

Tenant Influence in Boards and Governance

What can we learn by collaborating?

Authored by Anna O'Halloran
and Emma Flynn





Contents

Page

1.	Introduction	4
2.	Participants	7
3.	Moving beyond the numbers – why now?	9
4.	Is the focus on tenant influence the solution?	12
5.	The Core Project	14
6.	The Workshops	16
	Workshop 1	27
	Workshop 2	36
	Workshop 3	43
	Taking Stock	45
	Workshop 4	55
	Workshop 5	61
7.	What We Learned	72
8.	What Tpas Learned	74
9.	Thanks	

Authored by



Anna O'Halloran



Emma Flynn



Executive Summary

Welcome to our report on Tenant Influence in Boards and Governance. I hope you will find it a stimulating, thought provoking and useful resource to support you in your role and organisation.

The introduction of new consumer regulation in April 2024 was obviously some of the impetus for this work. But more than that was a desire from all participants to explore beyond regulation and really try to understand and articulate what excellence in resident influence can, and should, look like across all different types of landlord organisations.

Culture was always going to be a key part of that, really getting to grips with that means in practice for boards, senior leaders, and residents. The learning focused on behaviours and how we enable that critical shift for tenant influence to be embraced across the whole organisation.

The workshops were designed to explore effective ways that governance structures hear tenants voices and can demonstrate influence for real change. Exploring what it means to be a trustworthy organisation was integral to this project and by doing so this report opens up the possibility of much better working relationships for teams, boards and communities.

Taking a tenant influence approach is challenging but the rewards are outcomes that are more impactful and truly meet the needs of the communities in which you work.

As a sector we need to understand that tenant influence is more than engagement and involvement. It's about our focused and positive approach to data and insight and how this complements and adds to the shaping of better services.

This report is an important read for everyone in your organisation and I hope it acts a valuable guide to having better conversations for long lasting change.



Jenny Osbourne MBE
Tpas Chief Executive



1. Introduction

Tpas COLLABORATE

This report is the third in a series designed to reflect the findings of multi-landlord participatory research programmes led by Tpas.

The first report 'The Engagement Maximiser' was published in 2021 and can be found at:

www.tpas.org.uk/ebooks/download-form/22

The second report, 'Resident Engagement in Building Safety,' was published in 2024 and can be found at:

<https://www.tpas.org.uk/ebooks/download/25>

Tpas Collaborate programmes broadly follow the same methodology with a cohort of participants from landlords experiencing challenging and thought-provoking workshops led by experts from the housing sector and outside of it too.

Tenant Influence in boards and governance: why now?

Since the Grenfell fire in June 2017, there have been more tragedies reported that demonstrate the devastating impact when tenants voices are not heard. We have seen an impetus for change and reform to rebalance the relationship between tenants and landlords. We now have a trio of regulators – the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), the Housing Ombudsman (HO), and the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) – all with a statutory duty to collaborate and oversee social housing landlords. This is in addition to the involvement of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The current operating environment is challenging with a need to meet important additional standards around Building Safety, Health and Safety, Quality

and Climate Change alongside increased regulation and building more homes. The Tpas Collaborate programme offered time to reflect and take stock of where tenants voices are within these priorities as well as across all services and decisions.

Tpas launched this project in November 2023. The programme was developed following years of tenant and landlord feedback and responded directly to insight about key challenges to seeking solutions and new approaches to tenant engagement.

Never has the need for new approaches to securing engagement been so important.

The seven landlords collaborating in this project were motivated to join the project because:

“ In our sector it is not about competition, it is all about collaboration. Joining a programme focused on learning from others and being the best that we can be, together - was very refreshing. ”

Claire Wright, Director Digital and Customer Experience, Flagship.

“ Taking part in Tpas Collaborate over the past six months has been invaluable as we shaped our Customer Influence Strategy at Moat. The workshops provided a unique platform to not only refine our approach but also gain fresh perspectives from other housing providers and deeply inspiring speakers. The shared experiences and insights directly translated into tangible improvements in how we engage and empower our customers. It will continue to have an impact long after the programme has closed. ”

Stephen Walker, Director Customer Operations, Moat.

The project was delivered as collaborative research, to explore the most effective ways that boards, councillors and governance structures welcome tenant engagement and move to a position where tenants are at the front and centre of influencing decisions and services at board level.



As part of the Tpas landlord accreditation in resident engagement, we ask how board members seek assurance that tenants voices influence services and decisions.

Often, the response is silent!

We know that when tenants influence how landlords operate, we see a greater focus on core purpose and a more authentic approach to delivering frontline services.

The broad aims laid down at the outset of the project were as follows:

- The context and background to tenants influence from an assurance and compliance perspective.
- An exploration of what a 'trustworthy' organisation looks and feels like.
- Building better relationships and resilience, mitigating issues in the public realm.

“ Labour will turn the page on 14 years of Tory chaos, deliver where the Tories have failed and pass robust renters reform legislation that abolishes Section 21 no-fault evictions immediately and decisively levels the playing field between landlords and tenants. ”

Matthew Pennycook, Housing Minister



“ I think if I was doing my previous job now, I would be using this time wisely to learn from others and really think at board level how we can deliver services in a better and more accountable way to deliver for tenants. ”



Kate Dodsworth

Kate Dodsworth, Chief of Regulatory Engagement at the Regulator of Social Housing





More specifically, Tpas was keen to create an environment where participants could also:

- ✓ Understand the context and background of the Regulator of Social Housing expectations for effective tenant influence
- ✓ Explore accountability and responsibility in the context of tenant influence and ensure compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements
- ✓ Hear from Tpas and other thought-leaders on proven techniques with materials and action plans to implement
- ✓ Come together and work together as part of a collaborative peer-led group focused on the creation of solutions in a safe environment to tenant influence challenges
- ✓ Receive clear direction for ensuring successful assurance that landlords are noticing tenant voices and enabling influence at every level to improve governance
- ✓ Develop a broader network of support with likeminded colleagues and future practice, supporting the sector to innovate
- ✓ Directly respond to the recommendations in the Better Social Housing Review (BSHR), to refocus on core purpose and become proactive rather than reactive, improving quality by redefining excellence in repairs services
- ✓ Achieve a clearer view of what a tenant-first culture should be and ensure tenants are front and centre
- ✓ Increase ability and capacity to seek the evidence for assurance to reduce risks and to demonstrate the tenant voice is influencing decision-making
- ✓ Create a sense of urgency within organisations to deliver results.

The project content and scope enabled the exploration of key themes that would form parts of effective approaches to tenant influence in these five workshops:

1. What is tenant influence, how do we notice tenants voices?
2. Culture is critical
3. Resilience
4. Tenant influence and innovation in repairs and maintenance
5. What is Core Purpose?

This report reflects the learning everyone experienced and some of the early outcomes achieved by the organisational participants.

The project was aimed at housing associations and local authority landlords, including ALMOs, findings can be utilised across landlords with any governance structure. It will serve as a useful tool for organisations when developing their own approaches to tenant influence in boards and governance.



2. Meet Our Participants



VIVID

We're a leading provider of affordable homes and extensive support services in the south of England. We believe that everyone has the right to a safe and secure place to call home.

We're addressing the shortage of affordable housing in the south, building the right type of homes to meet the needs of our local communities. We're the fifth largest developer of new homes amongst housing associations in England, having built over 1,500 last year.

This is summed up in our vision "More homes, bright futures".



For Housing

We own and manage more than 24,000 homes across the North West. Everything we do aims to positively impact the lives of our social housing tenants and deliver on what matters to them and their communities.

By listening to tenants and keeping them at the heart of all we do, we provide safe, well maintained homes and deliver customer focused, equitable and efficient services. And we always want to do better.

Through our tenant focused, inclusive and agile culture, ForHousing is a place where everyone can thrive and be themselves.

We are part of the ForViva Group along with Liberty and ForLiving. Liberty provides smart and altogether better property services across gas, repairs, maintenance, and construction.



Flagship

We're Flagship Homes. We provide homes for sale and private rent - not just places to live, but places to love. We're proud of every home we build, and of our contribution to the local communities in which we operate. Everything we do is driven by our social purpose - reinvesting any profit we make into providing more affordable homes.

We're also part of Flagship Group, which means we build homes, let, and maintain them. Making homes available and affordable for all is easy to say but hard to deliver on, but that's why we're here. We want to solve the housing crisis.



Lincolnshire Housing Partnership

Lincolnshire Housing Partnership (LHP) manages nearly 12,500 affordable rental and shared ownership homes and offers a range of other services to support people and communities across the historic east coast of Lincolnshire.

As a charitable community-based organisation, we channel profit back into services and projects that benefit our customers and local neighbourhoods.

In early-2020 we launched our internal Culture Change Programme, The LHP Way, which means providing engagement and development opportunities, as well as enhancing our output through the embrace of technology.



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
PARTNERSHIP HOMES**

Northampton Partnership Homes

Northamptonshire Partnership Homes is an arms-length management organisation (ALMO) that manages West Northamptonshire Council's housing services.

We began on 5 January 2015.

We are wholly owned by West Northamptonshire Council but we have our own management team and Board of Directors. We are a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) and a not-for-profit organisation. This means that our income is put back into providing housing and housing related services.

NPH has been set up by West Northamptonshire Council (formerly NBC) for an initial period of 15 years.



Worthing Homes

Worthing Homes

Worthing Homes is a community-based Housing Association, which provides homes and services to around 4,000 households living in our properties in Worthing and surrounding areas. We are a service-based organisation, which employs brilliant people to work with our customers to help support them to live their best lives.

We were set up in 1999, when Worthing Borough Council transferred its residential properties to a newly formed organisation, set up specially to receive the entire social housing stock.



Moat

We are a leading housing association, owning and managing over 21,000 homes in the South East.

Since Moat was founded in 1966, we've grown from managing a single block of flats in Chertsey to housing over 21,000 families and individuals across Kent, Essex, Sussex and London. Through the decades, our purpose has stayed the same – to provide secure, affordable homes for rent and shared ownership to those in housing need.

As a not-for-profit organisation, we reinvest any surplus income we make into maintaining and improving our existing homes and building new ones where they are most needed.



3. Moving beyond the numbers - Why now?

Enabling tenant influence in boards and governance is the right thing to do, since April 2024 the RSH has also made it clear:

“ It needs a culture shift to put tenants at the centre. Boards need to be as focused on repairs, satisfaction, communication, anti-social behaviour as they are on compliance & building.

The operational has become strategic due to the risk to reputation.

It has to be led by Board/Councillors in order to lead to lasting change. ”

Over the years, we have seen evidence of really good engagement and involvement at Tpas, but is this enough anymore to demonstrate influence? Are our approaches driving up performance in service satisfaction?

Sector reports suggest not with dwindling satisfaction within the housing sector. This mirrors similar customer satisfaction outside of housing.

The Institute of Customer Services most recent Customer Satisfaction Index published in January 2024 highlights that customer service is a strategic necessity and many organisations are still not getting it right.

They state that customers have less patience for poor service, that customers' experience of care and attention is more of a priority for them and a key driver for satisfaction.

“ It is about assurance not re-assurance – looking at (the publicity around appalling homes and services) how do you know it isn't you? ”



Kate Dodsworth

Kate Dodsworth, Chief of Regulatory Engagement at the Regulator of Social Housing

56% of customers say their satisfaction with an organisation has been influenced by whether they felt it understood and cared for their personal situation and needs.

Poor service doesn't afford tenants the option of turning away and going elsewhere but the sentiment does translate across in to the social housing sector and reported reduced satisfaction levels.





Housemark

Housemark, in a more recent report from June 2024, states that overall tenant satisfaction with social landlords in England is at a five-year low and has dropped below 70%. Its analysis of the tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) shows that satisfaction dropped from 85.1% in 2018-19 to 69.4% in 2023-24, a decrease of more than 15 percentage points. While Housemark acknowledge this is an early indication based on limited sample sizes, trends are emerging.

The RSH highlights the importance of “effective and transparent communication” as a key factor in the consumer standards. It is also an important driver of satisfaction, ensuring that tenants know what to expect or understand the backdrop to decisions.

When there are difficult choices about service and investment priorities and challenging decisions to be made, then genuine transparency will take account of tenants views, and provide clarity on service standards. This will also highlight and evidence where influence has occurred.

“ Thanks to the team for a great series of workshops. I am going to ensure I really am the voice of the customer in the committee and board room by spending more time hearing what our customers say. ”

Jo Moran Group Board member VIVID

It has become increasingly clear to Tpas that many social housing landlords were uncertain about how to link engagement and involvement directly to governance, decisions and performance, let alone reporting beyond the numbers of tenants engaged and involved to truly demonstrate where they are influencing.

The insight on key challenges provided to Tpas would suggest this is because:

- Not enough strategic emphasis on tenants voices at board level discussions
- Traditional approaches encouraging the same voices at the expense of data and insight and increased voices with lived experience
- Difficult to evidence the impact and outcomes of engagement and involvement
- Decisions and service changes made before meaningfully seeking tenants voices
- Engagement and involvement is not part of everybody’s role, culture is a critical part of effective tenant influence.

Tpas has a strong track record of bringing organisations together to research and consider solutions to critical issues and so the project Collaborate: Tenant Influence in Boards and Governance was formed to address these challenges.

The project also needed to take in to account guidance and legislation introduced by the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/36, this led to the new proactive consumer regulation regime and strengthened the powers for the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) to enforce them.



Transparency, Accountability, Trust and Respect – Influence

The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard <https://tinyurl.com/3t53dt5s> sets out expectations for tenants to be able to influence at the very heart of the new regime.

The Regulator has made it very clear that landlords need to embed tenants voices within their decision making structures, making sure that they can evidence that tenants views are actually influencing decisions taken at board level. We were fortunate to hear directly from Kate Dodsworth, Chief of Regulatory Engagement, at one of the workshops, you can read more about this below.

A point the RSH is also keen to stress is can landlords evidence that the engagement is actually influencing decision-making? To what extent have things actually changed because of tenants views?

“ Outcomes landlords must deliver about being open with tenants and treating them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints, influence decision-making and hold their landlord to account. ”

Source: The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

The project also included time to think about some of the key principles around trust and stigmatisation discussed in The Charter for Social Housing Residents: the social housing white paper 2020: <https://tinyurl.com/dmb4eubv>

Tpas are not alone in working collaboratively to seek solutions. The Better Social Housing Review set up by The National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing sought to explore the quality of social housing.

“ The Grenfell Tower disaster and the subsequent inquiry clearly evidenced how an entire community can be catastrophically let down, exposing fundamental racial inequalities and discrimination. ”

Source: www.bettersocialhousingreview.co.uk

Tpas dedicated a workshop to explore the recommendation that housing associations should partner with tenants, contractors and frontline staff to develop and apply new standards defining what an excellent maintenance and repairs process looks like. **This is a key priority area for tenants.** Many of the other recommendations were also explored across all workshops.

“ Our investigation found reoccurring instances of residents being treated in dismissive, inappropriate or unsympathetic ways. In some instances, the language used was derogatory.

It is highly unlikely that this endemic behaviour of ‘othering’ is isolated to a single landlord and the social housing sector should consider whether they also need to turn over the stone and do a deep dive into their culture and whether they are living their social purpose. ”

Source: Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman’s comments about their investigation into Rochdale Boroughwide Housing following the death of Awaab Ishak <https://tinyurl.com/p5c3zran> summarises the issue well around the culture change needed to address instances of “othering”.



4. Is a focus on Tenant Influence the solution?

Tenant engagement and tenant involvement have been the subject of numerous definitions, models and a perception over the years of an ‘added extra service area’ rather than the vital cross-cutting service it should be.

What is clear to Tpas is that when there are clearly identified outcomes, then this is where positive changes happen, when tenants voices are heard, listened to, valued and acted upon.

Traditionally, approaches adopted have been steered towards an onus on tenants, joining in a ‘menu’ of different activities, including as **tenant board members**. This alone does not enable tenant influence. Why? Because organisations are still in control, a key nuance that we aimed to explore through our research project.

What really became clear is that when an organisational culture embraces openness, accountability and trust, this is the biggest enabler of tenant influence.

The feeling is mutual

Engagement and involvement are part of the solution. We need to move away from the focus on numbers involved, the number of activities, or the number of meetings held. Whilst having decent numbers actively involved can be a good indicator of engagement levels, it is only when we work with tenants with clear aims around influence at the start of any service design that we can then measure and evidence the influence made in the outcome.



Lived Experience

Another key insight we set out to explore, was how to ensure tenants ‘lived experience’ directly influences services and decisions. This moves beyond a key challenge reported to Tpas around increasing the number of tenants engaged and involved, and ensuring those involved are actively joining in. Often involved tenants are consulted on a service area they have not experienced, and we see declining numbers of tenants with the time and inclination to get involved. Many tenants just want landlords to get the services right. We have to explore other ways to hear, listen and act on tenants voices, who have lived experience.

What if engagement was as defined as every interaction we have with tenants? Interaction does not have to be face to face or as a result of joining in an activity. The key here is to provide a number of new ways to capture views through social media, portals or platforms as well as looking at how tenants interact with services, or not, then doing something about it.

The key to tenants with lived experience being able to influence is to start by looking at what tenants are saying already, from transactional data and using this insight to continuously improve services.

“ Your unhappy customers are your best source of learning. ”



Bill Gates

Landlords collect huge amounts of data and information about tenants on a regular basis. Is this an untapped resource that could yield more insight from a wider range of tenants voices?

Tpas would say it is.

We sought to explore some of these further challenges throughout the project.

- What is the overall aim and purpose of engagement and involvement and where does it lead?
- How can engagement and involvement encourage and embed influence across decisions and services?
- More importantly how do we ensure we enable influence from as many tenants as possible?
- If a focus on influence is different, how do landlords need to develop it?

The opportunities for tenant influence are endless when combining a robust understanding of insight with purposeful engagement and involvement.

Co creation is a key disruptor to traditional involvement; we cannot create value in isolation anymore.

Can we take the view that true influence is enabled through co creation? If we are asking that staff and tenants work in partnership, can collaboration work with inequality and a power imbalance?

By focusing on tenant influence, we explored the answers to these questions throughout the workshops.

Engagement

+

Involvement

+

Data

=

INFLUENCE





5. The Core Project

Launch Event

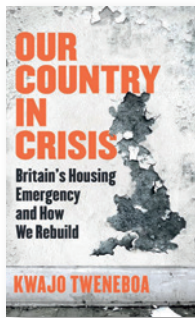
Tpas were very fortunate to hear from Alison Inman, Tpas Board Chair on the importance of the Collaborate project and Kwajo Tweneboa, social housing campaigner and author of 'Our Country in Crisis'.



Alison Inman



Kwajo Tweneboa



We shared our project programme and heard from landlords about their expectations of the project.

To make sure that Tpas could meet participants' expectations, using breakout sessions, the following questions were debated:

- What does tenant influence in boards and governance mean to you?
- What has been your key motivator in achieving tenant influence in boards and governance?
- What has been the key barrier to achieving successful tenant influence?
- Landlords key objectives for the programme?

What does tenant influence in boards and governance mean to you?

- ✓ Reflect on outcomes to make balanced decisions
- ✓ Decisions made by navigating internal processes not experiences, this project highlights this
- ✓ More voices

What has been your key motivator in achieving tenant influence in boards and governance?

- ✓ Board members need to be more aware
- ✓ Co-create learning and solutions, disrupt positively
- ✓ Connect tenant networks to governance

What has been the key barrier to achieving successful tenant influence?

- ✓ Too few people making decisions, setting purpose
- ✓ Lack of diversity
- ✓ Lack of trust

Landlords key objectives for the programme?

- ✓ Opportunity to share, learn and reflect
- ✓ Enhance our approach to culture, lived experience and services
- ✓ Get out of the way and find a different way.

Overwhelmingly culture, co-creation and relationships are key areas to get right.

“ More can be done to make sure tenants aren't just a tick box exercise in resident engagement but that their voices are actually being heard to create real change and benefit for them. All providers should be having this conversation. ”

Kwajo Tweneboa, Social Housing Campaigner and Author



“ A thought provoking and thoroughly enjoyable day with colleagues from across the sector. Glad Northamptonshire Partnership Homes can be part of these collaboration events. ”

Stephen Feast, Chief Executive Northamptonshire Partnership Homes



6. The Workshops

Each workshop was designed around a specific theme emerging from the launch event and pre-project research undertaken by Tpas.

The workshops were facilitated by expert partners of Tpas and were designed to be both challenging and interactive. The aim was to encourage participants to feel stretched and to be exposed to new ideas and concepts.



“ Really good insights and thoughts, we need to make an impact and focus more on outcomes not just the process. ”

Nicola Ebdon, Director of Governance and Compliance, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership

Workshop 1 - Why tenant influence and how we notice tenants voices?

This workshop was delivered by Emma Flynn and Anna O'Halloran.

Emma Flynn, BSc, CXCert, has worked as Tpas National Consultancy Manager for a number of years, as well as in senior roles in Local Authority and Housing Association settings. Emma is a freelance Consultant, regularly works in partnership with Tpas, in interim roles and joint programme lead for Collaborate bringing experience of working with tenants and landlords nationally and strategically.

Anna O'Halloran, MSc. Is a behavioural science practitioner and joint programme lead. Anna has worked in social housing since 1984 and as well as stints with the Chartered Institute of Housing as Director of Consultancy, as a regulator at the Audit

Commission and as a Director at Capita, worked for seven different landlords. Anna works regularly with Tpas and is a staunch advocate for incorporating tenants experiences into organisational decision-making.

Participants also benefited from insights from guest speakers:

- Kate Dodsworth, Chief of Regulatory Engagement, Regulator of Social Housing
- Emma O'Shea, Chief Operating Officer, Aster
- Phil Hardy, Executive Director of Operations, Grand Union



Kate Dodsworth



Emma O'Shea



Phil Hardy

Hear from the RSH

Overview of new Regulatory approach

Kate Dodsworth gave an overview of the new approach to regulation, now effective from 1st April 2024. The format for future inspections will be focussed on outcomes, after six weeks notice is given for a programmed inspection the RSH will send out for documents that will include Tenant satisfaction measures and any Housing Ombudsman information.

Inspections fieldwork may include a combination of any of the following:

- Visits to estates
- A focus group of tenants
- Survey

Kate was very keen to stress that **“how do you know at board you are meeting diverse needs and that tenants views are taken into account across decisions?”**

If boards and leadership teams focus on this, it drives culture. The RSH will seek evidence of this.



Regulator of
Social Housing

Kate's top tips from the tenant aspect lens for landlords:

- ✓ Embedding is paramount
- ✓ Establish 'early warning systems' of assurance
- ✓ Evidence of fairness and respect
- ✓ Diversity and fair access to equitable outcomes of services
- ✓ Engaging tenants and influencing decisions
- ✓ Keeping tenants well informed and communications
- ✓ Evidence “how do you know you are building trust”
- ✓ Data and understanding who lives behind the door, quality as well as quantity
- ✓ The RSH will look at social media carefully

We know at the time of writing that inspections to date have seen a mix of C1 – C3 grades awarded.





Workshop Content

Sector case study - Insight from a pilot inspection

Participants had the benefit of experience from Emma O'Shea's presentation about Aster's involvement in the pilot RSH inspection. Emma led participants through a series of questions for debate to start to challenge ourselves about how we can prepare for future inspections.

Questions For Debate

How do you hear the customer voice within your organisation?

How accessible are your means of engagement?

What role does data and insight play in your customer voice strategy?

How does your customer voice influence...

- Strategically?
- Locally?
- Culturally?



Emma O'Shea

The workshop key aims were in two parts:

1. Explore how we **notice** tenants voices
2. Explore **why** we need to focus on tenant influence

Part One

How we notice tenants voices

In this section of the workshop we explored with participants how we notice tenants and work towards 'knowing who lives behind the door'.

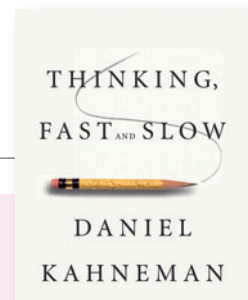


We shared a concept developed by Daniel Kahneman, author of 'Thinking, Fast and Slow'. This quote is one that we use regularly in our Re-engineering Engagement projects, especially when working with Boards:

**How can we know what's really happening if we can't see it?
What if it's not presented to us?**

The concept is about how we rely on fast thinking more, this type of thinking is our default setting, in other words our unconscious thinking mode, useful in some respects, such as driving. Fast thinking can lead to illogical and irrational thinking being applied to decision making.

We looked at the implications of this type of thinking in the context of tenant influence, and the risk and impact of making decisions based upon assumptions. Using the following image we explored the implication of availability bias and the risks involved.



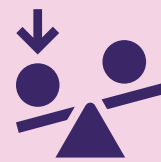
“What you see is all there is.” Daniel Kahneman



Are we guilty of taking too literally ‘hearing customers’ voices’?



Are we at risk of listening to and hearing only customers who are ‘engaged / involved’?



How could this create bias?



What are the risks of acting on potentially biased insight?



What about all the other people who use our services or might need them in the future?



What are the signals that maybe we aren’t picking up (or hearing)?

Our own ‘confirmation bias’ is based on what is available to us when we have to make a decision, similar to reports we read or meetings we are involved in. The danger zone is when we make decisions on a ‘literal’ hearing of tenants voices; often this is a small number of voices. The risks associated with this can create bias across decision making (let alone our own) because we are interpreting minimal available information as supportive of our own pre-existing view.

In actual fact our minds have two ways of thinking, the fast-thinking mode, operates effortlessly and instinctively, relying on intuition and past experiences. In contrast, and sometimes conflict, the slow-thinking mode, engages in deliberate, logical analysis, often requiring more effort.

Our discussion was based around the following questions:

- **As board members and others involved in governance, how certain are you that you are seeing everything and that tenants experiences are influencing your organisation?**
- **What is your role on contributing to assurance that these types of issues (bias) are not happening?**



More Challenge

A key insight found during discussions was to ensure steps are taken to overcome confirmation bias, by thinking slow, taking time for consideration, and requesting more information is provided, if this is lacking.

While we can search for confirmation evidence based upon our own beliefs, we are not naturally objective rational thinkers. We are influenced by our attitudes and behaviours that we are not even aware of.

This was a critical learning point made by the participants to challenge themselves and what may be presented to them, via reports requiring a decision, and to challenge where there is no or little mention of tenants voices across them.

Slow Down and Look For Alternatives

This insight links directly to a quote made by Kate Dodsworth, that we mentioned in our introduction the need to **join up leadership strategically and operationally, for boards** to have more of a grip on operational activities.

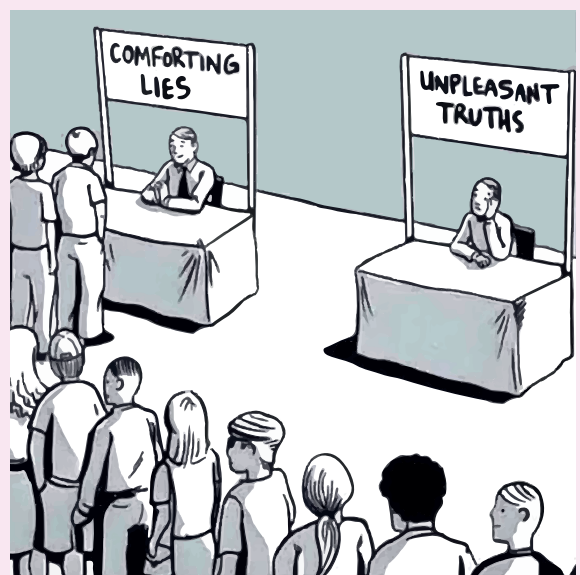
A critical **board behaviour needed now is to** understand tenants and lived experience and challenge where there is a lack of tenants voices reflected across the board, governance and activities.

We use our fast thinking when we are tired, hungry or mentally exhausted, interestingly a key learning point made in our last workshop was why we have board meetings at the end of the day, when people may be all of the above!

Why do the 'unpleasant truths' make us feel bad?

Cognitive dissonance is the uncomfortable psychological tension we feel when our actions are misaligned with our sense of identity: our beliefs, values and priorities.

“ We shouldn't be afraid of what ugly stuff falls out. ”



We explored how we may defer decisions and challenge or make the wrong decisions due to cognitive dissonance, this is where our behaviour, our decisions perhaps, do not reflect our beliefs and values. It was useful to examine this concept within what we may be more commonly aware of as groupthink.

Reflecting on thinking fast and slow naturally led to a discussion about the risk of groupthink, this was discussed in the context of the Post Office scandal that was (still is) in the media at the time of the workshop.

The Post Office scandal will become a classic example of the danger of groupthink, lack of challenge and fast thinking.



In May 2010, when Ed Davey was Postal Affairs Minister, he received a request for help from Alan Bates. Alan was a former sub-postmaster whose contract was terminated by the Post Office after asking too many questions about its IT system – Horizon. This was amongst a number of high-profile prosecutions of sub-postmasters the minister refused to help and was advised by colleagues it was a matter for the Post Office to investigate.

Alan Bates persevered, yet **Mr Davey listened only to his colleagues and accepted without question the issues raised were for the Post Office to resolve.**

Mr Davey has gone on public record later that he regretted not 'questioning his colleagues and the post office more'. Similarly, the same



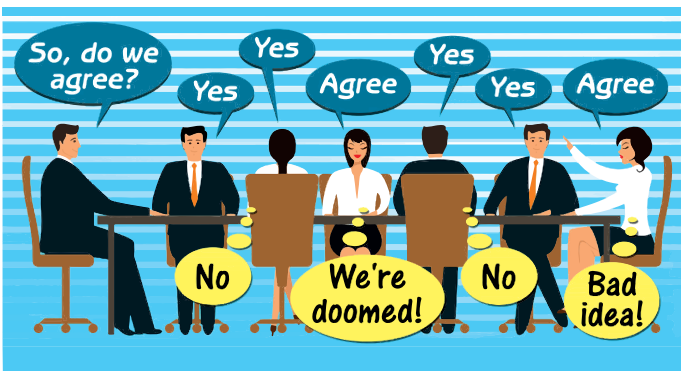
conversations were happening around the post office board table.

It was a number of years later and many ministers later that a campaign group, led by Mr Bates secured miscarriage of justice verdicts in court.



Participant Feedback

We discussed the symptoms of groupthink and strategies to overcome it.



What are the symptoms of groupthink?

- New starters – start vocal then this dims
- Everything being approved
- No evidence of challenge
- Consequences of speaking up
- Lack of confidence/knowledge
- Lack of discussion and questions
- Lack of balance in board members
- No discussion or challenge
- Lack of questions
- Same voices dominating
- Lack of demonstrable understanding
- Not reviewing longstanding practices or behaviours
- Not going against recommendations

How can you avoid groupthink?

- Allow time for questions
- Allow time for agenda items
- Questions in advance
- Training
- Strong chair/sufficient time
- Diverse backgrounds, life skills, experience-balanced
- Give sufficient time for challenge
- Developing board members and developing skills
- Diverse membership
- Chairing that encourages opinion and challenge
- Board behaviour framework – train everyone
- Ask for alternative view
- Trust to challenge and spend time together
- Chair and Customer Engagement need sufficient contact
- Board relationships, connections, trust
- Culture of challenge
- Mix of skills
- Diversity
- Value tenacity



Phil Hardy

Knowing Tenants

To start this part of the workshop we heard from Phil Hardy, Executive Director of Operations at Grand Union Housing Group (GUHG) about their approach to 'knowing who lives behind the doors'.

Sector Case Study

Phil gave participants an overview of their customer research programme and how the outputs resulted in changes to their operating model bringing greater assurance to the board.

The research helped GUHG to understand residents' behaviours and needs and revealed differences in experiences and attitudes, influencing residents' behaviour.

Further exploration revealed that these experiences translated into some serious situations that GUHG needed to respond to:

“ Segmentation is an important strategic tool which will enable us to really understand our customers. Each segment is a group of customers who are different to other customer segments with distinct and identifiable needs, attitudes, strengths and feelings.

Knowing who our customers are will enable us to use our corporate resources more effectively and direct strategic decisions - ultimately driving improvements for our customers, ensuring improved customer experience and improved business performance.

More than ever, we need to ensure we listen to our customers' views and opinions. Our segmentation will enable us to evidence representative customer voice in the delivery of our strategy and regulatory requirements.

Our research and subsequent analysis identified six different customer segments. The segment names reflect the approach that we should take to best meet the needs of the individual segments.

 ”

Identifying common themes

Our customers and home maintenance (% able to do)



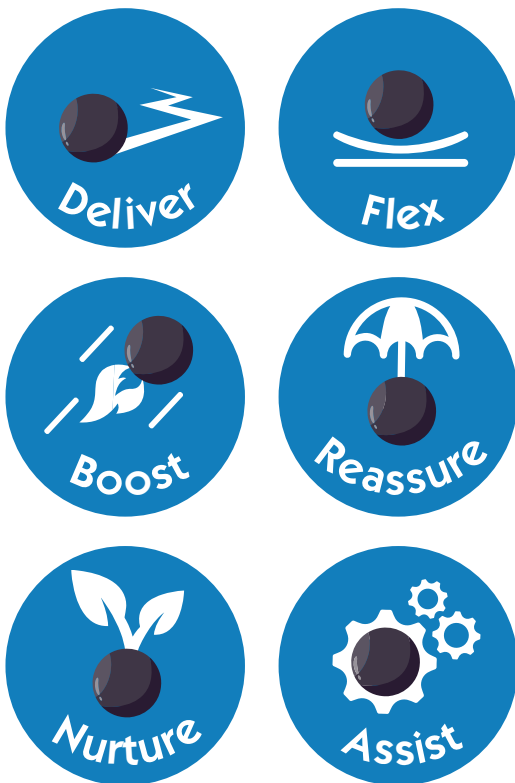
Around **a third** of customers don't feel able to maintain outdoor space or decorate

Nearly **60%** struggle with DIY

27% have an issue with damp and mould



To help GUHG translate these situations into support (or other ways of intervening), six segments were developed, enabling as far as possible a tailored and personalised service to be provided:



This example from GUHG of how collecting and using resident data, **beyond the narrow confines of simple demographic data**, can provide detailed insights and evidence that should support service development and delivery.

For participants, this illustration showed that they all had much more to do to truly understand what it might be like to live in a home managed by their organisation and the impact it undoubtedly has on the quality of the relationship between landlord and resident.

Part Two

Why we need to focus on tenant influence?

“ In the same way you can either diminish trust or lose trust, you can consciously create it, grow it, extend it and in some cases restore it. ”

Stephen Covey

For this part of the workshop we focused on trust – a key factor mentioned consistently by the trio of regulators in ‘rebalancing relationships’, tenant influence couldn’t happen without it!

Workshop preparation tasks were provided to participants for this part of the workshop. We can see their feedback later.

- Think about how your organisation is trustworthy, how you demonstrate this in your interaction with tenants?

- What one thing could YOU do to increase trustworthiness of your organisation?

We explored the Trust Triangle derived from a Harvard Business Review article and Ted Talk by Frances Frei, here Frances sets out three drivers of trust and that trust is a key factor of good governance:

https://www.ted.com/talks/frances_frei_how_to_build_and_rebuild_trust

Frances developed the trust triangle following, in part to, a request for her to help out Uber who were at the time dealing with culture challenge and reputation damage as a result of a series of

leadership decisions negatively impacting on the company. These are stories we have seen over the past few years in the housing sector! The point is that when trust is lost it can be traced back to a breakdown in one of three parts empathy, logic or authenticity.

Fast thinking can exaggerate a breakdown in trust, information we put out in communication or what finds its way into social media, as a result of behaviour, can negatively impact on any one of these areas. We did not go into more depth than this other than empathy was a key factor presented by organisations as a key takeaway at the end of the project, to the point of employing people with these skills. You can read more about the trust triangle at <https://hbr.org/2020/05/begin-with-trust>



Harvard Business Review suggests there are three drivers of trust:



From 'Begin with Trust' by Frances Frei and Anne Morris, May-June 2020



Participants Feedback

We moved on to explore at depth how an organisation demonstrates they are trustworthy- the ability to be trustworthy is much easier to demonstrate from an organisational perspective. While trust is difficult to measure and evidence, we focused on what an organisation can do to ensure and measure how well their values play out in reliable and responsive services tenants receive?

We discussed the pre-workshop preparation with each organisation to explore their thoughts.



Think about how your organisation is trustworthy, how you demonstrate this in your interaction with tenants?

- Hierarchical process within governance structure ensures appropriate flow of data based upon needs of end user.
- Customer voice section on reports provides data and context based upon analysis of customer feedback/interactions so that report captures impact on tenants.
- Consultation will be undertaken where appropriate and is done so more than in the past.
- Have a listening plan - it's more meaningful.

What one thing could YOU do to increase trustworthiness of your organisation?

- Being aware of risks, our own responsibilities and ensuring there is evidence provided and recorded.
- How to bring tenant experience to 'life' through reporting- invite photos, feedback, challenge rather than lengthy reports.
- Be willing to do more, not be fearful of it.
- Unvarnished board member visits.
- BMs know customer experience and expectations - look at what something does not tell you.
- 'Bake in the above'

Participant Insights

- Challenge assumptions; take time to think deeply about tenant influence evidence.
- Embrace tenacity and alternative views to build a culture of challenge, effective scrutiny.
- Bring tenant lived experience to life through listening and measuring tenant influence.
- Customer relationships is about trust and being proactive.



Yvonne Davies

Workshop 2 - Culture is Critical

This workshop was delivered by Yvonne Davies. Yvonne is a former Housing Association Managing Director, with over 35 years' experience of working in Housing and Communities. Prior to becoming a consultant in 2011, Yvonne was formerly Head of Housing and Economic Development at the Audit Commission for 5 years. Yvonne facilitates the programme for Board Excellence in Governance and the Board Diversity Programme for the Housing Diversity Network.

Participants also heard from guest speakers:

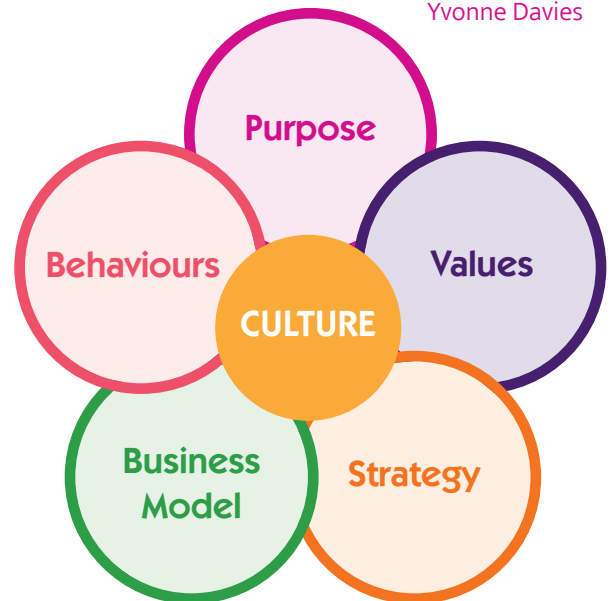
- Stephen Carver, Senior Lecturer in Project and Programme Management, Action, Execution and Implementation, Cranfield Business School and MBA business lecturer
- Bronwen Rapley, Chief Executive Onward
- Dave Richmond, Chief Executive St.Leger
- Dave Wilkinson, Board Member St.Leger

Workshop Content

The aim of the session was to continue to build knowledge and challenge around the Culture required that enables Tenant Influence at Board and governance levels, with takeaways for participants to develop back in their organisation. We explored how we understand what a good experience means across demography, ethnicity, vulnerability and other characteristics.

Participants worked through the following:

- What is culture and why is it important?
- How to develop a culture that welcomes tenant influence?



In advance of the workshop, participants were asked to prepare answers to pre set questions that they would use during the session:

Preparation was structured to encourage participants to start to think about evidence, and how they could be certain that what they were currently doing was working (or not) and, building on workshop 1 what they may be doing that is mistakenly damaging relationships.

1. Do your Terms of Reference scream out a tenant first culture?
2. Do we state our culture? – what are board and committees saying about culture and transparency?
3. How is culture cascaded across the organisation?
4. How do you evidence tenant experience, are they having a good one?



Leadership in NASA

The workshop started with an energetic presentation from Stephen Carver, one of Europe's top MBA lecturers in change and crisis management. Stephen Carver's talk on 'Leadership in NASA' was based upon his renowned storytelling technique that took us all on a journey through the Challenger (Jan 86) and Columbia (Feb 2003) disasters.



Stephen Carver

Stephen shared with us NASA's organisational and project management challenges up to and beyond those pivotal "Go/No Go" decisions, the night before both launches. For Challenger, there was previous knowledge of the potential for the O-ring failure.

What was shocking is that NASA's 'Go' decision on launching Columbia was based on an assessment it would "probably be alright", even though decision makers knew about the potential issues arising from heat proof tiles.

We heard about the background of the leadership team that can only be described as a command and control approach. The similar toxic relationship between government and NASA led up to and followed the disasters.

Stephen illustrated the findings of an independent inquiry on the Challenger disaster that found:

- 'Too much management and not enough leadership'
- Low empowerment
- Fear of escalation
- A silo mentality
- Complacency
- No 'One-Vision'

The same findings were made following an independent inquiry into the Columbia disaster.

For our participants there were a number of takeaways on:

- Project management
- Responsibility for people under a duty of care
- The importance of empathy and compassion.

We were also reminded that a culture supporting 'organised fun' will realise greater creativity. We have to acknowledge Albert Einstein for this quote!

Lastly, increasing 'listening skills' is exemplified by a quote from Colin Powell highlighting that if staff do not bring problems to the attention of management, then this reflects a failure in leadership.



NASA leaders admit that despite knowing about Columbia tile damage they decided not to inspect for damage..



Ron Dittmore
Columbia Programme Manager

Sector Case Study

We had the benefit of hearing from Bronwen Rapley (CEO at Onward and Chair, Housing Associations Group, Homes for the North & Deputy Chair of NHF) about experiences changing the culture at Onward, key learning shared included:



Bronwen Rapley

- ✓ Keep it real for staff and lead by example, bake it in as business as usual
- ✓ A listening plan is more meaningful as a strategic plan, keep consistent messaging
- ✓ Invest in front line staff, more doing
- ✓ Get good governance, seek evidence in board papers of customers voices
- ✓ Invite challenge
- ✓ Be curious and target the silent majority

Sector Case Study

Dave Richmond CEO (recently retired) and Dave Wilkinson board member of St.Leger Homes of Doncaster both shared similar insights on developing the culture;



Dave Richmond

- ✓ Approach to engagement and influence starts with the board
- ✓ Remember it is not about what we say as much as what we do - behaviours
- ✓ We are in the people business
- ✓ Make sure tenants are at the centre of decisions
- ✓ Engagement is everyone's business



Dave Wilkinson

Culture is Critical Workshop

When an organisational culture embraces openness, accountability and trust then this is the biggest enabler of tenant influence.

We can see the emphasis more and more on culture across key codes and guidance.

“ Ensure tenant values are aligned with decisions and accountability. ”

Kate Dodsworth, Chief of Regulatory Engagement at the Regulator of Social Housing

NHF Code of Governance:

- 3.2 (2): organisation focus on the needs of current and future residents
- 3.9: views and needs of key stakeholders. Including residents and other customers have informed decisions
- 1.3: embed inclusivity in organisational culture
- 1.4: positive inclusive culture – board to uphold the values of the organisation

<https://tinyurl.com/y7e63ned>



What is Culture and Why is it Important?

We kicked off with an exploration of the famous Peter Drucker's theory Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast, while strategy is important, the better way to organisational success, including tenant influence for our purposes, is to ensure that the culture – **the way we do things** - is an empowering and enabling one. No matter how good your strategy is, plans will fail without a culture that encourages people to implement it.



We Have to Find Our Own Way and Definition

Culture, unlike risk, strategic planning, performance management and financial planning is less clearly defined and understood, we talked about some of the key characteristics that contribute to culture, acknowledging that there is no 'one size fits all'.

ATTENTION WORKERS OF [REDACTED]

WORK IS NOT MEANT TO BE FUN.

THIS IS YOUR JOB. DO NOT DEDICATE WORK TIME TO DISCUSSION OF NON-WORK TOPICS.

DO NOT FACILITATE FRIENDSHIPS DURING WORK HOURS.
EXCHANGE PHONE NUMBER AND/OR HANG OUT UNTIL WORK IS COMPLETE.

REACH ME AT [REDACTED] IF A CO-WORKER IS HAVING NON-WORK DISCUSSIONS ON COMPANY TIME.

Viral work poster

Leadership Culture Characteristics

- Culture is an enabler, and cultural change does not happen overnight
- Non-Executive Directors are empowered to raise concerns where we have doubts
- Define and communicate a broader purpose than profit and growth, through actions and attitudes and the tone we set
- Workforce must feel engaged and able to contribute
- Openness and accountability matters to tenants
- It's the way the Board defines its business – and engages and reports to tenants (or the way staff do this on Boards' / Councillors' behalf).

Everyone's Culture Characteristics

- Board / Councillors should ensure culture is aligned to purpose, values and strategy
- Board / Councillors need to inform behaviours with directors, managers and all staff
- CEO should embed this throughout the organisation, remember that the CEO is a voice at the table, not the only voice
- Managers, properly empowered and supported, are critical to achieving the change.

Boards and Councillors need to define and understand their organisation culture and how this contributes to the achievement of corporate purpose and strategic priorities.

Participants Feedback

Q. Do we state our culture? What do boards and committees say about culture and transparency?

- We conducted a culture review, the board were mute on culture
- Culture is in our values, residents on our board
- Customer first working group, more to do
- We are now emphasising customer pioneer, takes time but making good progress
- Customer Impact included in all board papers, customer checks
- More on outcomes rather than culture, not all in the right place yet



Example checklists for monitoring:
Customer Service Excellence, Investors in People,
Tpas National Standards, The Sunday Times

How to Know Where We Are Culturally?

We can find our culture across a number of 'hidden' areas that need to be understood from monitoring:

- Unwritten rules, these can be multi layered, systemic and different throughout the organisation
- Staff will have heroes - who they look up to – who management listen to?
- Staff will have rituals – how they greet each other, how they respect all others, how we plan agendas and hold internal meetings-understand the micro cultures
- Staff will have symbols – like gestures, pictures and objects

More obvious demonstrations of culture is through:

- The way we deal with complaints and grievances
- What people do - behaviours
- What is celebrated – staff going above and beyond
- Whistle blowing feedback
- Staff survey results
- Intermediate external reviews
- Direct engagement with tenants and staff and other partners
- 3rd party – internal audit



How to Develop a Culture That Welcomes Tenant Influence?

Changing it up

Listening and involving tenants in decision-making and change is part of a tenant first culture that can be achieved through co production and co creation behaviours.

Where service providers and users of the service work together to reach a collective outcome. Target cultures can take on the following characteristics:

- Openness, transparency and honesty
- Clear commitment to power sharing
- Clear Communication
- Clear demonstration of value and respect for service users



While culture is key, once we have defined our target culture then we can work towards a shift to demonstrating it, the following examples on how to do this were explored:

- Communicate the culture we want:
 - What do staff communicate to tenants?
 - How well does each individual and team, align behind our purpose?
 - What needs to change to link to business strategy?
 - What messages do we need to enforce?
- Assurance that the culture we want is being met
- Challenging problematic practices from the frontline staff and managers
- Ensure we have the right people in the board/committee room, lived experience?
- Structure discussions and work to focus on the right issues, priorities and activities –meeting agendas centred on the culture we want to create
- Ensure high energy topics in the right place on the agenda – do we have the right materials to consider and time to discuss a tenant first culture
- Do we need to ensure coaching and training to build trust and communication with tenants – including tenant influence in decision making

Participant Feedback

Q. Do your terms of reference (and other key documents) scream out a tenant first culture?

- Not enough, more so in tenant groups
- It's passive
- May be overshadowed by governance fears, need more about why and how, not what as well as outcomes

Assessment and continued monitoring of culture is important, or else how will you know it is what or where it needs to be.

There are plenty of examples where we have got this wrong in our sector, how do boards seek assurance that the desired culture is 'practice'?

- Without clear and timely follow up actions, feedback from workers and tenants, organisations can be accused of "culture washing" leading to loss of trust – which is the biggest barrier to driving the culture
- Performance management and reward systems should support and encourage behaviours consistent with our purpose, values, strategy and business culture
- Engagement on culture with tenants can provide great reporting and – for the long-term benefit of tenants (and the organisation)



Competence and Conduct Standard: Consultation DLUHC – 6th February 2024

- Improved professional standards
- Tenants enduring poor conditions – leadership?
- Experience falls short of promises for tenants
- Policy and approach to managing and developing skills, knowledge, experience and conduct of their staff
- Adopt an appropriate code of conduct for those staff and ensure this is embedded in the organisation

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/competence-and-conduct-standard-for-social-housing-consultation



Participant Feedback

Q. How do you evidence tenant experience, are they having a good one?

- We need to be more proactive
- Silence is not always bad, need to be sure
- Use data and engagement

Are your practices of applying values and beliefs into behaviours flavours of the month, or consistently applied? Are they your focus monthly, yearly or 3 yearly? Embedding ways to monitor practice consistently and regularly against clear performance measures combined with clear leadership can drive behaviours.

While we want to be more tenant-centred, we can only achieve this by co-creating common values and beliefs.

Culture has a part to play in long-term success, this can't be flavour of the month and must wrap around all communications internally and externally.

Q. How is culture cascaded across the organisation?

- Behaviour
- Report on culture in board papers
- Through the leadership team
- Be overt and explicit - watch the saying / doing gap

Action Plans

Lastly we worked with each organisation on Action Plans:

Q. What is more effective than 'tenants at the heart', a common purpose of many landlords, but how do we demonstrate this culturally?

Action plans included:

- ✓ Developing insight and segmentation – be more aware of more customers priorities
- ✓ Demonstrate impact
- ✓ Listening plan that is genuine and all touchpoints
- ✓ Tenants able to influence all aspects
- ✓ Keep our promises, make it real

Q. How to get to a culture that welcomes and builds tenant influence?

Action plans included:

- ✓ Meaningful and worthwhile engagement
- ✓ Culture framework that includes customer insight, commitments, behaviours, performance
- ✓ Clear expectations
- ✓ Invite challenge
- ✓ Raise awareness, communications and rewards
- ✓ Customer led assurance group as well as board assurance methods

Q. How do we evidence this?

Action plans included:

- ✓ Communications
- ✓ Board papers
- ✓ Feedback - TSMs



Participant Insights

- Culture is created by what is tolerated or challenged
- Approaches to developing the right culture depends on what is consistently emphasised and what is overlooked
- Enable tenant influence of values and culture standards
- Celebrate the good stuff
- Be joined up, led by all-strategic and operational
- Evidence it



Workshop 3 - Resilience

This workshop was delivered by Michelle Hallmark, Managing Director and Val Hassell, Personal profiling and brand messaging strategist at Creative Bridge.

As a strategic communications consultancy, they help clients achieve greater social impact through purpose-driven communications and creative marketing.

Participants also benefitted from guest speakers:

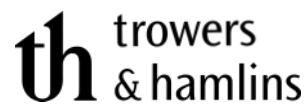
- John Denny, CEO and Founder of Hope Opportunity Trust, Chair of Merseyside Police Independent Assessment Group and former CEO of Chester and District Housing Trust & Cosmopolitan
- Ian Davies, Partner at Trowers and Hamlins



Michelle Hallmark



Val Hassell



Ian Davies



John Denny

In advance of the workshop, participants were asked to prepare examples that they would use during the session:

We asked participants to come prepared to the session with an example of a great comment, interview or communication to a resident following an occasion where something has gone wrong, and it could be perceived as the housing landlord at fault.

Also to bring a similar example from outside the housing sector.



Sector Case Study

We were very excited to hear from John Denny who gave a candid and honest account of his experiences of the CDHT / Cosmopolitan experience, alongside outside sector experience of reputation, core purpose and values.



We are not including the entire history here as there is not enough room in this report, let's just state that participants were exposed to an example of what can and does go wrong, even amongst strong governance and robust assurance, leading to a deep discussion of what a trustworthy organisation looks like.

John shared some invaluable insight for participants to consider:

- ✓ People, equity, kindness
- ✓ Culture
- ✓ Influence isn't enough, also community and colleagues
- ✓ Power- share it, don't recruit in your own likeness
- ✓ Do what is right not just what is expected
- ✓ Be aware of dissonance and distance decay – be there, turn up and get the truth
- ✓ Things happen that are out of your control. Get comfortably uncomfortable with that.

“ Enable influence at every level to improve governance. ”

Workshop Content

Part 1 - Personal and Organisational Resilience

The aim of the workshop was to explore how to build better relationships and resilience, while being able to respond to and mitigate issues in the public realm.

In this part of the workshop we explored:

What is resilience and what creates it?

Learning from outside the sector, we discussed key ingredients to building personal resilience:

- Get help on the right things at the right time
- There is a first time for everything
- Repetition
- Preparation

How do you get it or support others to maintain or improve their own? You can see similar characteristics as we found in the earlier workshops.


- Meaningful life – or purpose
- Optimism
- Self-efficacy
- Mastery/personal competence
- Secure relationships
- Trust – in others and own instincts
- Control – external and internal focus
- Spiritual influences
- Humour



We talked about the importance of keeping a check in on our own personal resilience and participants completed the Connor and Davidson Resilience scale (CD-RISC) (2003).

Resilience gives us the ability to thrive in the face of adversity. Those who are resilient are better able to move through the traumas of life. A number of organisations are prioritising staff well-being and psychological safety of staff, for the benefits to a positive staff experience contributes to tenant experience, all business benefits.

A check-in on your personal resilience – your lifejacket first



For the CD-RISC-25 in the US general population (n = 577), median score is 82, with Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 being 0-73, 74-82, 83-90, 91-100 (Connor and Davidson, 2003). Therefore, for example, a score of 55 would place the subject in the lowest 25% of the general population, and a score of 89 would fall in the 50-75% percentile, of third quartile: 25% would have a higher score than this.

tpas 13 CreativeBridge

The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale

The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale is a test that measures resilience or how well one is equipped to bounce back after stressful events, tragedy or trauma.

The Scale measures:

- The ability to adapt to change
- The ability to deal with what comes along
- The ability to cope with stress
- The ability to stay focused and think clearly
- The ability to not get discouraged in the face of failure
- The ability to handle unpleasant feelings such as anger, pain or sadness



Personal resilience matters when we consider the voices of tenants, the extent of, or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals, impacts on tenants and overall trust.

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, self-efficacy levels are lower amongst social housing tenants than private renters or home owners. Households where there may be less control over

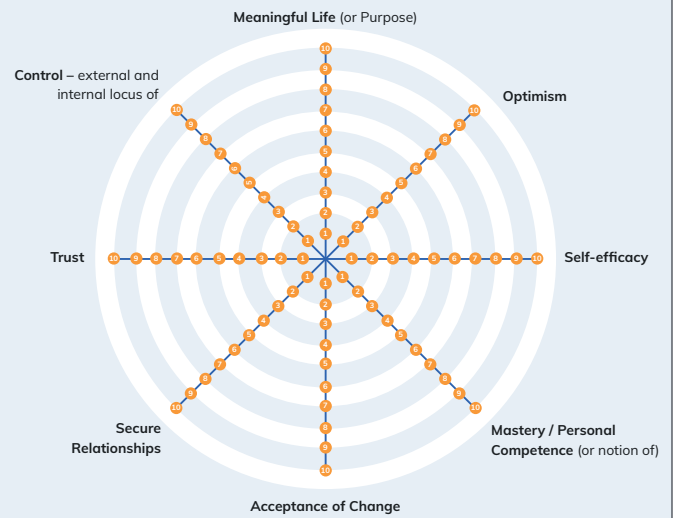
where they live or other life choices linked to less opportunity to participate in a consumer culture, may benefit from clarity over how they can have control over things you do and decisions you make as their landlord. Co-creating solutions within your tenant influence plans that guide and assist tenants to have more choice and control is important.



What can we do to improve resilience organisationally and for residents we want to hear from?

For how your organisation works with residents

How does your tenant involvement structure measure up on each of these dimensions of supporting resilience?



Please mark your score on each line from 1 (terrible) to 10 (excellent): •



Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD RISC 25)

Please check (/) the space corresponding to the statement the number that best describes yourself about each statement

Statement	0	1	2	3	4
1. I am able to adapt when changes occur					
2. I have one close and secure relationship					
3. Sometimes fate or God helps me					
4. I can deal with whatever comes my way					
5. Past successes give me confidence					
6. I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems					
7. Having to cope with stress can make me stronger					
8. I tend to bounce back after illness, injury or other hardships					
9. I believe in most things happen for a reason					
10. I make my best effort, no matter what					
11. I believe I can make my goals, even if there are obstacles					
12. Even when helpless, I do not give up					
13. In times of stress, I know where to find help					
14. Under pressure, I stay focussed and think clearly					
15. I prefer to take the lead in problem solving					
16. I am not easily discouraged by failure					
17. I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties					
18. I make unpopular or difficult decisions					
19. I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear and anger					
20. I have to act on a hunch					
21. I have strong sense of purpose in life					
23. I feel like I am in control					
23. I like the challenges					
24. I work to attain goals					
25. I take pride in achievements					

Response options: 5-point scale response

Not true at all=0, rarely true=1, sometimes true=2, often true=3, and true nearly all of the time=4

Total score:

Total sum scores range between 0-100, with higher scores indicating greater perceived resilience.





Part 2 - Reputational Resilience

In this part of the workshop we discussed two case studies and what a good response looks like.

Characteristics of a good response:

- Lives your values
- Factually accurate
- Expresses understanding of emotion
- Acknowledges there's more than one version of the truth
- Is written for the audience that actually matters most
- Continues the conversation in a place that works for tenants

Listening and learning - remember the audience:

- Explore whether the issue raised is isolated or representative
- Test awareness
- Follow up with direct assurance and reassurance
- Demonstrate learning afterwards
- Monitor the conversation
- The free weekly has more power than the national (press)
- Remain transparent

Forming a response

- ✓ Acknowledge
- ✓ Bridge
- ✓ Close / continue

Recent examples

The portfolio holder for housing at one council said: *"We take our responsibility to our tenants extremely seriously, and whilst due to GDPR legislation, we cannot comment on the specifics of this case, I can set out our approach to damp and mould issues.*

"As a landlord, we always do our best to ensure our homes are in a good state of repair, and we have a robust policy in place to address any mould issues reported to us. This includes inspecting homes promptly after the initial report, confirming actions or repairs required and the likely timescales as well as advice and support on reducing condensation in the home while we organise the repairs.

"We encourage all our tenants to contact us directly if they have any concerns, questions or complaints and encourage tenants to feed into the work we do and the how we do it to give a good customer experience. If any tenant wishes to raise a concern with us or help us by getting involved with service improvement, our doors are always open."



13



Recent examples cont'd

Responding to the issues raised, the council's cabinet member for housing services, private renters and planning, said: *"I want to apologise for the ongoing distress and inconvenience this is causing Mr Smith. This is simply not acceptable.*

"Whilst our teams have undertaken various repairs since 2021, the work to fix the main leak earlier this year took far too long and issues such as damp and mould and floorboards should have been resolved much sooner.

"An inspection will take place next week and we will ensure any outstanding work is completed urgently and the family kept updated throughout.

"Rest assured we are working hard to improve our housing services and know we must get this right as soon as possible."



13



Outside Sector Case Study



When 60 former staff at the Scottish brewer and pub chain Brewdog published a letter on Twitter claiming that the business was run on a "culture of fear" and "toxic attitudes", the CEO and senior managers were left reeling.

The letter, posted on Twitter, alleged that Brewdog fostered a culture where employees were afraid to tell their bosses when they had concerns.

Addressing James Watt (the CEO), the letter said: "You spent years claiming you wanted to be the best employer in the world, presumably to help you to recruit top talent, but ask former staff what they think of those claims, and you'll most likely be laughed at. Being treated like a human being was sadly not always a given for those working at Brewdog."

Watt responded by saying: "It is fair to say that this type of fast-paced and intense environment is definitely not for everyone, but many of our fantastic long-term team members have thrived in our culture. Our culture is built on rewarding and developing great people and focussing on growing our business."

If Watt thought that was a good response, he was wrong. The group of former staff responded by saying: "Many of our signatories worked for Brewdog for years and were extremely high performing. To suggest that those who apparently couldn't hack it are somehow less worthy in your eyes is grotesque; we believe this shows your true feelings of disregard for your staff, both former and current."

The accusations of a toxic culture, led from the top, were highly damaging to the Brewdog brand.

There were countless stories and features published in media outlets worldwide. The brand became associated with a 'toxic culture'. The proposed IPO was delayed as the firm tried to tackle the damage done by the furore.

The company says it will go ahead with an IPO in 2022. Investors now take ESG (environmental, social and governance) very seriously, so it will be interesting to see how they react to Brewdog's floatation.

As an example of how culture eats strategy for breakfast, what happened at Brewdog is a definitive case study.

Key Takeaways

In summary, key takeaways from this workshop include:

- a. Personal resilience and importance to tenants: self-efficacy, decreasing trust and control
- b. Organisational resilience benefits from staff and tenant resilience
- c. When things go wrong, you are more able to bounce back

- d. Control the narrative and being prepared is key
- e. Be prepared to turn things over to get to the truth
- f. Report on issues before others do

Resilience contributes to a culture where people can deal with pressure, respond creatively to challenge and change, and treat each others respectfully.



Sector Insight

We heard from Ian Davies, partner at Trowers and Hamblins about key areas to be aware of now we are in a new regulatory environment, there was a lot covered so here are the key takeaways:

- ✓ Need to demonstrate how you meet the obligations
- ✓ Need resident lived experience meaningfully engaged in governance structures
- ✓ Consult at a formative stage not after so you can react to feedback
- ✓ Have to support and sustain tenant led activities and use to inform decisions
- ✓ Evidence equitable outcomes, be aware of them to shape your responsiveness
- ✓ Data up to date on people and property
- ✓ Work towards Awaab's law timescales
- ✓ Get assurance in place

Participant Insights

- Assurance is where you choose to look for it
- Report on issues before others do
- There is a relationship between core purpose, values and reputation
- Create more control and choice to enable tenant influence, build resilience
- Boards need to reflect community – don't recruit in your own likeness
- Include in JD's kindness, respect and openness



Taking Stock

With so much covered at each workshop we took participants through a mid project recap session:

- One thing you have implemented in your organisation as a result of the first 3 workshops?
- What impact has the change had?
- What challenges are you facing now in achieving change?



VIVID

- ✓ Commissioned a Psychographic segmentation project. Identifies more about what customers are telling us
- ✓ Trying to move the narrative towards culture
- ✓ Recent IDA
- ✓ Now trying to understand more about customers.



Flagship

- ✓ Focus on customer first culture
- ✓ Getting the right people with the right thinking to serve our customers
- ✓ Improved customer engagement framework



For Housing

- ✓ We are aligning everything we do alongside learning from workshops
- ✓ Our journey is to ensure tenants are more involved
- ✓ Ripples and our drive to openness and transparency
- ✓ New governance plans and operational model
- ✓ My first workshop today but I have noticed how more open our board is
- ✓ Customer journey and journey mapping
- ✓ The board and Exec are getting more involved during change
- ✓ We know what we need to do.



LHP

- ✓ Just agreed at Board to review and reset our purpose
- ✓ Galvanised by consumer standards
- ✓ Fantastic opportunity as a small local org, felt was bland before
- ✓ A fundamental realignment of our org/culture
- ✓ Understanding our culture and what it means to our business.



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

Northamptonshire Partnership Homes

- ✓ We had a governance review, some synchronising with workshop content
- ✓ Looked at what implementation needs to look like, more from a tenant perspective and move away from traditional model
- ✓ Connect, going forward, who our tenants are
- ✓ Sessions have helped us have these conversations - it is like a blank sheet of paper.



Worthing Homes

Worthing Homes

- ✓ Boards Complaints Champion
- ✓ Scrutiny and audit committee collaboration
- ✓ Tenants involved in procurement



Moat

- ✓ Formed new Customer Influence Strategy – approval by board
- ✓ These workshops have helped us reaffirm what we need to do
- ✓ Transparency and focus
- ✓ Board TOR reviewed, customers are throughout it
- ✓ Customer Service training
- ✓ There is a lot to do and the workshops have helped us finalise our plans
- ✓ Procure new repairs service.



Workshop 4 - Innovation in Repairs

This workshop was facilitated by Mathew Baxter CEO at Echelon Group and Jane Nelson Director at Cardo Group and LCB Group, Director Alcinoe Ltd.

We also had a presentation from Lenna Cumberbatch who challenged what we thought we knew about inclusion. Lenna is a Board member at Rooftop, Trustee British Pharmacological Society, Non-Exec Director at Goodman Masson, Research Executive for the European Commission and EDI international speaker.

Workshop Content

Part 1 - Setting the scene and key challenges

The aim of this workshop was to take the repairs service area and develop a proactive and innovative approach that ensures tenants are front and centre by utilising data and working with insight and procurement to create a quality service that is reflected in TSMs and reduces complaints. We looked at the repairs service through a diversity and inclusion lens. Developed solutions ought to be able to focus on tenant influence across repairs services in direct response to the recommendations from the Better Social Housing Review (BSHR), using data and insight to drive up quality.



Mathew Baxter



Jane Nelson



Lenna Cumberbatch

“ What do you need to know that services are being well run at the frontline and serving everybody's diverse needs. ”



Kate Dodsworth

Kate Dodsworth, Chief of Regulatory Engagement at the Regulator of Social Housing



www.bettersocialhousingreview.org.uk



In advance of the workshop, participants were asked to prepare examples that they would use during the session:

- What are the three most important things that would give you assurance that you have a good repairs service?
- What part of the procurement process do you believe tenants add the most value?

The workshop was delivered in 3 parts:

- Part 1 Setting the scene and key challenges
- Part 2 Diversity and Inclusion
- Part 3 Best practice and future state

We acknowledge that across the sectors, landlords have found challenges across the repairs service as a result of the impact of Covid. However, landlords are now seeing demand up by 25-30% on pre-covid levels.

The impact of this demand rests across key performance indicators, predominantly the Works in Progress (WIP). A number of other challenges were discussed:

- Lack of investment in housing
- Housing Ombudsman spotlight
- Higher expectations (a perception)
- Consumer standards

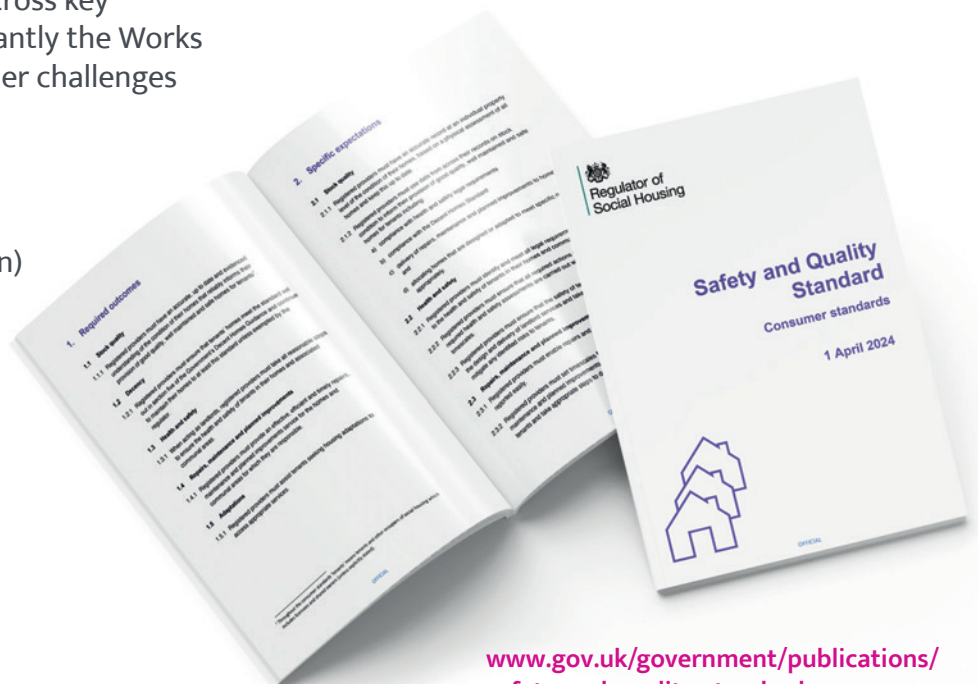
Key solutions shared by Mathew included:

- ✓ Implementation of complaint handling code
- ✓ Using data proactively
- ✓ Lobbying for VAT removal on decarbonisation works
- ✓ Focus on damp, mould and condensation
- ✓ Working collaboratively in developing new repairs standards
- ✓ Work with tenants on supply chain
- ✓ Benchmarking and sharing data

Recommendation 3

Housing Associations should partner with residents, contractors and frontline staff to develop and apply new standards defining what an outstanding maintenance and repairs process looks like.

BSHR Dec 2022



www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-and-quality-standard

Expectations or the basics?

- Communication
- Timeliness
- Quality
- Visibility
- Flexible appointments
- Understanding and respect



Part 2 - Diversity and Inclusion

Lenna and Jane presented their strategic perspective on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) for housing and contractors.

EDI is a clear part of the RSH standards; Lenna was spot on at challenging us all about what we think EDI is, and shared thoughts on why we need to focus on inclusion and power inequality. We also reflected that impact assessments were ‘all the rage’ in the 1980’s but had dropped off many radars. We all need to plan for these to return as a feature in our developing approaches.

Equality Impact Assessment

Housing
Groudmobil Services

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)
The purpose of the Equality impact assessment is to identify the equality implications of your strategy, policy, project or other activity on different groups affected by it and consider the equality implications of your strategy, policy, project or other activity on different groups affected by it and consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality. The EqIA will need to be completed by the project or For guidance, please refer to the training material at [link].

Name of activity
Consultation on the Complaint Handling Code and its implementation.

Activity purpose
To carry out a consultation with member landlords, at [link].

5. Does this activity affect one protected characteristic?
Age
Proportionally the 65+ age range access to our 65+ years (20%).

Impact
Since 2015, adults over the age of 65 years over half of all adult rental non-owners were digital non-users; 12% of social rented non-users.

Detail the impact, who is impacted and how to advance equality
The Complaint Handling Code will be implemented by providing a new Complaint Handling Code. In addition, the Code of 2019 will include the complaint process. The impact that these are all...

The purpose of the Equality impact assessment is to consider the equality implications of your strategy, policy, project or other activity on different groups affected by it and consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality. The EqIA will need to be completed by the project manager, policy author etc...

© Inclusive Perspective

What is diversity?

We often see Diversity as:

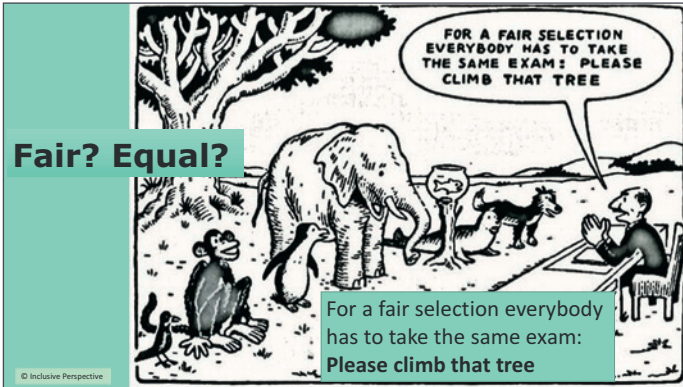
- Woman vs Man
- Black vs White
- Disabled vs Able
- It's not that simple...

© Inclusive Perspective



What is Diversity?

Fair and equal is not the same.



Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010

Age	Disability	Gender reassignment
Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race
Religion and belief	Sex	Sexual Orientation

© Inclusive Perspective

Listening

Ask, listen, record

© Inclusive Perspective

Equity

Equality

Equity

Individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access or opportunity to the game. They are being treated equitably.

Inclusion

All three can see the game without any support or accommodation because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

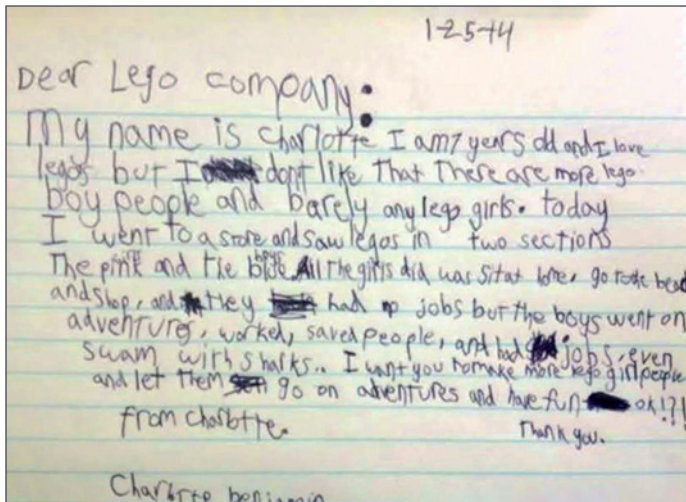
Inclusion



Business Case for Change

In 2016, 9 out of 10 contractors reported lack of skills or staff was amongst their greatest concerns over the next 12 months, ref BCIS.

- Repairs is a priority - the workforce matters
- Opportunities for tenants and children in the future
- Trust
- Skills shortage
- Workforce representative of community



Part 3 - Best Practice and Future State

In this part of the workshop we heard feedback from participants in answer to the preparation set, in the main around building assurance and tenants influencing procurement, although the principles can be applied to any and all aspects of the repairs service.

Participant Feedback

What are the three most important things that would give you assurance that you have a good repairs service?

- Tenant satisfaction – (TSM Transactional) League tables
- Failure demand point (Tenant journey and number of chase up calls made)
- Evidence from photos and tenants sign off of completed works
- Formal tenant scrutiny, part of the governance structure
- Performance / Auditing
- Less noise about repairs
- Fewer complaints
- Ratio of contacts per repair completed
- Ease of effective contact
- Proactive approach to reduce reactive repairs
- Customer perspective
- Staff perspective
- Efficiency of process and reduced customer effort
- (TSMs) – Complaints
- Engagement
- Customer design
- Continuous scrutiny
- Sickness
- RIDDOR
- Number of jobs per day
- Overhead costs
- Health & Safety
- Gives assurance that the service is meeting tenants needs and/or expectations
- Optimised WIP
- Completing jobs in timely manner, maximising efficiency
- Happy staff
- Pride in work
- Job satisfaction
- Easy to recruit



Participant Feedback

What part of the procurement process do you believe tenants add the most value?

- Scope – Cost/Service/Options
- KPIs
- Co-producing the specification and shape of the service
- Shape offer
- Evaluate
- Score offer
- Selection
- Continuous improvement and monitoring

Before

- What are their expectations?
- Standards
- Specification
- ITT
- PQQ
- Buyer event
- Meet the buyer
- Set the tone and expectation

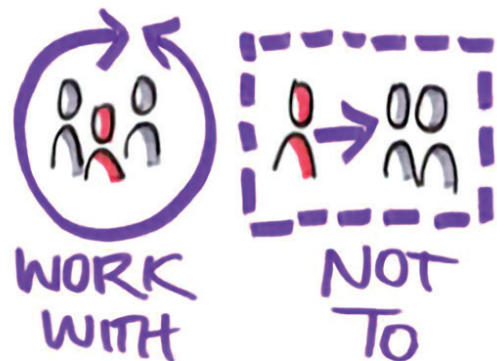
During

- Contractor evaluation
- Interviews
- Site visits
- Performance monitoring
- Contract management
- Scrutiny
- Mystery shopping

After

- Post evaluation
- Contract management
- Lessons learned
- Discovery
- Selection
- Design
- User testing
- KPIs
- Implementation

In summary there are a number of opportunities for tenants to be involved in procurement and its pretty much across the entire process. From October 2024, the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 will provide further opportunities for tenants to influence.



Tenant influence in procurement principles

<p>Option Appraisal</p>	<p>Co-production</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing service • Specifically with tenants • Targeted to recent users / complainants • New voices • Attend market events • Peer-peer discussions • Sign off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-production • Collaboration-service design • Turning aspirations into reality • Ensuring tenant influence • Ownership of new service / reality checks • Ensure right measures • Tenants sign off • Create the team
<p>Procurement Process</p>	<p>Evaluation and Award</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do tenants sit? • Use of iterative procurement (e.g. CD/CPN) • Use of new competitive flexible procedure from October • Upfront honesty for time commitment and support (e.g. IT) • Support and training is key • Maintaining independence • Should tenants be paid for their time – everyone else is? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal voice in Evaluation • Tenant designed questions • Oversight of whole process • Move away from soft questions only
<p>Mobilisation</p>	<p>Scrutiny and Governance</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active involvement in mobilisation • Co creation of joint communications • Embedding culture with new supplier(s) • Use tenant champions to spread the word • Scrutiny of this critical phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant sign off on performance management data • Hold suppliers to account • Holding landlord to account • Membership of core group(s) • Annual review process – lead in tenant aspects • Structure embedded in contract • Tenant advocacy • Clear links to other tenant groups
<p>Social Value</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early engagement to identify objectives • Bespoke set of measures • End-to-end Tenant scrutiny of delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding all parties to account in delivery • Measuring real added value to Tenants • Use of Social Value toolkit





Future State

- Tenant influence in decarbonisation
- New procurement regulations- opportunity to rethink
- Principle designer/contractor competency

Participant Insights

EDI

- Be aware of bias, be proactive
- Is EDI on risk register?
- Do impact assessments, you will find negative impacts then explain how you will address
- Don't be afraid to apologise
- Look at new initiatives to address trades skills shortage

Repairs

- Landlords should partner with tenants, contractors and staff to develop and apply new standards defining what an excellent repairs service looks like
- Think 'next level' service:
 - Bespoke
 - 30 minute call backs
 - 'We haven't forgotten you' calls
 - Knights (or knightesses) in shining armour
 - On route transparency
 - A contractor that turns up
- Closely monitor contractor KPIs

Workshop 5 - Core Purpose

Cormac Russell facilitated this session. Cormac is CEO of Nurture Development, an organisation that seeks to support communities to reduce institutionalisation and increase interdependency in community life. Cormac is a social explorer, an author and a much sought-after speaker. He is the Founding Director of Nurture Development and a member of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute, at DePaul University, Chicago.

Participants also had valuable insight from a talk delivered by Angela Lockwood, recently retired CEO at Northstar Housing Group about transformation of values and culture focusing on embedding influence.

Workshop Content

Part 1 - Discovering Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

This workshop aimed to understand the context of our sectors' role in communities supporting health, wellbeing and employment, how are we refocusing on our core purpose of residents, homes and staff and then delivering it.

The workshop was delivered in 3 parts:

- **Part 1** Discovering Asset Based Community Development
- **Part 2** Power
- **Part 3** Asking the right questions

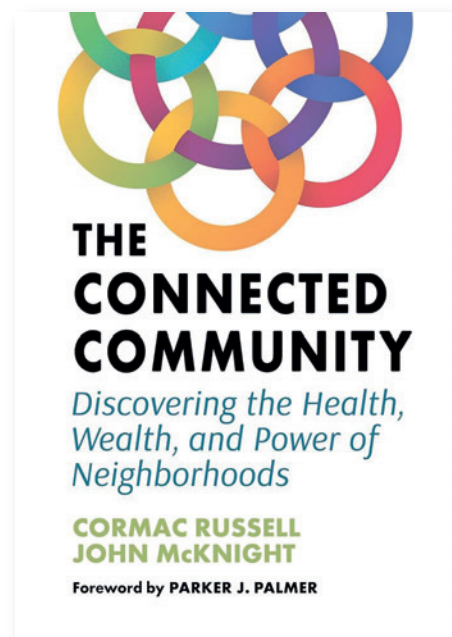
We did not ask participants to prepare for this last workshop as many were working towards their final presentation, see Finale!



Cormac Russell



Angela Lockwood





Does overhelp mean overpower?

The ABCD approach is in response to the ‘failure of external approaches to community issues’ (ref The Connected Community). The entire approach is very worthy of more detailed research but for the purposes of this report we have included some of the key points made by Cormac.

A key message is that we need to move away from seeing people (communities) as needing to be fixed, also known as the ‘white knight syndrome’ to seeing people as having a contribution.

ABCD means to be person-centred, where people have ‘gifts’ to offer alongside the value and contribution this brings.

How often do we hear language in our sector that brings the narrative of tenants and communities being ‘done to’ rather than ‘with’, how often do we go armed with solutions (with good intentions), rather than seeing what community assets are out there.

As a sector, can we be better at moving from a deficit-based perspective to an asset based perspective? If we do, how can this transform the current stigma faced by many tenants and neighbourhoods? There are lots of stories shared of examples where people come together to make things better.

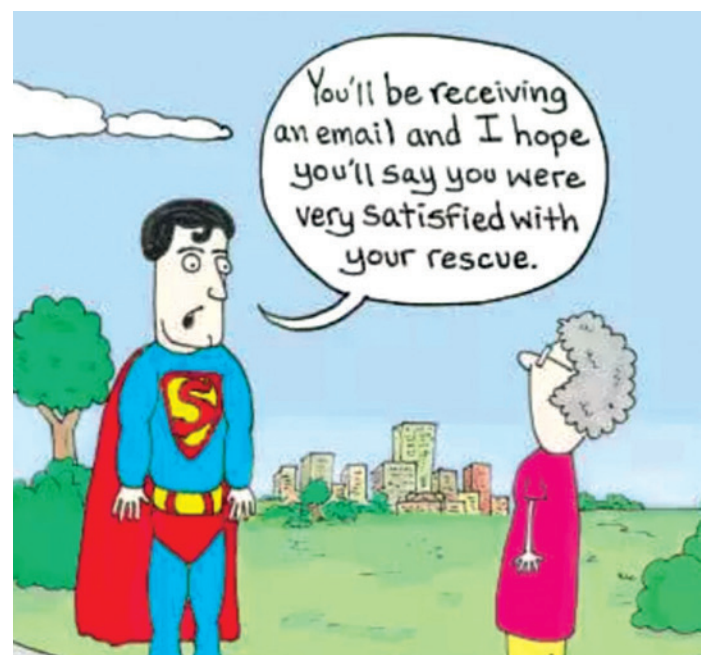
Examples of ABCD

- Women’s suffrage
- Workers rights including weekends off, and 8 hour days

“ Need community in your heart not just your title. ”



Cormac Russell

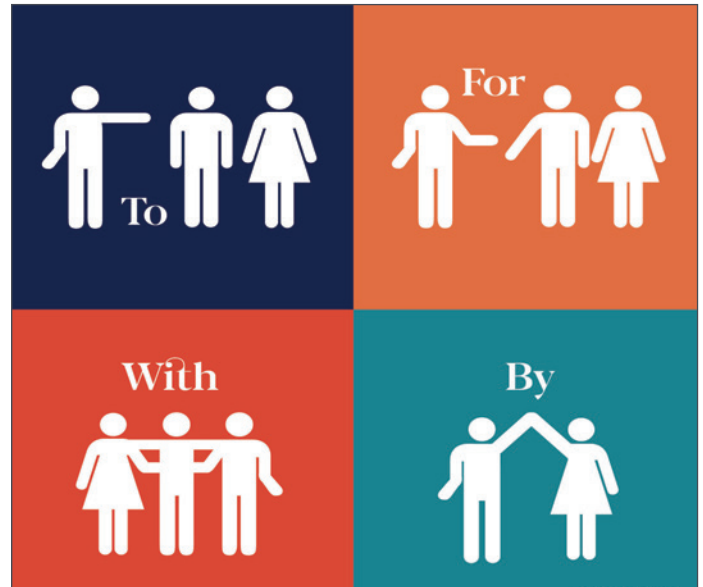


Cormac gave an example of working with the prison service to relocate 100 men leaving prison. The ex-prisoners were seen as 'community-returners', this shifted perspectives and humanised the project, an example of how language is important in defining purpose.

How this 'rests' alongside tenant influence is that core purpose, social purpose and any transformation must always involve local tenants and residents.

Contracting to Relocate Authority

We explored how 'animating questions' helps to relocate authority, by bringing to life (animation) individuals and communities. This approach is a key characteristic of the ABCD approach and **puts communities in charge of setting outcomes**. Cormac shared example animated questions. When we conduct needs assessments (agency is eroded by needs assessments, creates dependency) we are working towards service imposing solutions, the later reinforces paternalism and power imbalances. In the field of epidemiology when we understand that external services only reach 15% of community who needs them, how can we reach the remaining 85%? It's by seeing people from strength based perspectives and developing health interventions with communities.



“ It’s a misuse of power to solve problems that don’t belong to you. ”



Four Animating Questions

- 1 How valuable do you plan on this course being?
- 2 How participative do you plan on being during this course?
- 3 How much risk do you plan on taking during this course?
- 4 How much do you plan on contributing to the shared learning and wellbeing of everyone in this group during the course?



Part 2 - Power

We explored the 'Helpers Crossroads' this highlights different approaches to a common dilemma.

Dilemma: Kids in the community haven't got much to do in the summer holidays.

Which crossroad taken do you think will have more impact? Where do you hangout most in the crossroads?

- The ones that makes the neighbourhood a source of change
- Not external/landlord led
- Top up with services, when we over help we over power

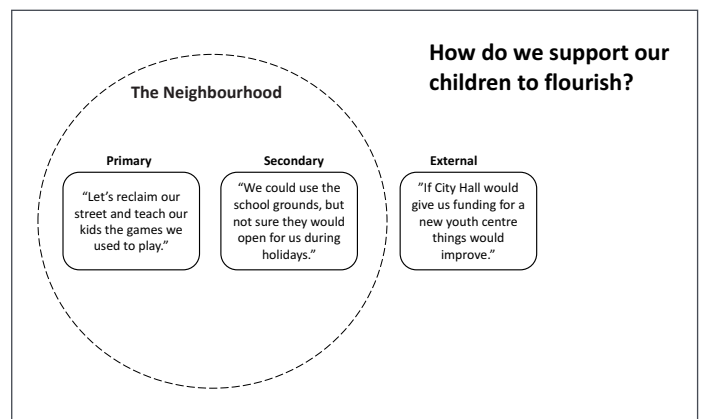
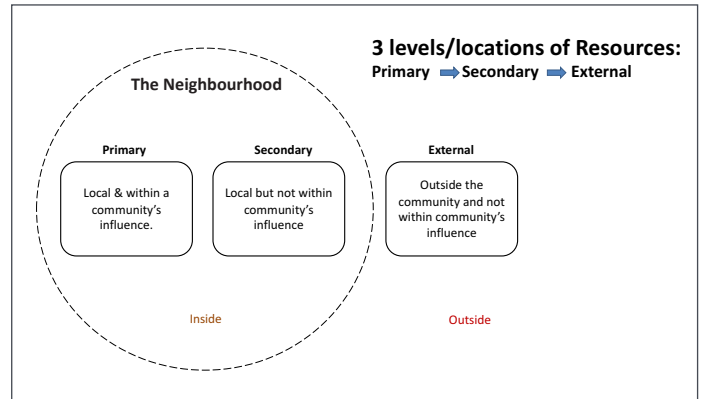
Key message from this part of the workshop was to move away from seeing people as needing to be fixed. Are some of our current approaches based on historical institutionalism assumptions?

We further explored the three levels of assets; these are an alternative way of thinking about the 'helpers crossroads' and perhaps the only way an external level has a role:

- **1. Primary** – local and within community influence
- **2. Secondary** – local but not within community influence
- **3. External** – not local, not within community influence

ABCD

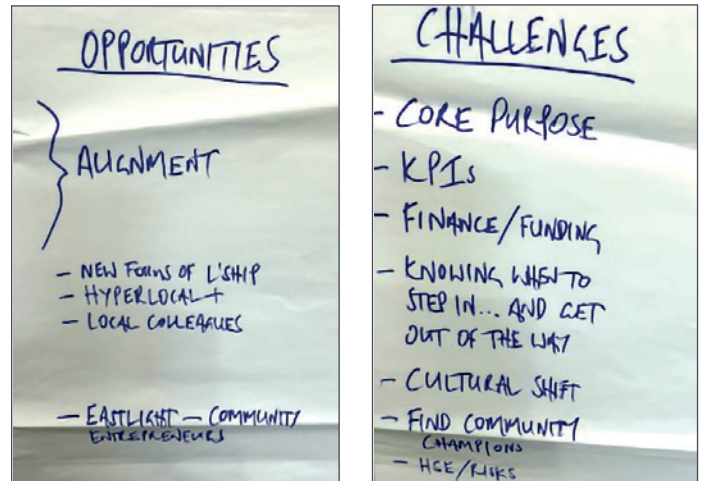
- No advising
- No rescuing
- No fixing
- No subtle leading



Part 3 - Asking the Right Questions

In this part of the workshop we explored how we can get to an ABCD approach, the challenges and some suggested solutions to meet them. One of the key challenges made by participants was that we can't get evidence unless we do something. Many landlords are offering solutions but interventions are aligned with association life, targets and community cohesion.

Contributions of people associations are the building blocks of sustainable communities.



“ If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail. ”

‘Maslow’s Hammer’, Abraham Maslow

Q. How do we measure the extent organisations value people?

A. Is it how you feel it? Satisfaction? Metrics - health, wellbeing?

Q. Can we do some of the approach in pockets, collaborate with community partnerships in place (grass roots)

A. First we have to convince communities we are not the experts and reconnect

Participants worked on what they would Stop, Start and Continue.

THE TOUCHSTONES

Start From Somewhere, Go Anywhere

DISCOVER CONNECTORS

- How do you plan on finding connectors?
- How would you apply the connector role to the scenario?

ENGAGE COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ASSOCIATIONS

- How would you go about identifying & connecting with community groups and associations?
- What role could they play in this scenario?

CELEBRATION

- What would celebration look like in this scenario?
- What are some things that potentially not go your way, how would you celebrate them?

RECRUIT A COMMUNITY ANIMATOR

- How do you plan on funding the Community Animator role and recruiting the right person?
- How would you apply the Community Animator role to the scenario?

VISIONING & PLANNING

- What can we do for ourselves, with no outside support?
- What can we do for ourselves with a little outside help?
- What do we need outside actors to do for us?

HOST COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Who would lead the conversations?
- Where is the best place for the conversations to take place?
- Thinking about the scenario, what questions would you be keen on asking?

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE (DOING & REVIEWING)

- What are the three smallest things you'd like to do that could make the biggest difference in this scenario?
- Who would you invite to join you?

BUILDING CONNECTION THROUGH SOCIAL INTERACTION AND SHAREABLE OPPORTUNITIES

- What is something you could host or organize that would be of benefit to the scenario?
- How will the gifts of community members play a part?

Theory of change two approaches

- One side does ABCD v one side needs based
- What fear of risk keeps us here?
- Does regulation present us with an opportunity?



Sector Case Study

Angela Lockwood CEO at Northstar Housing Group shared some great insight about leading differently to build trust.



What is the purpose of your purpose?

Purpose at Northstar - leadership and tenant influence culture.

If we had trust everywhere then we had influence everywhere.

Key points made:

- Listen to understand
- Translate learning into change
- Work with paradoxes



The Institute of Customer Service

Does it Work?



Regulator of Social Housing

- **liP Platinum**
- **100% feel trusted, trust the leaders, think North Star is a great place to work**
- **Top RJs**
- **2021: liP Employer of the Year and CIH Landlord of the Year**
- **ICS: Highest ranking HA**
- **Operating margin 25%, strong international credit rating**

Working with the Paradoxes that shape the workplace of tomorrow

1. **Knowing AND Uncertainty**
2. **Simplicity AND Complexity**
3. **Pace AND Relationship**
4. **Health, Wellbeing AND Demands**
5. **Growth AND Sustainability**
6. **Trust AND Control**
7. **More AND Less**

Recent Harvard Business School Research people in high trust companies (compared to low trust):

- ◆ **50% higher productivity**
- ◆ **Report 74% less stress**
- ◆ **13% fewer sick days**
- ◆ **76% more engagement**



Participant Insights

- Listen to understand
- Approach ABCD in some places
- Erosion of agency impact
- Awareness that culture and practices (paternalistic) reinforces power imbalances

7. What We Learned

Finale

Every participating organisation presented their ideas and thoughts at our project finale event.

Each organisation was asked to prepare a presentation on the following:

- Key findings from the project
- What was surprising?
- Plans for implementation



All organisations shared fabulous presentations that are too big to share in this report but here are their key plans for implementation and key learning.

“ Collaborate has been brilliant for me, I always wanted to bring tenant influence into governance. ”

Harriet Rushton, Head of Governance, ForHousing





VIVID

Next steps / implementation



Making great progress with **tenant satisfaction measures**



Improving our approach to scrutiny - we've arranged **specialist training for VIVID Impact**



Giving some thought to how **customer voice is involved in our governance arrangements**

Stop hand holding resident groups, support towards self sufficiency - "what do you care enough about to act on?"

Start listening to silent voices, reallocating authority

Continue creating space for customers to be influential in formal settings e.g. customer service committee

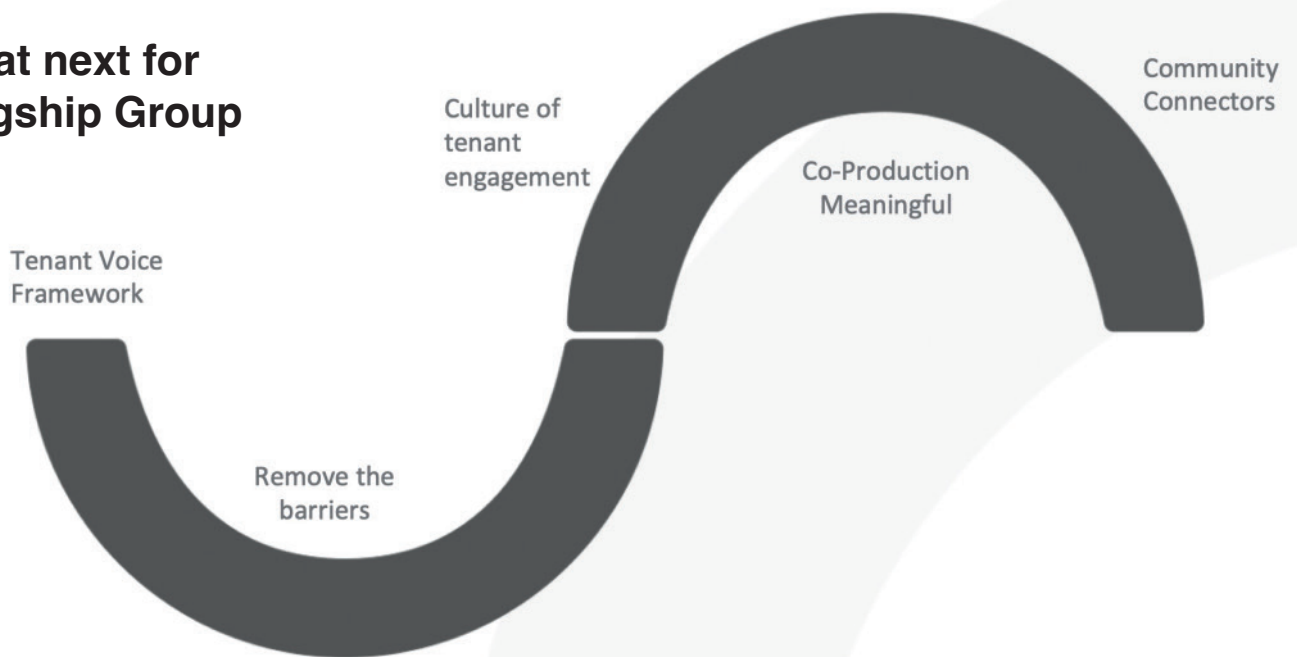
Deliver High levels of quality work achieved through professional service.	Flex Capable but have some general limitations. Capable under high pressure conditions.	Boost Have good and strong ideas and energy to meet strong demand but capacity and experience.	Resource Strong and strong and high level of experience and reputation.	Assist Struggle in a difficult situation, often need and experience to overcome challenges.	Nurture Living with complex issues, often need and experience to overcome challenges.
--	---	--	---	---	---

Vivid:

1. Integrity is really important
2. Be open and admit when you get things wrong
3. Customers must be felt and heard across the organisation and board, if uncomfortable then this is a good thing
4. Jump out of the Housing Association 'bubble'
5. Successful businesses need to talk with and listen to customers
6. Appreciate that things will get 'messy'



What next for Flagship Group



Flagship Homes:

1. A robust framework is essential, giving a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence decisions
2. We must break down the barriers to enable accessible engagement
3. Influence is everyone's role
4. Have to think differently and shift the culture



Examples of Implementation- What matters to us: Understanding our Communities

Based on principles of Asset Based Community Development

What is ABCD mapping?

- Asset Based Community Development approaches any engagement or work with the community based on their **strengths and potential**
- Directly targeted 'less heard' communities by going to them and using ABCD principles- asked questions and started with gifts!
- Created asset maps that reflected strengths and what people said meant most to them

Themes

- People want meaningful lives
- A lack of bridging spaces
- Places where people feel they belong
- ...but there are local stories of distinction and identity
- Community groups reaching burnout
- Cultures are changing whilst recognising local history

ForHousing:

1. The more we can talk more openly and honestly, the better we will be
2. Meaningful change takes time
3. Quick fixes are often not helpful
4. It surprised me how much the sector does to rather than with
5. We are looking at how to shift power, more can be done

What have we done

- Agreed with Board to reflect on our purpose
- Galvanised by consumer standards
- Fantastic opportunity as a small local org to put people more at forefront
- Understanding our culture and what it means to our customers



Lincolnshire Housing Partnership:

1. The programme has really influenced our thinking
2. Everything starts with customers' needs and lived experience
3. Neighbourhood action plans created with local communities
4. Care about the basics, get them right and also have aspirations



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

What we'll implement

- Remove the Involvement... because it prevents the influence
- Shift the perception of the organisation and the customers
- Test new assumptions about what Involvement should/could be
- Solder the connection between tenant influence and governance

Northamptonshire Partnership Homes:

1. The programme really helped us connect the dots between customers voices and governance
2. We have bought into this as an organisation, stopping 'involvement' as paternalistic and not an enabler of influence
3. What matters is what is cared about
4. Shift perception



To do list:

- ❑ Recruit and induct to our customer-led Impact and Action Group to achieve greater transparency, accountability and assurance
- ❑ We'll work with customers to define our co-creation principles
- ❑ Better promote our menu of opportunities
- ❑ Create an online space for involved customers to interact
- ❑ We'll sign up to Together With Tenants
- ❑ 'Customer approved' accredited communication
- ❑ Increasing opportunities for Board interaction within our communities
- ❑ We'll assess how everyone across Moat hears and responds to customer feedback and update relevant job descriptions to encourage active listening.

Our
'100 day'
plan



Moat:

1. Just what we needed to hear
2. Trust really chimed with us, need to avoid toxic positivity and looking inwards
3. Collaborate helped us reinvigorate our focus
4. Influence is where we need emphasis and seek outcomes
5. Our 100 day plan includes working with customers on co creation principles and assess everyone on how they hear and respond to customer feedback.

“ The programme came at a great time as we go through a period of change, it helped us write a Customer Influence Strategy. ”

Stephen Walker, Director of Customer Operations



Implemented



- **Board complaints champion (MRC)**
- **Scrutiny + audit committee – 2x annually**
- **Tenants involved in procurement**

Independent / Resident

Chongo
Development Committee

[More Info](#)

Worthing Homes:

1. It is all about people, a trustworthy organisation does not stop at influence
2. We have implemented the ABCD method – by people in their communities
3. Pink Chair – putting ourselves in customers shoes, sit in pink chair



Making Change & Transformation

We had a mini 'It's a Wrap' session with key tips and techniques from Benjamin Taylor, Managing Partner of Red Quadrant – Public Service Transformation Academy.

Systems Thinking and Key Ideas to Explore Further

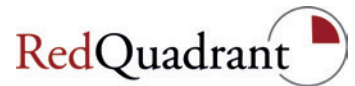
We explored different challenges organisations need to be able to deal with, regarding complexity and change, and how to understand the different 'five worlds' to become agile to change them.

We had a whistle stop tour of 'breaking the shell', about how to know what 'walls' (barriers to change) we can and can't break into!

- Brick walls, we can't change
- Partition walls, we can change
- Paper walls, I can change
- Mindset challenges are also the most troubling to management. Untested beliefs and perceptions, stops improvement – we need to change this together.



Benjamin Taylor



Organisations need to deal with complexity

Capacity, capability, connectedness and *variety* to understand and respond to:

1. The complexity of the world
2. Day-to-day work and turbulence
3. The complexity of the organisation
 - How the work works
 - Where to put the resources
 - Accountability
 - Change
4. What will be demanded of us in the future
5. Who we are, what our role is, our legitimacy, and balancing the needs of now and the needs of the future

Where are we in this system?

Public Service Transformation Academy logo | © Public Service Transformation Academy 020 3771 2608 www.publicservicetransformation.org | slide 17 | Please tweet using #psta, and follow us @ServiceReform

Five worlds

Public Service Transformation Academy logo | © Public Service Transformation Academy 020 3771 2608 www.publicservicetransformation.org | slide 18 | Please tweet using #psta, and follow us @ServiceReform



Breaking the shell

“The chick does not break the egg out of hatred for the shell; it does so out of a desire to live under a wider heaven”.

DH Lawrence, early draft of *The Rainbow*



© Public Service Transformation Academy 020 3771 2608 www.publicservicetransformation.org slide 39
Please tweet using #psta, and follow us @ServiceReform

Types of challenges – ‘Partition’ walls

These challenges can be managed through with effort, time, money and/or additional personnel, or other resources.

An individual might make some progress in dealing with this sort of challenge. Management might overcome the challenge totally – corporate management certainly should be able to.

Partitions might move slightly if pushed from the bottom, but if pushed from a higher level will often topple. We need help with these. This is something in the system that needs changing.

Examples include legacy, political, and structural issues.

“We can change”



© Public Service Transformation Academy 020 3771 2608 www.publicservicetransformation.org slide 43
Please tweet using #psta, and follow us @ServiceReform

Types of challenges – Brick walls

A really unalterable challenge. Things in the real world facing us that inhibit performance and are not likely to change.

This could be government or legal requirements, regulatory requirements, demographic changes, money market or international issues, high-level political developments.

These factors affect performance in delivering our service, but are well beyond individual or collective control.

Brick walls are immovable and real.

They are part of the bigger system. Perhaps we should be campaigning to change them, but that’s all we can do!



“Can’t be changed”

© Public Service Transformation Academy 020 3771 2608 www.publicservicetransformation.org slide 42
Please tweet using #psta, and follow us @ServiceReform

Types of challenges – Paper walls

This looks like a real barrier – until you test it. Then, you realise you can simply push through it.

Paper walls might exist because you think someone else will not approve, that it won’t be supported by another part of the organisation, that it is “policy” or the way things have always been done, etc.

But when you test this belief, you discover it isn’t true – others have done things differently and are doing things differently.

These challenges are manageable, but also real. This is something you can change about yourself, for yourself.

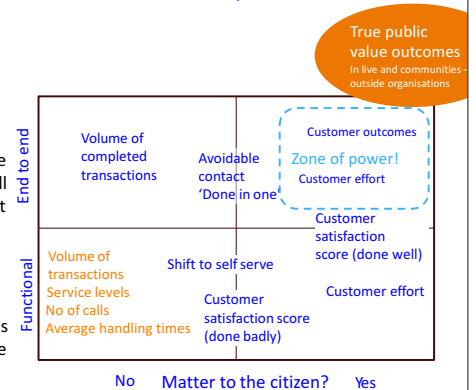


“I can change”

© Public Service Transformation Academy 020 3771 2608 www.publicservicetransformation.org slide 44
Please tweet using #psta, and follow us @ServiceReform

Measure what matters... to the citizen/customer

- Its easy to focus on the things which matter less to the customer. Most organisations will create performance indicators which fall into the bottom left quadrant (red text)
- But we need to develop indicators which also fall into the other quadrants as they matter more to customers



© Public Service Transformation Academy 020 3771 2608 www.publicservicetransformation.org slide 33
Please tweet using #psta, and follow us @ServiceReform

Measure What Matters

Great advice from Benjamin to wrap up our project.

“ The Tpas collaborate programme demonstrated full inclusion because they were keen to collaborate and share learning with other HAs. The 2x main themes I took away were customer scrutiny and culture, the workshops presented the use of feedback from other HAs to drive performance through continuous improvement and optimise costs. ”

Chongo Shula, Board member, Worthing Homes

“ The Tenant Collaborate sessions provided us with a valuable platform to engage with industry peers and a diverse array of inspirational speakers. These sessions challenged our perspectives and future actions, prompting us to reflect on our core purpose and how we increase the influence of our customers. ”

John O’Hanrahan, Corporate Head of Customers, LHP

“ The timing of Collaborate programme coincided with our own review of customer influence at VIVID. We took away lots of food for thought and learning from both Tpas and other participants on the programme. ”

Margaret Dodwell, COO, VIVID



8. What Tpas Learned

Don't make decisions and service changes before meaningfully seeking tenants voices

Tenant Influence is an approach that opens up more opportunities for increased outcomes and impacts. Tenant influence is more than engagement and involvement; the approach also brings in data and insight to ensure wider tenants voices are across change.

Be curious, try new things and explore what tenants are telling you already, directly or indirectly through transactions that tenants are having with you. Then work with tenants, sharing learning and findings, have two-way conversations and communications to co create change.

Key takeaway: Understand that tenant influence increases opportunities for wider tenants voices to influence services, governance and decisions.

Tenant Influence needs strategic emphasis

Keeping tenant influence on all agendas, from team to leadership meetings will support the shift that is needed to prioritise tenants voices and toward increased outcomes for tenants through improved services and performance. Put yourself in the 'shoes of your tenants', seek evidence that tenants experience is a good one.

When boards or councillors are making decisions, is there enough consideration given to where tenants voices are within those decisions or how tenants have influenced the report in front of you? In workshop one we set out ways to find out what is happening, even when not presented to us.

Key takeaway: Challenge each other across all aspects of governance and decision making, seek the evidence to ensure tenants have influence.



Organisational culture is a key determinant of success

To achieve successful tenant influence and a culture where tenants are at the centre of your organisation then tenant influence must be part of everyone's role. We can only achieve a tenant centred culture when we co create common values and beliefs. Strong leadership and commitment through consistent messages with clear purpose and expectations of behaviour – this drives culture – the way things are done. There are numerous benefits to all people involved when tenant influence is a key part of an organisational culture.

Key takeaway: The right culture depends on what behaviour is emphasised and what is overlooked.

Explore as many ways to ‘do with’ rather than ‘do to’ tenants

This key learning point developed throughout the programme, even more so at workshop five, when we acknowledged the role our organisations have within the communities we serve. Also how we need to move away from seeing people as needing to be fixed, to seeing people as having a contribution. While we often have great intentions to do good, we need to stand back, challenge our assumptions and see what assets are out in the community.

Key takeaway: Don't misuse power to solve problems that don't belong to you.

How you demonstrate being a ‘trustworthy’ organisation in everything that you do

Tenants are already ‘telling’ us what we do well and what we need to be better at, we need to listen and act on this. Keeping tenants well informed through effective communications is vital through honest and open continued dialogue.

Tenants want more than for us to get the basics right, tenants want to be treated with care and respect and to access us to receive the attention and service when required.

Key takeaway: Positive tenant relationships is about trust and being proactive.



TENANT ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS

tpas

What Tpas learned from participants in this project

- ✓ Taking a tenant influence approach is challenging but opens up more outcomes and impact
- ✓ There has been a huge commitment from participating organisations to getting this right, this is continuing
- ✓ Understanding that tenant influence is more than engagement and involvement, it also includes data and insight
- ✓ There must be a willingness to embrace different ways of working, to be innovative and challenging and to test effectiveness





9. Thanks



This project would not have existed without the wonderful participants, the hard work they put in month after month, the openness and honesty with which they tackled the different themes, and their willingness to try new ideas and concepts.

Thank you all.

Tpas thanks also go to all our brilliant speakers and workshop facilitators and the time they spent on the project, and afterwards.







T: 0161 868 3500
E. consultancy@tpas.org.uk
W. www.tpas.org.uk

    [tpasengland](https://www.instagram.com/tpasengland)



TENANT ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS
tpas