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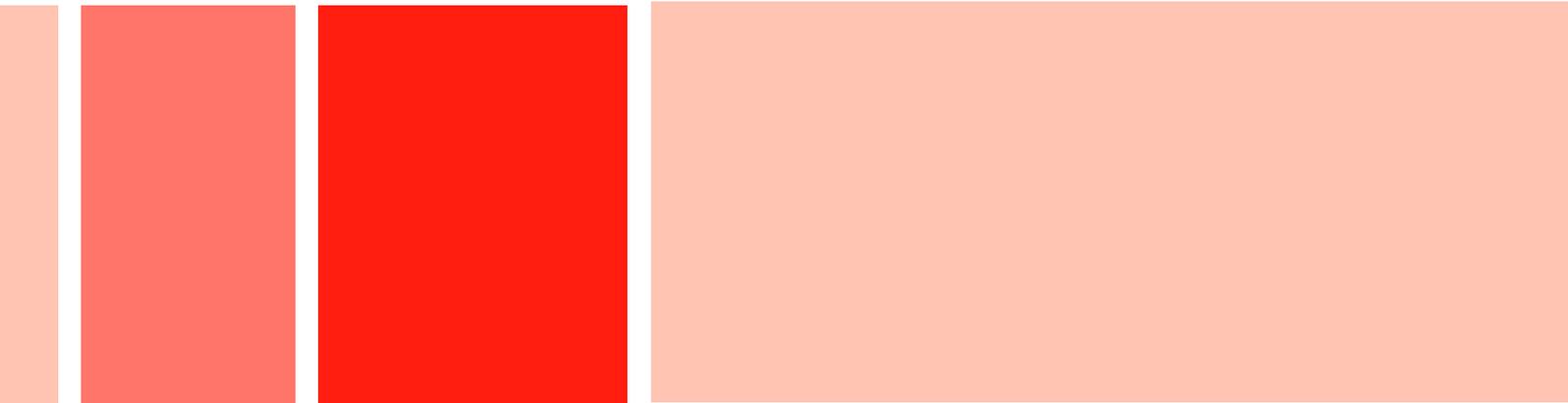
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# Support for Tenant Participation: Priorities and Shape of Future Provision



# **Support for Tenant Participation: Priorities and Shape for Future Provision**

## **Campbell Tickell Ltd**

Views expressed in this report are those of the research team and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**

ATTAIN	Accessible Training and Information Network
CIH	Chartered Institute of Housing (Cymru)
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
HA	Housing Association*
HT	Housing Trust
LTPS	Local Tenant Participation Strategy
TMO	Tenant Management Organisation
TPAS	Tenant Participation Advisory Service (Cymru)

\*Note: when the terminology 'housing associations' is used in this report, it refers to all housing associations, community mutuals and other kinds of transfer organisation registered with the Welsh Government.

# 1 Introduction: background and methodology

## Background to the study

- 1.1 Supporting tenants is a priority for the Welsh Government. The Programme for Government notes that the Welsh Government will take action on '*support to help tenants of social authorities and housing associations to participate in the running of their homes and services*'.
- 1.2 The Welsh Government provides this support in a variety of ways. The Regulatory Framework and other mechanisms continue to ensure that tenants are able to influence strategic decisions and service delivery at a local level. Funding is provided to support tenant participation and the Welsh Government publishes a National Tenant Participation Strategy. Support also includes grant funding for specific projects, such as Tenant Empowerment Grants, as well as core funding of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (Cymru) and Welsh Tenants.
- 1.3 The Welsh Government remains committed to providing support for tenants but must now consider what form this should take. The reasons for the Welsh Government commissioning this review are twofold. First, public sector budgets are under pressure. Secondly, limited resources must be used to best effect. Any funding the Government does provide needs to be targeted so that it is delivering value for money. The Welsh Government has, for some time, continued with a commitment to provide core grant funding to two different organisations to provide tenant support. The subject remains important to the Welsh Government but, given the above, now is the time to review the current arrangements.
- 1.4 Some wider considerations also inform this review, however. Support at a local landlord level for tenant participation has advanced considerably over the last decade, and social housing landlords are more likely (for a variety of reasons) to seek to foster organisational cultures that look to place service users and tenants at the heart of service delivery.

## **Aims and key questions**

### *Aims*

- 1.5 The purpose of the review, as set out in the brief issued by the Welsh Government, is to:
- Review what support, financial and other, is needed for effective tenant participation in housing at national and local levels
  - Determine how priorities in this area can be delivered in future in an effective and efficient way.

### *Key questions*

- 1.6 In doing this, the review was asked to consider and advise on the following:
- Clarify the Welsh Government's role in supporting tenants in a housing context
  - Consider how support may be delivered on behalf of Welsh Government, including the role that organisations currently play and could play in providing this support, in particular social landlords, the two tenant support organisations and other third sector organisations such as Cymorth Cymru, Tai Pawb, Community Housing Cymru and any others suggested by the research team
  - Review the current roles of the two tenant support organisations (Welsh Tenants and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service), the support and services they deliver, any duplication, and the value for money they offer.

- Examine whether one tenant support organisation would be appropriate and how this should be formed, e.g. one of the existing organisations or a completely new organisation.

## **Methodology**

- 1.7 The research team undertook both desktop research and qualitative fieldwork. The research methods were overseen by a steering group of five members. All of the research took place across the course of October to December 2013.
- 1.8 As part of providing a wider context for this study, the research team undertook a review of how support for effective tenant participation in Wales compares with the support provided in England and Scotland; this included both desktop reviews of documents and interviews with key civil servants in the three respective countries, as well as interviews with the TPAS organisations in England and Scotland.
- 1.9 So as to engage directly with stakeholders involved in supporting and leading effective tenant participation, the research team conducted face-to-face and/or telephone interviews with five representatives of Welsh Government, two executive team members of Community Housing Cymru, a representative from Housing Leadership Cymru, and representatives of five other service providers (consultants and third sector organisations) in Wales.
- 1.10 The research team interviewed the organisations currently in receipt of funding from the Housing Policy Division of Welsh Government, Welsh Tenants and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Cymru. We interviewed the Chief Executives of the two organisations on three occasions, one of which was a joint meeting. We interviewed the Chair of Welsh Tenants face-to-face and interviewed the Chair of TPAS over the telephone. We also had a face-to-face interview with the Director of the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru, together with two of his colleagues.

- 1.11 As the schedule of Tenant Advisory Panel meetings did not fall within the research period (and so it was not possible to meet with the whole Panel), we carried out semi-structured telephone interviews with six members of the Tenant Advisory Panel to the Regulatory Board for Wales, who had agreed (when asked by the administrator) to be interviewed.
- 1.12 Chief Executives of the thirty-seven registered housing associations and community mutuals in Wales were offered the opportunity to participate by providing responses to emailed questions. The survey achieved a 38% response rate. The research team recognises that this response rate may have been affected by the timing of the research (just before Christmas), by organisations not being chased to respond and by survey fatigue among this sample, given the sample group's exposure to recent research exercises and surveys.
- 1.13 In an attempt to ascertain views 'at the coalface', the research team also offered Tenant Participation Officers the opportunity to participate online. Twelve of the 56 tenant participation officers, invited to participate, responded. Four of the twelve were local authority staff. This is a low response rate, and as such any reporting of tenant participation officer views must not be considered to represent tenant participation officer opinion in general.
- 1.14 Telephone interviews were conducted with representatives of five housing associations and two stock-retaining local authorities. These organisations were selected to reflect a diversity of: type of landlord structure (local authority, housing association, large scale voluntary transfer, community mutual); size of organisation (from just under 1,500 managed units to c. 11,000); and geography (urban and rural, south, mid and west Wales). In making a selection the research team also took account of the different types of relationship that housing organisations have with Welsh Tenants and TPAS Cymru. For each of the seven landlords, we interviewed either the Chief Executive or the senior member of staff whose responsibilities include tenant participation. We also interviewed eight tenants representing six of the seven

organisations. For ease of reference in this report, these seven organisations are referred to as the 'staff/tenant sample interviews'.

1.15 In total, the research team interviewed 30 stakeholders from a range of organisations, interviewed or surveyed 40 members of staff from social housing landlords and interviewed 8 tenants (excluding the Tenant Advisory Panel members who are included among the 30 stakeholders).

### **Structure of the report**

1.16 The remainder of this report is structured in the following way:

- Chapter 2 sets out the key findings.
- Chapter 3 seeks to clarify what is meant and understood by the term 'tenant participation'.
- Chapter 4 describes the Welsh Government's current arrangements for supporting tenant participation.
- Chapter 5 describes, for comparison, arrangements for supporting tenant participation in England and Scotland.
- Chapter 6 sets out the findings of our research.
- Chapter 7 identifies options for maintaining support for tenant participation in the context of reduced funding.
- Chapter 8 sets out the conclusions of the review and makes some recommendations for the Welsh Government and other key stakeholders.

1.17 We would like to thank all of the stakeholders who gave their time to speak with us, and to respond to our consultations. The report has been written by Campbell Tickell, a housing consultancy working in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The team comprised: Radojka Miljevic, Sarah Brown, David Hedges, David Hingley and Zaidee O'Dell.

## **2 Key findings from the study**

### **Funding for tenant participation**

- 2.1 In Wales, there has been a strong level of investment in tenant participation at a national and a local level in recent years.
- 2.2 The Welsh Government has provided core funding in 2013/14 to TPAS Cymru of £275,000 and to Welsh Tenants of £205,000.
- 2.3 The Tenant Empowerment Grant Programme has been suspended pending the outcome of this review, but was at the level of £150,000 per annum in recent years.
- 2.4 Housing associations and local authorities are funding separately a wide range of tenant participation activities themselves.
- 2.5 The position of the Welsh Government is that the current level of investment is unsustainable due to a reduction in resources.

### **The regulatory framework**

- 2.6 Since the last funding round, the operating environment has changed for housing associations and community mutuels. Tenant participation is now promoted and safeguarded for housing associations and community mutuels by the Welsh Government's Regulatory Framework, which requires them to work with their tenants and service users in planning and assessing the quality of services.
- 2.7 For local authorities, however, requirements in respect of tenant participation are less prescriptive than for housing associations, and there is no regulatory or inspection regime that focuses on promoting or enforcing them. Local authorities are regulated by the Wales Audit Office, but tenant participation outcomes are not as closely scrutinised as they have been to date among housing associations under the implementation of the Regulatory Framework.

### **Building on progress**

- 2.8 A range of stakeholders agree that the adoption, promotion and support of tenant participation has made considerable progress in the last 25

years, and that the principle of involving service users in decision-making about services is accepted across the social housing and public sectors.

- 2.9 There is now a Tenant Advisory Panel functioning at a national level but its scope is restricted to providing a voice on tenant issues to the Regulatory Board for Wales for tenants only from housing association landlords (and not from local authority ones).

### **Priority areas for improvement**

- 2.10 In relation to tenant participation, the most common areas for further regulatory engagement identified through Housing Association Regulatory Assessments are: service user knowledge, early involvement of service users in shaping services, having a clear outcomes focus for service users, and valuing and responding to their views.

### **Views on effective tenant participation**

- 2.11 The evidence from this research suggests that tenant participation is mostly understood by sector practitioners to mean tenants' involvement with decision making, policy changes, performance improvement and community projects.
- 2.12 Some stakeholders involved in this research see wider skills, confidence and capacity-building investment as critical to effective participation. Some also see the skills and confidence developed by tenants through tenant participation as being transferable – to engagement in the community more widely, to a return to education and possibly to employment.
- 2.13 Most stakeholders involved in this research highlight that effective participation depends on a cultural and attitudinal focus within organisations to work collaboratively and openly.
- 2.14 Most stakeholders also stress that tenants should see benefits to their involvement and that participation needs to happen in a variety of ways.
- 2.15 The narrow requirements of local authorities focus on consultation and tenants voicing views on matters under consultation by the authority.

2.16 Whether a local authority or housing association landlord, as noted above, it is likely that much will depend on the organisational culture promoted across all of the landlord's service activities in determining how effectively the landlord embraces tenant views and influence. (This was a point made by senior sector stakeholders,.)

### **Support for effective participation**

2.17 The widely held view among the practitioners who were involved in this research is that tenants need support to make an effective contribution, and that they need an independent and trusted body to help them.

2.18 A number of stakeholders interviewed during the course of the research strongly support the suggestion of one organisation providing a range of services in relation to tenant participation, from advocacy to training to facilitation. It should be noted, however, that neither Scotland nor England has such an organisation.

2.19 Stakeholders are aware that there are barriers (whether in Scotland, England or Wales) to having one tenant-orientated organisation, such as the need for existing organisations to merge or work together in different group or partnership arrangements, and the 'cultural fit' between the organisations best placed to deliver those services.

2.20 Tenant Advisory Panel interviewees expressed frustration that a range of tenant organisations – not just TPAS and Welsh Tenants – do not work in such a way as to share openly good practice and information.

### **TPAS and Welsh Tenants**

2.21 The research findings suggest that the work of TPAS and of Welsh Tenants has been valued by stakeholders in the sector, but there are also criticisms of both organisations and reputational risks to both. There is evidence of overlap or duplication between the two organisations, though each is valued for different activities.

2.22 Many of the stakeholders involved in this research question why two organisations are needed to support tenant participation, and there are perceptions of rivalries and competition between both organisations.

2.23 While both organisations report to the Welsh Government on a range of activities being undertaken, there is little evidencing of the outcomes of these activities. There could be improvement in the Welsh Government's specification of the outcomes it is seeking.

2.24 Nearly all stakeholders identify a clear distinction in identity and purpose between Welsh Tenants and TPAS. While the label of 'tenants' organisation' was often considered positively for Welsh Tenants, TPAS's label as a 'landlord organisation' was often used pejoratively. The experience from England and Scotland is that this kind of polarising language can be unhelpful and inaccurate for describing stakeholder relationships.

### **Other organisations engaging with citizens and tenants**

2.25 Some stakeholders involved in this research are of the view that other organisations engaging with citizens and tenants (and not just those receiving core grant funding from a particular part of the Welsh Government Housing Division) should also have been under scrutiny for how best they might work with others to organise and promote the engagement, capacity, rights and influence of citizens.

2.26 Several stakeholders identify the potential for broadening out the support of engagement, advice and support and independent brokering around engagement in services, and not setting social housing apart (though this would have broadened out this study beyond its brief). They challenge the perceived monopoly of Welsh Tenants and TPAS.

### **Tenant Empowerment Grant**

2.27 Evidence from this research suggests mixed support for continuation of the Tenant Empowerment Grant programme. Tenant Empowerment Grants have a good geographic and thematic spread, are viewed as encouraging innovation and helping tenants look outwards.

2.28 There is criticism that the quality of Tenant Empowerment Grant outputs can be '*hit or miss*', that they can create unrealistic action plans that organisations may not sign up to, and it was also felt that they are susceptible to being staff-led rather than tenant-led.

## **The role of landlords**

- 2.29 All interviewees involved in this research identify co-operation and collaboration with tenants at a local level (including feeding back on outcomes) as a landlord responsibility.
- 2.30 Some (such as the social landlord staff from the staff/tenant sample interviews) view a responsibility to fund tenant groups as central to this local landlord activity.
- 2.31 Other stakeholder practitioners see a responsibility for landlords to broaden participation beyond funded tenant groups '*to engage the majority of tenants who are not interested in groups and panels and forums*' (though housing association landlords have a responsibility to do this in any case under the Regulatory Framework).

## **The role of Welsh Government**

- 2.32 Many of the stakeholders involved in this research (and working outside the Welsh Government) are unclear about the national strategy or vision in relation to tenant participation.
- 2.33 The majority of interviewees support the Welsh Government's role in monitoring the effectiveness of tenant participation in housing associations and community mutuals via the Regulatory Framework.
- 2.34 The difficulty of embedding effective tenant participation in the local authority sector in the absence of a regulatory or inspection regime for housing services was raised as an issue by a small number of stakeholders.
- 2.35 Stakeholders involved in this research consider the Welsh Government to have a role in funding partnership working around support to tenants and cross-sector events and comparisons that enable the sharing of good practice and learning.

- 2.36 A diverse range of stakeholders identified the need for the Welsh Government to continue to provide strategic leadership in promoting tenant participation. For the majority of stakeholders, this continued focus requires continued funding of independent support for tenant participation, but with movement away from local interventions (best funded by landlords themselves) to regional and national initiatives.
- 2.37 From our interviews with stakeholders within the Welsh Government, the research team understands the priorities for future support for tenant participation to be:
- Helping the service user in shaping housing-related services
  - Sharing and promoting good practice in tenant participation
  - Having the facility to consult with tenants on matters of housing policy (this was recognised by other stakeholders too, e.g. Tenant Advisory Panel members and Chief Executive survey respondents)
  - Investing money to help get initiatives started, with a view to these becoming self-sustaining.

## **The future**

- 2.38 A number of stakeholders involved in this research were keen for the Welsh Government to take a leadership role in a citizen-centred approach. There was a demand from some to see Welsh Government clarity around the extent to which it wished to develop engagement with citizens.
- 2.39 Some interviewees identified the challenges of the current operating environment in relation to welfare reform, living costs and affordability, and suggested that this would lead to greater tensions in relationships between landlords and tenants.
- 2.40 A strong emphasis for future support was placed on inclusion – in particular digital inclusion, as well as financial and health. Employment and training was also identified as a priority.

- 2.41 There was recognition among stakeholders of the growth of the private rented sector – and support among some for developing the capacity and voice of tenants in that sector. There are concerns as to whether existing organisations have the capacity to do this. There was a view that supporting tenant voice at a strategic level (much in the way that housing association tenants have a body operating at a national level in the form of the Tenant Advisory Panel) ought also to extend to local authority landlords.
- 2.42 This research found that the Welsh Government is expected to lead on the application of equality and diversity to engaging with tenants. Support is still needed to ensure that the profile of involved tenants reflects the wider tenant profile of any social housing landlord.

### **Government funding**

- 2.43 On an operational level, the evidence from this research suggests that service delivery organisations such as local authorities and housing associations, already consider that they fund tenant participation. They view it as core to their business approach.
- 2.44 Nearly all stakeholders involved in this research consider it important to protect a funding source outside landlord budgets for independent advice. This is because of an anxiety that tenants have no recourse for training and advice in the event of their landlords either not making resources available to them or not wishing to support the kinds of activities that tenants may declare an interest in (though the point was also made that the local authority Housing Revenue Account is in effect a protected budget).
- 2.45 Several stakeholders challenged the current operating arrangements of tenant-based organisations as costly and inefficient (though very little evidence was cited in support of this and focused mainly on overlaps into policy input or multiple conference events). Views were also put forward that other organisations could be providing back-office services,

or that some of the organisations concerned could establish a group structure to encourage both collaboration and cost-sharing.

## **Other ideas**

- 2.46 Very few ideas emerged regarding other arrangements or sources of funding: most of these ideas focused on organisations working more effectively together but a couple of organisations raised the prospect of sums of money being raised from social housing landlords through a levy system. There was a concern that any levy-type system would need to demonstrate some direct and real benefits to tenants. There are other disadvantages identified by the research authors: e.g. levies already paid to other bodies, a levy system would need an infrastructure, chasing mechanisms, accountability to funders and so on (so it would not be straightforward to establish) and the fact that this is an untested proposition.
- 2.47 One stakeholder proposed that the Welsh Government could promote its vision for effective tenant participation by making it a condition of certain types of funding explicitly designated for other purposes (e.g. major repairs allowances), and that this would help to promote participation in the local authority sector.
- 2.48 Another stakeholder suggestion was that private sector companies (typically large building/maintenance companies that have a long association with the social housing sector) might be approached to provide support for training to tenants, since the sums of money needed are small relative to the budgets of these types of organisations.
- 2.49 A couple of stakeholders viewed the research focus as too narrow because it was confined to how tenant participation is supported specifically in the social housing sector (rather than more widely, for example in the public sector). Some felt the research exercise had been a missed opportunity to explore how citizens are supported to engage with public bodies (and funded by the Welsh Government to do so).

## Potential options

2.50 The research team identified a range of options for future funding arrangements:

**Option One:** Retain the status quo and cut funding proportionately to the Tenant Empowerment Grants (administered by the Chartered Institute of Housing), TPAS and Welsh Tenants.

**Option Two:** Cease funding to one or other of the organisations or the grant scheme.

**Option Three:** TPAS and Welsh Tenants to form a closer working relationship with each other.

**Option Four:** TPAS and/or Welsh Tenants to form closer working relationships with other organisations.

**Option Five:** the creation of a group structure (or shared services vehicle) that provides shared services to a range of organisations which engage in participation and consultation activities of different kinds.

**Option Six:** the Welsh Government to tender a range of contracts in 2015 for the key activities it seeks to fund over a period of three years and cease core grant funding.

2.51 Option 1 (cutting funding proportionately) is an appropriate short-term measure to take, but offers no strategic vision, only a financial one.

2.52 With respect to Option 2, this research would suggest a continued pause on the Tenant Empowerment Grant programme is a sensible option, chiefly because there is evidence of considerable investment currently by Welsh social housing landlords in tenant participation. The research team does not view cutting funding to one tenant organisation at the expense of another a sensible solution, since both have their respective merits and strengths.

2.53 With respect to Options 3, 4 and 5, it is helpful to consider these together, since they offer a future path that is within the agency of other bodies rather than subject to the control of the Welsh Government, and it is for the organisations concerned to determine how they wish to shape

their futures. The research findings have established that many stakeholders across the sector have an aspiration for a single organisation, an organisational (and for some a physical) hub for citizen engagement, empowerment and learning.

- 2.54 There is learning to be drawn from the experiences of the peer organisations in Scotland and in England. The experience in Scotland has not been one of coercing independent organisations to work together, but rather of Government setting up a different basis on which contracts operate, not looking to provide core grant funding to organisations, but bidders having to organise themselves accordingly to be best placed to bid for contracts, and partnership working emerging as a consequence of that.
- 2.55 Option 6 emerges as a desirable option for both negative reasons – there are barriers attached to implementing any of the options (Options 3-5) that depend on the willingness or appetite of independent organisations to work differently – and positive ones, that the Welsh Government has an opportunity to articulate a new vision for tenant participation.
- 2.56 It takes time to plan and manage organisational change, and it would be unrealistic to think that organisations can quickly form new partnerships. The Research Team understands, however, that both TPAS and Welsh Tenants have already been warned well in advance of this review of impending cuts.

### **3 Defining ‘Tenant Participation’**

- 3.1 During the course of the research it became apparent that some stakeholders held strong views about the words used to describe what this study terms 'tenant participation'.
- 3.2 The research also found that stakeholders – particularly those managing or delivering services on the ground – often use the term 'tenant participation' (or their preferred term) to encompass community development activity which goes significantly beyond engaging tenants in the provision of housing management services.
- 3.3 This short chapter considers the language and scope of 'tenant participation' and suggests that it is useful to be able to distinguish the support provided for 'tenant participation' from wider community development work.

#### **Terminology**

- 3.4 Different organisations across the sector use different words to describe tenant participation – with 'involvement', 'engagement' and 'empowerment' offered as alternatives. There are differing opinions about whether these different terms are important and helpful or a distraction.
- 3.5 Some organisations involved in this research feel strongly that, while 'participation' may have been the right word 25 years ago, times have changed. As one housing association manager put it: *'We regard tenant involvement as intrinsic to the way we work, yet 'participation' sounds like someone's just allowed you in the door.'*
- 3.6 'Empowerment' is the word used by the UK Government to describe how landlords should involve tenants. The relevant standard in the regulatory framework in England is titled 'Tenant Involvement and Empowerment' and the grant programme in England is the 'Tenant Empowerment Programme'. The grant programme in Wales is also, of course, termed 'Tenant Empowerment Grant'.

- 3.7 For many organisations, however – in England as well as in Wales – 'empowerment' implies a level of tenant, or joint tenant/landlord, responsibility for services that is not appropriate (except for co-operative or tenant-managed organisations).
- 3.8 From the research team's working experience of the social housing sector for the last ten years, 'involvement' is a word preferred by many organisations: it is part of landlords' and tenants' everyday language and, for many, will sound more whole-hearted than 'participation'. Nevertheless, 'tenant participation' (and 'TP') is likely to continue to be widely used simply because it is the established term.

### **Scope**

- 3.9 Differences in language also reflect, of course, differences in what the term 'tenant participation' (or 'involvement' or 'engagement' or 'empowerment') is understood to comprise. These differences reflect, among other things, the diversity of the sector. For some landlords involved in this research, being accountable to tenants is part of their social housing mission; others approach customer involvement as good business practice; others seek to satisfy the requirements of the regulator. There is diversity too, of course, among tenants and how they want to be involved and what they want to achieve through their involvement.
- 3.10 This research found broad agreement that 'tenant participation' covers a wide spectrum of activities, ranging from giving tenants information about their housing service to their involvement in the management of their homes. Along this continuum is a range of other activities, including consultation exercises, panels, focus groups, the running of tenants'/residents' associations and the involvement of residents in governance arrangements.
- 3.11 From the information sent to the research team by housing association survey respondents (both survey responses and additional information), it is evident that organisations typically set out a 'menu of involvement', listing the various ways in which tenants can become involved. Some

define a 'ladder of involvement', focusing on the potential for progressive involvement and empowerment.

3.12 A typical menu might comprise:

- Individual feedback – comments, complements, complaints – by letter, email, phone, website or face-to-face
- Mystery shopping – checking service quality
- Estate champions/inspectors – carrying out regular estate inspections
- Focus groups – consultation focused on a particular issue
- Communications forum – web-based discussion forum
- Surveys – residents invited to give feedback on services
- Tenants'/residents' associations – elected and constituted area-based groups
- Tenants'/residents' panel – undertaking service scrutiny, being consulted about policies, procedures, services and initiatives
- Other formal structures – association board, residents' board, area or neighbourhood committees.

3.13 There are also other approaches. A systems-thinking approach by a couple of housing associations puts the focus on supporting residents to have an impact on their community through staff '*continually interacting with residents, capturing what matters to them at that point in receiving the service*'.

### **Policy differences across the UK**

3.14 Policy differences across the UK mean that some elements of tenant participation are emphasised more strongly in some countries than others.

3.15 In England, for example, as a matter of policy, central Government promotes and funds the creation of tenant management organisations and provides incentives for tenant groups to take on the management of specific estate services. It also sees tenants as being better placed than the regulator to monitor landlord service delivery – hence its strong focus

on tenant scrutiny panels as the main means through which the landlord is held to account.

3.16 A focus on developing tenant scrutiny arrangements also forms a key part of Government policy in Scotland.

### **Tenant participation as distinct from community development**

3.17 Across all parts of the UK, however, the definition of 'tenant participation' becomes less clear when tenant participation starts to overlap with 'community development' (another term for which there are a range of alternatives).

3.18 Both desktop research and the housing association survey responses demonstrate that many social landlords have a deep commitment to the communities they serve and seek to support local people and local communities in whatever ways they can: creating employment opportunities, increasing employability, addressing anti-social behaviour and financial exclusion, supporting particularly vulnerable sections of the community. Some of this work takes social landlords a fair way from the provision of housing and housing management services.

3.19 As with supporting tenant participation, community development work often involves activities designed to develop individual and community skills and confidence and the capacity to engage as active citizens. The research team's experience is that the close relationship between tenant participation and community development is seen as having great value, with tenant participation potentially a springboard for wider community involvement.

3.20 Organisationally, the same staff and same budgets as support tenant participation will sometimes support community development work, as revealed in the housing association survey responses (see Appendix 4). Although this may be a good practical arrangement, from the research team's experience in evaluating outcomes it does mean that it can be difficult to plan and account for the organisational resources expended on tenant participation and to evaluate the outputs from those resources.

- 3.21 At Welsh Government level, the overlap between tenant participation and community development may also present difficulties in terms of assigning policy, funding and administrative responsibilities between Departments and, again, in terms of evaluating the outputs and outcomes from grant funding.
- 3.22 This research suggests, therefore, that there could be value in distinguishing between the two and, in particular, in clarifying that 'tenant participation' relates specifically to housing matters rather than to wider community issues – to how social housing tenants are involved in decisions about, and exert influence over, how housing and housing management services are delivered. This would include of course tenants' views being sought on the quality of housing provision and housing management services.

## **4 The Government's support for tenant participation in Wales**

4.1 In this chapter we outline the ways in which the Welsh Government currently provides support for tenant participation. We look at the strategic, statutory and regulatory framework that promotes tenant participation and at the different arrangements that pertain in the housing association and local authority sectors.

4.2 The chapter includes an overview of the Tenant Empowerment Grant programme and outlines the role and structure of the two organisations currently in receipt of core funding from Government to deliver support for tenant participation.

4.3 The Programme for Government states the Welsh Government's commitment to providing:

*'Support to help tenants of local authorities and housing associations to participate in the running of their homes and services.'*

4.4 The Housing White Paper 2012 noted:

*'The design of services needs to be underpinned by an understanding of people's needs and evidence of what works, fuelled by the goal of continuous improvement. Services are at their best when they are informed or even led by the people who use them.'*

4.5 It also recorded that the Welsh Government would:

*'Continue to support organisations such as the Welsh Tenants Federation [now 'Welsh Tenants'] and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service and seek ways to increase collaboration between them to further the impact and effectiveness of their work.'*

And that it would:

*'Use the regulatory framework and other mechanisms to continue to ensure that tenants are able to influence strategic decisions and service delivery at a local level.'*

4.6 This present study has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to review its role in relation to tenant participation. The aims of the study are to review the support currently provided for tenant participation, to determine future needs and consider how those needs can be met in an effective and efficient way.

## **Welsh Government commitment to tenant participation**

### *National Housing Strategy*

4.7 The Welsh Government's 2010 national housing strategy, 'Improving Lives and Communities', gives commitments to encouraging effective tenant participation with the following objectives identified under action points:

*'Give tenants a clear voice in decisions that affect them.'* [Executive summary]

*'Tenants and private landlords will be helped to work together to drive up standards.'* [Improving homes and communities, section 4]

*'Review the ways in which tenants are involved in the design and review of services to inform the spread of good practice.'* [Better services to improve people's lives, section 5]<sup>1</sup>

### *National Tenant Participation Strategy for Wales*

4.8 Reflecting the citizen-centred approach adopted by the Welsh Government across all public sector services, a National Tenant Participation Strategy was developed in consultation with tenants, landlords and other housing organisations. Published in 2007, the aim of the National Strategy was: *'to develop quality tenant participation services across Wales'*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Improving Lives and Communities: Homes in Wales*, Welsh Government, 2010.

4.9 The Strategy committed the Welsh Government to promoting tenant participation by:

- engaging its housing partners (social landlords, tenants and others) when developing national housing policy; and
- developing tenant participation policy for social landlords and helping them deliver it, and monitoring and reviewing its effectiveness.

4.10 A central expectation of the Strategy is that social landlords produce local tenant participation strategies setting out how they will ensure that tenant participation is a key feature of all their services.

4.11 The Strategy was underpinned by an Action Plan. Updated and reissued in 2009, the Action Plan defines, assigns and timetables actions to achieve three objectives:

- To allow tenants to learn about housing and related policy
- To assist landlords to develop and deliver local strategies
- To assess the application and effectiveness of the National Strategy.

4.12 Interviews with a range of senior stakeholders found that the Strategy itself is now widely considered to be in need of review.

#### *'Homes for Wales'*

4.13 The 2011 Programme for Government reaffirmed the Welsh Government's commitment to providing:

*'Support to help tenants of local authorities and housing associations to participate in the running of their homes and services.'*

4.14 In the following year, the Housing White Paper 'Homes for Wales' noted:

*'The design of services needs to be underpinned by an understanding of people's needs and evidence of what works, fuelled by the goal of continuous improvement. Services are at their best when they are informed or even led by the people who use them.'*

4.15 The White Paper also recorded that the Welsh Government would:

*'Continue to support organisations such as the Welsh Tenants Federation [now 'Welsh Tenants'] and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service and seek ways to increase collaboration between them to further the impact and effectiveness of their work.*

*Use the regulatory framework and other mechanisms to continue to ensure that tenants are able to influence strategic decisions and service delivery at a local level.'*

4.16 As noted above, this present study has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to help it to consider how it can continue to deliver on its commitment to support tenant participation in an effective and efficient way.

## **The housing association context**

### *Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations*

4.17 Housing associations in Wales are regulated by the Welsh Government. Its approach to regulation is defined by the Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations Registered in Wales, which came into effect from December 2011. Following an interim evaluation of the Regulatory Framework, an action plan was approved in July 2013 to implement some changes to the approach.

4.18 The Regulatory Framework is based on the principle of putting tenants at its heart by:

- Ensuring that housing associations work with their tenants and people who use their services in planning, and assessing the quality of, services.
- Providing information that allows tenants and others to compare the performance of their housing association to that of others.
- Ensuring that the Welsh Ministers take account of the views of tenants and service users.

4.19 The Regulatory Framework defines a set of 'delivery outcomes' which Welsh Ministers expect housing associations to achieve. Failure to achieve a delivery outcome can trigger regulatory intervention.

4.20 The first of the delivery outcomes is '*We place the people who want to use our services at the heart of our work – putting the citizen first*', and the Framework defines how associations can demonstrate this outcome.

4.21 To date, the most common areas in which housing associations are assessed as failing to achieve the delivery outcome of 'putting the citizen first' are the following (see Appendix 3, Table 1):

- Knowing the current/potential service user profile and tailoring services effectively;
- Having early tenant/service user involvement in shaping services, reviewing performance and developing future plans;
- Having a clear 'outcomes focus' for service users, taking into account future requirements/circumstances/barriers;
- Valuing and responding to views (i.e. reporting back to service users the consequences of their involvement).

#### *The Tenant Advisory Panel to the Regulatory Board for Wales*

4.22 The Regulatory Board for Wales, an advisory board set up by the Welsh Government to oversee the operation of the Regulatory Framework, is supported in its role by a Tenant Advisory Panel. The Panel comprises fifteen housing association tenants from across Wales who actively seek the views of other tenants by attending local and national events, meetings and conferences.

### **The local authority context**

#### *The statutory framework*

4.23 Since the 1985 Housing Act, local authority landlords have been required by statute to consult with tenants about management arrangements for their homes.

- 4.24 The 'Best Value' initiative, introduced with the Local Government Act 1999 placed a requirement on local authority landlords (in England and Wales) to measure and report their performance on key aspects of tenant participation, such as tenants' levels of satisfaction with the opportunities for participation available to them in management or decision-making.
- 4.25 However, when statutory guidance was issued to local authorities in Wales in 2002 on how they should discharge their Best Value duties, under the banner of 'Wales Programme for Improvement', this and further developments of that guidance introduced a less prescriptive expectation of local authorities, with a requirement for them to set their own improvement objectives, and no expectation that they needed to survey tenant opinion.
- 4.26 Other primary legislation in the form of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011<sup>2</sup> (Section 62) obliges local authorities to take into account the views of the public in the work of Overview and Scrutiny committees. The statutory guidance states that:

*'Scrutiny has an important role in stimulating connections between different individuals and groups, and channelling community intelligence into the improvement processes of the council and its partners.'*

- 4.27 The guidance also sets out how local authorities should comply with Section 62 of the Measure, including: developing *'internal mechanisms to better enable members of the public to engage in scrutiny activity'*.

#### *The audit of local authorities*

- 4.28 Local authorities are not regulated for the provision of their housing services, although they are audited by the Wales Audit Office for their effective use of resources. Each local authority is subject to an annual

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<sup>2</sup>Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/pdfs/mwa\\_20110004\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/pdfs/mwa_20110004_en.pdf)

assessment of its performance, resulting in a published Annual Improvement Report.

4.29 While aspects of housing are covered in these reports, they are confined to progress in delivering the Welsh Housing Quality Standard or the effectiveness with which housing benefit is administered or progress against wider improvement objectives (e.g. preventing homelessness).

4.30 The requirements on stock-retaining local authorities in respect of tenant involvement are therefore less onerous (from a statutory and regulatory perspective) than those on housing association landlords, though in the local authority environment there is the added pressure to take views into account through the local accountability of elected members and the Council's scrutiny function.

*A strategic group for local authority tenants?*

4.31 There is no umbrella body for local authority tenants with a status and influence equivalent to that of the Tenant Advisory Panel to the Regulatory Board for Wales. However, a stakeholder group, comprising representatives from Welsh Tenants, Tenant Advisory Panel, the Welsh Local Government Association and some ten local authorities, did participate in some limited discussions regarding the establishment of a similar strategic tenants group.

*The Right to Manage*

4.32 Local authority tenants in Wales (as in England) have had a statutory right to take over housing management services of their homes from their landlord – the 'Right to Manage' – since 1994. By forming themselves into a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO), tenants can take over the landlord's responsibility for managing housing services such as repairs, caretaking and security.

4.33 Although, as noted in chapter 5 below, there is a lively TMO movement in England, there are no TMOs in Wales.

## **The Tenant Empowerment Grant programme**

4.34 The Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru (CIH Cymru) reported in May 2013 that the Welsh Government's Tenant Empowerment Grant programme has provided over £1.3m in grants to 172 groups since 2003.

4.35 Any group of local authority or housing association tenants and residents in Wales can apply for a Tenant Empowerment Grant. They can be used to:

- provide groups with independent advice and support on opportunities for greater involvement
- assist groups to develop the skills and knowledge to become more involved
- create innovative ways of participating effectively within their communities.

4.36 In recent years the Welsh Government has been providing funding of £150,000 per annum for the Tenant Empowerment Grant programme. Support for new projects is currently on hold pending the conclusion of this present review and no budget has been set for the Tenant Empowerment Grant programme for this current year (2013/14).

4.37 The maximum amount of grant that can be awarded is determined by the size of the landlord. Grants where the landlord has up to 25 homes are set at a maximum of £4,200. Where the landlord has more than 25 homes, the maximum is set at £4,200 plus £8 per home after the first 25. There is no upper limit.

4.38 Just over half of grants awarded fall in the range £4,200 to £8,000. Overall, the average size of grant is around £7,000.

4.39 The largest Tenant Empowerment Grant awarded was £27,864 to Caia Park Communities First in 2007 to fund an appraisal of options for the local community to become more involved in the management of its homes.

4.40 Landlord endorsement for Tenant Empowerment Grant applications is a prerequisite unless there are exceptional circumstances. In a change from the original arrangements, since 2010 the landlord has been required to contribute at least 25% of the cost of the project. This is seen both as allowing the Tenant Empowerment Grant programme to deliver more and as achieving greater landlord commitment to the various projects.

4.41 CIH Cymru administers the Tenant Empowerment Grant programme on behalf of the Welsh Government. Its 2013 report, looking back over the past 10 years, notes the diversity of projects that Tenant Empowerment Grant has funded. It groups projects under the following headings:

- Strategic Reviews. Including business planning, asset management, tenant participation strategies, local tenant groups, representative federations, landlord wide forums and exploring tenant management options.
- Service and Performance Reviews. Including specific techniques and approaches such as tenant inspection, mystery shopping and performance monitoring, and reviews of particular services including anti-social behaviour, repairs and WHQS programmes.
- Community Assets. Including reviews of community facilities, establishing resource centres and tenant advice services.
- Skills Development. Including training and development for tenants as inspectors, in IT skills (e.g. website), writing and editing (e.g. handbooks and newsletters), designing and carrying out surveys and accredited learning.
- Environmental Projects. Including planning environmental improvements, community gardening schemes energy efficiency and fuel poverty.
- Particular groups. Including young people, children, supporting people programme, people with learning disabilities, women,

tenants living in flats, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender tenants, Black and Minority Ethnic tenants and communities, people with disabilities, tenants in rural communities, Welsh speakers, homeless people.

- Original and cutting edge projects. Including cross landlord scrutiny, training for trainers (including resources), alternatives to meetings, inter-generational involvement, changing tenure (shared ownership), direct access hostels and temporary accommodation.

4.42 Tenant Empowerment Grant projects are delivered by 'approved Tenant Empowerment Grant agents' (ATEGAs). Four out of five projects are delivered by one of two agents: either TPAS Cymru or Open Communities (an independent organisation providing training and advisory services across the UK).

### **Core funding of TPAS Cymru and Welsh Tenants**

4.43 The Welsh Government provides core funding to two organisations that deliver support for tenant participation: TPAS Cymru and Welsh Tenants.

4.44 Funding for 2013/14 for the two organisations is:

- TPAS Cymru: £275,000
- Welsh Tenants: £205,000.

#### *TPAS Cymru*

4.45 TPAS Cymru describes its role as follows:

'Our essential Wales-wide role is to be a resource hub of information and expertise delivering at a range of levels:

**Locally:** developing best practice at landlord, tenant group and project level through practical advice, support, training and project work

**Across Wales:** improving the quality of tenant participation through disseminating and promoting good practice

**At Government level:** contributing to policy change by informing about policy developments and issues, channelling the experience and needs of tenants and landlords to policy makers, and working with partner organisations to influence policy.'

4.46 The purpose of the Welsh Government funding of TPAS Cymru is to enable it to:

*'...improve the quality of life of social housing tenants both in terms of their housing and their community environment.'*

4.47 TPAS has a Management Committee comprising nine elected representatives from tenants' groups (three from local authorities, six from housing associations and one from supported housing organisations). It also has honorary representatives from organisations such as CIH Cymru, Community Housing Cymru, Shelter Cymru, Tai Pawb and Welsh Tenants. The Committee meets quarterly. (TPAS's annual report 2011 [the latest available on its website] cites 239 'Tenant and Resident Association Members', 40 RSLs, 7 Local Authorities, and 24 supported housing providers.)

4.48 We would note that there is no constitutional relationship between TPAS Cymru and the similarly orientated (and in some cases similarly named) organisations operating in England, Scotland (the first TPAS) and Northern Ireland (Supporting Communities). The four organisations meet approximately once a quarter to plan and share notes on their work (for example, the TPAS Cymru accreditation is loosely based on TPAS England's approach).

4.49 The total income of TPAS Cymru in the financial year ending April 2013 was £548,054, comprising a Welsh Government grant of £291,084, Tenant Empowerment Grant of £98,899, and income from other sources such as membership fees and consultancy.

## *Welsh Tenants*

- 4.50 The mission of Welsh Tenants is: *'To enhance and protect the rights, representations and housing standards of all tenants in Wales'*.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.51 Welsh Tenants describes itself as a 'rights-based organisation'. Among the rights it supports are: the right to a decent, affordable home; the right to live in peace and quiet enjoyment of a home (from the Human Rights Act); the right to express oneself; the right to make informed choices regarding one's home, welfare and community; and the right of residents to play a key role in their community.
- 4.52 The role of Welsh Tenants is to respond to issues raised by members and to act as the representative voice of tenants in Wales, providing information, advice and support to members and tenants generally.
- 4.53 Although it notes that the focus of its activities has shifted over time, from vocal protests 'on the street' to lobbying around meeting tables, Welsh Tenants continues to have a stake, and strong role in, the participation and involvement agenda.
- 4.54 Welsh Tenants is governed by a Management Committee of 16 tenants who are elected by members for a two-year term. The organisation is moving towards introducing a new governance structure, with an equal balance of tenant and independent members on the Board.
- 4.55 The organisation has 324 member groups and around 1,000 tenants on its contacts list. Welsh Tenants states that private rented sector (PRS) tenants represent a growing proportion of the total membership.
- 4.56 Welsh Tenants employs five staff, supported by 9,000 hours of voluntary work provided each year by highly active volunteers.
- 4.57 Accounts for the last financial year show Welsh Tenants having a total annual income of £219,500 which is made up of a Welsh Government grant of £189,000 and income from other sources (mainly related to the role of Welsh Tenants in facilitating the Tenant Advisory Panel) of

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<sup>3</sup> From Welsh Tenants Website, <http://www.welshtenants.org.uk/about-us/>.

£30,500. The surplus for the year, after all expenditure, was £12,500 (5.7% of total income).

## Summary

4.58 In summary, support for tenant participation in Wales has in place the following components:

- Clear commitment on the part of Welsh Government to tenant participation, with a housing strategy that identifies as a priority tenants having a clear voice in decisions that affect them, a National Tenant Participation Strategy that seeks to promote tenant participation, and a Programme for Government and a Housing White Paper that both seek to support tenant influence over services and strategy;
- A Tenant Empowerment Programme in receipt of Welsh Government funding of £150,000 per annum (currently paused);
- Two core funded organisations – TPAS and Welsh Tenants – in receipt of £275,000 and £205,000 respectively from the Welsh Government in 2013/14;
- A focus on tenant participation in the regulatory framework and proactive regulation for the housing association sector, with a strategic national residents' group – the Tenant Advisory Panel – feeding issues into the Regulatory Board for Wales;
- No targeted regulation of tenant participation in the local authority sector and no strategic national residents' group for local authority tenants.

## **5 Government support for tenant participation in England and Scotland**

5.1 This chapter considers the way in which Government supports tenant participation elsewhere in the UK, focusing first on England and secondly on Scotland. The chapter then provides a brief overview of the main similarities and differences across the three home nations.

### **England**

5.2 Promoting tenant empowerment is part of two key Coalition Government initiatives – localism and the 'Big Society' – with tenant empowerment seen as a springboard to wider community involvement.

5.3 The following paragraphs outline the statutory and regulatory framework for tenant participation in England and describe the evolution of the Tenant Empowerment Programme. The Government's current priorities for tenant participation in England and how these are being implemented are then noted.

### **The statutory and regulatory framework for tenant participation in England**

#### *The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard*

5.4 In England the Social Housing Regulator's 'Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard' – effective from April 2012 – sets the overall framework for tenant participation. It is one of eight Standards (three 'Economic Standards' and five 'Consumer Standards') set by the Regulator with which all registered providers of social housing – housing associations and local authorities – are required to comply.

5.5 The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard defines 'required outcomes' under three headings:

- Customer service, choice and complaints
- Involvement and empowerment

- Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants.

#### *The role of the regulator in supporting tenant participation*

- 5.6 Although the Regulator actively monitors landlord performance against the three 'Economic Standards', since April 2012 (when the regulatory function transferred from the Tenant Services Authority to the Homes & Communities Agency) it no longer monitors the performance of landlords to ensure compliance with the five 'Consumer Standards'. Nor is there any programme of inspection of landlord services of the type that used to be carried out by the Audit Commission. Part of the UK Government's rationale for this approach is that Government – or its agency – is not well placed to monitor what is going on locally.
- 5.7 In support of this, the UK Government provides funding through the Tenant Empowerment Programme (described from para 5.10 below) to empower tenants to monitor effectively by, for example, helping tenants to develop their understanding of performance information.

#### *The Right to Manage*

- 5.8 As noted in chapter 4 above, local authority tenants in England (as in Wales) have had a statutory right to take over housing management services of their homes from their landlord – the 'Right to Manage' – since 1994. By forming themselves into a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO), tenants can take over the landlord's responsibility for managing housing services such as repairs, caretaking and security. There are now some 200 TMOs in England.
- 5.9 Funding through the Tenant Empowerment Programme supports tenants in exercising their Right to Manage.

### **The Tenant Empowerment Programme**

#### *Origins and development*

- 5.10 The Tenant Empowerment Programme was originally the 'Section 16 Tenant Empowerment Grant Programme', aimed at improving housing

management in local authority housing through greater tenant participation and the development of tenant management organisations. The programme was extended in October 2008:

*'...to help both local authority **and** housing association tenants to access independent advice, training and information...[to help] them to challenge, influence or control how housing services are provided to their communities.'*

- 5.11 At the time, the Tenant Services Authority (the then Regulator) noted: *'...we do not fund main tenant participation activity, which landlords are responsible for, such as setting up a tenants and residents association.'* Government continues to stress that: *'This funding is intended to support activities over and above those that landlords should provide as part of their regular responsibilities.'*

#### *Current administration of the Tenant Empowerment programme*

- 5.12 It was announced in 2011 that the programme would be providing up to £2 million a year for four financial years from 2011/12.
- 5.13 Currently, a small Department for Communities and Local Government team is dedicated to tenant empowerment (and has a Twitter feed@TenantPower – *'to promote activities that empower the lives of social tenants'*). Their role includes policy work, contract management and grant administration.

#### **Current UK Government priorities**

- 5.14 The UK Government currently has three main priorities for tenant participation in England:
- tenant panels, through which tenants scrutinise services and hold landlords to account
  - supporting statutory rights of tenants – the Right to Manage services and the Right to Transfer ownership of homes
  - training and support to equip tenants to take up options for involvement.

### *Tenant panels*

- 5.15 Although the sector in England usually refers to these as 'scrutiny panels', the Department for Communities and Local Government uses the broader term 'tenant panels', recognising that they may carry out a range of functions. Government sees the potential roles of tenant panels as monitoring or scrutinising services; shaping services; decision-making; and complaints handling.
- 5.16 Tenant panels undertaking the first and second of these roles are now widespread across the housing association sector in England. Some also undertake the third, having a formal role in the organisation's decision-making processes.
- 5.17 The last of these four roles – complaint handling – refers to the role that a tenant panel might wish to play as the 'designated person' in the new arrangements for handling complaints that came into effect from April 2013. Using their local knowledge, tenant panels can help to resolve complaints without referring them to the Housing Ombudsman. To date, some 30 tenant panels in England have adopted this role.

### *Tenant management of local services: the Right to Manage*

- 5.18 Helping groups of local authority tenants to exercise their statutory right to manage services continues to be a Government priority. The Tenant Empowerment Programme provides grants to potential tenant management organisations, tailored to meet their particular needs. The TMO develops its own work programme; DCLG funds 75% of the programme while the respective local authority funds the remaining 25%.

### *Tenant management of local services: Community Cashback*

- 5.19 'Community Cashback' is a new initiative which aims to encourage tenants to take control of small-scale local services (costing less than

£170,000 per annum). It applies to housing association tenants as well as local authority tenants. The first Community Cashback agreement was signed on 1 July 2013.

- 5.20 Examples of the sort of services that might be relevant include cutting the grass or decorating communal areas – which tenants might do themselves or employ a local person to do. Tenants can reinvest any savings they make from running these services into other community priorities.
- 5.21 Through the Tenant Empowerment Programme, grants of up to £3,000 are available to tenants to get the Community Cashback scheme set up. As with grants to TMOs, the funding is available to obtain advice and training, and for communication with fellow tenants. It might also be used for set-up costs such as equipment or materials or room space.
- 5.22 The Community Cashback scheme is delivered by both the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO) and TPAS (England) as part of the 'Tenant Central' programme (described below).

*Training and support: the 'Tenant Central' programme*

- 5.23 The third priority for the UK Government is the provision of training and support to enable tenants to take up the opportunities for involvement that are available. Currently, the TEP provides funding for two major programmes. The first of these goes under the name 'Tenant Central'.
- 5.24 In August 2012, the UK Housing Minister announced that DCLG was holding
- '...two parallel competitions to identify an organisation that is eligible to receive grant [i.e. a charitable or benevolent organisation] for delivering a package of training and support to:*
- a) *inspire tenants to set up tenant panels, by maximising opportunities to use recognised good practice, and enable tenant panels to train prospective tenant panel members;*

b) *inspire tenants to seize opportunities for engaging on a range of housing issues by gaining the skills and confidence to engage effectively with landlords.'*

5.25 It was announced that the grant funding available, during the bidding process, for the programme for the period November 2012 to March 2015 was £1.3m.

5.26 The organisation selected to deliver both strands was TPAS (England), working in partnership with a number of other organisations.

5.27 TPAS has branded this programme 'Tenant Central', describing it as:

*'...an innovative two-year programme to equip tenants with the skills to lead change in their communities. Together with our group of delivery partners we will be offering a broad range of free courses and learning opportunities reaching thousands more tenants and landlords than ever before, many of them for the first time.'*

5.28 'Tenant Central' has its own website: <http://www.tenantcentral.org.uk/>.

#### *Training and support: Trafford Hall*

5.29 The other main way in which the TEP provides tenant training and support is through its funding of the National Communities Resource Centre at Trafford Hall to offer residential training to tenants on topics such as tenant panels, youth engagement and social media. Trafford Hall received a TEP grant of £535,000 in 2011. The contract was extended, with a further grant of £404,000, to March 2015.

## **Delivering the Tenant Empowerment Programme**

### *Awarding contracts*

5.30 The DCLG's two major training and support contracts were awarded (to TPAS and Trafford Hall respectively) following an open procurement exercise.

### *Evaluating outputs and outcomes*

- 5.31 DCLG has set a range of targets for TPAS for the 'Tenant Central' programme, and for Trafford Hall for the 'Tenant Futures' programme. Examples of the targets (measures of both outputs and outcomes) are included at Appendix 5.
- 5.32 Both organisations submit quarterly performance monitoring reports. In addition, Trafford Hall has commissioned its own independent evaluation of the 'Tenant Futures' programme, taking a more in-depth look over the past few years, focusing in particular on tenant feedback.
- 5.33 DCLG acknowledges that it is difficult to quantify real outcomes from these programmes, especially as Government policy is no longer to carry out the sort of independent research that might test the impact of these initiatives. The lack of hard-edged, quantifiable, outcomes makes it difficult to mount a convincing case for future funding.

## **SCOTLAND**

- 5.34 The Scottish Government says:

*'Tenant participation is a way for tenants and landlords to share information, ideas and power to improve the standard of housing conditions and services. Tenants now have the right to be consulted and to participate in this way.*

*Effective participation benefits both tenants and landlords. It gives tenants an opportunity to influence decisions about the housing service that they receive. And it gives landlords better links to the community and the opportunity to carry out partnership working.'*<sup>4</sup>

- 5.35 The Scottish Government sees its role with regard to tenant participation as being to encourage landlords to:

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/16342/tp>.

- deliver good quality cost effective services which tenants and other service users have been able to influence
- build the capacity of tenants to hold landlords to account for the services they provide
- encourage landlords to put tenants at the heart of their activities.

## **The strategic, statutory and regulatory framework for tenant participation in Scotland**

### *'Partners in Participation'*

5.36 The Scottish Government's commitment to effective tenant participation has its roots in the National Strategy for Tenant Participation developed by the Tenant Participation Working Group established by Ministers in 1998. The strategy, published in 1999, is titled 'Partners in Participation'.

5.37 'Partners in Participation' sets out key principles for good tenant participation that have been endorsed by tenants' organisations, landlords, housing organisations and the Scottish Government *'to promote a consensus about good tenant participation practice'*.

5.38 In parallel with 'Partners in Participation', the then Scottish Executive issued codes of practice for tenant participation in certain key areas – in regeneration, best value, stock transfer, rural areas, at a local level – describing how to apply the principles.

### *The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001*

5.39 Taking forward the national strategy, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a legal framework for tenant participation. Among other provisions, the Act places a requirement on social landlords actively to develop and support tenant participation.

## *The Scottish Social Housing Charter*

5.40 The Scottish Social Housing Charter, which came into effect from April 2012, sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve in carrying out their housing activities.

5.41 The Charter includes an outcome that relates directly to tenant participation:

*'Participation. Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.'*

and two which are closely related:

*'Communication. Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.'*

*'Equalities. Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.'*

## *The role of the Scottish Housing Regulator*

5.42 Unlike the Social Housing Regulator in England (and more akin to the implementation of the Regulatory Framework in Wales), the Scottish Housing Regulator continues actively to regulate all aspects of social landlord performance. It takes a risk based approach to regulation, with *'poor outcomes for tenants and other service users'* being one of four key risks with the potential to trigger regulatory intervention. In defining its approach to regulation, the Scottish Housing Regulator emphasises the role of tenants in holding their landlord to account.

## **Current Scottish Government priorities**

### *National Tenant Engagement*

- 5.43 As part of the National Strategy for Tenant Participation, the Scottish Government gave a commitment to involve tenants at a national level in discussions about housing policy. It does this through consulting with the nine Regional Networks of registered tenant organisations – of which there are some 670 in Scotland.
- 5.44 Involving the Regional Networks, as a way for the organised tenant movement to influence national policy development and provide a representative view of tenant interests, is a current priority for the Scottish Government. The Regional Networks contributed to the development of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and they are routinely involved in Scottish Government policy working groups along with housing professionals.
- 5.45 The nine national Regional Networks have their own constitution, communications strategy, and election process. There is also a dedicated website: <http://www.regionalnetworks.org.uk/>
- 5.46 The other main current priority for the Scottish Government – following the launch of the Scottish Social Housing Charter – is to work with landlords and tenants to develop and implement effective and consistent approaches to tenant scrutiny.

### **Resources for supporting tenant participation**

- 5.47 The Scottish Government has a dedicated, five-person, Tenant Participation team. Its work focuses on supporting the nine Regional Networks and raising awareness of them to the wider Scottish Government to ensure that they are able to influence national policy. The team also leads on developing effective tenant scrutiny practice across Scotland. The team has a budget (£250,000 in the current year)

which pays staff costs and is used to fund the Regional Networks and the 'Stepping up to Scrutiny' programme (see below).

5.48 Following the 2001 Act, consideration was given to imposing a levy on social landlords to provide support for tenant participation. After discussion with tenants and landlords, it was decided that this model would not bring sufficient benefit. A key consideration was that it might lead to a reduction in the support that individual landlords already provided to support participation.

### **'Stepping up to Scrutiny'**

5.49 Earlier this year, the Scottish Government sought tenders from eligible organisations to deliver '*...a learning programme to support the development of tenant and landlord skills and confidence in interpreting, scrutinising and challenging performance...*'. Following an open procurement competition, the contract – 'National Scrutiny Training and Learning Programme 2013-2016' and branded 'Stepping up to Scrutiny' – was awarded to a joint bid by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Scotland and HouseMark Scotland.

5.50 The programme costs £6,700 (plus VAT) for each organisation. Of this, the Scottish Government contributes £3,350 to cover the tenant training costs. The other £3,350 (for the element that relates to training for staff and Board members/councillors) is paid by the organisation. The Government considers that funding the programme in this way – with landlords paying for the staff/Board member training element – has helped to secure commitment from participating landlords and well as widening the coverage of the programme.

5.51 In total, the Scottish Government is providing funding of £246,000 for the programme over the three financial years. As well as allowing the tenant places on the programme to be free, this funding has covered the costs of developing the programme.

## Housing Voluntary Grant Scheme

- 5.52 The Scottish Government operates a Housing Voluntary Grant scheme: *'...to help national organisations in the housing and homelessness fields develop voluntary projects that benefit the people of Scotland as a whole.'* National housing and homelessness organisations and organisations providing related training, advice or research can apply for funding under the scheme. Grants are available to fund proven services or for new or innovative projects. Twenty-six such grants have been awarded in the current financial year (2012/13), ranging from £25,000 to £198,000.
- 5.53 Two organisations delivering support for tenant participation are in receipt of grant under this scheme: the Tenant Information Service and TPAS (Scotland).
- 5.54 Over the past two years, the Government has encouraged the Tenant Information Service and TPAS to make a joint application for funding under this scheme to avoid duplication of effort. The Government works closely with the two organisations on their application to ensure that their work supports Government's current policies.
- 5.55 The grant awarded to the Tenant Information Service and TPAS (Scotland) jointly for the current year is £94,480. The organisations report back annually on achievement against agreed targets.
- 5.56 The Tenant Information Service describes itself as a national tenant controlled organisation which provides independent information, advice and training for tenants contributing to developing good tenant participation practice in Scotland. The Tenant Information Service offers a range of services (including conferences and booklets) to assist tenants and landlords to review and put their tenant participation strategies into practice.
- 5.57 TPAS (Scotland) describes itself as a national membership organisation for landlords, tenants and other related organisations. It aims to ensure

that tenants continue to influence improvements in housing services. It says:

*'TPAS Scotland is the national tenant and landlord participation advisory service for Scotland. We promote good practice in tenant participation throughout Scotland.'*

### **Arrangements in England and Scotland compared with Wales**

5.58 Through various strategies and through regulation, the Welsh, UK and Scottish Governments all seek to encourage tenant participation in decision-making. The regulation of social housing in England and Scotland incorporates local authority social housing landlords (in England, only in respect to those standards which incorporate tenant involvement and empowerment), whereas in Wales the Regulatory Framework applies only to housing associations.

5.59 The Regulator in England does not ensure compliance with those standards which promote tenant participation because its view is that this is best done locally, whereas in Wales and Scotland all aspects of social housing landlord performance are still regulated (though in Wales only for housing associations). A risk-based approach to regulation in Wales has recently been agreed, so it is yet to be determined what this will mean for the regulation of housing association performance.

5.60 Only Wales has a single resident group (the Tenant Advisory Panel) operating in a national role at a strategic level to feed tenant issues into the work of the Regulator (in the Welsh context, specifically to the Regulatory Board for Wales). The Welsh Government also looks to both TPAS (Cymru) and Welsh Tenants to provide feedback at a national level. In Scotland, tenants do have a route, however, to communicate with the Scottish Government on national policy issues through nine Regional Networks of registered tenant organisations, and involving them is seen as a current priority for the Scottish Government.

- 5.61 The UK and Scottish Governments have dedicated staff teams to support tenant participation: the Department for Communities and Local Government in England has a small team that administers and manages contracts in relation to the Tenant Empowerment Programme, and the Scottish Government has a Tenant Participation team that supports the Regional Networks and a scrutiny learning programme. No such resource exists in the Welsh Government.
- 5.62 Only the Welsh Government, however, provides core grant funding to any tenant organisations.
- 5.63 Both the UK and Scottish Governments have identified tenants being able and equipped to scrutinise services as a strategic priority for them, and some of the activities they fund issue from this priority. The UK Government currently funds a national training programme (2012-March 2015, let through a competitive tender process) and the national resource centre (Tenant Central). The Scottish Government also funds a national learning/training programme (Stepping up to Scrutiny), though participating landlords contribute to the costs, and a grant scheme. The Tenant Information Service and TPAS (Scotland) were encouraged to apply jointly to run the grant scheme.
- 5.64 Only the UK Government offers funding specifically targeted at supporting tenants in exercising their right to manage.
- 5.65 Only the UK Government has a robust framework in place for measuring outputs and outcomes from the funding it provides to tenant participation.

## **6 Issues and findings**

- 6.1 This chapter sets out the findings of the qualitative research. The context for tenant participation in Wales is first considered, and then stakeholder perceptions of what is meant by tenant participation, the outcomes sought from it and the kind of support it requires to be successful. The chapter then examines stakeholder perceptions of the activities and bodies Welsh Government currently funds. Finally there is an exploration of respondents' feedback of the role of landlords and the role of Welsh Government in supporting and promoting tenant participation, and how stakeholders view future priorities for funding.
- 6.2 In reviewing the findings, it is important to bear in mind the wide context for this research study. The position of the Welsh Government is that its own level of investment cannot continue because its resources are reducing and there are pressures on public finance. The Scottish and English Governments are experiencing similar pressures on their budgets, but perhaps have more flexibility in relation to how activities are funded.

### **Framework and funding for tenant participation in Wales**

- 6.3 The research team found that the term 'tenant participation' incorporates and conveys to stakeholders a wide range of activities. As noted in chapter 3 above, for most stakeholders (particularly those engaged in managing or delivering services), 'tenant participation' also embraces community engagement and community development activity. Indeed, some see tenant participation and community development as the same thing.
- 6.4 There has been a strong level of investment in tenant participation at a national and local level in recent years.
- 6.5 The email survey of registered housing associations found that the majority of respondents have an in-house dedicated resource for tenant

participation. This is particularly the case where the association also undertakes community engagement and regeneration work.

- 6.6 The survey also found that housing associations provide financial support to a range of activities, including funding for resident panels and other structures, training, hosting of events (fun days etc.), and communications (such as newsletters). Housing associations tend to have a dedicated budget for tenant participation and engagement.
- 6.7 Stakeholders recognised that tenant participation is promoted and safeguarded for housing associations and community mutuals by the Welsh Government's Regulatory Framework. Some stakeholders identified the Tenant Advisory Panel as representing a significant difference in how tenant participation is valued and promoted at a strategic level. The Regulatory Framework and the creation of the Tenant Advisory Panel were seen as significant changes since the Welsh Government last considered funding for tenant participation, three years ago.
- 6.8 Respondents noted that there is a clear directive through the Regulatory Framework for housing association landlords to involve tenants: it is their responsibility to do so at a local level and the Regulation Team's responsibility to gauge their commitment to doing so.

### **The longer view**

- 6.9 A range of stakeholders noted that the adoption, promotion and support of tenant participation has made considerable progress in the last 25 years. While there may be scope for improving how it is done and the impact it has, evidence suggests that at least the principle of involving service users in decision-making about services is accepted.
- 6.10 Many stakeholders have identified a considerable culture shift among landlords, from perhaps an unwillingness to have dialogue with tenants back in the late 1980s to a different social housing landscape in which,

for example, stock transfer organisations have placed a great emphasis on listening to and engaging with tenants as part of their core function.

- 6.11 There were very few challenges to this view from stakeholders, though one or two believed that, more recently, the tenant participation movement had been weakened and that tenants had become less equal.
- 6.12 Qualitative research highlighted more widely held concerns from a wide range of stakeholders that the immense challenges facing the social housing sector, such as welfare reform and the affordability of homes, might put the perceived progress and organisational culture shift at risk.
- 6.13 As a consequence of both the culture shift in tenant expectations and of the more hostile world tenants are facing, many stakeholders were keen to see changes to how tenants may be supported in the future, in particular a harder edged focus on the outcomes being sought from participation (e.g. making a difference to living costs, energy bills, employability etc.).

### **Effective tenant participation – being heard**

- 6.14 The tenants from the sample interviews viewed tenant participation as mainly about getting involved with decision making, including policy changes, performance improvement and community projects, and this was a view reflected by many other stakeholders. For Tenant Advisory Panel members, for example, effective tenant participation meant involvement in initiatives at a local level at the beginning. A range of stakeholders (including the tenants from the sample interviews and tenant participation officers) emphasised the value of tenants having a voice because of their expertise in being able to inform performance improvement and service delivery: *'We have to start giving people confidence to speak (...) Tenants are the experts.'*

- 6.15 Some senior stakeholders also saw tenant participation as including the meaningful involvement of tenants in governance structures, though the majority chose not to comment on this aspect of participation.
- 6.16 As outlined above, while the principle of tenant participation may be supported, stakeholder interviews (together with the Housing Association Regulatory Assessment outcomes) reveal differing views as to the intent and earnestness with which this principle is put into practice. A few stakeholders believe that tenants face a barrier in being heard through some landlords paying lip-service to tenant participation:
- ‘There are still attitudes out there which are alive and well – organisations which say they have tenants at the heart but are ticking boxes.’*
- 6.17 Effective tenant participation, argued many stakeholders, depends on a cultural and attitudinal focus within organisations to work collaboratively and openly; it depends on genuine enthusiasm from staff in working with tenants and valuing tenant input and tenant-based initiatives (a point underlined in several of our staff interviews). One staff member said that in their organisation *‘tenant participation is in everyone’s job description’*.
- 6.18 Sample staff interviewees interpreted tenant participation in ways that indicated different levels of power and influence afforded to tenants, from a “guiding role”, to “scrutiny”, “influencing decisions”, “having a say” or being “consulted”.
- 6.19 Given that the legal requirements of local authorities are different to those of housing associations, it is unsurprising that staff from the two local authorities in our sample interviews and some of the local authority tenant participation officers offered more conservative definitions of tenant participation. One, for example, stressed the customer service element only, and another saw their organisation’s focus as mainly ‘consultation’. A senior stakeholder also suggested that, in the local authority context, tenant participation was customer service and part of the corporate mainstream, with service standards and mechanisms for feedback rather than some kind of stand-alone activity. A senior

stakeholder with experience of tenant participation across a range of structures in England offered the view that in his experience there tended to be more of a culture of paternalism prevailing in local authority structures when compared with housing associations.

6.20 Despite the lack of regulatory force for local authorities to involve tenants in decision-making around housing services, it would be wrong to conclude however that organisations had not engineered their own culture shift in how they conceptualise their relationship with their tenants. Some stakeholders interviewed felt that attitudes towards tenant involvement are likely to reflect broader attitudes within a local authority towards transformation, improvement and public sector values. Those organisations that are committed to an improvement journey across their services will prioritise their relationships with stakeholders as part of that ethos, and indeed there is evidence from the research to support this in some having implemented their own tenant scrutiny arrangements (with no requirement upon them to do so) as a direct result of their own partnership working with tenants. One stakeholder felt that even the local authorities which had received 'no' votes from stock transfer ballots had benefited from the process of having to talk to their tenants and actively engage with them.

6.21 Several stakeholders were also of the view, however, that some local authorities are likely to be paying lip-service to the spirit of tenant participation. In this respect, there is no difference from stakeholder perceptions of other social housing landlords, i.e. that some housing associations are excellent in their commitment to and resourcing of tenant participation and a small number have yet to understand the culture shift that is needed to fully embrace the principles.

6.22 In the housing association sector, a clear message from tenant participation officers was that tenant participation is no longer just about participation in decision making about services being delivered, but includes notions of:

- Delivering improvements, or being involved in, the residents' wider community (five organisations);
- Doing participation in a way that will '*increase skills, confidence and employability prospects* [of participants] in the process' (three organisations) and offering a 'scale' of participation, from a resident with a learning disability reporting a repair, to a resident helping to govern the association (one organisation);
- Building a genuine partnership between staff and residents or 'empowering' residents (three organisations).

### **Outcomes being sought from tenant participation**

6.23 The tenants from the sample interviews and several other stakeholders emphasised the importance of tenants seeing a benefit to their involvement. Effective tenant participation delivered results. It also needed to happen in ways that suited people.

6.24 Some stakeholders were keen for the sector to have a National Tenants Survey (which has recently been commissioned by Community Housing Cymru) as a way of establishing how well tenants felt they were served and heard.

6.25 The tenants from the sample interviews saw the outcomes of involvement as improving services and getting feedback on what their landlords are doing, as well as improving the confidence of tenants and developing their social capital. This was broadly echoed by staff from the sample interviews and by tenant participation officers, who saw as an important outcome improving service performance, design, and strategy in a way that more closely matches the needs of tenants. Some respondents had developed this outcome to include a specific focus on value for money or customer focus.

6.26 There were differences in how staff from the sample interviews reported that outcomes are measured. One organisation was using tenant satisfaction as a measure for success in tenant participation, along with

monitoring outcomes related to specific priorities the residents had identified. Another organisation had appointed an Independent Tenant Representative to act as a link between the resident panel and the Board. The third organisation had developed a 'results-based accountability' approach in an effort to 'make tenant participation integral to processes across all teams', with each team being responsible for showing that they are responding to the tenant voice. (Results based accountability advocates collaboration among teams or partners to deliver certain outcomes.) A fourth organisation was monitoring outcomes from engagement activities (e.g. changes made to anti-social behaviour policies as a result of engagement), but had found monitoring direct outcomes difficult because tenant participation was not the only influence on improvement and change.

6.27 Seven of the 12 tenant participation officers who responded also highlight as an outcome the need to enable residents to build skills or 'realise their potential', both in their ability to engage with housing issues and to improve their employability. This wider capacity building and citizen engagement outcome was also identified by other sector stakeholders as an important aspiration. Beyond having a voice, the experience of practitioners of tenant participation was that tenants need help in clarifying and shaping messages. Tenants first face a challenge in having an organisation committed to listening to their voices, and this depends on the receptivity of the organisational culture to finding out and listening. Once that challenge has been addressed, they face a personal one in knowing what they want to say and how that might enable change. For tenant participation to work effectively, many stakeholders identified the need for tenants to be able to understand, ask questions and get feedback about performance issues, almost as a prerequisite for making an effective contribution.

## **What support is needed for effective tenant participation?**

6.28 For effective participation to take place, many stakeholders highlighted the fact that there is a structural issue to address, ‘the capacity of tenants to contribute’. It is not enough to give people a platform to be heard, they will always need support in understanding what they want to say and how. Practical support was needed to help tenants talk through issues, bring in others’ experiences, and discuss what may or may not work:

*‘Tenants need support to be equal partners rather than be responsive to what the landlord wants to do. They need confidence to know that they can be equal partners.’*

6.29 From the local authority perspective, this kind of support is much needed at a time of great change, with new initiatives, ways of working and policy changes taking place. Tenants need independent and trusted voices to act as outside facilitators or brokers.

6.30 Many stakeholders would like a different vision – some mentioned a ‘unifying vision’ – for how tenant participation is supported and structured at a national level. The majority of stakeholders were of the view that it was important to have organisational support and infrastructure for tenant participation that is independent of landlords themselves. Non-landlord organisations were also viewed by some stakeholders as important in helping landlords to improve their communications with tenants.

6.31 A number of stakeholders strongly support the notion of one organisation providing a range of services in relation to tenant participation, from advocacy to training to facilitation. Neither Scotland nor England has such an organisation in place. There are barriers (across Scotland, England and Wales) to having one tenant-orientated organisation, such as the need for existing organisations to merge or work together in different group or partnership arrangements, and the

'cultural fit' between the organisations best placed to deliver those services.

- 6.32 Members of the Tenant Advisory Panel highlight the Regulatory Framework as an important cornerstone of support for tenant participation.
- 6.33 Regarding support for the Tenant Advisory Panel itself, while members interviewed generally felt that administrative support had been satisfactory, they reported only having received intermittent information and communication from a range of stakeholders. They were also disappointed at not having more of an open invitation from organisations to have Tenant Advisory Panel members along to meet tenant panels. Members said that it had taken some time for the Tenant Advisory Panel to find its place, but that there was a stronger sense of collective confidence gathering from the Panel.

### **Tenant Empowerment Grants**

- 6.34 Tenant Empowerment Grants (TEGs) received mixed reviews from a range of stakeholders, whether staff from the sample interviews or sector representatives.
- 6.35 There is positive brand recognition around the term 'TEG' from a range of stakeholders.
- 6.36 Tenant Empowerment Grants demonstrate a good geographic and thematic spread, as well as distribution across types of organisation (see Appendix 2). Questions were raised by some stakeholders as to whether it is appropriate for some organisations and some agents to benefit so substantially from Tenant Empowerment Grants.
- 6.37 The strongest support for Tenant Empowerment Grants came from tenant participation officers, who demonstrated almost unanimous support for them. Tenant participation officers believed the projects were (or had the potential to be) highly relevant and useful, specifically with regard to innovating and setting up new ways for residents to get

involved e.g. 'tenant-helping-tenant' approaches and a new online disability panel. One organisation identified Tenant Empowerment Grants as a '*catalyst for higher-level involvement*', the results of which '*carried on as [the grants] are able to adapt as the project develops*'. One organisation commented that the amount of the grant was '*small compared with the total project costs*'. One organisation had used the outputs of grants made to other organisations (the Tenant Assessment Toolkit put together by Rowan Associates was mentioned specifically).

6.38 Several interviewees were of the view that Tenant Empowerment Grants helped with getting initiatives and new ideas off the ground at a local level and in supporting tenants to look outwards. The process of applying to, and receiving the grants was said to be straightforward.

6.39 Tenant participation officers identified a number of successful outcomes of Tenant Empowerment Grants. These included building capacity; building peer support; establishing new resident groups or networks such as Tenant Scrutiny Panels or a South Wales Scrutiny Network; improved information to tenants (e.g. 'welcome packs' for supported housing tenants); work to tackle digital exclusion; reviews of services by residents. Criticisms included views that the Tenant Empowerment Grants were '*hit and miss*' in the quality of outputs (although one interviewee made the point that lessons could also be learned from what had failed), and that tenants were told '*what we already know and what we were doing anyway*'.

6.40 There were a number of criticisms in relation to the sustainability of the interventions. For example, structures/activities might not be sustainable after the grant had been spent, and the grants were less useful in terms of generating meaningful change as much of the money was spent on consultants' fees and creating '*unrealistic action plans*'. The point was also made that after the completion of projects organisations might not sign up to action plans, with agents and tenants having no power to make them do so. Projects were also not subjected to review or follow-up assessments to determine the magnitude and longevity of their outputs.

- 6.41 Evidence from those engaged in the delivery of Tenant Empowerment Grants suggests that the less positive element of Tenant Empowerment Grants is their susceptibility to misuse, to not being genuinely tenant-led or initiated but rather led by the staff of the organisation.
- 6.42 A few stakeholders were very disappointed by their perception that the original spirit behind the establishment of Tenant Empowerment Grants, purportedly to help support the establishment of tenant management organisations, had been lost, and indeed that they have become ‘*a supplementary funding pot for landlords*’.
- 6.43 It was underlined by practitioners involved in Tenant Empowerment Grants that the independent administration of Tenant Empowerment Grants was important and that the Welsh Government need not interfere in their commissioning.

### **TPAS and Welsh Tenants**

- 6.44 Evidence suggests that the work of TPAS and of Welsh Tenants has been valued, whether by landlords, tenants or other practitioners in the sector.
- 6.45 While there is reporting of a range of activities by both organisations to Welsh Government (as per the terms of their contracts), there is less evidencing of the outcomes. There is a lack of clarity of the outcomes being sought by Welsh Government. The research team has also not seen any monitoring of the diversity of tenants involved in events and activities organised by the two organisations.

### **Welsh Tenants**

- 6.46 In particular Welsh Tenants is valued for its Accessible Tenant Training and Information Network (‘ATTAIN’) events (regionally organised events designed to solicit tenants’ views, inform them about housing policies and issues, and train them on their rights and responsibilities), its lobbying activity, and its input into responding to policy. The organisation

also receives considerable credit from the majority of stakeholders for evolving from an organisation that was perhaps perceived as difficult to work with to one that has matured, is effective and tactical. Welsh Tenants itself says that it has tried to move to systems and processes that are less confrontational but feels constrained from delivering all of its aspirations because of resourcing and capacity issues.

6.47 There were, however, less positive comments about Welsh Tenants from the staff from the sample interviews, some of whom felt that the organisation was focused 'on a world view from which landlords have moved on'. These respondents tended to see Welsh Tenants as tenant focused at the expense of looking to engage effectively with landlords. There were mixed views from the tenants from the sample interviews, with some finding Welsh Tenants useful for advice but one or two finding the Welsh Tenants mode of operation outdated. Half of the tenant participation officers had little or no contact with Welsh Tenants, although three tenant participation officers said that their tenants had found the conferences and events held by Welsh Tenants relevant and useful for bringing a '*pan-Wales perspective on matters which affect social housing tenants*'.

## **TPAS**

6.48 TPAS is valued for its briefings, toolkits and guidance, its ability to coordinate and develop good practice, (by some) for its training and its conference, and by tenant participation officers for its practical support.

6.49 Tenant participation officers are among the most positive supporters of the work of TPAS. They value opportunities to network and link together local authorities, housing associations and tenants, and appreciate how TPAS encourages collaboration and partnership working. For a few tenant participation officers, the independence of TPAS (being neither government nor landlord nor tenant-run) means it is perceived as being able to facilitate partnership working well.

6.50 There was criticism among other stakeholders in relation to TPAS being core grant funded and raising income from social housing landlords through other means (membership fees, Tenant Empowerment Grants and consultancy). Concerns were raised that its membership risked decline and that its offer was in need of refreshing to something tailored and less generic. Some tenant interviewees said that their organisations had 'outgrown' TPAS, a view which was also put forward by several housing association survey respondents.

6.51 TPAS's role in evaluating local tenant participation strategies, which it had been asked to do by Welsh Government, has raised concerns. Stakeholders highlight TPAS's role in both *evaluating* tenant participation strategies on behalf of Welsh Government and yet also *advising* individual associations (on a consultancy basis) on their tenant participation strategies. Some respondents are critical of the Welsh Government for having asked TPAS to carry out the evaluations. The research team also understands that TPAS endeavoured at the time to ring-fence potential conflicts of interest.

### **TPAS and Welsh Tenants: risks and overlap**

6.52 There are further reputational risks to both organisations. There is disappointment among stakeholders at the level of collaboration between the two organisations (which is perceived by them to be low) and at the duplication of some activities. There were questions raised by the majority of stakeholders interviewed as to why two organisations were needed to support tenant voice and participation. Frustrations were also voiced regarding the risk that tenant participation is being potentially diluted by perceived rivalries and competition (*'protecting their own patches'*). It was perceived by several respondents that the relationship between the two organisations, and different political agendas, is getting in the way of an inspiring vision for tenant priorities and voice. The majority of sector stakeholders (as opposed to staff contributors) had an aspiration to have one organisation (but in the nature mostly of a

partnership or alliance rather than a full merger), as it was felt that this would create more capacity for supporting tenant participation.

6.53 There are some areas of overlap or duplication of activities between the two organisations (see Appendix 8). The two annual conferences were identified by many interviewees as a prime example of the organisations not collaborating effectively. It was proposed by Tenant Advisory Panel members that one conference, run over several days, with all relevant tenant organisations encouraged to help shape the agenda and audience, would create much more of a positive momentum across the sector. There was a view that the same faces attended both organisations' events. (Welsh Tenants reported that the joint conference arrangements had simply become unaffordable for them.)

6.54 Tenant input into policy was also identified by stakeholders as an area of overlap and the point was often made that TPAS doesn't particularly represent tenants as such (this is clearly a grey area, since TPAS does not particularly claim to represent tenants but is approached by the Welsh Government on policy issues as a source of advice on the tenant perspective).

6.55 The ATTAIN events (organised by Welsh Tenants) and TPAS's networking events were also identified by Tenant Advisory Panel members as very similar types of meetings (though the ATTAIN events were generally described by stakeholders as more successful).

6.56 It was reported that the local authority relationships with Welsh Tenants and TPAS were varied and historical. It was suggested by some respondents that the organisations were viewed interchangeably by local authorities (suggesting overlap), but also that their approaches were not particularly tailored to local authorities.

### **Perceived distinguishing factors**

6.57 Nearly all stakeholders identify a clear distinction in identity and purpose between Welsh Tenants and TPAS Cymru. One organisation is

consistently described by research respondents as ‘a tenants’ organisation’ (Welsh Tenants) and the other as a ‘partnership’ (or sometimes ‘landlord’ or ‘landlord-tenant’) organisation (TPAS Cymru). While the label of ‘tenants’ organisation’ was often considered positively by most stakeholders (though rather more militantly by staff from the sample interviews), TPAS’s label as a ‘landlord organisation’ was often used by interviewees in a way that was intended to be pejorative. The experience in Scotland has been that this kind of polarisation can be unhelpful and misleading. Tenants Information Service, the closest equivalent to Welsh Tenants in Scotland, moved away from describing itself as solely a ‘tenants’ organisation and has as its strapline ‘working with tenants and landlords to make a difference’. Membership is open to landlords and ‘other interested organisations’, as indeed it is to Tenants and Residents Organisations of England in England. TPAS Scotland describes itself as a ‘national tenant and landlord participation advisory service’.

6.58 A couple of members of Tenant Advisory Panel identified this polarising language as a danger, as did other senior stakeholders:

*‘you need landlords’ buy-in in order to ensure a voice for tenants – viewing landlords as the enemy in some way is not going to help to create trust. The tenants’ voice gets lost in that kind of characterisation and it’s important to reflect on who you are fighting sometimes.’*

*‘I don’t think you can have tenant engagement without staff engagement.’*

6.59 There was some frustration expressed that a range of tenant organisations did not work as openly and collaboratively with each other as Tenant Advisory Panel members and other stakeholders would like, and that there was insufficient cross-referencing of practices and information between them, perhaps because of an anxiety to protect their own organisations.

## **The role of other organisations**

6.60 Questions were raised about how other organisations – such as Participation Cymru, Communities First, Customer Focus, Tai Pawb and Shelter – fitted into a consideration of how best to organise and promote the engagement, capacity, rights and influence of citizens.

*‘It’s strange in a way that social housing is set apart from the overall sense of how we facilitate citizen engagement.’*

*‘The Government should see participation and governance as issues common to lots of public services and therefore join up the resources dedicated to participation across the board. This work should then be supported by a “global advisory service” covering all services.’*

6.61 Several stakeholders identified the potential for broadening out the support of engagement, advice and support and independent brokering around engagement in services, and not setting social housing apart.

6.62 Several stakeholders also challenged the monopoly of Welsh Tenants and TPAS over aspects of tenant participation, suggesting that other organisations are also capable of delivering similar services (Appendix 9 sets out a list of the organisations staff and residents from the sample interviews mentioned they had found helpful).

## **The role of landlords**

6.63 Nearly all interviewees identified co-operation and collaboration with tenants at a local level (including feeding back on outcomes) as a landlord responsibility.

6.64 Some (such as the staff from the sample interviews) viewed a responsibility to fund resident groups as central to this local landlord activity.

6.65 Other stakeholders saw a responsibility for landlords to broaden out participation beyond funded tenant groups *‘to engage the majority of tenants who are not interested in groups and panels and forums’*. Tai

Pawb also raised this as an issue, with many organisations having a traditional approach to tenant panels and groups, attracting the same people who have more time and tend to be older. Tai Pawb wanted to see the diversity of involvement increasing and the methods used to engage with tenants changing. Some stakeholders raised a concern that fundamental social changes were not being addressed through how tenant participation is viewed and delivered. Doing things as they had been done before, with a reliance on forums and panels, spoke to an older and less representative cohort, *'Other tenants will get involved in things that threaten or improve their homes, environments and neighbourhoods'*.

6.66 There was mostly consensus from the 14 (email survey) housing association respondents about what they should be funding. The majority saw a responsibility (and self-interest) in housing associations supporting tenants in playing a role in how associations design and deliver services, whether because this will lead to service improvement or enhanced customer satisfaction or ensuring that providers deliver what tenants want. Simply put, involvement was seen as good business:

*'We should be responsible for all activities that give a voice to residents and contribute to achieving business objectives and the continuous improvement of our service offer with opportunities to engage at all levels (neighbourhood and city-wide).'*

*'We should be responsible for funding activities which place tenants at the centre of the design, review and (where appropriate) the delivery of services.'*

6.67 The point was made by one housing association survey respondent that none of this activity should be funded externally because the organisation should be generating its own gains from investing in this activity, *'creating its own payback'*.

6.68 A number of housing association survey respondents underlined that funding tenant participation activities extends to building tenant skills, capacity and learning (for example through conferences). Members of

staff from the sample interviews were keen to see training co-ordinated with other landlords. One local authority, for example, was working with a couple of local housing associations on training initiatives.

6.69 A number of the respondents from the sample interviews discussed the significant infrastructure costs of supporting tenant participation – food, travel, room hire – and this comprised a significant proportion of the entire tenant participation budget at one local authority.

6.70 There was also a warning note from one housing association survey respondent about the pressures on budgets when both capital and revenue funding streams are being squeezed, and the fact that this could lead to *'difficult decisions about whether we can sustain the current level of activity'*.

### **The role of the Welsh Government**

6.71 Many stakeholders outside Government (e.g. Tenant Advisory Panel members) were unclear around the national strategy or vision in relation to tenant participation.

6.72 The majority of interviewees recognised a role for Welsh Government in monitoring the effectiveness of tenant participation in housing associations and community mutuals via the Regulatory Framework.

6.73 A diverse range of stakeholders – from staff from the sample interviews to senior spokespeople – identified a need for the Welsh Government to continue to provide strategic leadership in promoting tenant participation and ensuring its consistently high quality through appropriate indicators of its effectiveness. It remained a priority to mainstream tenant participation within organisational cultures, as well as to promote the status of meaningful tenant participation.

6.74 To the majority of stakeholders, this continued focus required continued funding of independent support for tenant participation, but with a movement away from local interventions (best funded by landlords themselves) to regional and national initiatives. Tenant Advisory Panel members were particularly keen, however, to see the Welsh Government ensuring value for money from its investment.

6.75 From our interviews with Welsh Government stakeholders, we understand the priorities for funding to be:

- Helping the service user in shaping housing-related services
- Sharing and promoting good practice in tenant participation
- Having the facility to consult with tenants on matters of housing policy (this was recognised by other stakeholders too, e.g. Tenant Advisory Panel members and Chief Executive survey respondents)
- Being able to invest money in such a way that helps to pump prime initiatives.

6.76 It wasn't particularly seen as the Government's role to divert money into landlord income but rather into the 'tenants' movement', into partnership working around support to tenants and inter-landlord comparisons.

6.77 A spectrum of views emerged about the role of the Welsh Government in funding tenant participation from the 14 (email survey) housing association respondents. Some of the ideas put forward were that the Welsh Government's role should be:

- Funding a tenant body (TPAS and Welsh Tenants are each mentioned separately) – whether as an umbrella organisation or a consultative mechanism or a source of objective advice and challenge or as a promoter of involvement
- (from several respondents) Supporting inclusion (whether digital, financial, accessibility of information)
- (from several respondents) Supporting initiatives that work across landlords – whether networks, area groups, Tenant Advisory Panel, training
- Supporting input into wider aspects of Government policy (e.g. health or housing policy)
- Supporting scrutiny and governance across the sector
- Funding research, dissemination of best practice, designing new and innovative ways of involving tenants

- Quite limited and focused on tenant voice in the regulatory framework via Tenant Advisory Panel, and funding innovation and training to support a national voice and policy development
- Paying for national surveys
- No particular role for Welsh Government (two respondents).

6.78 The cross-sector element was also identified by other interviewees (including staff from the sample interviews) as important in addressing how tenants might have a meaningful voice and know what it is they want to say. Interviewees said:

*'It's no good having a direct line to the regulator if you don't know what you want to say. Tenant participation needs resources and networking with other organisations to feed it. You share stuff and inspire people. Unless there is a structure and movement tenants can be part of, they will just be doing their best on their own – and they will be dependent on the leadership.'*

*'We could get much more if we work together. The Welsh Government could encourage that on a regional basis.'*

6.79 There were differing views as to whether training should be accredited (or accredited in relation to a discipline or functionality – e.g. housing type qualifications) but general agreement that much greater coordination of training resources was needed. The majority of tenants from the sample interviews identified training (including jobs fairs, said one) as a priority. The research evidence suggests that tenant training appears to incorporate many different activities to different groups of people, from 'hands on' activities, e.g. team-working with resident groups, to housing qualifications, to employment and broader life skills. Some of the respondents from the sample interviews also raised concerns about the accessibility of training in terms of both travel and payment.

- 6.80 A number of stakeholders identified the Welsh Government's need to take a lead on equality and diversity and engagement and ensure that there is an attempt to engage with 'hard to reach' groups.
- 6.81 Tenant Advisory Panel members also saw some wider role for the Welsh Government in promoting people's well-being and wider skills through involvement.

### **Future priorities for the Welsh Government**

- 6.82 A number of stakeholders were keen for the Welsh Government to play a leadership role in a citizen centred approach. There was a demand from some to see Welsh Government clarity around the extent to which it wished to develop engagement.
- 6.83 Some identified the challenges of the current operating environment in relation to welfare reform, living costs and affordability, and suggested that this would lead to greater tensions in relationships (indeed, one or two stakeholders identified this happening already). Against this background, said one, *'it's even more important that tenants have access to good quality independent support as a counter-balance to the voice of landlords'*.
- 6.84 Some of the priorities for future support remained unchanged from the current situation, namely an ongoing need for impartial advice and facilitative expertise. Some favoured a national organisation to facilitate, support, build skills/capacity and organise the voice of tenants in Wales; others – particularly tenant participation officers – favoured the independence and separation of activities.
- 6.85 A strong emphasis for future support is placed on inclusion – in particular digital inclusion (housing association respondents and staff from the sample interviews mentioned this), as well as financial (again respondents from both housing association and sample interviewed staff mentioned fuel poverty) and health. Employment and training was also identified as a priority.

- 6.86 There was recognition among stakeholders of the growth of the private rented sector, and support among some for developing the capacity and voice of tenants in that sector. There was a view that supporting the tenant voice ought to extend across tenures and landlords, to local authority landlords and to the private rented sector. A couple of stakeholders expressed concern about the quality of housing in the private sector, and therefore viewed as important providing a means through which the concerns of private rented sector tenants might be heard. A local authority respondent felt that there should be a greater emphasis on exchanging information between stock-owning local authorities which face challenges and are now geographically spread across Wales.
- 6.87 The Welsh Government was seen to have a role in broadening the diversity of involvement and voices in the future. Diversity of voice was also viewed by some stakeholders as a way of protecting tenant-focused organisations from disintegrating into factions and schisms – it ensured a drive towards democracy and transparency. Support is still needed to ensure that the profile of involved tenants reflects the wider tenant profile of any social housing landlord.
- 6.88 There were concerns about those perceived to be potentially ‘unsupported’ tenants with stock-retaining local authorities or in the private rented sector, who ought to be supported, but concerns about the capacity of existing organisations to do so. (Shelter, for example, said that they deal with in the range of 20,000 people a year with housing problems, with a disproportionate number of them from the private rented sector in Wales and a number disproportionate to the size of that sector in Wales.)

### **Welsh Government funding**

- 6.89 On an operational level, our evidence suggests that service delivery organisations, such as local authorities and housing associations,

already consider that they fund tenant participation. They view it as core to their business approach.

- 6.90 Nearly all stakeholders considered it important to protect a funding source outside landlord budgets for independent advice. This was stressed by some local authority stakeholders, who emphasised the fact that local authorities do not have the requisite funds to do any more than is already being done. (The point was also made, however, by a senior local government practitioner that in fact wider cuts within local authorities shouldn't impact upon housing services or make any other changes necessary, since the Housing Revenue Account is dictated by rental income rather than by the distribution of funds by the local authority and the last year has seen a small uplift in this account for this particular local authority.)
- 6.91 Two organisations called for changes in funding: one wanted the Welsh Government to make sure all providers, large and small, could access the funding available; a local authority respondent felt under intense budgetary pressure and therefore was worried that there was not enough money available to ensure that tenant participation was a priority (with all resources being diverted to statutory duties such as freedom of information requests).
- 6.92 Several stakeholders perceived the current operating arrangements of tenant-based organisations as costly and inefficient, with one stakeholder questioning '*whether they have the critical mass to make it work*' (though this might be a criticism levelled at any small organisation, it appeared within the context of questioning whether two tenant-orientated organisations were needed). Views were also put forward that other organisations – such as Shelter, Community Housing Cymru, etc. – could potentially provide back-office services, or that some of the organisations concerned could establish a group structure to encourage both collaboration and cost-sharing.<sup>5</sup> There were active suggestions

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<sup>5</sup> Group structures usually comprise separate legal entities operating under a parent structure and Board, with corporate services provided by the parent, which can be a newly formed entity established explicitly for the purpose of providing this corporate centre – IT, finance, human resource type services. These structures are established with

about which organisations ought to merge or partner in a structure with 'like-minded' others.

## **Other ideas**

- 6.93 A few ideas emerged regarding other arrangements or sources of funding, namely organisations working more effectively together or sums of money being raised through a levy system. Each landlord would make a contribution to national support for tenant participation through a levy based on the number of properties they have (and therefore theoretically linked to tenants' rent payments), though there was a concern that any levy-type system would need to demonstrate some direct and real benefits to tenants.
- 6.94 There are of course a number of disadvantages to this. Associations already pay a levy to their federation, potentially to other organisations (such as TPAS), and it is not inconceivable that one day paid-for regulation may be on the way. A levy system would need an infrastructure, chasing mechanisms, accountability to funders and so on, so it would not be straightforward to establish and is an untested proposition.
- 6.95 A proposal was made by one senior local authority stakeholder that significant opportunities are missed by the Welsh Government to deliver its priorities and vision around tenant participation when it funds other kinds of activities, such as the major repairs allowance or Section 180 funding (homelessness grant), where it can make a requirement that recipient organisations deliver in such a way that engages tenants and service users.
- 6.96 Another stakeholder suggestion was that private sector companies (typically large building/maintenance companies that have a long

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the aim of more efficiently providing services to the member organisations. A cost sharing structure can also operate from the bottom up, with a range of independent organisations jointly controlling the service provider, all within a VAT group; cost sharing groups of this kind have recently had a boost through being exempt from Value Added Tax payments under the Finance Act 2012.

association with the social housing sector) might be approached to provide support for training to tenants, since the sums of money needed are small relative to the budgets of these types of organisations.

6.97 A couple of stakeholders viewed the research focus as too narrow because it was confined to how tenant participation is supported specifically in the social housing sector (rather than more widely, for example in the public sector). Some felt the research exercise had been a missed opportunity to explore how citizens are supported to engage with public bodies (and funded by the Welsh Government to do so).

## 7 Options

- 7.1 In terms of how the Welsh Government might progress from its current funding position, this research study has examined extensively how tenant priorities are supported and funded in Scotland and England, and how those arrangements have developed. The Research Team has also had several discussions with Welsh Tenants and TPAS to ensure that the impact of the options on these organisations is fully understood. To understand what ideas stakeholders across the wider social housing sector may have to proffer, opportunities for input have been offered to a range of stakeholders, from senior practitioners and advisers, to frontline staff and tenants. Finally, the research team has undertaken an options appraisal, based on the evidence gathered via this study.
- 7.2 There is one option to which we have given no consideration – namely, increasing the amount of core funding provided by the Welsh Government into tenant participation, because the Welsh Government has made clear that in the current economic climate this option is not feasible.
- 7.3 The following options have emerged from the research, and it is important to underline that many of these options are not mutually exclusive. Each of them is discussed in further detail below:
- **Option One:** Retain the status quo and cut funding proportionately to the Tenant Empowerment Grants (administered by the Chartered Institute of Housing), TPAS and Welsh Tenants;
  - **Option Two:** Cease funding to one or other of the organisations or the grant scheme – this might include other ways of sustaining their survival for one or other organisation, e.g. TPAS through consultancy work and bidding for contracts from Welsh Government, or Welsh Tenants raising sums through the imposition of a levy on social housing landlords;
  - **Option Three:** TPAS and Welsh Tenants to form a closer working relationship with each other;

- **Option Four:** TPAS and/or Welsh Tenants to form closer working relationships with other organisations;
- **Option Five:** The creation of a group structure (or shared services vehicle) that provides shared services to a range of organisations which engage in participation and consultation activities of various kinds;
- **Option Six:** the Welsh Government to tender a range of contracts in 2015 for the key activities it seeks to fund over a period of three years and cease core grant funding.

7.4 Options three, four and five might be considered sub-variations of a theme in relation to new partnerships, alliance and structures.

**Option One: Retain the status quo and cut funding proportionately to the Tenant Empowerment Grants, TPAS and Welsh Tenants**

7.5 This option would potentially see a 50% cut (or the relevant percentage applicable in terms of the availability of budget to spend and pro rata cuts) to each organisation, so an annual budget to Tenant Empowerment Grants of £75,000, to TPAS of £138,000 and to Welsh Tenants of £103,000.

7.6 The advantages of this option are:

- the Welsh Government is not perceived as interfering in the business of independent organisations;
- each organisation retains its independence and stays in control of its own destiny;
- there is a notional fairness in how each party is treated;
- such a move might drive efficiencies through each structure. CIH Cymru has, for example, identified how efficiencies might be delivered around Tenant Empowerment Grants, through: setting a standard rate per day for Approved Tenant Empowerment Grant Agents (ATEGA) below the current average; capping the maximum

Tenant Empowerment Grant at £5,000 (compared with the current £8,000); making the review meetings 'pro bono', saving £600 per Tenant Empowerment Grant; limiting the number of Tenant Empowerment Grants per ATEGA to say five per annum (though clearly this would have a deleterious impact on TPAS's income, since just under £100,000 of income in the year ending March 2013 came from Tenant Empowerment Grants), and reclaiming underspend from any Tenant Empowerment Grants that had not been completed within a year.

7.7 The disadvantages of this option are:

- with funding severely reduced, the organisations would still need to undertake a radical transformation in order to be able to survive and they would be likely to be catapulted into an immediate survival strategy, which would be time-consuming, labour intensive and likely to detract from their mission;
- this is not a resolution to some of the 'problems'/perceptions identified by stakeholders (that there is confusion in funding two tenant organisations);
- this might be perceived as prevarication on the Welsh Government's part and an attempt to postpone making a difficult and potentially unpopular decision;
- it represents a financial solution, but not a strategic one.

### **Option Two: Cease funding to one or other of the organisations or the grant scheme**

7.8 This option would entail the Welsh Government making a strategic choice about what it chooses to fund and why.

7.9 The advantages of this option are:

- It recognises that the operating environment has changed and that it may no longer be the Welsh Government's role to fund as much support to tenant participation;
- It may lead to more creative models of raising sources of funding that do not depend on central government budgets. For example, for Welsh Tenants, an alternative (but nevertheless complex) option in the event of funding being ceased is to consider (as Welsh Tenants has) a route of 'unionisation'. This would involve tenants voluntarily submitting a sum to the organisation in order for it to represent them and campaign on their behalf;
- Another potential option identified by stakeholders was the imposition of a levy on each social housing landlord. One idea put forward was for a levy to be paid of £1 per tenant per annum. Experience of the administration of membership fees in other scenarios suggests that this kind of levy system is best applied in bands or ranges, since it generally constitutes better value for money in relation to smaller sized organisations. A conservative estimate is that approximately £100,000 could be raised through this means (depending on how it was administered, and whether it was extended across into local authority stock-retaining landlords this figure could increase).

#### 7.10 The disadvantages of this option are:

- In the event of simply ceasing Tenant Empowerment Grant funding, this might be perceived as prevarication on the Welsh Government's part and an attempt to postpone making a difficult and potentially unpopular decision;
- It may be that solely funding one or two of the three options does not incorporate all of the tenant participation activities the Welsh Government wishes to support – the focus of the Welsh Government's support may not be fully reflected by one or other organisation, and one organisation may perform better at certain activities than the other;

- There may be allegations of favouritism to one or other activity/organisation;
- The imposition of a levy might be at variance in TPAS's case with its landlord membership fee status, since housing associations are unlikely to wish to pay twice over for some kind of external support for tenant participation;
- The imposition of a levy is untested and unknown and could lead social housing landlords to believe they have discharged some of their responsibilities in respect of tenant participation through their payment and cease to continue to invest at the same levels themselves;
- The route to unionisation would be highly complex and there would be no certainty about income levels.

### **Option Three: TPAS and Welsh Tenants to form a closer working relationship with each other**

7.11 This option entails a range of possible variations, for example merging the two organisations into one new one, creating a group structure with the two organisations as subsidiaries or transferring one organisation into the other etc.

7.12 The advantages of a closer working relationship are:

- This would offer a degree of financial security and long-term sustainability, which is an important conveyor of commitment by the Welsh Government for tenants more widely;
- It might give access to growth opportunities – there may be an opportunity to take the combined organisation into a new arena;
- Depending on the type of structure most favoured, it might strengthen the financial position with the efficiency gains that come from merging senior teams and give longer-term sustainability;

- It could give a strengthened profile to how tenants are supported and enabled;
- A single structure (whether group or individual) might potentially take on an increased leadership role and voice on tenant issues – there is considerable support from stakeholders for a single voice;
- If the merger is successful, other associations might wish to join, especially if a group structure is created.

#### 7.13 The disadvantages of this option are:

- The organisations concerned may feel that they are being coerced into a relationship that is not of their choosing;
- The organisations concerned have distinctively different characters and histories, and potentially appeal to different client groups – a full merger (or one organisation transferring into the other) might dilute what is distinctive about one or either of them;
- Mergers need to be considered very carefully in terms of their costs versus the benefits they offer;
- Creating a new post-merger organisation, and identifying and leading the operational and staffing changes to address this, is demanding and resource intensive. While philosophically there is an argument to say that the ethos of Welsh Tenants – an organisation that is perceived to be for tenants – ought to characterise any structure and inform the values of the parent body (were it a group structure), TPAS Cymru appears the better resourced body and arguably therefore better placed to run a larger entity. There are also potential benefits in being perceived as a ‘tenant and landlord’ organisation in terms of gaining credibility with regard to one’s professionalism – the experience of the Chief Executive of TPAS England is that it has taken time to rid stakeholders of perceptions that the organisation ‘may be well meaning but not professional’;
- Even as a separate subsidiary within a group, the parent would have ultimate control;

- A degree of autonomy is likely to be the best that either organisation could achieve;
- It could potentially lead to the loss of TPAS and Welsh Tenants's name, brand and status;
- There may be a challenge as to whether the organisations essentially have a shared purpose, are seeking to achieve broadly similar outcomes, and whether their history, ethos and roots provide for common ground;
- There will be a question as to whether the Boards (and senior staff) of both organisations have compatible skills, experience and expertise, and whether they are able to work together to deliver the required outcome;
- The rationalisation of senior management teams can present risks, such as the potential loss of able, experienced and committed senior staff members.

#### **Option Four: TPAS and/or Welsh Tenants to form closer working relationships with other organisations**

7.14 This option would see TPAS and Welsh Tenants approaching potential partner organisations which have shared values, a sense of purpose which is sympathetic to that of each organisation (with culturally aligned leadership structures – Board and senior team), a willingness to look at back office and staffing efficiencies, and a similar track record in working with tenants of different kinds.

7.15 It is worth noting, however, that the take-over process involving these types of small associations is often the most difficult to realise. This is because such associations are likely to want to retain their independence, identity and focus, something that often causes negotiations to stall.

7.16 The advantages of this option are:

- Each organisation believes it has more natural alliances with other organisations in terms of ethos and purpose;
- Other organisations are likely to feel subject to similar pressures around financial viability/capacity, since the charitable sector environment is a challenging one at the moment with central and local government funding cuts;
- Other organisations might welcome the skills and focus that TPAS and Welsh Tenants have to offer;
- Stakeholders might perceive clearer differentiation between the two organisations;
- It might allow for the development of services on a broader canvas.

7.17 The disadvantages of this option are:

- There is no strong pressure on other organisations to enter such a relationship, since they are not subject to the same process of review to participate in such negotiations. It would probably require some form of incentive or push to encourage other organisations to take part in such discussions;
- These kinds of alliances can be hard to realise – one can expect organisations to be keen on retaining their independence, identity and focus, something that often causes negotiations to stall;
- The more organisations one involves in trying to create an optimum solution, the greater the risks of failure;
- Some of the complexities set out in Option Three above will apply.

**Option Five: the creation of a group structure (or shared services vehicle) that provides shared services to a range of organisations which engage in participation and consultation activities of different kinds.**

7.18 This option would require the establishment of a group structure (usually comprising separate legal entities operating under a parent structure

which provides corporate services, or a newly formed entity established explicitly for the purpose of providing back-office services) in the interests of more efficiently providing services to any member organisations.

7.19 Setting up such a structure would entail a lot of hard work and would need to be properly resourced and managed. The organisations concerned are unlikely to have spare resources of the kind needed to direct and manage the negotiations and negotiate any complexities around governance and infrastructure arrangements, or any due diligence processes.

7.20 The advantages of this option are:

- There is an opportunity to create a compelling vision of participation in Wales;
- There could be a phased process of reducing funding, allowing participating organisations to restructure their back-office services accordingly into a cost-sharing corporate parent structure;
- Participating organisations could retain their own brands and constitutional structures, while retaining an openness around how synergies might work into the future;
- Adopting this option can offer a phased path towards further integration as organisations and individuals grow accustomed to working more closely together and start to seek efficiencies from how they might best do that.

7.21 The disadvantages of this option are

- It is likely that external help would be needed to project manage and advise on the process, in addition to legal advice;
- Performance might be placed under strain for some months, with a potential diversion from core purpose for any participating organisations;

- It is fairly complex trying to get two organisations to work closely together – this kind of option starts to elevate the level of complexity quite considerably;
- While financial and other due diligence issues are key factors in forming new structural relationships, it is often the softer cultural issues that determine the success – or otherwise – of any such relationships.

**Option Six: the Welsh Government to tender a range of contracts in 2015 for the key activities it seeks to fund over a period of three years and cease core grant funding.**

7.22 This option involves giving TPAS and Welsh Tenants notice of an intention to cease core grant funding and establishes instead a contract-based approach by the Welsh Government to the future funding of any nationally supported tenant participation/support activities (for which any organisations would be able to bid).

7.23 The advantages of this option are:

- It is possible to pay solely for those services which the Welsh Government believes it has a role in supporting and there is clarity around the customer-client relationship;
- There is time for the organisations to consider how they manoeuvre and prepare themselves into an optimum space for bidding for the relevant contracts;
- This option does not coerce independent organisations to take up any structures;
- This may encourage innovation and bold thinking on the part of the organisations concerned, and may encourage different kinds of partnerships and alliances to emerge;

7.24 The disadvantages of this option are:

- The organisations may still feel caught up in trying to guarantee their own survival;
- Some of the additional tasks the Welsh Government has insisted come from core funding will be lost or will come at a cost as variations to a contract;
- The Welsh Government will need to demonstrate absolute clarity in relation to what it wishes to fund;
- Procurement processes can be time-consuming and expensive to administer.

## **8 Conclusions and recommendations**

- 8.1 This section provides conclusions on what has been learned about tenant participation and sets out some recommendations as to the way forward.
- 8.2 The Welsh Government's set of citizen-centred principles were established as part of an improvement agenda, as a recognition that public service bodies needed to align their culture, purpose and processes with the needs and aspirations of the people using those services. The aspiration, tracing back to the Government's 2004 Making the Connections agenda, was for services across organisations to be responsive, citizen focused, driven by a commitment to equality, and efficient.
- 8.3 The evidence provided by social housing landlords demonstrates that tenant participation, from their perspective, now embraces a wide range of activities, from shaping service delivery, to providing feedback at community events, to conducting scrutiny, to participating in governance, to community engagement and development.
- 8.4 It is our opinion that some of the achievements of today's culture of tenant participation in the social housing sector bear testimony to how society has changed, how increasingly it is seen as 'common sense' and good business to engage customers and services users, whether as public or private sectors. They also reflect what can be achieved when there is a clear Government vision and strategy, a regulatory framework, grass-roots organisations working doggedly over many years to lobby and campaign about housing conditions, and other types of organisations working to tackle the structural inequalities through building skills and confidence within organisations and among the people who interact with them. Many different types of organisation have played a part – nationally and locally – in improving the choices for and expectations of (at least) social housing tenants in recent years.
- 8.5 This progress over 25 years ought to be reflected in the kinds of activities the Welsh Government is prepared to continue resourcing.

There is a strong message from stakeholders that the world has changed.

- 8.6 Notwithstanding this view, there are also other views emerging from the research to suggest that a challenge remains across different types of landlords in relation to tenant participation. This research (and the evidence of the Housing Association Regulatory Assessments) identifies a need for culture change among some housing associations (and the research team sees this as a governance challenge). The expectations of local authorities in relation to tenant participation are not the same as housing associations and participation is potentially less well resourced. Finally, several stakeholders identified that there is a tremendous challenge to address the experiences and housing conditions of those living in the private rented sector.
- 8.7 If this review were only to be about saving money, a rather dispiriting message would be conveyed to tenants. Instead, this review provides a strategic opportunity for the Welsh Government to step back, set out a new vision of what it is seeking to achieve and encourage national and local partners to play a role in helping to deliver it.
- 8.8 It is the authors' opinion that a clear vision of participation is now needed from the Welsh Government to continue the commitment to equality and social justice that drove the articulation of the citizen-centred principles. Perhaps a slightly different agenda is emerging from the future priorities that many stakeholders said that they would like to see. The vision of tenant participation in housing management services seems for the most part to be ascribed to social housing landlords as their duty. There is an implied message from the Regulatory Framework's message for tenants to be at the heart of services and that the whole of an organisation should see tenant participation as embedded in how it works, whether at a strategic or operational level, and not just parcelled off to tenant participation officers. It is the role of landlords to make sure that this culture is encouraged, effective and deep-rooted. It is the role of governing bodies to drive such a culture, rather than the role of Welsh Government. And it is the role of the regulator to assess whether Boards

are able to rise to this challenge. In the local authority context, wider organisational change and the rise of the 'overview and scrutiny' function has perhaps also generated a deeper commitment to involving stakeholders of all kinds, though the requirements of local authority landlords in respect of tenant participation are significantly less prescriptive.

8.9 More widely, and with reference to the local authority context, there is nevertheless a prevailing belief that it is not the Welsh Government's role to monitor or determine what should happen at a local level. The UK Government's approach in England has been founded on the belief that local people are in the best place to make judgements about their area and their services, and that they need to be empowered to understand performance information in order to be able to engage meaningfully at a local level. There has been a shift from notions of vertical accountability (from regulators or inspectors) to horizontal accountability, to local authorities and housing associations being accountable to their 'customers'.

8.10 Stakeholders see the Welsh Government's responsibilities as:

- independent support for tenant participation, but a broader concept of participation and the participation of a broader group of people;
- advocacy for tenants across tenures;
- a programme of training that brings progression to people's lives; and
- ways of sharing learning and knowledge in regional and national forums.

8.11 The authors acknowledge that there are some challenges here, since quite understandably the Welsh Government's Housing Division's focus is on the aspects of tenant participation that relate to the provision of housing and housing management services. There is, however, a vision among other stakeholders for wider agendas that develop individual and

community skills and confidence, and the capacity to engage as active citizens. It is our opinion that there is potentially a challenge for the Welsh Government to not be parochial in its thinking, while stakeholders may need to recognise that policy-makers are understandably focused on their own budgets, and there are financial drivers behind this review.

### **Discussion of options**

8.12 As already outlined, the following options have emerged from the research study. Each is outlined below and conclusions drawn as to the best option to take:

- **Option One:** Retain the status quo and cut funding proportionately to the Tenant Empowerment Grants (administered by the Chartered Institute of Housing), TPAS and Welsh Tenants;
- **Option Two:** Cease funding to one or other of the organisations or the grant scheme;
- **Option Three:** TPAS and Welsh Tenants to form a closer working relationship with each other;
- **Option Four:** TPAS and/or Welsh Tenants to form closer working relationships with other organisations;
- **Option Five:** The creation of a group structure that provides shared services to a range of organisations which engage in participation and consultation activities of various kinds;
- **Option Six:** the Welsh Government to tender a range of contracts in 2015 for the key activities it seeks to fund over a period of three years and cease core grant funding.

8.13 Option 1 (cutting funding proportionately) is an appropriate short-term measure to take, but in terms of the longer-term vision and picture offers an uncertain way forward for all concerned and appears simply to postpone making difficult decisions – there is no strategic vision, only a financial one.

- 8.14 With respect to Option 2, the research team believes a continued pause on the Tenant Empowerment Grant programme is a sensible option chiefly because there is evidence of considerable investment currently by Welsh social housing landlords in tenant participation and because the Welsh Government needs to find savings. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that Tenant Empowerment Grants – while they may encourage innovation – are not necessarily tenant driven (so that Government is sometimes subsidising landlords). This may be a transitional arrangement – for example, Option 6 (which resembles more the model in England and Scotland) might involve reintroducing a grant programme if there are particular strands of activity (e.g. tenant scrutiny) that the Welsh Government wishes to foster.
- 8.15 The research team does not view cutting funding to one tenant organisation at the expense of the other a sensible solution, since both organisations have their respective merits and strengths.
- 8.16 The research team's view is that Option 3 is not a viable option for the Welsh Government to pursue since it is outside its scope to dictate this outcome, and indeed to give any steer of this kind might be reputationally damaging.
- 8.17 With respect to Options 3, 4 and 5, it is helpful to consider these together, since they offer a future path that is within the agency of other bodies rather than subject to the control of the Welsh Government, and it is for the organisations concerned to determine how they wish to shape their futures. The only caveat is that the Welsh Government has the opportunity to incentivise organisations to work in a different way, and the research team believes this merits some consideration. Small organisations often lack the capacity to drive significant organisational or constitutional change. The research findings have also established that many stakeholders across the sector have an aspiration for a single organisation, an organisational (and for some a physical) hub for citizen engagement, empowerment and learning.

- 8.18 At this moment in time, the research team does not see the scope for TPAS Cymru and Welsh Tenants to join into one structure (not as a merger, which hasn't seriously been entertained by any stakeholders, but a group-type structure). While forming a group has been an option that both organisations have considered, the level of trust and alignment of purpose is simply not there to make this happen; an important first step might incorporate developing a Memorandum of Understanding.
- 8.19 It is salutary to be reminded that there is separation between the enabling/facilitative type role that TPAS styled organisations play in other parts of the UK and the 'ground roots' voice of tenant-styled organisations. In England, TPAS and Tenants' and Residents' Organisations of England (TAROE) are independent organisations, as are TPAS and TIS in Scotland. They may collaborate to bid for initiatives or contracts or work in partnership to give a wide-ranging view on issues, but they have not integrated further. Their experiences suggest that there are barriers of history, culture and orientation that can be difficult to overcome.
- 8.20 Moreover, while the focus of this review (in line with the brief for the research) has been on two organisations and a grant scheme, a wider examination of the efficient use of Welsh Government funds (including those organisations which may receive core grant funding and sit within the housing or other Welsh Government departments) could help to explore a fuller picture of tenant participation.
- 8.21 Regarding Option 6, the experiences of England and Scotland suggest that looking to tender contracts in the future is the strategic direction that the Welsh Government ought to be favouring.
- 8.22 There is learning to be drawn from the experiences of the peer organisations in Scotland and in England. The experience in Scotland has not been one of coercing independent organisations to work together, but rather of Government setting up a different basis on which contracts operate, not looking to provide core grant funding to organisations, but bidders having to organise themselves accordingly to

be best placed to bid for contracts, and partnership working emerging as a consequence of that. The hard reality that emerged in Scotland, for example, was that funding was cut and organisations wishing to avail themselves of the money that remained would need to work together.

8.23 The two fellow TPAS organisations in England and Scotland do not operate on the basis of core grant funding, but rather have to generate income streams, together with a membership basis type operation. Both organisations have to compete with private sector consultancies and independent consultants with experience in the tenant participation field. They operate in a market. The fellow TPAS organisations have stated that this kind of competition for funds has helped them keep sharpening their product and offer, and the research team views this kind of space as one into which TPAS Cymru ought to be moving in the future, with the freedom to choose which organisations it does or doesn't want to work with.

8.24 With respect to Welsh Tenants, there is a philosophical challenge in the Welsh Government providing core funding to an organisation that potentially might seek to campaign against its priorities and policies. This is unsatisfactory both from the Welsh Government point of view and from the point of view of a grass-roots organisation that wishes to demonstrate accountability to tenants but is technically financed by Government.

8.25 While there are threats posed to Welsh Tenants's identity in any removal of core grant funding, continuing such an arrangement is not suitable into the longer term. From a Welsh Government perspective, however, the organisation has an important role as a consultation body able to marshal grass-roots views and priorities and feed them into the shaping of national policy – whatever the part Welsh Tenants wishes to play in advocacy, lobbying or campaigning. Tenant-orientated organisations will not always have palatable messages that make for easy digestion by Government, and it is to be expected that unity of voice is a perennial struggle for them to attain, but at their best they provide feedback that is authentic and representative. There must be room and support in the

tenant participation landscape for organisations like Welsh Tenants. The challenge is to find how best to support their continued survival (though there is a danger in being paternalistic, when the reality is that Welsh Tenants as an independent organisation will already be wrestling with such questions itself).

- 8.26 There has been interest expressed by some stakeholders in the idea of a 'levy' to support a tenants-based organisation – potentially working across tenures. Such a levy might offer Welsh Tenants a direct line of accountability to tenants, since the organisation would in effect be supported by their rental income (albeit mediated through the vehicle of landlords). Since membership fees are already paid to staff and trade bodies, theoretically it is not unreasonable to consider a payment to a tenants' body, though some organisations may feel that they already do so in relation to their membership fees for TPAS. (It should be noted that no such levy is in operation in either Scotland or England.)
- 8.27 Considerable risks are likely to face both organisations as a result of funding cuts, although how they choose to develop joint working relationships with their chosen partners can help to mitigate these. For the Tenants and Residents Association of England, losing its grant award through the tenant empowerment programme and having to rely solely on membership fees has propelled it to seek charitable status to survive and in December 2013 TPAS in England made a pre-tax loss of just under £108,000 (some of this budgeted to allow for restructuring).
- 8.28 Option 6 emerges as a desirable option for both negative reasons – there are barriers attached to implementing any of the options (Options 3-5) that depend on the willingness or appetite of independent organisations to work differently – and positive ones, that the Welsh Government has an opportunity to articulate a new vision for tenant participation.
- 8.29 It takes time to plan and manage organisational change, and it is unrealistic of the Welsh Government to think that organisations can quickly form new partners. The research team understands, however,

that both TPAS and Welsh Tenants have already been warned well in advance of this review of impending cuts.

## **Recommendations**

8.30 Based on the findings of this study, the research team would recommend therefore that the Welsh Government and other stakeholders consider the following:

### *For Welsh Government*

- Introducing a modest cut to the funding available to both TPAS and Welsh Tenants from the beginning of July 2014 – this would allow enough time to plan properly the changes the organisations would need to make (and our understanding of the Welsh Government’s position is that it has no option but to implement some cuts in this coming financial year)
- Continuing cessation of funding to the Tenant Empowerment Grant programme for the next financial year
- Consulting with relevant organisations to investigate the feasibility and potential outcomes from offering (or allowing organisations to bid for) a small investment sum (say up to £75k) in 2014-15 to explore closer partnership working. Potential partners would be able to bid for resource support in developing closer working in recognition of barriers around capacity, and to help drive innovation and explore the wider vision stimulated by stakeholders
- Scoping and exploring further the value of conducting a consultation with social housing landlords – both housing associations and stock-retaining local authorities – regarding a levy-based system to contribute to a tenant advocacy and campaigning organisation
- Working with partners (such as the Welsh Local Government Association, Community Housing Cymru, the Chartered Institute of

Housing, Housing Leadership Cymru and others) to set out clearly a three-year strategy and focus for tenant participation from the financial year 2015 onwards. This may involve no longer looking to provide core grant funding to organisations but rather to organise a procurement process for services, which would help to drive innovation, partnership working between organisations and other potential alliances and structures. Ideally all core grant funded organisations with some kind of 'participation' remit ought to fall within consideration of this wider procuring of services, since the danger of duplication of services and the potential of more efficient working across organisations is not confined to TPAS and Welsh Tenants, but extends to other participation-orientated organisations. This would, however, require inter-departmental working across the Welsh Government, which may be complex to deliver.

*For the Welsh Government and the Learning and Development Panel*

- Seeking assistance from the Learning and Development Panel that sits under the Regulatory Board for Wales in respect of drawing up the specification for some of the contract services, if this is the preferred option
- Setting a clear focus on outcomes (as part of the success criteria) for any contracts that are to be let.

*For the Welsh Local Government Association*

- Identifying how a strategic voice for residents from the local authority sector might be able to feed into a body holding local authority performance to account in delivering citizen-centred services (e.g. whether an equivalent for local authority tenants to the Tenant Advisory Panel ought to feed into the Wales Audit Office)

*For those involved in delivering services (whether to the social housing sector or within it as social housing landlords)*

- Monitoring events and activities involving tenants, where they are expected to influence services, policy and strategy, for the diversity and representativeness of people involved
- Ensuring that there is a methodological framework in place for evaluating the outcomes of whatever approach is adopted to 'tenant participation'
- Consider approaching private sector companies (e.g. large building/maintenance companies) to provide support for training to tenants

*For Community Housing Cymru and other partners*

- Examining how the dissemination of good practice in relation to capturing the outcomes of involvement might best be shared among social housing landlords

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## **Appendix 1: Acknowledgements**

### **Acknowledgements**

All of the following organisations have contributed to our research, whether through telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, or survey responses. We would like to register our warm thanks and gratitude for their participation.

### **List of Organisation**

#### *Welsh, Scottish and English Government*

Housing Policy Division, Welsh Government

Regulatory Board for Wales

Regulation Team, Welsh Government

Tenant Advisory Panel

Tenant Participation Team, Scottish Government

Department for Communities and Local Government (England)

#### *Sector stakeholders*

Carmarthenshire County Council

Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru

Community Housing Cymru

Open Communities

Rowan Associates

Shelter

Tai Pawb

TPAS Cymru

TPAS England

TPAS Scotland

Welsh Tenants

#### *Survey participants*

Interviews with staff and residents from Bron Afon, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Cantref, Charter Housing Association, First Choice, Merthyr Valley Homes, Newydd/Cadarn, Pembrokeshire County Council, and Valleys to Coast

Housing association survey respondents: Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd, Family Housing Association, Linc-Cymru, Melin Homes, Merthyr Tydfil Homes,

Merthyr Valleys Homes, Mid-Wales Housing Association, Monmouthshire Housing Association, Newport City Homes, North Wales Housing Association, RCT Homes, Tai Calon, United Welsh, Wales & West Housing.

Tenant Participation Officers from Caerphilly County Borough Council, Cadwyn, Cartrefi Conwy, Clwyd Alyn, Denbighshire County Council, Family Housing Association, Flintshire LA, Linc-Cymru, Monmouthshire Housing Association, Newydd, NPT Homes, and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

## Appendix 2: Award of Tenant Empowerment Grants

2.1 The majority of awarded Tenant Empowerment Grants have been commissioned by three Tenant Empowerment Grant agents, namely TPAS Cymru, Open Communities and Rowan Associates.

**Table 1: Top three agents awarded grants**

Top three agents	Number of grants	%	Value of grants (£)	%
TPAS Cymru	68	42	490,466.75	41
Open Communities	53	33	370,589.50	31
Rowan Associates	11	7	95,818.50	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>956,874.75</b>	<b>80</b>

2.2 The average value per grant is around £7,000. The largest grant is significantly higher than average, at £27,864, and was awarded to Caia Park Community Options (landlord: Wrexham County Council).

**Table 2: Summary of value of grants**

<b>Total awarded</b>	£1,200,199.50
<b>Average</b>	£7,363.19
<b>Highest</b>	£27,864.00
<b>Lowest</b>	£2,756.00

2.3 Just over half the grants (56%) awarded were of a value between £4,200 and £8,000.

**Table 3: Summary of number of grants**

Value of grants	Number of grants
<=£4,200	15
£4,200-£8,000	92
£8,000-£12,000	45
>£12000	11

2.4 A total of 77 'landlords' received grants. Of these, most landlords received only one grant (see Annex B for the full list). However, three landlords received significantly more grants (see the table below):

**Table 4: Landlords in receipt of highest number of Tenant Empowerment Grants**

<b>Top three landlords</b>	<b>Number of grants</b>	<b>% of all grants</b>	<b>Value of grants (£)</b>	<b>% of value of all grants</b>
Flintshire County Council	14	9	86,089.00	7
Newydd Housing Association	10	6	70,512.75	6
Denbighshire County Council	8	5	54,658.00	5

### **Annex A**

The following table shows the list of all Tenant Empowerment Grant agents which administered grants, according to the project information on the website.

<b>Agents</b>	<b>Number of grants</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Value of grants (£)</b>	<b>%</b>
TPAS Cymru	68	41.7	490,466.75	40.9
Open Communities	53	32.5	370,589.50	30.9
Rowan Associates	11	6.7	95,818.50	8.0
First Call Housing Consultants	5	3.1	37,044.00	3.1
Aldbourn Associates	4	2.5	33,755.00	2.8
CG Consultancy	4	2.5	37,837.50	3.2
Marilyn Bryan Consultancy	3	1.8	22,665.00	1.9
Community Training Partnership	2	1.2	17,325.00	1.4
Foundation for Social Change	2	1.2	11,720.00	1.0
Sazani Associates	2	1.2	11,260.00	0.9
Welsh Tenants	2	1.2	16,915.00	1.4
Community Development Services	1	0.6	3,525.00	0.3
Dome Consultants	1	0.6	4,400.00	0.4
Heart of England Consultancy	1	0.6	19,700.00	1.6
Keep Wales Tidy	1	0.6	7,388.00	0.6
Lottie Miller Training and Consultancy	1	0.6	6,134.00	0.5
Skill Wales	1	0.6	3,375.00	0.3
Tai Pawb	1	0.6	10,281.25	0.9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,200,199.50</b>	<b>100</b>

## Annex B

The following table shows the list of all 'landlords' which received grants, according to the project information on the website.

Landlords	No. grants	%	Value of grants (£)	%
Flintshire County Council	14	8.6	86,089.00	7.2
Newydd Housing Association	10	6.1	70,512.75	5.9
Denbighshire County Council	8	4.9	54,658.00	4.6
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	6	3.7	36,878.00	3.1
Cardiff Community Housing Association	5	3.1	37,686.00	3.1
Carmarthenshire County Council	5	3.1	56,600.00	4.7
Wales and West Housing Association	5	3.1	40,005.00	3.3
Cadwyn Housing Association	4	2.5	24,824.00	2.1
Mid Wales Housing Association	4	2.5	22,521.25	1.9
Pembrokeshire County Council	4	2.5	25,910.00	2.2
United Welsh Housing Association	4	2.5	39,025.00	3.3
Bro Myrddin Housing Association	3	1.8	19,510.00	1.6
Caerphilly County Borough Council	3	1.8	24,055.00	2.0
Cardiff Council	3	1.8	20,225.00	1.7
Cymdeithas Tai Eryri	3	1.8	18,583.00	1.5
Digartref Ynys Mon Cyf	3	1.8	14,591.00	1.2
Hafod Housing Association	3	1.8	29,133.50	2.4
Powys County Council	3	1.8	25,780.00	2.1
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	2	1.2	18,610.00	1.6
Bron Afon Community Housing	2	1.2	13,388.00	1.1
Cantref Housing	2	1.2	13,202.00	1.1
Charter Housing Association	2	1.2	10,680.00	0.9
City and County of Swansea	2	1.2	18,672.00	1.6
Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd	2	1.2	18,150.00	1.5
Cymdeithas Tai Hafan	2	1.2	9,076.00	0.8
Cynon Taf Community Housing Group	2	1.2	8,648.00	0.7
Linc Cymru	2	1.2	12,525.00	1.0

Monmouthshire County Council	2	1.2	24,770.00	2.1
Monmouthshire Housing Association	2	1.2	10,875.00	0.9
Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council	2	1.2	13,060.00	1.1
Rhondda Housing Association	2	1.2	12,100.00	1.0
Swansea Housing Association	2	1.2	8,643.00	0.7
Alwyd Housing Association	1	0.6	6,000.00	0.5
Anglesey County Council	1	0.6	7,000.00	0.6
Cardiff Women's Aid	1	0.6	4,400.00	0.4
Cardiff YMCA	1	0.6	6,185.00	0.5
Cartrefi Cymru	1	0.6	5,000.00	0.4
Coastal Housing	1	0.6	5,250.00	0.4
Conwy County Borough Council	1	0.6	5,608.00	0.5
DEVCO	1	0.6	12,350.00	1.0
Eastern Valley Housing Association	1	0.6	10,440.00	0.9
Family Housing Association	1	0.6	10,275.00	0.9
Foundation Housing	1	0.6	5,606.00	0.5
GISDA	1	0.6	4,000.00	0.3
Glamorgan and Gwent Housing Association	1	0.6	8,700.00	0.7
Gwalia Care and Support	1	0.6	9,000.00	0.7
Gwerin Housing Association	1	0.6	13,000.00	1.1
Gwynedd Council	1	0.6	7,130.00	0.6
Hafod Housing Association, United Welsh, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Newydd, Wales and West	1	0.6	9,787.50	0.8
Llamau Limited	1	0.6	6,368.00	0.5
Merthyr Valleys Homes	1	0.6	9,000.00	0.7
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	1	0.6	10,775.00	0.9
Newport City Homes	1	0.6	5,500.00	0.5
Newport Housing Trust	1	0.6	6,000.00	0.5
Newydd Housing Association, Bron Afon Community Housing, Newport City Homes	1	0.6	6,000.00	0.5
Newydd Housing Association, RCT	1	0.6	7,570.00	0.6

Homes				
North Wales Housing	1	0.6	2,756.00	0.2
NPT Homes	1	0.6	6,000.00	0.5
Pembrokeshire Housing	1	0.6	10,480.00	0.9
Pennaf Housing Group	1	0.6	8,260.00	0.7
Pontypridd and District Housing Association	1	0.6	4,400.00	0.4
RCT Homes	1	0.6	3,375.00	0.3
Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC / Rhondda Housing Association / Hafod Housing Association	1	0.6	9,800.00	0.8
Supporting people City and County of Swansea	1	0.6	8,950.00	0.7
Supporting People Information Network	1	0.6	13,320.00	1.1
Taff Housing Association	1	0.6	10,500.00	0.9
Tai Ceredigion	1	0.6	10,000.00	0.8
Tai Clwyd	1	0.6	2,902.00	0.2
Tai Cymdogaeth	1	0.6	9,762.50	0.8
unknown	1	0.6	3,850.00	0.3
V2C	1	0.6	9,250.00	0.8
Vale of Glamorgan Council	1	0.6	5,000.00	0.4
Wallich	1	0.6	7,500.00	0.6
Welsh Tenants Federation	1	0.6	7,540.00	0.6
West Glamorgan Housing Consortium	1	0.6	8,630.00	0.7
Wrexham County Council	1	0.6	27,864.00	2.3
Ynys Mon County Council	1	0.6	10,130.00	0.8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,200,199.50</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Appendix 3: Areas of Future Regulatory Engagement

**Table 1: Summary of areas of future regulatory engagement relating to tenants and identified in Housing Association Regulatory Assessments**

	Name	Reg Eng	Assessment point for future engagement																# areas
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
1	Cadarn HG Ltd	M								•	•			•			•		4
2	Cadwyn HA	M			•	•		•				•		•					5
3	Cartrefi Conwy Cyfyngedig	M			•					•	•	•	•					•	6
4	Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd Cyf	M				•							•	•	•				4
5	Cymdeithas Tai Cantref	M				•				•	•	•			•				5
6	Family HA Wales	H			•				•	•						•			4
7	First Choice HA	M	•											•					2
8	Grwp Gwalia Cyf	M		•		•			•	•	•				•				6
9	Linc Cymru	M	•		•	•			•	•	•			•	•				8
10	Newport City Homes HA	M	•		•	•				•							•		5
11	Newport HT	H		•	•											•			3
12	North Wales HA	M	•		•					•									3
13	Rhondda HA	M			•	•			•	•						•	•		6
14	Taff HA	L			•					•									2
15	Tai Ceredigion Cyf	M	•			•				•	•							•	5
16	Valleys to Coast	M			•	•													2
17	Bron Afon	M	•	•	•		•			•				•			•		7
18	Tai Eryri	M	•		•	•				•		•							5
19	CCHA	M	•		•														2
20	Hendre	M	•	•		•						•		•					5
21	Mid Wales HA	M	•		•			•	•			•		•					6
22	Monmouthshire HA	L					•		•			•		•		•		•	5
23	RCT Homes	M			•	•			•	•					•		•		6
24	United Welsh	M			•	•		•		•				•			•		6
25	Merthyr Valleys Homes	M	•		•	•			•			•							5
			11	4	17	14	2	3	8	15	6	7	3	8	7	3	7	2	
			Out of 25																

## Appendix 4: Housing Association Survey Respondents

Set out below is sums of spend on resident involvement from housing association survey respondents (in ascending order of magnitude), together with any information given about what the costs cover. The sums of spend reflect both size of organisation and the varying interpretations of 'tenant participation' (i.e. some organisations include regeneration staffing costs for example, while others do not).

Order of ascending sums of spend	Planned spend on resident involvement 2013-14 (£)	Kinds of activities funded
1.	23,500	Not specified
2.	37,000	Current annual budget for Residents Panel. There is a specific budget for other resident groups. 1.5 FTE posts not included in this sum
3.	44,258	Tenant participation activities, incentives, training, panel funding, newsletter, associations, social evenings etc. No staff costs included
4.	45,500	15,500 tenants panel and £30k on staff costs
5.	61,000	Tenant events, consultation, information, scrutiny panel and projects. No staff costs included
6.	66,054	Just under 54k staff time and costs. Newsletters and events
7..	118,000	Resident involvement activity budget (£22k) and staffing costs (including community and regeneration staff) of £96k
8.	120,000	Includes staff costs, tenant expenses, tenant fun day / community engagement events, printing and copying (mostly meeting minutes and papers) tenants and residents association grants, accredited training, time banking, catering /refreshments and attendance at conferences.
9.	174,000	Resident engagement activities and training. Includes 1 resident participation staff member and 4 community development staff
10.	193,000	Not specified
11.	203,000	Includes salary costs and a community investment budget
12.	269,000	Includes staff and other costs; activities have a regeneration focus
13.	344,600	Resident groups Rent for office accommodation Incentive scheme Survey, consultancy, staff time, other
14.	345,000	Inclusive of direct salary costs, residents newsletters/publications, resident challenge /scrutiny funding, training for residents etc.

The table below sets out the spend per unit by respondents on tenant participation, as anticipated by them in their 2013-14 budgets – the range of figures (as demonstrated above) in part evidences the different activities embraced under the term ‘tenant participation’.

<b>Average spend on tenant participation in 2013-14 budgets per unit of stock owned/managed, as supplied by housing association survey respondents</b>
£10.50
£12.46
£16.18
£17.30
£18.36
£22.18
£25.27
£31.30
£33.85
£35.67
£44.09
£46.13
£58.37
£60.30

## **Appendix 5: Examples of performance measures used to evaluate programmes funded by the Tenant Empowerment Programme**

- Number of face to face courses run
- Number of tenants trained through face to face training
- Number of regional events
- Number of tenants contacted
- Number of landlords contacted
- Number of tenants accessing e-learning modules
- More confident/skilled %
- Customer satisfaction with training %
- Menu of courses developed
- Number of learning assessments completed
- Number of peer mentors trained
- Number of actions by peer mentors (e.g. visits to panels, speaking at training events and courses, facilitating discussion forums)
- Number of tenant panels supported by peer mentors (e.g. visiting, offering guidance and support, sharing experiences, helping to plan and guide)
- Number of tenant groups supported with follow up on-site support
- Number of tenant panels contacted

- Number of discussions within the Tenant Central social media platform
- Number of individual and group training needs assessments completed and advice provided
- Number of How To Guides made available on line
- Number of visual guides produced
- Number of case studies made available online

## Appendix 6: Useful resources

### *Welsh organisations*

**Cardiff University** – Peter Mackie was mentioned in particular – [http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/about-us/staff/peter-mackie#quicktabs-profile\\_tabs=3](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/about-us/staff/peter-mackie#quicktabs-profile_tabs=3)

**Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Cymru** – Their i2i programme was specifically mentioned which includes the *Can Do Toolkit* – <http://www.cih.org/i2i/publications>

**Community Housing Cymru** – Made up of Community Housing Cymru, Care & Repair Cymru and Crew Regeneration Wales, who jointly champion not-for-profit housing, care and regeneration, effectively collaborating for communities – <http://chcymru.org.uk/en/>

**Community Development Cymru** – National community development organisation for Wales – <http://www.cdcymru.org/>

**Cymorth Cymru** – Supported housing providers' umbrella group – <http://www.cymorthcymru.org.uk/>.

**Neighbourhood Green** – Partnership initiative which highlights the importance of open space for residents of social housing and works with social landlords to raise the quality of their design, management and safe use – <http://www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk/home>

**Participation Cymru** – Aims to build the skills and capacity of managers and deliverers of public services (public, third and private sectors) to achieve better public engagement in the design, development and delivery of citizen-centred services for the people of Wales. Publications include *Taking Part, 10 ways for organisations to help you take part* – <http://www.participationcymru.org.uk/>

**Shelter Cymru** – Provides independent specialist advice, advocacy and legal representation for anyone with a housing problem – <http://www.sheltercymru.org.uk>

**Tai Pawb** – Promotes equality and social justice in housing in Wales – <http://www.taipawb.org/>

**TPAS Cymru** – Lots of useful publications and facilitates the tenant participation officer network facilitated by TPAS – <http://www.tpascymru.org.uk/>. Specific publications of use include: *Participation the next generation, Getting results, showing evidence, LTPS Main Steps and Checklist*, and *LTPS Assessments Report*.

**Welsh Government** – Some reports/publications cited as useful by survey respondents:

- *The Essex Review* – <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/strategy/essex/?lang=en>

- *Housing Associations in Wales – Improving the lives of tenants and communities* – <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/housing-associations-improving-lives-tenants-communities/?lang=en>

**Welsh Local Government Association** – Has some useful publications – <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/wlga-library>.

#### *Wider voluntary sector*

**Big Lottery Fund** – Ran a £12m Community Voice programme supporting people to have a greater influence over policies and decisions affecting their community – <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/wales/community-voice>

**Conwy Voluntary Services Council (CVSC)** – <http://cvsc.org.uk/>

**Environment Wales** – A partnership in the voluntary sector, funded by the Welsh Government which provides grants for environmental projects – <http://www.environment-wales.org/grants/130>

**GAVO** (Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations) – Awarded a grant from the Big Lottery Fund containing a portfolio of projects with a social services or health & wellbeing focus – <http://www.gavowales.org.uk/>

**Learning Disability Wales** – A national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales – <https://www.ldw.org.uk/>.

**Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS)** – <http://www.pavs.org.uk/about/index.htm>

**Prince's Trust** – Has provided volunteers to carry out some community projects – <http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/>

**RAY Ceredigion** – A play association that has helped associations develop play sessions on estates – <http://www.rayceredigion.org.uk/>

**RNIB** – Runs an accessible housing accreditation, Visibly Better – <https://www.rnib.org.uk/aboutus/contactdetails/cymru/training/accessiblehousing/Pages/visibly-better-cymru.aspx>

**Valleys Regional Equality Council** – training on equality – provides leadership and promotes good practice in the fields of equality, diversity and human rights – <http://www.valrec.org/>

**Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)** – Aims to provide excellent support, leadership and an influential voice for the third sector and volunteering in Wales – <http://www.wcva.org.uk/>

#### *Regeneration*

**CABE** (now part of **Design Council**) – Publications on high quality urban design and neighbourhood planning toolkits – <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/cabe/>.

**CREW Regeneration Wales** – Established to promote integrated and best practice regeneration in Wales publishes free resources – <http://www.regenwales.org/resources.php>.

**Regeneration Skills Collective** – Consortium of six organisations including: ICE Wales Cymru, The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, The Royal Society of Architects in Wales, The Royal Town Planning Institute in Wales, The Chartered Institute of Housing and The Landscape Institute Wales – published *Professional and Cross-Professional Sustainable Regeneration Skills in Wales*, 2008 – <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/9479/Regeneration-Skills-in-Wales.pdf>.

#### *Consultancies*

**Board Development Agency** – <http://www.boardagency.org.uk/>

**Central** – <http://www.centralconsultancy.co.uk/>

**Housemark** – <http://www.housemark.co.uk/>

**Open Communities** – Set up The Scrutiny Network, funded by a Tenant Empowerment Grant – <http://opencommunities.org/>

#### *Organisations outside Wales*

**HACT** (Housing Action Community Trust) – A charity, social enterprise and industry-focused think/do tank established by the housing association sector – <http://www.hact.org.uk/about-us>

**Joseph Rowntree Foundation** – [www.irf.org.uk](http://www.irf.org.uk)

**National Housing Federation (NHF)** – <http://www.housing.org.uk/>

**Tenants and Residents Organisations of England (TAROE)** – National organisation which unites tenants' and residents' groups from the regulated housing sector across England – [www.taroe.org](http://www.taroe.org)

**Tenants Information Service (TIS)**, Scotland – Brings together the knowledge and skills to help tenants and landlords work together more effectively throughout Scotland – <http://tis.org.uk/>

## Appendix 7: Stakeholder Questions

1. How would you define effective tenant participation?
2. What are the key support needs for effective tenant participation?
3. Do you feel that existing tenant support organisations and/or others can deliver on these priorities? If yes, how? If no, why not? Who can?
4. What do you feel the priorities for future support should be?
5. It is likely there will be significantly less money in the future for Government funding tenant support activities – what do you feel is the appropriate role for Welsh Government in tenant participation?
6. What other potential ways are there of funding Tenant Participation?
7. Relative to each other, what is your understanding of the nature of support and activities provided by the two tenant support organisations (TPAS Cymru and Welsh Tenants)?
8. Do you perceive any overlap and/or duplication between the two organisations or any other agencies, and if so to what extent?
9. Are there tenant support organisations that you have effective relationships – which and why?
10. How could the priority areas best be provided by existing tenant support organisations and/or by others?
11. Which tenant participation activities do you believe social housing landlords should be responsible for funding?
12. Which tenant participation activities would you expect the Government to fund?
13. Where do you see scope for better collaboration between any organisations? If yes, where?
14. What are the priorities that you would like to see in a national strategy for tenant participation?

## Appendix 8: The range of activities offered by TPAS and Welsh Tenants

Most of these activities are drawn from 2012-13, though there are some wider services that we indicate are non-date specific (nds).

	TPAS Activities	Welsh Tenants Activities
1.	<p>Local Tenant Participation Strategies (LTPSs) – support and guidance on developing and implementing these</p> <p>Many landlords adopt their good practice recommendations</p>	<p>Helping to engage with under-represented groups of tenants (nds)</p> <p>Developing IT solutions to allow tenants from across Wales to engage with Welsh Tenants including Running an online forum for tenants to contribute feedback about Welsh Government policies (nds)</p> <p>Supporting volunteering by drawing up good practice policies and procedures and encouraging people to get involved with Welsh Tenants and its members. (nds)</p>
2.	<p>Review of LTPSs</p> <p>TPAS shows there is a difference in approach over the years with more landlords seeing participation as a mainstream activity, they identify evaluating impact still is a weak area for landlords</p>	

	<b>TPAS Activities</b>	<b>Welsh Tenants Activities</b>
3.	<p>Training - 35 courses over 41 days on various topics such as social media, operation of scrutiny panels, environmental standards within WQHS</p> <p>Feedback shows high % of people feeling that their skills and confidence have increased as a result of the training</p>	<p>Training for members – 15 ATTAIN (Accessible Tenant Training and Information Network) events per year, attended by around 40 residents each, dealing with subjects such as the Housing Act, the Bedroom Tax, Tenancy reform, and the Tackling Homelessness Through Financial Inclusion</p>
	Seminars/workshops – 5 topics through the year	
	Training needs assessments for 4 landlords	
	Annual conference	Conference and events – holding an annual conference with 170 attendees, workshops, producing a final report
	Tenant newsletter and email bulletin	
	TPAS Cymru handbook don't know what info this gives & may have sponsors	Publication of ' <i>Waking Up!</i> '
	Website and publications	Information, Communication & Marketing - Hosting an online library containing jargon-free publications on issues of interest
	Tenant Empowerment Grant agent – 68 grants since the programme was launched in 2004	a Tenant Empowerment Grant project looking at the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and ' <i>a mechanism whereby tenants and their social landlords can agree and monitor the delivery of their WHQS program and associated service improvements</i> '
	Mediation/problem solving between landlords and tenants – 3 local authorities	Governance –support and skills development, including internal conflict resolution, for residents' groups Formalising and supporting the relationship between tenant groups and landlords– through setting up Service Level

TPAS Activities	Welsh Tenants Activities
	Agreements (nts)
Phone and email advice – 90 hours to 34 landlords Advice & support to new TRAs – 8 during the year	Supporting Tenants – Running the Tenant Support Line giving advice about tenancy and housing issues to social and private tenants
Annual membership visits – review of tenant participation policy & practice with all members	
Participation awards from TPAS projects	
Conference for Tenant Inspectors – 13 landlords attended	
Supporting Tenant Advisory Panel members	Supporting Tenant Advisory Panel members
Advice & support to stock transfer and retention LAs – primarily Caerphilly & Vale of Glamorgan with increased resident involvement & empowerment	
Input into Welsh Government policy – e.g. tenancy reform, white paper, flexible tenure, extension of self-assessment and regulation to LAs, fraud, re	<p>Input into Welsh Government policy - numerous discussion papers and responses to consultations led by the Welsh Government</p> <p><i>Better use of existing resources: Communities, Equality, Local Government Committee National Assembly Wales – Discussion Paper</i></p> <p>Enabling tenants to be equal partners: The case for a national tenant training strategy – Discussion Paper</p> <p>Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness June 2011 –</p>

	<b>TPAS Activities</b>	<b>Welsh Tenants Activities</b>
		Consultation response  Downsizing – a New duty for tenants to receive Priority Move-On – Discussion Paper  Welsh Government – <i>Rent Setting Review</i> – Consultation response
P		Policy and practice campaigns  Conducting a widespread campaign regarding the removal of the spare room subsidy (the ‘bedroom tax’)

Both organisations also engage in a strong degree of partnership working.

Networking/interacting with/influencing leading housing figures

Welsh Tenants aspires to developing a national tenant training academy and a core competency framework to improve the quality and scope of tenant representation.