Submission: Labour Party Review of Social Housing

31 January 2018

Overview

We are facing an undeniable housing crisis. For decades the country has not been building the homes we need, especially homes that are affordable to people on the lowest incomes. The Government’s financial commitment to house building has fallen by a half over the last decade\(^1\), and for years, there was no new money for new social housing. The cut to social rents took a further £3.85 billion out of the delivery of new homes for those in the greatest need. Meanwhile, the Housing Benefit bill has soared as more households become reliant on the expensive and insecure Private Rented Sector (PRS); and homelessness remains a significant and growing problem.

Providing safe, secure and decent homes for tenants is key to the success of the social housing sector, as well as building new homes for those in housing need. This encapsulates the social purpose that drives housing associations to deliver. As funding has gone down, our work has become more difficult. Our members have had to be innovative, thinking of new ways to continue to invest in new homes and in our tenants and communities.

Despite this tough context, housing associations have kept on building, even increasing output, and have continued to deliver new genuinely affordable social housing. But not nearly at the level needed by society, or that we would like to see.

Housing associations lead all other tenures in terms of the quality of our homes\(^2\), but the sector recognises the importance of further improvements across all housing. All landlords must ensure their tenants have a safe and secure home, and that they are responsive to those they house.

This submission explores the factors that need to change if we are to see a nationwide transformation in delivery and an offer for tenants that helps to build pride in social housing. The National Housing Federation welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Labour Party’s review. We stand ready to work with the Labour Party and current and future tenants to deliver a new deal for housing: a new generation of genuinely affordable, high quality homes, placing our tenants at the heart of what we do.

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\(^1\) National Housing Federation, [Social housing spending at record low](https://www.housing.org.uk/register/advertisement/social-housing-spending-at-record-low), September 2017

\(^2\) English Housing Survey, Headline Report, 2016/17
Our record and ambition: a commitment to delivering social housing

The National Housing Federation is the representative body of housing associations in England. Our 900 members provide two and a half million homes to more than five million people. Together we campaign for and deliver good quality housing, united by our central belief that everyone should have a great home at a price they can afford. We have an ambition to deliver 120,000 new homes a year by 2033.

Housing associations are independent, not-for-profit organisations providing support and a place to live for people at every stage of their lives. Be it delivering the crucial social housing that is the subject of this review; or a first step on to the property ladder for young families; or a supported home in older age. Housing associations are delivering homes across the country, including in those areas where other providers find it harder to build. One in five English households live in rural areas and supply of affordable housing by housing associations can often make the difference between vital rural services thriving or failing to survive.

Our members are committed not just to building and maintaining quality homes, but also to creating sustainable communities and great places. Around 40% provide some sort of employment and skills support to their tenants and the local community. In addition to the core commitment to provide safe, secure, affordable housing, our members act to reduce inequality and improve health and wellbeing. They work alongside residents to promote better neighbourhoods, and greener living. These principles have endured for over 100 years. Faced with a broken housing market, our social purpose is more important than ever.

The housing association sector is playing an important role in fixing our broken housing market, against an extremely tough financial background. Last year housing associations built over 38,000 homes and started building a further 47,700, an increase of 13% on 2015/16. Of the homes our members completed last year, 85% were for social and affordable rent or sale.

However, two thirds of socially rented homes were delivered without any government investment. For every £1 that the taxpayer does invest in housing associations, this is matched by £6 raised by our members. This is a rising level of non-government contribution, and reliance on this funding method does expose our members to some of the same cyclical market risk as for-profit developers.

Investing in a new generation of genuinely affordable homes

The proper provision of social housing is fundamental to building a fairer society. With 1.3 million households struggling to make ends meet after paying their rent, we cannot hope to achieve more equal outcomes for all until we deliver a new generation of genuinely affordable homes.

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3 National Housing Federation, [How affordable housing can save rural services and communities](https://www.nhf.org.uk), 2017
4 National Housing Federation, [Housing associations and employment support](https://www.nhf.org.uk), 2014
5 National Housing Federation, [How many homes did housing associations build in 2016/17?](https://www.nhf.org.uk), May 2017
6 Shelter, [General Election 2017 - The case for living rent homes](https://www.shelter.org.uk), May 2017
Government guidance which defines affordable rent as up to 80% of market rent is no longer a realistic interpretation of “affordable” in many – but not all – parts of the country. The National Housing Federation wants to see a more appropriate measure of affordability. In areas where local rents are very high we believe there is a case for basing rent levels on local earnings.

Our response was to lead the research on developing the concept of Living Rent. Under this system, rents are set for each area at 28% of the net local, lower quartile earnings figure. This means that whether in work, or out of it, or transitioning between the two, homes will be affordable for those on low incomes.

For housing to be genuinely affordable there is a need to re-establish the crucial links between housing and the labour market, and rents and people’s ability to afford them.

The National Housing Federation worked on the development of Living Rent with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The concept has most notably inspired Mayor of London Sadiq Khan’s introduction of the London Living Rent. The Mayor has published benchmark London Living Rent levels for every neighbourhood in the capital. These are based on a third of average local household incomes and adjusted for the number of bedrooms in each home. In most boroughs this will be a significant discount to the market level rent. Many housing associations are helping the Mayor deliver these new types of homes.

Building at scale: what’s holding us back?

The housing association sector has an ambition to deliver 120,000 homes a year by 2033. We therefore welcome the Labour Party’s commitment in its 2017 General Election manifesto to support councils and housing associations to build 100,000 homes a year for genuinely affordable rent or sale by the end of the next Parliament. We are pleased that the Labour Party recognises the continuing contribution of the housing association sector and stand ready to work together to achieve these goals.

Housing associations are not only in a position to build at scale, but can also build faster than other housing providers. Research shows that sites with a higher proportion of affordable housing will be built out quicker. For both large and small sites, those with 40% or more affordable housing have a build out rate that is 40% higher than those with less than 20% affordable housing. Housing association L&Q have suggested they are building Barking Riverside out four times faster than private developer Bellway (who they acquired it from) were planning to.

Savills corroborates the call for a significant boost in the number of affordable homes. They recently reported that 96,000 households a year are now in need of sub-market housing. We know from research that we commissioned through the British Social Attitudes survey in 2016, that the public

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7 Department for Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, 2012
8 National Housing Federation, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Savills, Living Rents – a new development framework for Affordable Housing, 2015
9 https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/renting/london-living-rent
10 Savills define households as being in need of sub-market housing if there is no market provision accessible when they spend 25% of their gross income on housing costs. Savills, Investing to solve the housing crisis, November 2017
supports an increase in affordable homes\textsuperscript{11}. Considering the steady residualisation of social housing over recent decades, this is hugely encouraging.

To build at the scale required, we will need to work together. As recent research published by the National Housing Federation and the New Local Government Network (NLGN) demonstrated, housing associations and local authorities are well-placed to collaborate in order to build the homes we need\textsuperscript{12}. Housing associations provide development and housing management expertise, while councils bring strategic links to the key elements of the planning process and often possess land assets. Both are important anchor organisations in their local communities, are significant contributors to the civic economy, and on a practical level, can borrow at competitive rates.

Building 100,000 genuinely affordable homes a year will require national policy changes, including:

- Increased capital investment
- Greater flexibility over the use of funding streams
- Reopening the Affordable Housing Guarantees Scheme
- Planning reform to ensure affordable housing requirements cannot be negotiated away
- Bold land reforms covering public land, private land, and the green belt
- A social security system that facilitates fair access to good quality, affordable housing

### Increased capital investment

**The problem:** The social housing sector in this country has experienced a decade of diminishing capital funding via government grant. Furthermore, from 2010 until autumn last year, no new public investment was available to build new homes for social rent. The impact of this cut was felt immediately. In 2010/11, just under 36,000 social rented homes were started; the next year work began on just 3,000\textsuperscript{13}.

**The solution:** The Labour Party endorsed the National Housing Federation’s call in the run-up to the last Budget for the remaining £1.1bn from the Starter Homes budget to be redirected to build new, genuinely affordable social homes. With this investment, we have calculated that the housing association sector could deliver up to 30,000 new affordable homes, including 7,500 new socially rented homes\textsuperscript{14}. As the grant rate improves, the greater the proportion of these homes that can be delivered for social rent. Our conversations with developing housing associations show that almost all are in the process of refinancing, revaluing and restructuring to increase their development capacity following the Government’s announcement in November of an additional £2 billion for affordable housing.

Whilst welcome, this investment will only begin to deliver at the scale that is necessary. Recent research by Savills concluded that it would take £7bn a year to provide social rented homes to all

\textsuperscript{11} Survey data reported that homes to rent from housing associations or local authorities, and housing that is affordable to people on local average incomes, are considered by the public to be the nation’s housebuilding priorities. NatCen, British Social Attitudes Survey, 2016

\textsuperscript{12} National Housing Federation and the New Local Government Network, Working together for more homes: How housing associations and local authorities can tackle the housing crisis, 2017

\textsuperscript{13} National Housing Federation, How public money is spent on housing, September 2017

\textsuperscript{14} Based on 25% social rent, 25% affordable rent, 50% shared ownership.
those in need of sub-market housing\textsuperscript{15}, Investment is the most effective way of delivering a new generation of genuinely affordable homes. It is a more predictable and cost effective use of public money in the long-term. Government investment should be focused on the nature of the housing challenge. In some places this will be supply; but in others it might be about improving existing homes.

How funding streams are managed is also important. Genuine, long-term partnerships between government and housing associations, which combine flexible use of funding and greater use of government CPO and land assembly powers, are likely to maximise the number of new social homes that housing associations can deliver. We have seen the success of these strategic partnerships between the Mayor and housing associations in London.

Our members are also calling for a reintroduction of government guarantees to support access to private finance. In a complementary move, the Government should reconsider the HRA borrowing cap. Re-opening the Affordable Homes Guarantee Scheme, which previously helped support the delivery of 27,000 new affordable homes, would also serve as an effective mitigation against the impending loss of European Investment Bank funding.

Reforming the planning system

The problem: The planning system remains a vital source of new affordable homes, with 45% of the affordable homes delivered by housing associations in 2016/17 coming via section 106. However, too often section 106 affordable housing contributions are negotiated down, or out, of deals, by private developers, letting them evade their responsibility for contributing to vital new housing for those in most need.

The solution: There should be a national minimum threshold for affordable housing required on new housing developments. Privately owned sites should be expected to deliver 35% affordable housing and publicly owned land should be expected to deliver 50% affordable housing. To act as an incentive to developers, where they do deliver at these levels, they should benefit from a fast-track approach to planning. This would follow the model successfully introduced in London. Minimum thresholds should ensure that affordable housing is factored into the price paid for land, and ultimately help avoid land values continuing to increase.

As the Mayor of London has done for the capital, viability assessments must be reformed to ensure there is a consistent methodology, strengthened guidance, enhanced transparency and clear review mechanisms.

The National Housing Federation supports the inclusion of many of these changes in the Labour Party’s five-point plan to make it harder for developers to reduce their affordable housing commitments\textsuperscript{16}.

\textsuperscript{15} Savills, \textit{Investing to solve the housing crisis}, November 2017
\textsuperscript{16} \url{https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/labour-sets-out-plans-to-reform-viability-testing-53080}
Accessing affordable land

The problem: To build more genuinely affordable homes we need to increase the supply of affordable land. Land is too often sold to maximise financial return, and not, for example, at the best price to deliver a mix of housing tenures. Current “best consideration” guidance on the disposal of public land makes it hard to prioritise the delivery of new social housing. Bolder action is also required on land generally, and the green belt in particular, if the housing association sector is to deliver its building ambition.

The solution: Public land should be used for public good, and its sale should not be conducted purely as a price-based competition. Instead, government and other public bodies should be compelled to consider the wider social and economic value, and show leadership in bringing forward land that is less than “best consideration” where doing so maximises the delivery of affordable housing.

Homes England is well placed to intervene strategically on behalf of government to purchase, assemble and distribute land in support of desired housing objectives. It also has significant scope to develop more long-term strategic partnerships with local authorities, housing associations and other anchor organisations to deliver sustainable local developments. We would support better alignment between the Affordable Homes Programme and public land disposal.

There are also a number of steps that can be taken to improve the allocation and use of private sector land, ensuring that the planning system helps more land for housing come forward. Namely:

- All local authorities to have ambitious, up-to-date and long-term local plans, which include realistic housing targets and site allocations
- Local authority planning departments to be properly resourced
- Greater transparency in the land market to be achieved through the publication of land prices, transactions, ownership and options agreements
- A grown up conversation about the definition and purpose of the green belt

Just 1.14% of England’s total land area is currently being used for housing, and over 87%\(^\text{17}\) is classified as green space. Addressing this stark imbalance would make a significant difference to levels of affordable supply. Even at current density levels, building 1 million homes would require 0.2% of England’s total land area.

A social security system that is fit for purpose

The problem: Since 2010, changing social security policy, restrictions on access to benefits, and reductions in entitlements have made life harder for many tenants on the lowest incomes. In particular, social housing providers and our tenants have been impacted by:

- Changes to the way benefits are paid and the design of Universal Credit
- Successive reductions in the Local Housing Allowance
- The freezing of working age benefits

\(^{17}\) Department for Communities and Local Government, [Land use statistics](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20051129105103/http://www.communities.gov.uk/statistics/landuse/landuse) (Generalised Land Use Database), 2005
The introduction of the bedroom tax for social renters
Proposals on the future funding of supported and sheltered housing

Inability to meet the rising demand for new social housing, combined with the effects of the policies above, has seen numbers, costs and pressures rise in the PRS. All of which has in turn, resulted in more money going to private landlords in the form of Housing Benefit.

There has been a dramatic knock-on impact on levels of homelessness. Since 2009/10 homelessness acceptances have increased by 48%; between autumn 2010 and 2017 rough sleeping has increased by 169%. There are currently 79,190 households in temporary accommodation. The largest single cause of homelessness is now the end of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the PRS.

The solution: Housing policy must be coordinated across all departments and over a longer period of time. There must be an understanding of how policies emanating from the DWP or the Treasury align with a government’s housing ambitions. The only way to sustainably bring down housing costs and cut homelessness is to increase capital investment in social housing alongside creating a social security system that is fair and delivers for those on low incomes. This will create a more secure environment for tenants and social landlords alike.

The National Housing Federation believes that any review into social housing must recognise the impact of policies such as not uprating benefits, the bedroom tax, or the design of Universal Credit, and seek to create a system that is administratively robust, providing security both to claimants and landlords.

Coordinated housing and social security policy must also address the funding of short-term supported housing services that support some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society, including those who have experienced homelessness, domestic abuse, or severe mental health conditions. The recent government consultation on funding for short-term services brings new levels of insecurity into the sector. To see our proposed solutions, please read our consultation response.

Quality

The policy changes recommended above will help housing associations and our partners in local government build the scale of social housing required to meet current and future demand. But as a sector, our ambition is not just to deliver 120,000 new homes a year. It is also to ensure that we deliver homes and neighbourhoods of great quality, and that our tenants’ experience of housing associations as landlords is the best that it can be.

Housing associations have the highest proportion of homes meeting the decent homes standard. Our members invest heavily in maintaining the quality of their existing stock, and have continued to do so against an increasingly difficult financial backdrop. The sector spent £20bn of its own money

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18 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Rough Sleeping Statistics Autumn 2017, England
19 National Audit Office, Homelessness, 2017
20 National Housing Federation, Supported housing consultation response, January 2018
21 English Housing Survey, Headline Report, 2016/17
The problem: The problem faced by many in need of social housing has been increasing reliance on the lightly regulated, poor quality, PRS in the absence of sufficient supply of higher quality, genuinely affordable housing association and local authority homes.

The devastating and tragic fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017 threw into sharp relief the systemic failings in the nation’s regulatory systems for fire and building safety. In turn, this has called into question the quality and safety of new and existing housing of all tenures.

The solution: Additional, long-term investment in social housing will begin to redress the imbalance between the PRS and the social sector; boosting supply of the latter will reduce those in housing need from reliance on the former. In the meantime, it is vital for greater regulation and quality standards to be introduced in the PRS. A proportionate and effective regulatory regime should play an important role in maintaining standards no matter what your housing tenure.

The National Housing Federation believes that effective and proportionate regulation strengthens the sector and provides assurance to tenants, government, lenders, local authorities and other partners. Regulation should be considered and measured; clear in its application and expectations; and be outcomes-focused. However, regulation of the social housing sector cannot be seen in isolation from regulatory issues affecting housing more broadly.

Much housing regulation, particularly on issues such as landlords’ duties regarding housing fitness, safety and repairs, will apply to housing in all sectors, social housing as well as the PRS. This is why the housing association sector fully supports Karen Buck’s Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Bill as an important step to begin to raise quality standards across all housing tenures.

We also support current proposals for a Single Housing Ombudsman whose remit will extend to the private rented sector as well as to housing associations and local authority landlords. Housing associations have the highest level of compliance with the rulings of the Ombudsman than any other sector. We do believe that reforms to increase tenants’ access to the Ombudsman should be considered; removing the democratic filter to make it easier for tenants to seek redress quickly.

The horror of the Grenfell Tower fire must serve as a catalyst for change across the entire construction and property management industries. The sector stands ready to respond proactively to the findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, and has been supportive of Dame Judith Hackitt’s

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22 English Housing Survey, Homes Dataset, 2014/15
independent review of building regulations and fire safety. Any recommendations from the Hackitt Review should rightly apply to housing in general.

Resident safety is the number one priority for housing associations and the sector. We fully support the Hackitt Review’s direction of travel. The outcome needs to be a robust regulatory regime with safety at its heart, and command the confidence and trust of residents through:

- Clear and risk-based regulation and guidance
- Defined roles and responsibilities within the system
- Improved levels of competence for individuals working in the industry
- Robust assessment of compliance and meaningful enforcement where it is not present
- Clear and effective routes for resident input and redress
- Improved testing and quality assurance of products used in construction

Responsibility to current and future tenants

Housing associations are leaders in the field of tenant engagement and transparency. Our members invest in a range of approaches to ensure the experience of tenants is at the heart of what they do.

But we are not complacent. While we know from independent data that the quality of homes and services we provide is high, it remains vital for us to demonstrate that we are responsive to our tenants if we are to continue to earn their confidence and trust – as well as that of our local partners, government and the public.

Housing associations seek to ensure that tenants are meaningfully heard, and that decisions and policies are properly informed by tenant experience. The whole sector is committed to tenant engagement, supporting the ability of tenants to influence, scrutinise and shape decisions made by housing associations. Methods differ between housing associations, reflecting differences in scale, organisation, geographic reach and service provision, as well as differences in the communities they serve. We have included some case studies of methods of tenant engagement employed by our members in the Appendix.

Current approaches include diverse and empowered resident boards, multiple tenant panels, surveys, focus groups and new digital approaches including real time feedback. These structures are designed to ensure the full range and diversity of tenant experience is represented, heard and acted upon. We believe that past approaches that focused on more limited measures (such as a mandated number of tenants on boards) do not provide a sufficiently rich and representative picture of tenants’ expectations and experience.

The problem: While there are a lot of good examples of tenant engagement in the social housing sector, we recognise that there is not a consistent or collective understanding of what tenants expect from their landlords, and how we measure against those expectations.
The solution: To ensure that standards in tenant engagement are as high as possible we have launched a major new project on the sector’s Offer for Tenants\textsuperscript{23}. Working with our members, their tenants and a range of partners, we plan to establish a large scale standing Tenant Panel, to ensure that the experience of residents is being heard as part of an ongoing national conversation.

We can only determine what makes a great place to live and how to deliver that, if we ask the people who live in them, and those who would like to. We want to consider the potential that a digital world offers to collect views in real time and through something close to mass participation. We need to know whether our residents are getting what they want and whether we are meeting their reasonable expectations. We will use the learning to develop a sector offer to tenants, to inform our influencing work and to spread best practice.

It is 10 years since we last had a focused national conversation with residents. That work, our tenant involvement commission led by Ed Mayo, culminated in the publication of What Tenants Want. It is time to do it again, in part to help change a national narrative that has developed that wholly unreasonably demonises social housing tenants.

The sector is determined to respond to the challenges of responsiveness and representation proactively, as demonstrated by the take-up of the voluntary Sector Scorecard initiative during 2017. Organisations controlling over 80% of the sector’s stock submitted data across 15 key performance metrics for comparison and analysis. This data can then be used by stakeholders to scrutinise and compare performance. The Scorecard will continue each year, with the metrics kept under review to ensure ongoing relevance\textsuperscript{24}.

Conclusion

It is clear that we need a new generation of genuinely affordable homes. With supportive policy changes, and through constructive partnerships across the public sector, housing associations are in the best position to deliver at scale and at speed for those who have been left behind by the broken housing market. Driven by its uniting social purpose, the sector has an ambition to deliver 120,000 new homes a year that are safe, secure, and affordable, especially for those on the lowest incomes. Our members are committed to investing in communities and building great places, and tenants are at the heart of what we do.

We welcome the Labour Party’s launch of this timely, comprehensive review into social housing policy, and stand ready to work together as it develops, and towards our shared goals. As we bring together the social housing sector and tenants in an ongoing national conversation we are determined to ensure that tenants are meaningfully heard, and that decisions and policies are properly informed by tenant experience. It is time for the major commitment to social housing that current and future tenants deserve.

\textsuperscript{23} Inside Housing, David Orr, \textit{Why we are launching a sector-wide discussion with tenants}, November 2017
Case studies: Building on the great work already taking place

**North Star**

North Star has a Tenant Voice Scrutiny Panel which reports into the Board and regularly meets with board members without members of staff present. The Board also gains input and assurance from tenants through:

- Real time tenant feedback on services
- One-off focus groups on specific issues
- Organic tenant groups
- Tenant advisors

Tenant voice is at the heart of the organisation’s culture and the structures remain flexible to the needs of tenants and the business.

**Riverside Group**

Riverside Group has adopted a model that ensures tenants participate in the formal scrutiny of service performance through the Neighbourhood Services Committee (NSC). This Committee comprises 25% customers, 50% independents, 25% made up of the Chair, a subsidiary nominee and a Director-level employee, and it feeds back to the Group Board. The NSC considers performance data and questions service leads on trends, areas of great performance, and areas identified for improvement. This strategic approach is complimented by national and local scrutiny groups for specific services; and a Tenant Complaints Panel which can consider customer complaints that have completed the internal complaints process, provide feedback and make recommendations for resolution as well as put forward lessons to be learned.

**Yorkshire Housing**

Yorkshire Housing’s tenants are engaged in shaping the services they provide by:

- Being members of the Customer Services Committee (a subcommittee of the Board) who receive regular updates on and influence the tenant involvement of the organisation
- Tenants sit on the Complaints Scrutiny Panel
- Tenants, residents and other service users are encouraged to join the Customer Voice Panel. Panel members are frequently surveyed for their views on service delivery matters
• Tenants and other residents are invited on to focus groups, to give their opinions on specific services they receive, and use this feedback to make changes where possible
• Yorkshire Housing supports their tenants in running their own projects

Thrive

Thrive has established an independently chaired Customer Experience Panel (CEP) comprising residents – tenants and leaseholders – and two Board members who are full members of the Panel, not Board representatives. The Panel has developed its own dashboard of satisfaction with service measures that it monitors; three of these appear on the corporate balanced score card. The Chair of the panel has an ‘open line’ to the Board Chair and reports twice a year to the Board. The Board regards the CEP as an important element of its Assurance framework to be considered alongside other forms of assurance such as internal audit. The Panel has been heavily involved in the development of a new Strategic Framework, emphasising the importance of quality service provision to existing customers as well as sustainable growth.

Aspire

Aspire utilises customer focus groups, a Customer Forum open to anyone who lives in an Aspire neighbourhood, and Neighbourhood Get Together days to offer varied routes for resident engagement and involvement. This approach has delivered tangible business benefits in service delivery, such as simplified repairs reporting, and shaped priorities for local areas.

Home Group

Home Group has a dedicated customer involvement team, tasked with ensuring customers have genuine opportunities to shape decision-making and strategy. This is part of the way that the organisations seeks to ensure that tenants’ voices are a core part of business planning. Other practical measures are:

• There are an equal number of customers and Executive Team members on the Board; the customers are appointed as independent board members rather than specific tenant representatives
• 79 customer promise assessments involving 648 customers visiting other customers to verify performance, increase the opportunities for customers to have their say about the service they receive, and make suggestions for improvements.
• Independent Complaints Panel made up of customers who investigate and resolve complaints
• Key projects, such as digital engagement and regeneration schemes are customer-led from the beginning

Optivo

25% of Optivo’s Board members are residents. Each non-resident member is linked to one of their resident scrutiny groups. The groups cover both local geographic areas, and service groups, for
example, repairs. Their structure was co-designed with residents. Optivo’s residents who want to be engaged informally can make use of a large range of involvement including:

- Working as procurement champions with staff on procurement projects including being on tender interview panels
- Green champions to advise neighbours on green/sustainable initiatives
- Resident forums on particular issues, and traditional residents and tenants associations for estates
- Online resident discussion group called The Loop