

 <p style="text-align: center;">HOUSING MANAGEMENT SECTION</p>		DOCUMENT NO HM - 09			
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1.0 Scope

This policy allows the Association to make a clear statement on its commitment to tenant participation and demonstrates to employees, the Board and other stakeholders how this process will be managed. This policy seeks to comply with good practice and regulatory guidance, the Regulatory Framework requires a written Tenant Participation Policy. Consideration was given to current practice in Scotland where Tenant Participation Strategies were required under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

2.0 Objective

It is the intention of this document to ensure that tenants St Matthews Housing Association are sufficiently informed about all aspects of its work and are able to participate in and influence decisions that have a bearing on the way their housing is managed.

3.0 Definitions and Abbreviations

SMHA St Matthews Housing Association

4.0 Responsibilities

Initial responsibility for the promotion of tenant participation through resident groups and forums lies with housing management. However this is a generic document that applies to all employees and ownership is spread throughout the organisation.

5.0 Related Documents

HM-12 TENANT COMPACT: COMPACT BETWEEN SMHA AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR
HM14 – SHAPING COMMUNITY PLAN

6.0 Policy Statement

6.1 Equal Opportunities

The Association strives to be an equal opportunities organisation and is governed by Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act (1988)

In relation to tenant participation (and the provision of information), this means that the Association is committed to ensuring that no tenant is unable to, or discouraged from, contributing because they sometimes find it difficult to fully understand documents produced in regular printed English. This means that the Association will provide documents upon request:

- in large print for those with visual impairment or deteriorating eyesight
- on tape for those who are unable to read printed matter
- in Braille for those who prefer this means of communication
- translated into another language
- in any other feasible format that tenants may find helpful

The Association recognises that no tenant should be discouraged from attending a meeting or discussion forum, it will therefore provide a sign or language interpreter for anyone attending a meeting – to locate a suitably qualified person, we would ask for as much prior notice of this as possible.

6.2 The Participation Process

Tenant participation is fundamental to how the Association intends to operate and it recognises the need to formally address how this can be achieved and sustained.

There are a number of benefits in taking an active approach to participation including:

- Better service delivery
- Help for the Board and staff in decision making and setting priorities
- Personal development for tenants
- Increased tenant satisfaction and better two way communication
- Greater accountability

The following general principles will be the basis for working together

- There must be **TRUST** between the Association and its tenants
- Participation is a **CONTINUOUS PROCESS** of sharing information,
- All parties must be able to **CONTRIBUTE** to the agenda
- Decision-making should be **OPEN, CLEAR** and **ACCOUNTABLE**
- There must be **ENOUGH TIME** for all views to be properly considered
- SMHA will ensure that tenants' forums are facilitated so as to be able to be **INDEPENDENT** from the Association
- SMHA will provide **RESOURCES** for training, support and servicing of the groups
- The policy will be **TAILORED** to suit the individual needs of clients especially through periods of change and growth
- The policy will be **INCLUSIVE** of all tenants

The Association has adopted a theme of continuous improvement and equality in all that it does. Therefore informing tenants and encouraging participation is seen as an important management tool. To be successful, the methods used have to be relevant and unworkable in practice.

6.3 Provision of information and Methods of Consultation

There is a whole range of ways in which tenants can be consulted and two way communication can be achieved:

- Public meetings
- Handbooks
- Satisfaction cards
- Information leaflets
- Web site and email
- Annual Report
- Individual consultation on a planned or ad hoc basis
- Open days
- Newsletters
- Questionnaires and surveys
- Special forums or focus groups
- Post scheme audit

The Association will seek the opinion of its tenants as to the preferred method of long and short term consultation. This will initially be done at the signing of a new tenancy and will be included in any tenant satisfaction survey that may be carried out. The Association is committed to establishing a tenant forum in time and will offer training, admin support and a venue for meetings. If this method of participation becomes popular a specific budget shall be established.

The Association continues to be absolutely committed to involving tenants as much as possible, we believe, however, that we must respect a tenant's right not to participate. Where it is clear that an individual tenant/household does not wish to participate, then this right will be observed.

6.4 Opportunities for Participation

- Repairs and routine maintenance feedback
- Housing management issues
- Rent levels
- Security
- Litter
- Environmental works consultation
- Developing and achieving best value services through customer satisfaction surveys
- Complaints procedures
- Regeneration and redevelopment through consultation
- Community safety
- Customer care
- Environmental works
- Neighbourhood issues which affect tenants' homes or the management of the housing service through residents groups.
- Membership of Board of Management (minimum 2 tenants on Board)

7.0 Shaping Community Plan

SMHA is at the heart of the Short Strand community and we provide an excellent

local service to our tenants in Clonard and Poleglass. We have been active within Short Strand for 40 years having been formed by local people wanting to improve their area.

Shaping Community is a plan which draws together on existing SMHA work in the areas of community involvement, investment, participation and financial inclusion. SMHA is seeking to improve our strategic approach in these areas and have a plan for coming years.

SMHA believes partnership can improve how we deliver a housing service. We aim for the approach outlined to be compliant, empowering and produce tangible benefits.

The St Matthews Plan outlines our vision and values and reinforces our belief that being at the heart of our community will deliver what is best for our community. In embracing the need to consistently engage with our community we also seek to find ways for participation in all the work we do within our community and the outcomes we hope to achieve.

Our Vision

Striving for excellence as a community based housing association in Northern Ireland

Mission Statement

Quality, affordable housing locally

Values

We are committed to Community

We are committed to Quality

We are Reliable

We respect the need for Trust

We have always had a Tenant Focus

We are always Professional

SMHA Board and staff are committed to involvement and participation. We recognise the regulatory commitments of the Tenants Guarantee and Housing Association Guide but beyond this wish to embrace the aspiration of our own Tenant and Voluntary Community Compact and encourage greater involvement and participation, identifying the following objectives for Shaping Community:-

- Inform - Informing residents
- Consult - Consulting with residents
- Empower - Empowering residents
- Partnership - Partnership with the wider community
- Measure - Measuring outputs

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years