewarding, but they may have an unpleasant experience of involvement.

- Two of the pilots had given serious thought to making the choices easier. *Their* menu described what the way of being involved meant in practical terms, and how much time it would take.

### Good Practice:

- Have a wide 'menu of involvement'.
- Take the time to explain the time and skills that the menu activities require.

## Take steps to involve everyone

Using a 'menu of involvement' means that there are a good range of opportunities to be involved. The best landlords go further; they try to find out if any particular groups are not involved and why they are not involved. Then they work to resolve the problem. Often they come up with innovative solutions.

- One landlord with lower satisfaction levels and lower involvement of its residents from Black and Minority Ethnic communities provided a 'phone back' service. It added a strap line in a variety of community languages offering the mobile phone number of a bi-lingual housing officer to make an appointment. The result was a higher response rate to the survey and higher satisfaction than the average.
- One pilot organisation ran a 'Dreamscheme' programme offering incentives for young people to be involved in changing their neighbourhoods and achieving real success.
- In another organisation, to ensure that a resident with a disability could follow through their complaint, the entire process was completed on tape.

### Good Practice:

- Start with barriers to accessibility.
- Be inventive about how to get round them.

## Make sure that all staff are serious about involvement

You cannot expect every member of staff to be a resident involvement guru. You can expect that the majority of staff know what resident involvement is, are able to point to what's good about it, and take it seriously. If you do not expect this of staff resident involvement probably will not work; people can always put up another barrier, or drag their feet.

- Every pilot was serious about 'embedding resident involvement'.
- In one, several staff said that their experience of being in an organisation that was committed to resident involvement had 'converted' them.
- In another, a member of staff described doing a survey of former debtors that had led to training for all tenancy enforcement officers in debt advice.

In two organisations that had identified some staff resistance, there were plans for programmes of training that would ensure that everyone understood that resident involvement is not an optional extra.

All pilots were committed to training staff in resident

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involvement but oddly, none of the organisations routinely trained staff and residents together. (One offered its *formal staff* training programme to residents). If you want to embed resident involvement, then joint training allows for people to learn from each other.

## Conclusion

The pilot landlords are committed to resident involvement. They see a business case in the work. Their enthusiasm to make resident involvement a part of all staff members thinking shows that this commitment runs deep. The pilots demonstrate that they need to find out the views of all their residents. They are developing wide menus. They look for effective ways to engage under-represented groups. They recognise that achieving all of this means thinking about neighbours and not just homes.

## Chapter 6

### Applying Learning

#### Introduction

All of the pilot landlords have developed resident involvement that delivers change to the way they work and to the lives of their residents. The following section looks at how the landlords might move forward to deliver better outcomes for both the business and the residents.

#### Be clear about the boundaries and limits.

One of the core questions asked by the assessors was *'What are the limits to your resident involvement'*. Quite rightly the pilot organisations tended to say that they aspired to enable involvement in everything. They were less good at identifying the practical limits to this aspiration. Generally, the pilots identified sensitive issues around resident involvement in personal matters such as individual lettings decisions or anti-social behaviour cases.

Residents need to know the limits of their involvement and influence. Sometimes their aspirations need to be guided by wider considerations. These limits should be negotiated and agreed with residents. More clarity in some of the areas listed below would have been welcomed.

- Compact dispute resolution clauses - when things go wrong in resident involvement, is there a formal process to resolve them?
- Priorities – you can't do everything all the time. Is there a way of deciding what matters most?(see below)
- How much power is being devolved? For each activity does devolved power relate to information, consultation or delegation? There is no point in offering delegated power if the landlord still feels it needs firm control.
- How long is it going to take? Set out what the time limits to an involvement process are.
- Who makes the final decision? When you get to the end of the timescale or are not getting agreement someone needs to say 'enough is enough' and take the decision. Roles should be negotiated. It should be explicit who the lead person or body is.

- What level of skill/representative status do residents need to take part in an activity? For instance, will the landlord fund organisations other than tenants' and residents' associations to do community based projects?
- If the landlord's work goes 'broader than housing' where does its responsibility stop and someone else's start?

These boundaries establish a 'frame of reference' for resident involvement work. It is really important to make sure this frame of reference is communicated to the wider resident body and to non specialist staff. It is a well known mantra for all organisations never to promise what you can't deliver. This needs to be as true in resident involvement as anything else.

#### Good Practice:

- Be honest with yourself about the limits you are going to put on resident involvement.
- Let everyone else know what these limits are.
- Once you have set the limits, continue to push the boundaries outwards.

### Taking a strategic view and implementing Resident Involvement

#### Resident Involvement is good for business

Chapter 5 identified that all of the pilots believe there is a business case for resident involvement. There are challenges, however, in ensuring that this business case 'reads through' all of the documents relating to resident involvement.

One of the observations of compacts in the *Interim Evaluation of Tenant Participation Compacts* (ODPM, 2003, p.5) was that they have sometimes been overly focused on the processes of resident involvement. While the process is important, the *Interim Evaluation* (and the assessors) took the view that before this, compacts need to focus on what resident involvement is trying to achieve.

The updated *National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts* (ODPM, 2005, p.19) is clear that resident involvement has a strong strategic direction. Therefore, the assessors were keen to see that there was a robust way of prioritising work. Resident involvement needs to look at the areas of the landlord's

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work that are most important to residents, and/or most pressing for the landlord.

In all pilots, assessors expected that resident involvement activities on the compacts' action plans should explicitly state:

- their outcomes - the changes that the activity is trying to achieve. For instance, the 'outcomes' of reviewing the resident newsletter might be:
  - Higher satisfaction with newsletter.
  - Greater understanding of how the landlord works.
  - Greater interest in community based activities.
  - Increased confidence in writing and photography skills.
- The officer or resident body responsible for achieving the outcomes.
- The timescale for the activity.

These outcomes seem relatively obvious, and most interviews showed that active residents and resident involvement staff knew why they were doing things. Other interviews suggested that if you do not clearly describe the outcomes at the beginning it will be difficult to prove how resident involvement is having an impact. It may also be difficult to explain to residents that are not involved, why you are doing something.

## Project Managing Resident Involvement

The section above sees each action plan task as a *project*. These projects have to be planned. The assessors suggest that the action plan should relate back to the 'business' priorities, and that each 'action' should have a simple form that maps the project and its intended (and actual) results. There was evidence that the pilot landlords were moving this way.

- Three landlords were using project management techniques to map and manage what they were doing.
- Two landlords explicitly saw their resident involvement staff as 'advisory' specialists. Those staff were to ensure that resident involvement was effectively built into other departments' projects.
- Two landlords were using 'case studies' and individual testimony in an ad hoc way to demonstrate the positive outcomes for individual residents of being involved.

- The specialist landlord had developed the concept of 'campaigns' co-ordinated from the centre, to look at a specific area of priority (initially the review of the business plan). The campaigns will expect scheme managers to undertake involvement activities within a framework of activities that deliver good quality feedback.

Although all the landlords demonstrated clear progress, there was also some evidence that actions (process) sometimes got mixed up with outcomes (achievements) in the paperwork. Rarely was there a clear line that ran throughout all of the documentation showing how priorities had been decided and what would drop off the bottom of the list if projects ran over. This may seem pedantic, but if you want to 'sell' resident involvement to sceptical staff and residents then you need to demonstrate that it is going to deliver the changes people want.

### Good Practice:

- Gather information about what needs changing and negotiate priorities with clear outcomes with residents.
- Make sure you know what you are trying to achieve and make it explicit in the paperwork.
- Think about resident involvement as a series of projects not a structure.

## Demonstrate that you are 'efficient'

In 2004, the Housing Corporation and Audit Commission collaborated on a study *Housing: Improving Services through Resident Involvement* which considered the costs and benefits of resident involvement. The result was inconclusive, suggesting that it is extremely hard to make these assessments of a service that is as qualitative as resident involvement. At the same time, those landlords that take resident involvement seriously believe that it delivers a better managed (more efficient) service. Since the study above, landlords have been asked by government to make efficiency savings. Landlords, and other public services, must either save money or 'add value'. This puts measuring the benefits from resident involvement near the top of the priority list. After all, if the resident involvement work can't demonstrate its value, it might be at risk.

During the pilots, the interviews with specialist staff showed that people take efficiency in resident involvement seriously.

- One landlord was investigating joint training with neighbouring landlords, partly to drive down costs.
- Another was tendering the support of its 'Tenant Consultative Committees' rather than keeping it in-house.
- Another talked about how a 'residents in design' team had made a cost saving suggestion about providing coloured tarmac on a new scheme rather than a large grassed area.
- All of the landlords could point to grant income either they, or residents had accessed.
- Some residents talked about the 'match funding' their volunteering time provided.

Although the examples above are positive, no-one seemed to be able to point to anywhere that these 'efficiencies' are evidenced. Interviewees often said something like 'we'd have to go back through the minutes of...'. Resident involvement staff need to get in the habit of recording the savings (or the 'value added') that they make. If resident involvement moves to the 'project thinking' described above, this might turn out easier to do. As projects are designed, residents and landlords can try to think of the most effective way of doing things. As projects progress grant income can be recorded. As projects finish, the benefits can be recorded.

### Good Practice:

- Make sure efficiency is part of your project planning.
- Make sure you *record* the benefits you know you achieve.

## Moving from the menu to targeted resident involvement

In Chapter 6 we discuss the *menu of involvement*. That chapter also looks at some of the ways that diverse and under-represented groups have been encouraged to share their views. The next important step is to bring these two approaches together.

In order to work in a targeted way landlords need to know about the diversity profile (e.g. age, gender,

ethnicity, disability) of their residents and how they wish to be involved. In this way trends can be spotted and activities designed to meet people's aspirations.

This sort of resident 'census' has proved to be difficult for landlords to undertake. Clearly, it needs to be done with resident consent, and it takes a lot of resources. However, it *can* be done.

- One pilot organisation had used a broad range of channels to find out about its residents, and now claimed detailed profiling information for over 90% of its residents.

The next challenge for that pilot organisation is to integrate its menu of involvement.

- Another pilot organisation had very detailed information about the profile and aspirations of residents but hadn't yet found a way to centralise that information.

### Good Practice:

- Make a concerted effort to find out about your residents.
- Centralise the information.
- Develop a system to *target* the Menu. Can you develop a database that shows how people want to be involved?

## Dealing with rapid change

All of the pilot organisations were in the middle of rapid change. Arguably, continuous organisational change is and probably will remain a key factor in the housing world. While change may be necessary, it is going to be unsettling for staff and residents.

- Two pilots had, relatively recently, become ALMOs.
- Two organisations had completed restructures in the last 18 months.
- All pilots were consulting on moving from devolved housing offices to a more centralised structure.

Two of the organisations had highly developed *formal* resident involvement structures. It was in those organisations that residents seemed most informed about, and comfortable with, the changes in progress.

The assessors inferred that it is easier to discuss a message through a group meeting collectively, than it is to deliver a message by letter and ask for feedback through a consumer approach.

In all pilot organisations, the more active residents were more 'satisfied' than less active residents, which suggests there are some challenges around how landlords feedback their intentions (see below).

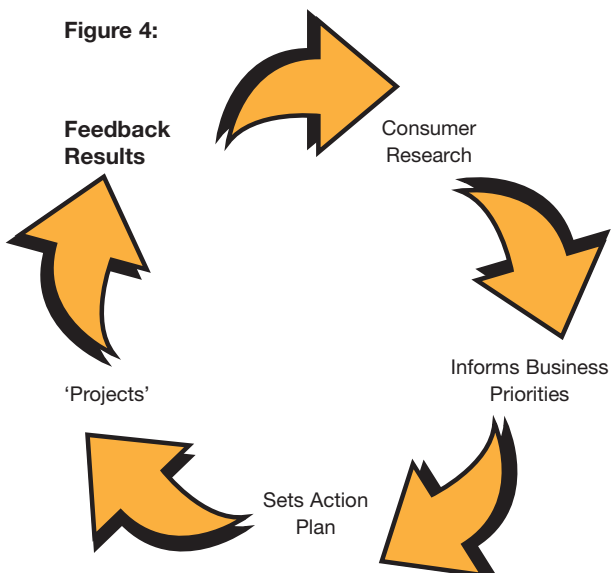
### Learning Point:

- Is your formal structure robust enough to deal with rapid change?

## Feedback is at least as important as activity

In order to ensure that everyone is aware of the work that is going on and the changes that it makes, it is important to get the feedback of results. Feedback is a classic stage in a 'virtuous circle' where information is gathered about a problem, action is taken to resolve it and feedback is given on how the problem has been resolved before the process starts again [fig. 4].

Figure 4:



Most of the pilot landlords had communication strategies to ensure that feedback happened. Interviews and focus groups showed that residents who were involved in the more formal elements of the resident involvement structure generally felt that they received good information on the impact their involvement achieved.

To differing extents, all landlords felt that they had issues around feedback. Residents who were active at a neighbourhood level seemed less satisfied with feedback arrangements.

### Good Practice:

- Build feedback processes into project planning.
- Use a wide range of ways of feeding back - including newsletters, meetings, seminars and individual contact.

## The next step from feedback is local accountability

All of the pilot landlords had robust processes that ensured that active residents could scrutinise corporate policy, practice and performance information. However, it was more difficult for residents at a neighbourhood level to take the benefits of this corporate scrutiny and use it to hold the landlord to account for how the service was delivered locally.

- There was only one landlord that had a single negotiated document that incorporated all of its service standards.

The service standard document meant that residents at a local level could undertake monitoring of services with a clear sense of what they could expect. This allowed them to pinpoint problems and challenges with some accuracy. This approach also had the effect of 'managing expectations' as both landlord and residents could be clear about what 'an acceptable service' was at that time; even if they disagreed about the detail.

- The same landlord had a formal process whereby Tenants' and Residents' Associations could take evidence of service problems and make a 'collective complaint'.

By following this process it was possible for local groups to register their concern and get a reasoned answer. If the problem wasn't resolved, later stages of the process triggered a full review of the service in question.

Another way of achieving local feedback and accountability could be through the establishment of local or issue based compacts that set out service expectations at the more devolved (as opposed to the corporate) level. Providing these compacts have the 'teeth' to achieve change they could be powerful drivers of service improvement. No landlord had made significant progress towards this aim.

#### Good Practice:

- Negotiate clear and robust service standards.
- Set up a formal process for residents to hold the landlord to account.
- Think about local compacts as an accountability model.

## Work with the community and voluntary sector

Current government rhetoric puts a lot of weight on social enterprise as an 'intermediate' deliverer of public services. When it comes to the 'broader than housing' agenda there is a lot of untapped potential to deliver services in a smarter way.

There were some really positive examples of how the pilot landlords have worked with (and funded) voluntary sector organisations that are better placed to achieve 'broader than housing' aims. The pilots showed the voluntary sector can reach under-represented groups:

- One organisation funds a local football charity to work with young people. The charity delivers its core mission of increasing sport opportunities for young people. The landlord gets raised capacity among its young residents, lower levels of nuisance and a way of directly accessing the views of young people.
- Another landlord had trained its residents in survey techniques. It was the landlord's intention to help these residents to set up as a social enterprise, providing market research services both for the landlord and other service providers.

Much of the good information regarding this area of work was provided as supplementary evidence. This showed that the pilots don't always promote these initiatives positively enough. In most pilots there were few examples. Landlords could investigate the possibilities in the voluntary sector more fully.

#### Good Practice:

- If someone else can do it better - pay them to do it
- Provide support to groups to develop their own capacity to form social enterprises or voluntary organisations - then use them!

## Conclusion

Much of the learning above builds upon the good practice that the project identified in the previous chapter. The pilots showed that thinking about resident involvement in terms of projects can provide more clarity to the work. This clarity can help to make it easier to feedback achievements at the end of a project. A clear set of service standards form the building blocks for greater accountability. Formal structures don't meet every need but they may help with managing change. A really dynamic resident involvement structure will be targeted in its methods and work with the voluntary sector to deliver.

## Conclusion

In creating a robust standards framework for resident involvement this project has met its primary aim. The standard has been developed with invaluable contributions from steering group members and the four pilot organisations. It provides a benchmark of quality that will assure landlords and residents that their approach is effective.

In the course of developing the project the method has been adapted to fit the experience in each pilot organisation. Landlords self-assess against the framework, minimising resource pressures and providing a solid foundation for independent assessment. A scrutiny phase will ensure that landlords can input into the assessment. Residents and staff will be interviewed or will take part in focus groups. Resident involvement will be observed in action.

The framework covers all of the key areas of resident involvement. It does this through a scoring system that builds up through units and themes to a broad picture of the organisation's work. The pilot landlords have found some units challenging and the thresholds for accreditation have been adapted to recognise this.

The assessment method and the framework produce a strong measure of the quality of a landlord's resident involvement. However, there are occasions when the way that landlord works is effective but does not meet the detailed standards. The assessors have sought to interpret the evidence according to the circumstances. There has always been a clear reason for this use of interpretation and the assessment framework has shown that it can accommodate this.

A welcome outcome of the project is that it has identified many examples of good practice. There were common trends in that good practice, and some of those examples are described in the report. The pilot accreditations have also shown some common areas for improvement.

The assessors and the scrutiny panel are confident that the pilot assessments were accurate and robust. As a test of a methodology, the project has been successful. The framework, which is provided as Appendix A on the CD Rom, will provide an effective tool for landlords, working with residents to self-assess their involvement work. If landlords are seeking advice on how to use the

framework, design a review of their resident involvement or gain the added assurance of an independent 'critical friend', then please contact TPAS.

As the promotion of the framework takes place, we will welcome feedback on how it works. There will be a process of continual improvement in the methodology, process and assessment framework.

## Notes

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Notes

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