

Tenant and Leaseholder involvement

Information from Southampton City Council about how to get more involved in your housing services.

Have your say, Do your bit





Section 1

Involvement with low time commitment – about 1 hour every month.

Getting involved

This leaflet explains some of the ways that tenants and leaseholders can get involved with the council in making sure that you get the best service available. We call this involvement.

Involvement is good news for us because by talking to more tenants and leaseholders, it gives us a better chance of improving our services to you.

How you can get involved and have your say?

There are many ways you can get involved. Please read on to see some of the many involvement options available and the time commitments required for each one. As you will see it doesn't mean that you have to come to meetings or give up lots of your time.

Tenant and leaseholder involvement options

We have divided our tenant involvement options into three sections depending on the time commitments required for each activity.



How you can help your Community

Patch chats – These are a great way of meeting with housing staff and other organisations who provide services to your estate. Along with other tenants and leaseholders patch chats give you the opportunity to discuss with housing staff what's happening where you live with opportunities to monitor and improve local services.

At Kingsland residents suggested putting signs around the play area designed by children giving the area a brighter more cheerful look.

Through Patch Chats at Wyndham Court, residents have been inspired to obtain funding to improve their communal garden.

Estate inspections – If you are interested in inspecting your estate with other tenants and housing staff, this is for you! By working with us, identifying problems and monitoring the service, together we can ensure your estate is kept in good condition. Look out for details of published estate inspections in your area.

Estate Improvement Schemes – We are working hard to improve your neighbourhoods, but we need your help to make sure we get it right.

Residents told us about a problem at International Way, Weston where strong coastal winds created wind tunnels around the tower block entrances, making it difficult to open the door to the main entrance. We found a solution with tenants by placing designed windbreaks around the main entrances which also lifted the appearance of the area.

Look out for consultation events in your area, so you can have a say on how we improve your neighbourhood.

How you can help the us improve our service

Phone panel – By being a member of the phone panel you can tell us your views about our service without having to leave the comfort of your home. Please sign up if you are happy for us to ring you occasionally about a housing or estate issue.

Email panel – This is a great opportunity to help us get our service right by giving us your views by email. You would normally be contacted about once a month about your thoughts on a housing issue. We promise to keep these emails short so it shouldn't take more than 5-10 minutes of your time.

'Question Time' with the Cabinet Member for Housing – These meetings are held two or three times a year and provides you with an opportunity to ask the Cabinet Member about issues that interest you about the Housing service.

Tenants Link (the councils quarterly magazine for tenants and leaseholders) – Did you know that you can help to choose storylines for Tenants Link as well as having the opportunity to write articles or become a roving reporter. Training and support is available for those of you who need some extra help in getting your message across.

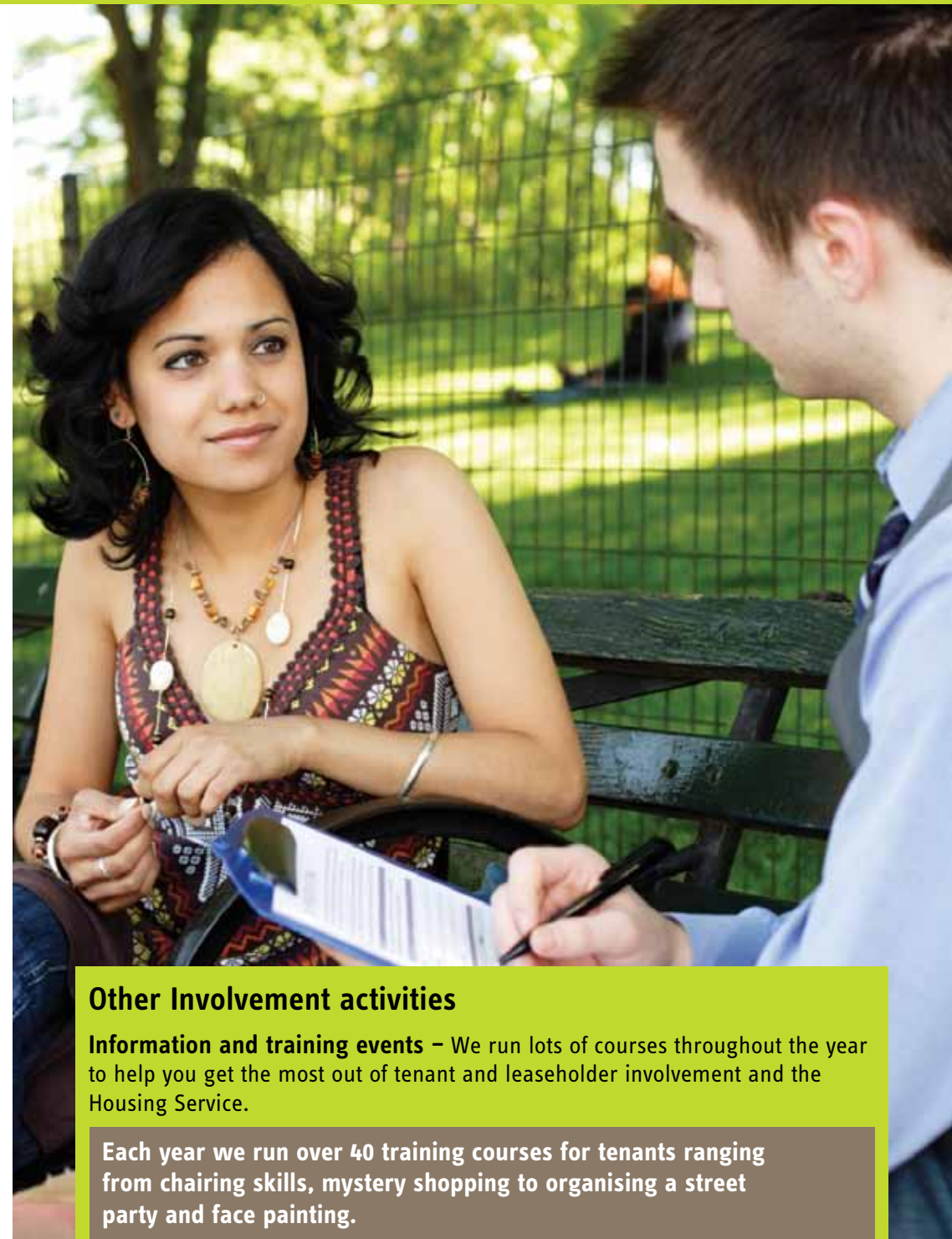
Income Management Improvement Group – We recognise that our customers need the right information and advice when it comes to paying their rent. This tenants group helps the council keep tenants better informed about the rent payment service.

This group was responsible for the new traffic light rent letters and changing the dates of the rent free weeks.

Disabilities and Equalities Group – This group meets quarterly to look at adaptation and accessibility issues with the Housing Service.

Leaseholder Forum – Meets twice a year for leaseholders to discuss their issues with the council.

As a result of this group the council has now changed how it contacts and communicates with leaseholders.



Other Involvement activities

Information and training events – We run lots of courses throughout the year to help you get the most out of tenant and leaseholder involvement and the Housing Service.

Each year we run over 40 training courses for tenants ranging from churning skills, mystery shopping to organising a street party and face painting.

Section 2



Involvement with a medium time commitment – about 2-3 hours a month



How you can help your Community

Tenant and Resident Associations* – Tenant and Resident Associations (TRA) are run by tenants with a keen interest in improving the area and community they live in. TRA's are a brilliant way of bringing the community together and improving communications with residents, the council, police and other agencies. Many TRAs are at the heart of the community, organising street parties and community events and by accessing grants helping develop play areas and community gardens. We can advise you if there are any Tenants and Residents Associations (TRA's) where you live or how to set one up in your area.

Block and Street Reps – This is a role where you represent your block or street to highlight local problems and work with the council to resolve them. There are over 70 Block Reps in Southampton and where we have Block Reps we find the areas are better maintained and tenants are better informed.



How you can help us improve our service

Capital Group – This group meets monthly to discuss spending priorities for home and estate improvements.

The Capital Group have worked closely with the council on the Decent Homes Programme, the installation of Digital TV and setting priorities for window replacement schemes.

Mystery shoppers – Did you know you can now become a Mystery Shopper for Southampton City Council. We are looking for tenants and leaseholders to help us monitor the housing service by mystery shopping parts of the council. This could involve ringing or visiting the council and sharing with us your views on the service you received. Full training will be provided.

Discussion Groups – Your views are important to us. There are all sorts of things we need to regularly discuss with tenants and you can really help us by being part of a discussion group. This may involve telling us what you think about Tenants Link or how we maintain and clean our estates or our guidelines on keeping pets in flats. If this interests you sign up for a discussion group and help make a real difference.

Reading Group – Ever seen a letter or leaflet which is so confusing that you're left scratching your head? As one of our customers you can help us make sure that our leaflets are clear, easy to read and understandable. The Reading Group are tenant volunteers that look at some of our leaflets before they go public making sure that our customers understand them.



Section 3



Involvement with a high time commitment – 3-6 hours a month.

Other Tenant Involvement activities

Federation of Southampton Tenants and Residents Associations* – This is a tenant run group that supports tenants and tenant associations across the city and works with the council to improve the Housing Service.

Their monthly meetings are open to all tenants and topics have included Homebid, welfare rights, the concierge service, recycling and Digital TV. Their projects have also included helping the council set some new Tenant Involvement Standards.

Sheltered Housing Forum – A monthly meeting for tenants in supported housing to discuss issues related to this area of the service. These meetings are popular, packed and entertaining. By attending not only will you be better informed but you can make a difference.

The Sheltered Housing Forum have been involved in reviewing the councils policy for keeping dogs in flats for 60 plus schemes.

*If you are a member of the committee the time commitment may be more than 2-3 hours a month.



Helping us improve our service

Tenant Inspectors – As a Tenant Inspector you will be involved as part of a team of tenants, reviewing a specific part of the housing service. At the end of the inspection the Inspectors are asked to produce a balanced report on their findings which may involve making recommendations on how the service can be improved.

Inspections have included looking at the councils anti social behaviour procedure and the standard of empty properties new tenants move into.

There are generally two inspections a year, lasting 3-4 months each. Tenant Inspectors are recruited via an interview process.

A big thanks for your help...

These involvement opportunities are important to us as they help the council improve our services across the city for the benefit of all tenants and leaseholders.

However please note these involvement opportunities are not ways to raise or progress any personal issues; these are ways you can make a difference to the community you live in, and to the service you receive.

We hope that there is something that will interest you in our range of tenant involvement options. We are always very grateful for your contributions.

The benefits of getting involved are:

You will help us improve our services and communities for the benefit of all Southampton City Council tenants and leaseholders.

You will be better informed about council services and you may learn new skills.

You will be able to meet other tenants and council staff in a sociable, informal and relaxed environment.

Keeping you up-to-date and involved

You can be kept informed about issues that affect your home and neighbourhood by:

- Reading the council's free quarterly magazine called 'Tenants' Link'.
- Looking at the council's website in the housing section at www.southampton.gov.uk/housing
- Become a new fan on Facebook and keep up to date on our activities.
- Becoming part of our mailing list; we will keep you up to date on all events and the ways you can have your views heard.
- Keep a look out for other things happening in your area and new ways of involvement

How we can support you

We do not pay any of our tenant and leaseholder volunteers but we do provide out of pocket expenses for transport and an allowance for childcare etc.

We will provide a wide range of information and training sessions to help you get the most out of your involvement.

Interested in finding out more?

Summary of Tenant Involvement options described in the leaflet. There will be more on the way

Patch chats	Information and training events
Estate inspections	Tenant and Resident Associations
Estate Improvement Schemes	Block and Street Reps
Phone panel	Capital Group
Email panel	Mystery shoppers
Question Time	Discussion Groups
Tenants Link	Reading Group
Income Management/Improvement Group	Tenants' Federation
Disabilities and Equalities Group	Sheltered Housing Forum
Leaseholder Forum	Tenant Inspectors

If you are interested in the activities listed above or any future ones and would like to be put on our mailing list, please complete your name and address below and return to the address below.

I would like to be put on your mailing list and be sent information from time to time about involvement activities.

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Please return in an envelope to:

Tenant Participation Unit, Southampton City Council, Ground Floor,
Southbrook Rise, 4-8 Millbrook Road East, Southampton, SO15 1YG

Tel: 023 8083 3185 **Email:** tenant.participation@southampton.gov.uk

Web: www.southampton.gov.uk/tpu **Facebook:** Tenant Participation, Southampton

This written information is available on request in other formats or languages. Please contact 023 8083 3185 for help.



Any information you provide on this form will be held by Southampton City Council (SCC) strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. SCC's Data Protection Officer is Mark Heath, Solicitor to the council. The information you have provided will be used for the sole purpose of keeping you informed about some of the opportunities available to engage with the council to comment on its services. Your information may be shared with other council departments but not with any other parties unless we are required to do so by law. If you have any questions relating to the use of your data, please telephone the Tenant Involvement Team directly on 023 8083 3185.

www.southampton.gov.uk

Version 1
Designed, printed & produced by Southampton City Council 01.11.22770



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE