

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

Tenant Participation Strategy 2023-2026



Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association Tenant Participation Strategy 2023-2026

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Introduction – Background

Listening carefully to the experience of tenants and acting on what they tell us is essential for LSHA to provide services that meet peoples priorities and needs. We therefore want to make it as simple and meaningful as possible for tenants to have a say in what we do, improve standards and share decision-making power. This strategy sets out how we aim to create meaningful and timely ways to engage with tenants so that they are well-informed about and can actively influence LSHA's work, in a way that suits them. It is a guide for tenants and a tool for staff to use in embedding and valuing tenant participation in everything we do from future planning and current decision-making to measuring standards and updating policies. There are long-term benefits for tenants, the organisation and communities of investing in tenant participation work; it will enable LSHA to be more efficient, staff to be more connected, gaps in services or issues managed effectively, successes celebrated and tenants more satisfied.

Not only is tenant participation valuable in its own right, it's also a statutory duty to ensure tenants can participate in setting our priorities, be consulted on key areas and standards of service, scrutinise our performance and help us self-assess through the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and 2010 with [The Scottish Social Housing Charter](#) (updated 2022). This important work also links to [our values](#), the [Customer Service Charter](#), the [Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure](#) and the [Registered Tenant Organisations Policy](#) (RTOs) (all available on request). All tenant participation work will comply with confidentiality procedures and Data Protection Regulations.

This strategy has been developed over the last 18 months since the recruitment of a new Tenant Engagement and Support Manager in August 2021 who has been trialling out new methods of gathering tenant feedback, involving tenants in decisions that the organisation is making, and using results and data from different sources like satisfaction surveys, consultations and focus groups to inform positive changes to services. Staff, Board Members and tenants have helped to create this strategy and it will guide our work on involving tenants over the next three years. It aims to describe what we are already doing in practice, as well as what we are working towards in the future and replaces LSHA's former Tenant Participation Policy.

Introduction – Development - References

Stages of development: desktop research on best practice and tenant involvement guidance, using data from current surveys and complaints on how we can improve communication, involve tenants in decision making and opportunities increase participation levels > staff and Board member survey on tenant participation priorities, new ways of working, potential barriers > tenant survey on what participation should look like in the future > draft strategy reviewed by Senior Management and the Board > Focus groups and one to one tenant feedback on the draft strategy > Final strategy shared with staff and stakeholders for comment > Last changes and new strategy launch.

Benefits of participation can be unique to individuals as well as communities. But we have already seen stronger partnership working with individual tenants, local groups, communities and key organisations to better understand things from their perspective and respond to local needs. We can improve standards of services and increase satisfaction if we invest in the areas that tenants tell us are a priority. It can form new relationships, friendships and build trust. Tenants can gain new skills, develop existing ones and be valued for sharing their own knowledge and experience leading to positive changes for themselves, other tenants and their communities. With tenants' input, we can have a wider impact on peoples quality of life too; using what we have learned to advocate and campaign for improvements to services provided by other organisations, agencies or decision-making bodies at local, regional and national levels. Participation enables people to be involved in shaping the future of the places and issues they care about, it celebrates volunteering, offers opportunities for learning and active citizenship.

We start by creating as many opportunities as possible for tenants to be heard and developing a safe and welcoming culture where tenants feel they can be open and honest with us, and know that their participation will have an impact. We will have clear processes in place to do something meaningful and positive with the information or views they have shared. As a result, tenants should be able to see the change, feel the change and know they are a part of the change.

Participation principles

We asked tenants, Board members and staff what they think makes participation successful and what values we should be led by when planning and leading any activities. We also reviewed feedback from our latest tenant satisfaction survey on our opportunities to take part/influence decisions and how good we are at keeping tenants informed. This word cloud shows the results; the bigger the word the more important it was to people.



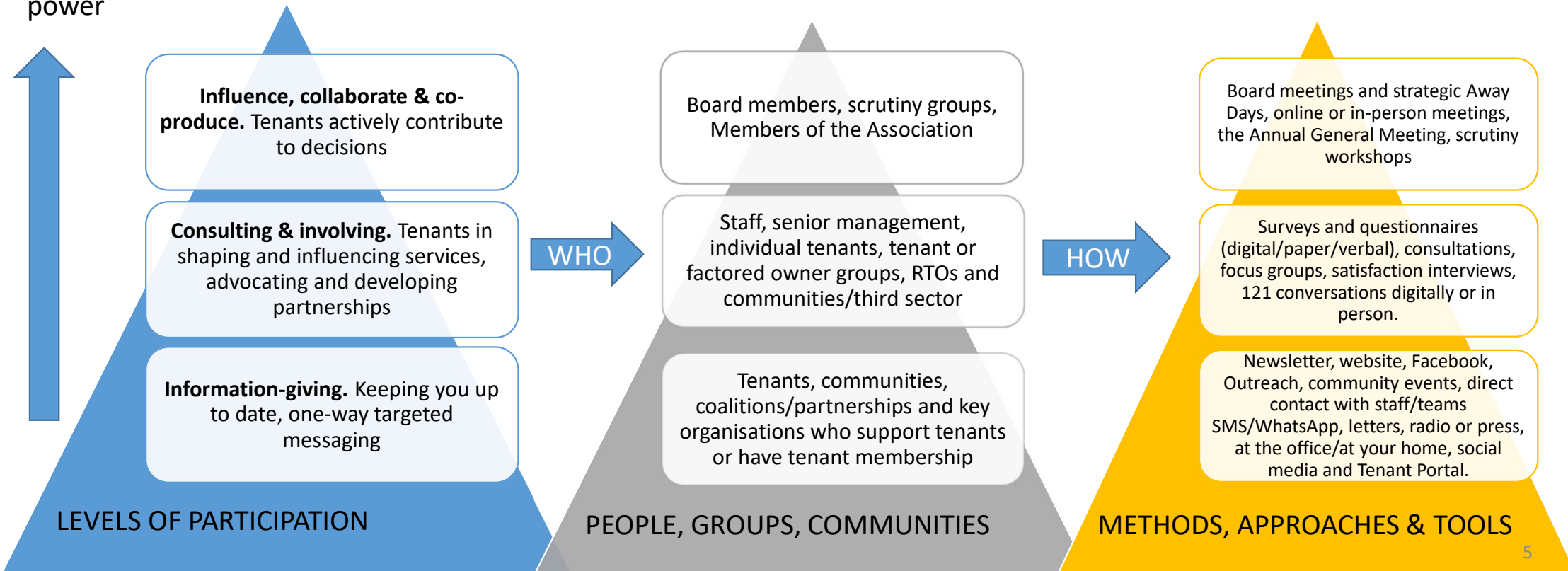
Based on this, we will commit to ensuring:

1. Tenant participation activities are designed and led in a way that builds trust, opens up honest conversations and is respectful.
2. People can take part in whichever way they choose, with whatever time they can offer, and their involvement will be respected by giving clear feedback on how their contributions have made a difference.
3. Information-sharing and communication is improved, with tenants involved in shaping and co-designing new approaches.

Participation in practice

Opportunities for tenant participation comes in different formats, from more passive forms at the bottom of the pyramid to more active involvement at the top where tenants can really influence decisions. Participation can be proactive or reactive to changes inside or outside the organisation. While there are specific things that we would find useful to ask tenants about and involve them in, we will also create space for people to approach us about the things they care most about and set the agenda. The next two pages also gives examples of how we try to provide lots of ways to involve tenants in shaping services throughout the tenancy journey...

Participation
power



Participation on the tenancy journey & showing your impact



Applications and allocations - applicants on the Highland Housing Register may have chance to comment on any proposed changes to policies that may affect them as prospective future tenants, like rent setting. We may also use your application information to help us plan for the future; investing in the right type of housing, in locations where there is clear demand and developing local lettings plans.



Building new housing – tenants and the wider community will be invited to input on local development plans so that we can help create sustainable, thriving communities. This information can feed into planning applications, neighbourhood designs, the provision of other future services in an area and housing need surveys.



New tenancies – we'll ask new tenants about their experience of moving home, to understand what went well, or where we can improve the process for others. You'll be invited to join our tenant participation register to be kept up to date with any activities too. Suggestions, feedback and priorities get shared with Housing Management, Tenant Support, Energy Advice and the Development Team to adapt sign-up processes, support services, neighbourhood management and house designs.



Changes in services – you will be consulted on any proposed changes to services that affect you, like the annual rent review or an updated policy, this can also include focus groups or workshops to share your opinions, make suggestions on how we can do things differently or test out new ideas. Depending on the topic, different departments will be given the feedback and the Board will also review the results for topics like the rent consultation.



Property maintenance, stock surveys and modernisation – we'll involve tenants as early as possible in the planning of any upgrades, to take into account their needs and tell us how satisfied you were with the process once the work is finished. We'll ask a sample of tenants whether they're pleased repairs completed so we can learn lessons and repeat good practice within the Property Services team. Stock surveys help us to understand what we could improve to make homes functional and comfortable.



Equality impact assessments – we will ensure that our services are accessible, inclusive and meet needs by routinely completing reviews with tenants who identify as having a protected characteristic(s) and putting their suggestions into practice. This work will be shared with the whole organisation for learning and reflection, advocacy and potentially campaigning at regional and national scales.

Participation on the tenancy journey & showing your impact



Special projects and community outreach – we will develop and support informal tenant groups that can have a specific focus on a particular project which is time-limited for example, a policy review. We will commit to having a greater presence in community spaces through our outreach sessions, and at community events so that you can approach us for information, advice and give us your views on things. This will be shared with the relevant department or staff member/team depending on the topic and issue.



Satisfaction – a minimum of once every three years, we will complete a Tenant Satisfaction Survey to find out your views on our services and what your priorities are. Everyone in the organization and Board will receive the feedback and have involvement in creating and monitoring action plans for keeping up good work or focusing on improvements.



Complaints, compliments and comments – Any complaint reported will be taken seriously, and we'll use your feedback to fix the problem and reflect on what needs to change to stop it from happening again. We will publish complaints learning multiple times a year on our website. The Board also review complaints information and offer advice on making positive changes.



Improving Neighbourhoods - tenants can request a walkabout with LSHA staff and key service representatives to help address any local issues relating to their estate or housing management. Groups of tenants can also create Registered Tenant Organisations to make positive changes in your local area. Any actions agreed by LSHA or other services will be monitored so that local residents see and feel the change.



Governance and Scrutiny – tenants can become a member of the Board to make decisions about LSHA's services, approve strategies and help set its aims and objectives. Tenants can also get involved in scrutiny projects; looking in detail at a specific service's performance and completing tasks or research to make constructive recommendations. Tenants can have a wide-reaching impact in these roles that affect all types of services and communities. All tenants will be offered the option to become a Member of The Association which gives you voting rights, AGM participation and access to reports and financial statements.



Moving on – when a tenancy ends, we will try to understand whether there is anything we could have done differently or offered earlier to help you stay and to better understand your reasons for moving on so that we can review our future services. This information will be shared with housing management, tenant support and property services.

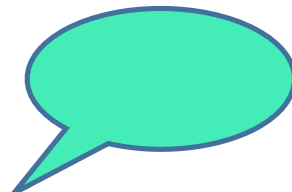


Communication commitments

To keep you up to date with information about what we have achieved, what is happening currently and our plans for the future we will:

- ✓ Give tenants clear, timely and accessible information: use plain language and use your preferred communication preference where possible. We will offer translation or interpretation services, provide information in other formats where requested. Long documents or complex information will be summarised. We will upgrade our website over the next three years to ensure it is more accessible, interactive and useful.
- ✓ Provide a clear point of contact (a team/staff member) so that you reach the right people first time with any request, question comment or complaint. This will be given to all new tenants, advertised on our website, Facebook page, in seasonal newsletters, and other communications.
- ✓ Share information and offer a choice of different ways to contact us: by email, SMS/WhatsApp, website forms, post/letters, local radio or press, in person at the office, at your home or outreach sessions and community events and develop our contact channels via social media and the future Tenant Portal.
- ✓ Publish performance information through our Annual Report and other documents like peer group updates to allow tenants to easily compare us to other landlords and benchmark against national averages. These and other Plans/Strategies will be on our website and highlighted in newsletters or copies sent directly to tenants.
- ✓ We will demonstrate the impact of tenant participation by creating and sharing summaries or action plans, 'you said we did' features and direct feedback to participants. These will help us to monitor progress on our commitments, and you can hold us account for delivering them.



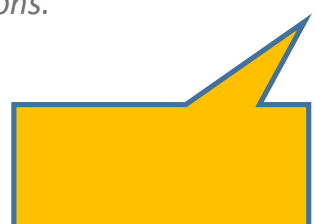


Communication commitments

- ✓ Supply useful tenancy information in written leaflets and the Tenant Handbook which will also be verbally explained at the beginning of tenancies and provided on request. We will use our Tenant Portal in future as well for digital access to tenancy-related information.
- ✓ Invite any RTOs or tenant/resident groups to local meetings (digital or in person) to share relevant information that affects the neighbourhood or service like new build development consultations. This will also be a chance to gather feedback from tenants and consult on decisions.
- ✓ Inform strategic partners and groups who work with or support tenants about ideas, projects or changes and seek their feedback where this is relevant too. A stakeholder map will be kept up to date to ensure critical friends and key groups are involved at the right level.

Providing information to tenants and sharing knowledge of what we do and how we do it will help us to build better trusting relationships. In doing so, we hope to create an environment where tenants feel able to approach LSHA to hold us to account, propose ideas and suggestions to influence what we do, and collaborate with us on decisions.

Quality Consultation



When will we consult? Any decisions that LSHA needs to make about managing tenants' homes or major changes to services or standards will require consultation with tenants and RTOs first. For example LSHA will consult when we make or change:

- policies and procedures related to housing management/repairs and maintenance if the proposals are likely to affect tenants a lot;
- decisions about the information to give tenants on the standard of housing management and performance;
- performance standards or targets on housing repairs and maintenance;
- the development of new strategies and service reviews like the annual rent review.

Quality Consultation and equal opportunity

How will we consult? Page four describes the different approaches, methods and tools we can use to involve people in consultations and we will always give people a choice to cater for a range of needs and preferences. Deadlines for involvement will be clear on our communications, and where possible we will send reminders. We will let you know who makes any final decisions and when. We will ensure tenants can access a member of staff in person locally, as well as offering the chance to feedback at different times to accommodate peoples commitments, caring responsibilities or work patterns. We will come to you, so that you don't have to come to us: we will be present in spaces, places and events where tenants and communities naturally gather to create a social and informal approach.



Feedback and support: With any tenant involvement activity we will provide concise and useful information to help you make informed decisions and be clear on what exactly is being asked for so tenants know their role and the scope/boundaries of their influence. Wherever tenant views are captured, we will publish the results/recommendations and actions or give direct feedback to those who took part so that everyone can see and understand the impact of their involvement and how it has made a positive change to the organisation or a service. Where tenants have been represented by another person or agency, we will give them relevant feedback on consultations. Wherever peoples views have not been accepted or a different decision has been made, we will explain why.

How will we support tenants to take part? We have committed resources to support tenant participation in a number of ways:

- Grants and costs: we have a budget to support tenant participation activities and information – sharing. This can include supporting tenants to attend meetings with fuel/transport costs, childcare costs, hosting community events or offering small incentives to take part in activities like covering the cost of refreshments and offering prizes.
- Training and resources: we have staff members trained and skilled in working with tenants to develop their confidence and skills in scrutiny work and Board membership and provide the necessary documents or information required to take part in different projects. We will train and equip staff across the organisation to get the most out of tenant involvement and support participation.





Quality Consultation and equal opportunity

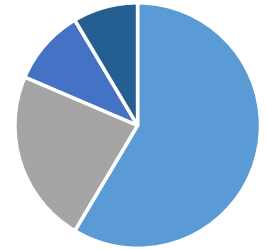
- Access to facilities and inclusive, accessible spaces for tenants to meet together, or with staff to discuss topics and complete projects: office space, equipment; digital equipment support; specialist equipment for anyone with a physical/mental illness or long-term health condition, learning disability, or neuro-diverse identity; administration activities and digital inclusion activities (trained digital champions).

Tenants and communities are diverse and so representation and involvement in any activities should reflect this to ensure different views are taken into account. To do this, we will:

- Complete equality impact assessments on different services with tenants who identify as having protected characteristics that may be traditionally excluded or discriminated. This can also involve working with groups who advocate on tenants behalf or specialist agencies.
- Provide new and different opportunities for under-represented groups of people to be involved in ways which suit them, for example young people, those who may have a learning or support need, those whose first language may not be English and housing applicants and homeless people. We will also encourage and as far as possible ensure that there is representation from tenants living in different locations across Lochalsh and Skye as well as a broad range of demographics.
- Regularly review what might present barriers to participation by analysing who has participated, how they chose to get involved and how many people levels and our approaches, as well as asking tenants what would make it easier for them. To proactively respect different needs and requirements, for example this may involve holding single sex meetings if appropriate.
- Train our staff to make sure they are aware of equalities issues and actively promote participation.



Measuring our performance



Measuring our performance and the effectiveness of this strategy: Each year we will do a self-assessment to see how we are delivering on our commitments and ensure the strategy remains relevant. A new strategy review will be completed in 2026. Our success will be measured by the two Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes:

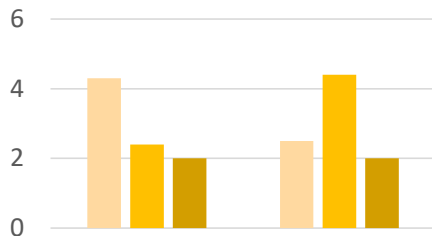
COMMUNICATION Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

PARTICIPATION: Tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy for them to participate in, and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

When we complete tenant satisfaction surveys (at least once every three years) we will ask tenants questions on these standards to benchmark ourselves and monitor progress.

The following pages describe the specific actions we will take over the next three years to improve our performance and deliver on our commitments in this strategy.

The final page shows how these actions will be completed over time, with key milestones described. We will use this to report and update tenants and key stakeholders on our progress.



Action Plan 2023-2026

To help us to deliver the strategy, these tasks will be updated as we progress and will be used to monitor outcomes.

Key priority/task	Timing	Participation level/Charter standard	Outcome measure
Maintain the current register of interested tenants with their topics of interest and specialist skills/knowledge to share, method and level of involvement in tenant participation activities. Use this to proactively invite people to take part in relevant activities that match their preferences and ensure the diversity of tenants is represented.	Ongoing	Involve/collaborate/ Participation	Increased diversity in participation activities and clear examples of tenants with special interests/skills are involved in relevant activities.
Support digital inclusion for receiving communication in this format, taking part in online events access to new tenant participation activities; training, support and device access, internet provision.	Ongoing	Inform and collaborate / Communication	Increased number of tenant involvement in online/digital participation and using email communication.
Develop use of text surveys for quick feedback.	Ongoing	Involve and influence / Participation	Process for satisfaction feedback via text developed and actively used.
Develop and maintain a stakeholder map that will be kept up to date to ensure critical friends and key groups are involved at the right level. Nurture and create new or existing partnerships and coalitions that amplify the LSHA tenant voice and enable effective communication.	Ongoing	Inform, involve, influence and collaborate / Communication and Participation	Stakeholder map completed with staff, tenants, communities and Board members, which is reviewed on a needs basis. New or existing partnerships are strengthened and improved satisfaction with landlord-tenant communication.
Celebrate and promote tenant participation – raise awareness of the benefits of getting involved and clearly show how tenants can have a positive impact.	Short term	Inform / Communication	Published documents on website such as action plans and summaries. Promotional articles via newsletter, social media, radio, community events and outreach.
Invite tenants to review and contribute newsletter content.	Short term	Inform and involve / Communication and participation	Newsletter articles published on topics suggested by tenants.

Key priority/task	Timing	Participation level/Charter standard	Outcome measure
Identify a calendar of events that LSHA can attend to offer information and support to tenants and opportunities for participation in social settings. Be present in different locations for access to information and opportunities to participate.	Short term	Inform and involve/ Communication and participation	Attendance at community events/increased presence at social events. Continued outreach sessions and these are well attended, new ones set up where demand.
Explore new tools and ways to measure participation, and to calculate/report on social value added through tenant engagement and participation activities.	Medium term	Inform/ Participation	We can report on social impact and value added to tenants and communities through the Annual Report to Tenants.
Governance representation – support more tenants to become Board members or influence strategic activities and regularly review potential barriers to participation.	Medium term	Influence and collaborate/ Participation	Increase number of tenants Board members or a strategic group. Increased representation of different groups in participation activities because barriers have been reduced or eliminated.
Complete equality impact assessments (EQA) on a service review or organisational decision and increase collection of equalities monitoring data for needs assessment and over/under representation analysis.	Medium-long term	Influence and collaborate / Participation	At least one EQA completed and suggestions presented to Board and LSHA staff for action. Complete campaign for accurate recording of equalities data for tenants.
Develop diverse and inclusive groups to complete scrutiny work and act as critical friends for special projects.	Medium term	Collaborate and influence/ Participation	Scrutiny group/critical friends project group established and actively making recommendations.
Provide information via the Tenant Portal and new contact channels.	Short - Medium term	Inform / Communication	Tenant Portal launched with key documents accessible and tenants are actively using the portal.
Increase youth outreach and involvement.	Medium term	Inform and involve/ Communication and Participation	Attendance at events in the community to raise awareness of LSHA work, gather ideas and suggestions. Provide work experience placements. Increased representation of young peoples in consultations.

Key priority/task	Timing	Participation level/Charter standard	Outcome measure
Upgrade the website to improve accessibility, ensure it is interactive and useful and involve tenants in the design and content of this. Analyse interaction and footfall on website pages to improve user experience and enhance content.	Long term	Inform / Communication	Website updated with tenant input on design, testing functionality and suggesting content. Data analysis available for website interaction.
Offer training and assess support needs to assist increased participation for staff, Board members and tenants and be aware of equalities issues.	Long term	Involve / Participation	Training and skills audit completed and relevant training provided internally or by specialist agencies.
Seek aspirational funding to: support community projects that have a positive impact in neighbourhoods; projects that support or enable tenants to communicate with LSHA; projects that facilitate greater participation.	Long term	Participation/Collaboration	Grant funding secured to support projects, leading to increased satisfaction in neighbourhoods, improved satisfaction with communication and increased levels of tenant engagement.

Project plan

Action/Timescale	June - December 2023	January - June 2024	July - December 2024	January - June 2025	July - December 2025	January - June 2026
Maintain, develop and actively use the current register of interested tenants	Ongoing and updated when required					
Support digital inclusion for communication and participation	Promote digital support and access to devices	Digital outreach sessions in April planned.	Tenant survey completed for digital strategy and roadmap creation			
Develop use of text surveys for quick feedback.	Trial text surveys for different departments	Repairs survey emails in use and SMS used for tenant termination surveys and rent consultation	SMS used to support equalities data collection			
Develop and maintain a stakeholder map and nurture/create partnerships for the tenant voice	Ongoing and updated when required					
Celebrate and promote tenant participation	Newsletter article - included in Summer and Autumn 2023 editions	Published feedback from rent consultation in FAQ and action plan.				
Invite tenants to review and contribute newsletter content	Feedback sought and used for Summer/Autumn editions	Feedback sought and used for Winter/Summer editions		Seek feedback		Seek feedback
Identify a calendar of events that LSHA can attend, to be present and accessible	Calendar created and events booked		Events for 2025 to be booked			
Explore new tools and ways to measure participation, and to calculate/report on social value added through tenant engagement and participation activities.		Tools researched and tested using 23-24 data	Tools adopted for Annual Report 2024			
Governance representation – support more tenants to become Board members		Recruitment drive	Training and support			
Complete equality impact assessments (EQA) and collect equalities data for meaningful analysis on service provision.		EIA 1 complete - Age EIAs for policy reviews		EIA 2 complete		EIA 3 complete
Develop diverse and inclusive groups to complete scrutiny work and act as critical friends for special projects.		Recruitment drive & training	Scrutiny group set up	Scrutiny project complete		

Project plan

Provide information via a Tenant Portal and new contact channels	Information provided/roll-out commences	Feedback gathered and future options considered				
Increase youth outreach and involvement		Recruitment drive and outreach	Youth group active			
Upgrade the website and analyse usage for enhancing content and user experience	Invite tenants to give feedback	Research other designs/demos. POTENTIAL PAUSE - dependent on budget for 24/25.	FY25-26 as part of digital strategy work: trial new website	TBC New website live	TBC Feedback and monitoring for improvement	TBC Enhancements delivered
Offer training and assess support needs to assist increased participation for all, including equality, diversity and inclusion		Understanding Autism training commences for all staff. Mental Health training	Training providers researched and selected	Training delivered	Ongoing further training needs analysis	Ongoing further training needs analysis
Seek funding to: support community projects, enable tenants to communicate with LSHA; projects that facilitate greater participation.		Collect tenant ideas for community projects: focus on energy advice, money advice and climate change.	Seek funding to assist groups with any new projects. Increase outreach opportunities.	Deliver projects	Deliver projects	Deliver projects

For further information on this strategy, to enquire about developing an RTO, get involved in scrutiny work or to join the register of interested tenants for updates on upcoming activities please email WeHearYou@lsha.co.uk or call/text the Tenant Engagement and Support Manager, Lowri Richards on 07825410116.

Additional guidance on tenant participation is available from:

• Scottish Government • TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Services) • TIS (Tenant Information Service) • The Scottish Housing Regulator • Shelter Scotland.

To request this document in a different language or format, please contact our office: Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association, Morrison House, Bayfield, Portree, Isle of Skye, IV51 9EW

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