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Tenant Involvement in Governance: Models and Practices

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Skainos Centre, Belfast



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Communities**
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Tenant Involvement in Governance: Models and Practices

Current Project for NIHE

- **What is the current policy and strategic context in Northern Ireland?**
 - 17 stakeholder interviews completed
- **What can be learned from other places?**
 - Review of 70 academic and practice documents leading to typology
 - 6 brief case studies in preparation
- **3 Northern Ireland Case Studies**
 - NIHE Central Forum, 2 Area Scrutiny Panels, Large HA case study
 - What works here? What could work here? How relevant might other models be?
- **Looking at future governance models across the NIHE and HA sectors**
 - 3 consultation events with Supporting Communities and NIHE

Scoping Report, Evidence Review and State of Art Review will be published <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/departments/social-policy-social-work/research/projects/2015/tenant-engagement-in-governance.aspx> and made available through Supporting Communities

Why Good Governance Matters



Key themes from NI Policy

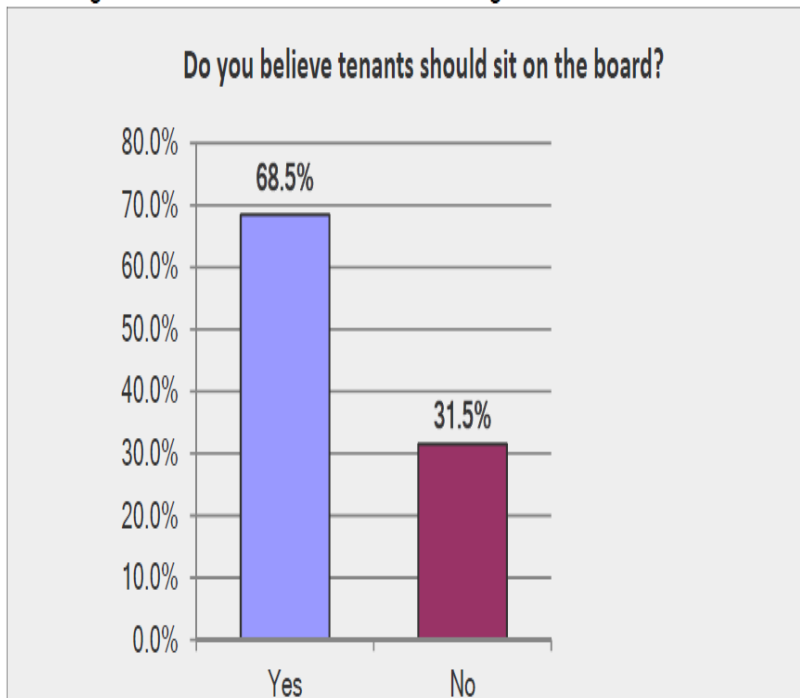
- Emphasis on tenant involvement in governance growing
- Scope to build from strong NIHE Housing Community Network structures 'the jewel in the crown' across social housing
- HAs expected to increase TI and many currently have tenant members on governance boards
- Role of **super councils and community strategies an interesting new dimension**
- Some excellent models from supported housing sector
- Devolved power and cooperative management have not been tried in NI social housing
- **Empowerment: Barriers to devolved management** transfer but scope for asset transfer and community businesses?
- NIHE Community Grants scheme and **Social Housing Enterprise Strategy** provides additional tool for engaged communities
- Supporting Communities has played a key role in building capacity. New structures for supporting and promoting tenant involvement need thinking through

Boards and Committees



HAs under-achieving aspirations on tenant board membership

Figure 5: Board Members' views on having Tenant Board Members



- In 2015 nearly half (**52%**) of NI HA boards had no tenant board members (this was 71% in 2000)
- 22% had between 1-10%
- 22% had between 11-25%
- only 4% associations had between 26-33% of board places held by tenants.
- **No board had over one third tenant representation**
- **There are no co-ops providing social housing in NI**
- 70% of boards had some form of direct relationship with tenant engagement structures

Board Dilemmas

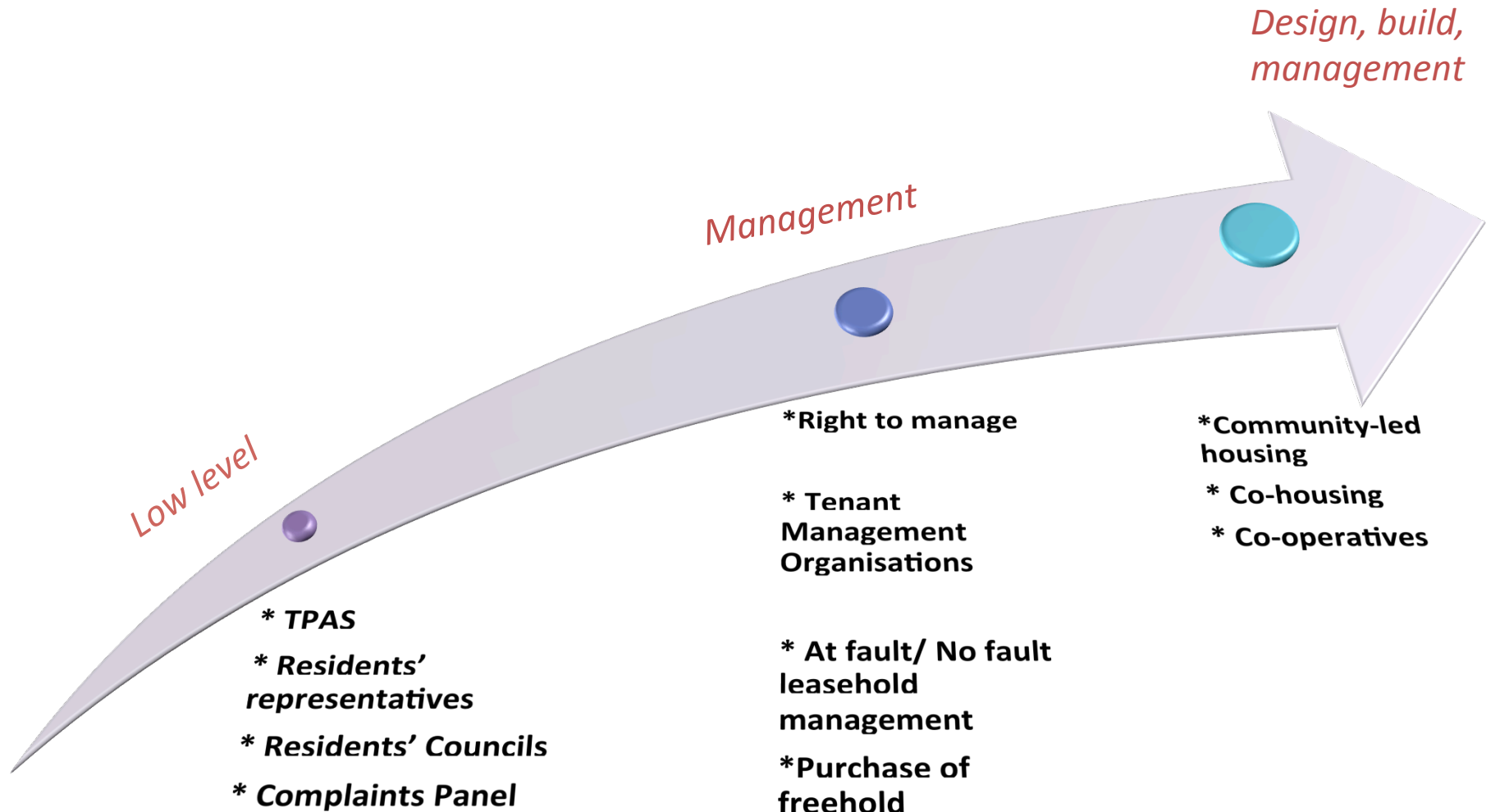


Where to focus? – empowerment or involvement?

Arnstein's Ladder of Public Participation



Resident Involvement types



Key themes from international review

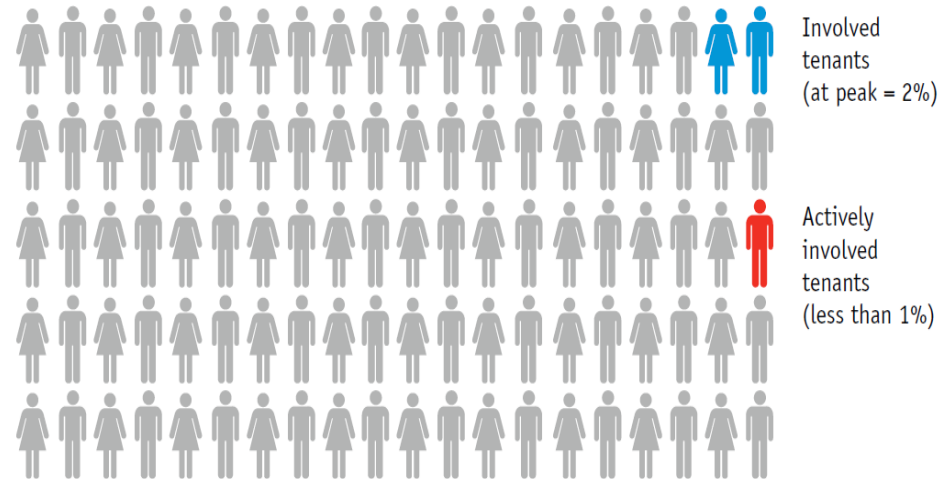
- **Conflicting views on role of tenants in governance**
 - Hierarchy of participation or menu of choices?
 - Citizens or Consumers?
 - Representation or Responsibilisation?
 - Holding to Account or being consulted?
- **Organisation wide – Place Based or mixed models?**
 - single landlord or cross community?
 - Community building in new settlements
 - Community regeneration alongside housing refurbishment (stock transfers)
- **Underlying Values and Ethos**
 - View taken of tenants' and residents' rights and capabilities
 - Involvement in practice v organisation models
- **Cost or Opportunity?**

Contrasting recent sector based research on value of tenant involvement in decisions

Downplaying Achievement or Recognising Limitations?

Figure 5: Resident involvement by numbers

“Resident involvement has long been one of the fundamentals of social housing: it feels like the right thing to do. Yet, despite numerous attempts to involve residents in how we run our business, and how we deliver better services, the reality is most are neither involved, nor are they interested.”



They're just ticking boxes:
they not really interested
in what we think.

They only complain when
something goes wrong.

They don't make it easy
for me to get involved.

We arrange meetings,
but no-one ever turns up.

Consultation? Yeh,
right. They already know
what they want to do

Re-establishing the support base for social housing

An investment not a cost

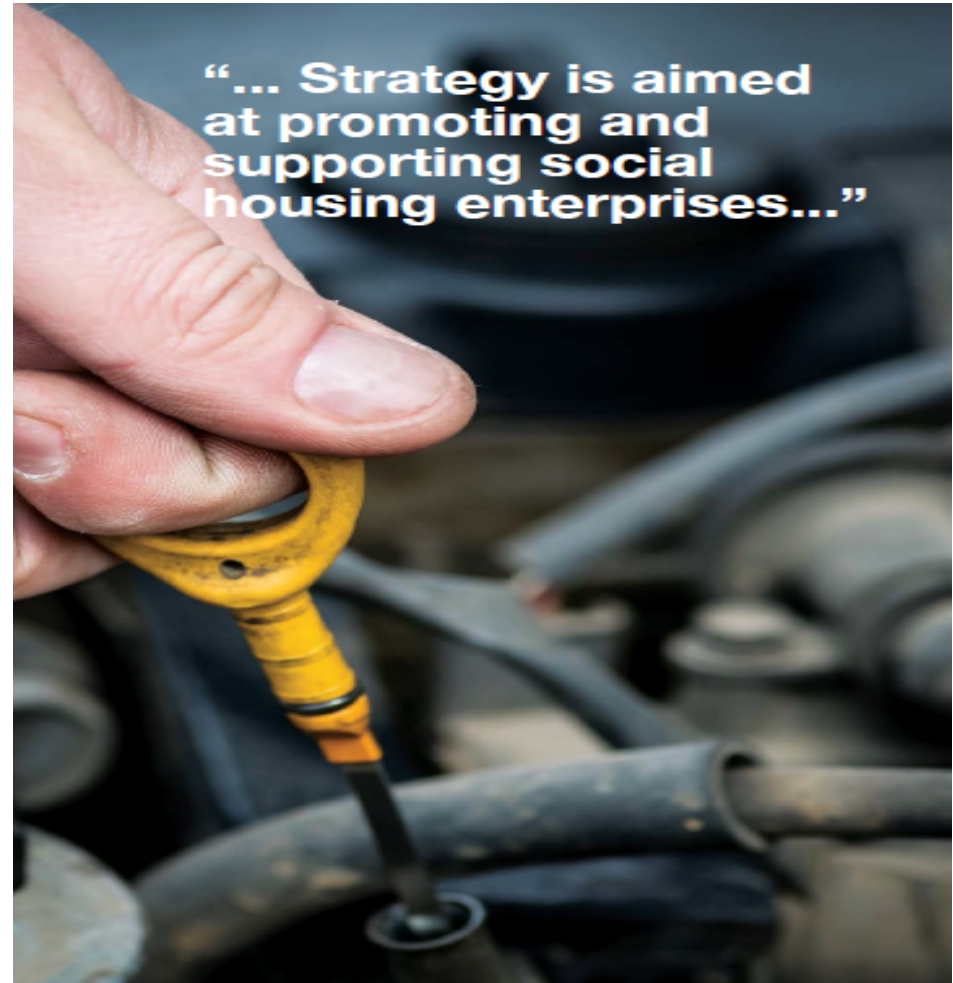
The business benefits of tenant involvement



Twenty landlords identified specific savings brought about by tenant involvement which amounted to £29 per property annually. If these savings were replicated across all social housing providers the sector could see savings of around £118 million a year.

A Genuinely Tenant-led housing sector would be much harder to undermine and more cost effective

A wider view of tenant involvement in governance



What is the problem?

- Appropriate solutions depend on specific purposes (problems that tenant involvement intends to solve)
 - Improving **service delivery** (satisfaction surveys and complaints or direct participation in decisions?)
 - **Regulation** (resident scrutiny, mystery shopping)
 - Deciding on **Organisational priorities and policies** (board involvement or policy consultation?)
 - Improving **design and community building** (opportunities when new housing built and residents move in)
 - **Community regeneration** alongside housing refurbishment (better futures for existing residents)
 - Employment opportunities through **training, community investment and local enterprises**
 - Improving **local community involvement** (may be wider than tenants and leaseholders)

Six Interesting Types and Cases

- **Estate Level –Right to Manage** – Leathermarket, London (tenants managing existing council estates and building new homes for social rent in centre of London)
- **Estate Level – Building in Collaboration** Hauptbahnhof, Vienna, Collaboration built in to development process.
- **Small Scale Resident Led** organisations – new coops in Wales – building capacity in partnership with existing housing associations
- **Large community based models** – Stock Transfer and After – Poplar Harca, London – Genuine resident influence in large HA.
- **Large community-led models** – Community Gateway – linking local involvement to board membership –Preston
- **Cross –landlord local accountability** – Amsterdam Area Based Accountability under 2015 Housing Act – Tripartite annual agreements LA, HAs and tenants.

Potential Learning Process

- Case Study Reports
- Getting behind the structures
- Potential for peer learning
- Reality checking
- Potential for Case Study visits – virtual and actual

Northern Ireland Case Studies

- **NIHE Housing Community Network**
 - Central Forum
 - Scrutiny Panel (Belfast case to be agreed)
 - Causeway – social enterprise and digital inclusion
- **Choice HA**
 - Tenant Accountability in large merged HA group
 - Scaling up but maintaining accountability?
 - Links to Super-councils ?

Context Specific Issues



- NI Case studies will consider relevance of context to assess relevance of models:
 - Sectarianism
 - Motivations to get involved
 - Landlord and tenure divides
 - Opportunity of Super councils
 - Stock transfer not so far linked with community regen.
 - Where is the new build and how do allocation and transfer policies affect scope for community building on new estates?

Creative Responses to Overcome Barriers!



- **Sectarianism and Empowerment options**
- Social Enterprise and Community Business
- Devolved housing management
- Common Selection Scheme and new HA estates

Working with Residents' motivations



- What are the motivating factors for tenants becoming involved?
- What makes people continue to stay involved?
- Difficult to reach?
- **Professionalised tenants or community-aware professionals?**

Everyone Welcome?



- **Should community engagement structures cater for all tenures**, social tenants, leaseholders, home owners and private tenants?
- The case for is that all may be affected by decisions made by NIHE and HAs in their neighbourhoods.
- The case against is that other tenures may be seen to dilute tenants' rights to accountability from their landlord.
- Could this be the future for community planning in NI?

Building in Involvement?



- The best time!!
- Working with new residents before they move-in
- Supported them to take ownership of communal spaces
- Its all part of new build housing in Vienna-Hauptbahnhof Case Study
- **Could this be part of the future in NI ?**

Workshop Questions

- How do tenants feel about being given the opportunity to sit on social landlord boards / apply for board positions? Would they prefer an external challenge role?
- How can landlords promote the benefits of becoming involved? What measures can be used to build capacity and ensure succession planning?
- Should the promotion of social enterprise and community investment in social housing neighbourhoods be regarded as a key part of tenant involvement in governance?
- **Is there potential for closer working relationships between the Northern Ireland Housing Council the NIHE Central Housing Forum? Would cross-sector forums of tenants, HAs, NIHE organised around the new super council areas be a good way forward?**
- **Could stock transfer occur create opportunities for greater community involvement/ empowerment? If so, what structures and practices would stakeholders like to see implemented?**
- **Is new build the best time to build in involvement – how can this be achieved?**

For more information:



Housing and Communities Research Group

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/departments/social-policy-social-work/research/projects/2015/tenant-engagement-in-governance.aspx>

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