Tenants' Voices

Tenant Participation
Getting Involved

Tenants' Voices are West Lothian Council tenants who can be nominated by other council tenants in their community to speak for them on housing and other related matters. They can only operate in small communities where there are no Registered Tenant Organisations (RTO), and they will be supported by Housing and Building Services to carry out their duties.

As a Tenants' Voice you can attend and participate in:

- Housing Networks
- Tenants' Panel (if elected by your local Housing Network)
- focus groups
- conferences and information days
- meetings of the Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (if nominated by your local Housing Network)
- working groups
- regular estate walkabouts
- Tenant Led Inspections (TLIs)
- quarterly performance meetings with your local housing staff

As a Tenants' Voice you would:

- represent the views of West Lothian Council tenants in your local street/area or represent tenants who are part of a specific group (young tenant, tenants with a disability, tenants from an ethnic minority)
- highlight any issues or concerns in your area relating to housing matters
- gather the views of the people in your street/area and make sure they are heard when decisions are being taken
- help to communicate with tenants in your area in ways that best suit your area
- use information gathered from service users to highlight where services have failed in your community, but you would not be expected to deal with individual tenants problems

The outcome of any consultation by Housing and Building Services will be recorded and shared with :

- service users generally
- local Registered Tenant Organisations
- Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
- Council's Local Area Committees
- Housing Networks
- Tenants' Panel

Housing and Building Services will:

- advertise Tenants' Voices
- consult with the community to ensure they agree that the Tenants' Voice can speak for them
- ensure that the geographical area being represented by the Tenants' Voice is a small manageable size/area
- support the Tenants' Voices to gather tenants views, to present these views and to communicate with tenants in their area through:
  - Newsletters / leaflets
  - Local questionnaires
  - Meetings / local events
  - offer Tenants' Voices advice and support and make available independent advice from an independent worker
- encourage Tenants' Voices to get in touch with experienced Tenants' Voices and members of Registered Tenant Organisations for support and advice
- seek to attract members from hard to reach groups to become Tenants' Voices.
- monitor interest in setting up a Registered Tenant Organisation. If a group is established where there is a Tenants' Voice, the Tenants' Voice will be encouraged to become part of the Registered Tenant Organisation

Training

Training is available from Housing and Building Services and from other independent sources, depending on what is the most appropriate and cost effective way to provide this.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Training)

Expenses

Claiming any care, travel or out of pocket expenses

- expenses will be paid by West Lothian Council Tenant Participation Team
- any expenses must be agreed prior to being incurred
- receipts must be provided
- reimbursement will be made within 5-10 working days

If you are a tax payer or are in receipt of an income-related benefit, then you must declare any payment, payments in kind, or expenses you receive.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Expenses)

For further information contact your local housing office, or you can contact your Tenant Participation team by:
Email: TP@westlothian.gov.uk | Telephone: 01506 775000

(This document forms part of West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Strategy pack - 2008)

Tenant Led Inspections

Tenant Participation
Getting Involved

Tenant Led Inspections are carried out by a team of informed council tenants and other service users, who will closely examine a particular area of Housing & Building Services. They will identify strengths and areas for improvement within the service being inspected.

A Tenant Led Inspection Team can:

- agree the service areas to be inspected
- undertake any necessary training on the inspection process and the service area being inspected before the inspection starts
- follow procedures as set out in the Tenant Led Inspection Framework and Ground rules document
- undertake the inspection
- compile inspection reports, highlighting good practice and including recommendations for improvement
- assist in recruiting and training inspectors in association with West Lothian Council
- agree sign off of the action plan if satisfied with its implementation
- carry out a brief follow-up inspection to check the implementation of the action plan, 6 months after the latest target date for completion of the action plan.
- carry out spot checks at any time even after the inspection has been signed off to ensure improvements are maintained
- assist and support new inspectors as they carry out the inspection

Housing and Building Services will:

- Meet with service users annually to agree the areas of inspection
- advertise and encourage service users through an annual advertising drive
- provide an overview/briefing of the service to be inspected prior to the inspection starting
- arrange for independent advisors to be brought in to assist the inspectors, if required
- facilitate the inspection process
- ensure the inspectors are supported by experienced Tenant Led Inspectors, West Lothian Council and an Independent Advisor
- provide template documents for use by the Inspectors during the inspection process i.e. report template, action plan template
- offer a proof-reading service for the final draft of the report, prior to submission.
- agree an action plan on each inspection's recommendations and publish the report
- make adequate provision in the TP Budget for inspections
- publish the results of TLIs in:
  - Tenants News
  - Local media
  - West Lothian Council website
- share the results with:
  - service users generally
  - local registered tenant organisations
  - council's Local Area Committees
  - Housing Networks
  - Tenants' Panel

Support

Support to Tenant Led Inspectors is available from the council and from other independent sources, depending on what is the most appropriate and cost effective way to provide this. Support can include:

Information Sharing/Training

- workshops on a particular area of the service, that is planned to be inspected
- training on report writing
- IT skills, such as Microsoft Word, Excel etc.

Benchmarking

- Meeting other Tenant Led Inspectors from other local authorities

Expenses

Participation Incentives

- a participation incentive is payable to Tenant Led Inspectors (50% of this can be claimed at the start of the inspection process)
- any participation incentives will be paid by:
  1. West Lothian Council Tenant Participation Team or
  2. Local Housing Network (if the inspector is a member)

Claiming any care, travel or out of pocket expenses

- any travel or out-of-pocket expenses will be paid by:
  1. West Lothian Council Tenant Participation Team or
  2. Local Housing Network (if the inspector is a member)
- reimbursement will be made within 5-10 working days
- any relevant receipts must be provided

If you are tax payer or are in receipt of an income-related benefit, then you must declare any payment, payments in kind, or expenses you receive.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Expenses)

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(This document forms part of West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Strategy pack - 2008)

Tenants' Panel

Tenant Participation
Getting Involved

The Tenants' Panel covers the entire West Lothian Council area. It is made up of six elected West Lothian Council tenants from the Housing Networks and senior Housing and Building Service managers and elected members.

The main role of the Tenants' Panel is to monitor how tenants views are used to influence service delivery.

How Tenant Panel members are elected:

- all West Lothian Council tenant members of the Housing Networks are eligible to stand for election to the Tenants Panel
- a maximum of six council tenants can be nominated from the Housing Networks
- all members of the Housing Network are eligible to vote to nominate Tenant Panel Members
- members of the Tenants' Panel will stand for re-nomination every two years

As a member of the Tenants' Panel you will meet every month:

- one month with tenants only
- then next month with the full members of the Tenants' Panel, which includes, Tenants, Head of Housing & Building Services, Senior Managers and Elected Members

At the tenants only meeting you will:

- investigate, monitor and review housing and building services performance and budgets
- invite council officers, if required to aid with the work of the Panel
- consider feedback, monitor effectiveness of the consultation process and evaluate the outcomes of the consultation process
- record and publicise the benefit of participation on services
- set the Agenda for the monthly meeting with the full Tenants' Panel
- issue the 'Tenant Approved' stamp to publications that meet the agreed standard

At the full Tenants' Panel meeting you will:

- monitor that tenants views are reflected in the council's decisions
- help plan consultation with tenants and review what tenant consultation is telling the Service
- agree and monitor the Tenant Participation budget and incentive rates
- raise any concerns / issues that have not been resolved
- elect a tenant member to chair the meeting

Housing and Building Services will:

- take the Minutes of all meetings
- publish minutes of Tenants' Panel meetings on the council website

Supporting members of the Panel

To assist the members of the Tenants' Panel, Housing and Building Services will:

- offer training to support members of the panel, based on their individual needs
- provide independent support if required
- provide facilities for meetings of the panel

Claiming Expenses

Participation Incentives

- a participation incentive is payable to Tenant Panel members
- any participation incentives will be paid by your Housing Network

Claiming any care, travel or out of pocket expenses

- any travel or out-of-pocket expenses will be paid by your Housing Network
- reimbursement will be made within 5-10 working days
- any relevant receipts must be provided

If you are a tax payer or are in receipt of an income-related benefit, then you must declare any payment, payments in kind, or expenses you receive.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Expenses)

For further information contact your local housing office, or you can contact your Tenant Participation team by:
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Training

Tenant Participation
Getting Involved

Training is available from Housing and Building Services and from other independent sources, depending on what is the most appropriate and cost effective way to provide this. Training can be tailored to the specific needs of a group or individual. The types of training we can offer include:

Internal Training

- workshops on a particular area of the service, such as Repairs or Enhanced Estate Management
- training to support the needs of groups such as:
  - Committee Skills
  - Making Meetings Work
  - Negotiation Skills
  - Report Writing
  - Equality and Diversity Training
- training on Tenant Led Inspections
- IT skills, such as Microsoft Word, Excel etc.
- attending internal conferences, such as:
  - Tenants Information Day
  - Housing and Building Services Annual Conference
  - Community Days

External Training

- Chartered Institute of Housing
  - certificated courses
  - training events
- attending conferences, such as:
  - Chartered Institute of Housing Annual Conference
  - Tenant Participation Advisory Service Annual Conference
  - Tenant Information Service Annual Conference

The number of places allocated to external training events will:

- reflect the annual Tenant Participation budget
- reflect the Annual Work Plans (set with Registered Tenant Organisations and the Housing Networks)
- be based on the benefit that the individual or group will get from attendance at an event
- give priority to new members who have not previously attended

If you are not part of a recognised group and wish to attend an external training course/conference you can contact the TP Team who will consider your request.

Housing and Building Services will:

- draw up an annual learning programme in consultation with service users and staff
- advertise the annual learning programme in Tenants News and the local press
- advertise external training events in Tenants News
- work with each group to identify any specific group or individual training needs they may have, and include these in their Annual Work Plan
- work with groups and encourage office bearers to attend training sessions tailored to meet the specific requirements for the role as an office bearer, such as Making Meetings Work, Committee Skills, Negotiation Skills
- work with Tenants' Voices, Individual Service Users and members of the Register of Interested Tenants to identify any specific training needs they may have, and where possible incorporate this in the annual learning programme
- include training costs in the annual Tenant Participation budget

Expenses

Claiming any care, travel or out of pocket expenses

- Any expenses will be paid by West Lothian Council Tenant Participation Team or the Housing Network, where appropriate
- any expenses must be agreed prior to being incurred
- receipts must be provided
- reimbursement will be made within 5-10 working days

If you are a tax payer or are in receipt of an income-related benefit, then you must declare any payment, payments in kind, or expenses you receive.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Expenses)

For further information contact your local housing office, or you can contact your Tenant Participation team by:
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(This document forms part of West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Strategy pack - 2008)

Registered Tenant Organisations (RTO)

Tenant Participation
Getting Involved

As a member of a Registered Tenant Organisation you will work with other like minded service users to tackle housing and other related matters that are of interest to you in your local community. Housing and Building Services will support you to be involved in tenant participation and in helping to shape and improve the services we deliver. We will work in partnership with you, and consult with you on any changes or developments to these services. We will ensure the views of your members are reflected in the work of West Lothian Council, as required by the Housing Scotland (2001) Act.

As a member of a Registered Tenant Organisation you can attend and participate in:

- Housing Networks
- Tenants' Panel (if elected by your local Housing Network)
- focus groups
- conferences and information days
- working groups
- any other consultative event organised by Housing & Building Services
- carrying out surveys
- regular estate walkabouts
- Tenant Led Inspections
- quarterly performance meetings with local Housing staff
- meetings of the Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (if nominated by your local Housing Network)

There are some issues that only tenants of West Lothian Council should be involved in, and where possible members of the group who are not West Lothian Council tenants should make this clear to the Chairperson when these issues are being discussed. These issues include:

- Rent setting
- Internal house repair / improvements
- Housing Revenue Budget

The outcome of any consultation by Housing and Building Services will be recorded and shared with :

- service users generally
- local Registered Tenant Organisations
- Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
- council's Local Area Committees
- Housing Networks
- Tenants' Panel

As a registered group you will:

- **have a written constitution that is available for inspection by the public, and it must set out:**
  - your group's objectives
  - the area in which you operate, which must include houses that are owned or managed by West Lothian Council
  - the group's procedures for meetings of members, including the Annual General Meeting (AGM) – meetings must be open to all members
  - that membership of your group must include West Lothian Council tenants
  - that your group must have a minimum of three members
  - how decisions are reached democratically (the decision making process should be included in your constitution)
  - how your business is conducted, including delegated powers
  - how your funds are managed - audited accounts should be presented at your AGM
  - how your constitution can be changed
  - your commitment to equal opportunities
  - how you intend to promote housing and housing related matters
  - demonstrate through your aims and objectives, how you will keep your members informed
- **have an elected committee that:**
  - is elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
  - is in office for a specified period (as stated in the constitution)
  - consists of at least three office bearers, who can co-opt other members onto the group
  - includes at least one West Lothian Council tenant
  - is representative of their community

For further information contact your local housing office, or you can contact your Tenant Participation team by:
Email: TP@westlothian.gov.uk | Telephone: 01506 775000

(This document forms part of West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Strategy pack - 2008)

Registered Tenant Organisations will:

- encourage its members to attend the relevant Housing Network in their area
- invite council officers and elected members from their ward to meetings, in line with council protocol
- promote and encourage membership of their group amongst tenants and residents in their local area
- adhere to the council's 'Good Working Relationship' document
- complete an Annual Work Plan for their group, with assistance from West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Team, local Housing Staff and the Independent Development Worker
- be encouraged to investigate the possibility of receiving funding from other sources
- ensure the Minutes and Agendas of meetings are available to the public through local offices and council website

Housing and Building Services will:

- provide information on service performance
- consult on service delivery, changes and/or developments
- work with your group to prepare an Annual Work Plan to set out your aims and objectives for the year by:
  - highlighting any support needs
  - estimating an annual budget
  - identifying training needs
- ensure your Annual Work Plan reflects local priorities and the ability of your group and West Lothian Council to undertake this activity
- consider proposals for additional special project funding, however this will be dependant on budget constraints
- provide information relevant to your group, that has been collected from various sources, such as:
  - surveys
  - general enquiries relating to your area
  - Register of Interested Tenants
- deduct any funds not spent, or any funds spent outwith the planned budget from the coming year's budget
- ensure that an up-to-date copy of West Lothian's Registered Tenant Organisations is available from all Council Information Service Centres, libraries and on the council website
- inform all new tenants of any Registered Tenant Organisations in their area

As set out in the Data Protection Act, we cannot divulge any personal details in any of the information distributed, without prior agreement

Training

Training is available from Housing and Building Services and from other independent sources, depending on what is the most appropriate and cost effective way to provide this.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Training)

Expenses

Claiming any care, travel or out of pocket expenses

- expenses will be paid by West Lothian Council Tenant Participation Team
- any expenses must be agreed prior to being incurred
- receipts must be provided
- reimbursement will be made within 5-10 working days

If you are a tax payer or are in receipt of an income-related benefit, then you must declare any payment, payments in kind, or expenses you receive.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Expenses)

Register of Interested Tenants (ROIT)

Tenant Participation
Getting Involved

Housing and Building Services offer opportunities for council tenants on the register to comment and be consulted on issues that they have told us are important to them. As a member of the register you will be invited to attend and participate in different consultative events, where we hope to encourage you to get involved in areas of the service that interest you. As a tenant you will be able to use your experiences and knowledge to improve the services you receive.

As a member of the Register you can attend and/or participate in:

- Housing Networks
- Tenants' Panel (if elected through your Housing Network)
- focus groups
- conferences and information days
- working groups
- meetings of the Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (if elected by your Local Housing Network)

Members of the register can also choose whether or not they wish to be contacted by their local Registered Tenant Organisation or Housing Network

- surveys
- annual postal tenants satisfaction questionnaire
- regular estate walkabouts
- Tenant Led Inspections (TLIs)
- tenant satisfaction visit (this will be carried out in your own home at least every three years)
- any other consultative event organised by Housing & Building Services

The outcome of any consultation will be recorded and shared with :

- service users generally
- local Registered Tenant Organisations
- Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
- council's Local Area Committees
- Housing Networks
- Tenants' Panel

Housing and Building Services will:

- advertise and encourage membership of The Register
- review the register on an annual basis
- contact or pass on information to members of The Register on behalf of local groups (as and when requested)
- seek to attract members of The Register from traditionally hard to reach groups

Keep you informed and consult with you on:

- the performance of Housing and Building Services
- any changes that may affect service delivery
- any developments to the services you receive
- any changes that will affect your rent

Training

Training is available from the council and from other independent sources, depending on what is the most appropriate and cost effective way to provide this.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Training)

Expenses

Claiming any care, travel or out of pocket expenses

- expenses will be paid by West Lothian Council Tenant Participation Team
- any expenses must be agreed prior to being incurred
- receipts must be provided
- reimbursement will be made within 5-10 working days

If you are a tax payer or are in receipt of an income-related benefit, then you must declare any payment, payments in kind, or expenses you receive.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Expenses)

For further information contact your local housing office, or you can contact your Tenant Participation team by:
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(This document forms part of West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Strategy pack - 2008)

Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP)

Tenant Participation
Getting Involved

There are nine Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels (PDSP), each is responsible for certain services provided by West Lothian Council. Housing and Building Services comes under the "Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel".

How tenants are represented at the PDSP:

- all council tenant members attending the Housing Networks are eligible to stand for nomination to attend and participate in the meetings of the Services for the Community PDSP
- a maximum of four council tenant members can be nominated from the Housing Networks
- all members of the Housing Networks are eligible to vote to nominate a tenant to attend the PDSP
- tenant members of the PDSP will stand for re-nomination every two years
- if the nominated tenant is unable to attend for any reason, then a substitute tenant can be appointed

How does the Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel work:

- the panel will meet roughly every six weeks, with some additional meetings being organised from time to time
- the panel is made up of six elected members, appointed by the council
- one of the members will be the Executive Councillor who holds the portfolio for Services for the Community, who will also chair each meeting.
- the chairperson will ensure the smooth running of the meeting and that everyone has a fair chance to participate
- an agenda and abbreviated minutes of meetings will be sent out to all those invited to attend
- meetings are almost always held in public and any member of the public can attend to watch even if not specifically invited
- the panel is a form of working group of the Executive Committee and its role is to:
    - develop new policies and review existing policies, and make recommendations for their adoption by the council
    - work through items of business from their own workplans or from full council, executive committee or other council committees
- the panel has a Lead Officer whose role is to work with officers and members to help the panel in its work
- the panel is able to request help and advice from officers of the council when appropriate
- the panel cannot make decisions which are binding on the council – it consults and considers issues and makes recommendations to the Council Executive. If a formal decision is needed then it is made by the Executive and the PDSP recommendations will be taken into account.

What is the Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel responsible for:

- housing revenue and capital budget
- council house rent setting and collection
- local housing strategy
- homelessness
- affordable housing strategy
- supporting people services
- tenant/tenancy support and supported accommodation
- temporary accommodation for those in housing need
- private sector improvement and repair grants and adaptations to properties
- council house sales
- new-build houses for rent
- Tenant Participation strategy
- housing repairs and maintenance services
- meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standard
- housing advice and information service
- Community Safety strategy and policy
- anti-social behaviour
- Neighbourhood Response Team
- Safer Neighbourhood Team
- Noise Nuisance Team
- supporting victims of crime and abuse, including domestic abuse
- reducing accidental injuries, deaths and fires in conjunction with police and fire services
- reducing crime and the fear of crime
- police and fire services

For further information contact your local housing office, or you can contact your Tenant Participation team by:
Email: TP@westlothian.gov.uk | Telephone: 01506 775000
(This document forms part of West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Strategy pack - 2008)

Supporting tenant representatives to the PDSP

To assist the tenant representatives of the PDSP, Housing and Building Services will:

- offer training to support members of the panel, based on their individual needs
- provide independent support if required
- provide support from other council services if required

Claiming Expenses

Claiming any care, travel or out of pocket expenses

- any travel or out-of-pocket expenses will be paid by your Housing Network
- reimbursement will be made within 5-10 working days
- any relevant receipts must be provided

If you are a tax payer or are in receipt of an income-related benefit, then you must declare any payment, payments in kind, or expenses you receive.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Expenses)

Individual Service Users

Tenant Participation
Getting Involved

Housing and Building Services offer opportunities for all service users to be involved in tenant participation and in helping to shape and improve the services they receive. We will consult with you on any changes or developments to these services, and we will ensure the views of all can be reflected in the work of West Lothian Council and the tenant movement in general.

As an Individual Service User you can attend and/or participate in:

- housing networks
- focus groups
- conferences and information days
- working groups
- housing surgeries
- surveys
- regular estate walkabouts
- Tenant Led Inspections (TLIs)
- quarterly performance meetings with local Housing staff

If you are a West Lothian Council Tenant you can also participate in:

- Tenants' Panel (if nominated by your local Housing Network))
- Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (if nominated by your local Housing Network)
- postal annual tenants satisfaction questionnaire
- tenant satisfaction visit (this will be carried out in your own home at least every three years)

The outcome of any consultation by Housing and Building Services will be recorded and shared with :

- service users generally
- local Registered Tenant Organisations
- Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
- council's Local Area Committees
- Housing Networks
- Tenants' Panel

You can also record your views by:

- contacting your local Housing Office
- contacting any Council Information Service Centres
- completing a West Lothian Council 'Comments, Complaints and Concerns Card'
- logging onto www.westlothian.gov.uk, then follow the links – contact us/online forms/housing

Housing and Building Services will:

Keep you informed and consult with you on:

- the performance of Housing and Building Services
- any changes that may affect service delivery
- any developments to the services you receive
- any changes that will affect your rent

Training

Training is available from Housing and Building Services and from other independent sources, depending on what is the most appropriate and cost effective way to provide this.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Training)

Expenses

Claiming any care, travel or out of pocket expenses

- expenses will be paid by West Lothian Council Tenant Participation Team
- any expenses must be agreed prior to being incurred
- receipts must be provided
- reimbursement will be made within 5-10 working days

If you are a tax payer or are in receipt of an income-related benefit, then you must declare any payment, payments in kind, or expenses you receive.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Expenses)

For further information contact your local housing office, or you can contact your Tenant Participation team by:
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Expenses

Tenant Participation
Getting Involved

Service Users get involved in Tenant Participation on a voluntary basis. The Department for Work and Pensions defines a volunteer as a person who is:

- not given any money, apart from their expenses
- not legally obliged to volunteer
- doing something for a not-for-profit organisation
- doing something for someone who is not a family member

Any participation incentives you receive will be treated as income. If you are a taxpayer or are in receipt of an income-related benefit, then you must declare any payment or expenses your receive. Depending on which benefit you are getting, the Department for Work and Pensions may take this income into account when they work out your benefit.

Remember when claiming out of pocket , care or travel expenses receipts must be provided

What can you claim for:

Events

If you are involved in tenant participation you will have the opportunity to attend various meetings and events. As a volunteer you are entitled to claim for any out-of-pocket expenses, such as:

- transport costs (where possible transport should be shared with all those attending the same event)
- care costs
- refreshments (if not supplied)

Transport Costs

When attending events, meetings or on-site inspections in connection with tenant participation, then public transport should be used, unless there is a specific reason (disability, no suitable buses). If necessary transport can be arranged by:

- contacting your local Housing Network
- contacting West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation team
- minibus booked through Housing & Building Services (subject to availability) – this should be accessible for all those travelling *(if an individual is unable to use transport that has been booked, and wishes to make alternative arrangements, then this should be agreed with the Tenant Participation Team or Housing Network)*
- private car users can claim mileage at the rate of £0.40 per mile
- Travel Costs will not be paid for Tenant Led Inspections as this has been included in the Incentive Rate

Where possible, the most cost-effective method of transport should be used at all times, taking into account the effect this has on the environment.

Care Costs

When attending events or meetings in connection with tenant participation, Housing and Building Services will reimburse you for any reasonable care costs, if you need to organise care from a professional agency for:

- childcare (either registered childminder, creche or nursery place)
- carer costs – for registered carers or relatives of any disabled person attending we will fully cover transport, and any other reasonable costs that you may incur to enable both the person and the carer to take part. Utmost care will be taken to ensure full accessibility and opportunity for participation. Please contact us if there are any additional arrangements that we can make for the event or meeting that would be of assistance.

(Contact the TP Team for more information)

Participation Incentives

The council will pay a participation incentive to tenants engaged in the following tenant participation activities:

- Tenant Led Inspections – a flat rate of £15 per half day, £30.00 per full day
- Incentive Fee - £10 per half day, £20 per full day

The incentive fee would apply to the following:

- Tenants' Panel
- Working Groups
- Quality Improvement Teams (QIT)
- Focus Groups
- Editorial Panel
- Overnight conference stay for out of pocket expenses e.g. for TPAS annual conference you would be entitled to claim £60.00 for three full days

To encourage participation the council may also offer incentives such as prize draws, competitions, etc. at consultation events or through Tenants News.

For further information contact your local housing office, or you can contact your Tenant Participation team by:
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Housing Networks

Tenant Participation
Getting Involved

Housing Networks are made up of Individual Service Users, council tenants from the Register of Interested Tenants (ROIT), Tenants' Voices and members of Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs).

The Housing Networks main role is to work in partnership with all of these service users, to gather views on housing and other related matters. The Networks will present these views to the council; ensuring that any decisions made are informed and shaped by the users of our services.

The Housing Networks will cover each of the multi-member wards:

- **Linlithgow**
- **Broxburn, Uphall & Winchburgh**
- **Livingston North**
- **Livingston South**
- **East Livingston & East Calder**
- **Fauldhouse & the Breich Valley**
- **Whitburn & Blackburn**
- **Bathgate**
- **Armadale & Blackridge**

As a member of a Housing Network you can attend and participate in:

- your local Registered Tenant Organisation
- Tenants' Panel (if a council tenant and if elected)
- focus groups
- conferences and information days
- working groups
- any other consultative event organised by Housing and Building Services
- carrying out surveys
- regular estate walkabouts
- Tenant Led Inspections (TLIs)
- meetings of the Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (if elected)

There are some issues that only tenants of West Lothian Council should be involved in, and where possible members of the network who are not West Lothian Council tenants should make this clear to the Chairperson when these issues are being discussed. These issues include:

- Rent setting
- Internal house repair / improvements
- Housing Revenue Account

The outcome of any consultation by Housing and Building Services will be recorded and shared with :

- service users generally
- local Registered Tenant Organisations
- Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
- council's Local Area Committees
- Housing Networks
- Tenants' Panel

Housing Networks will:

- invite council officers and elected members from their ward to meetings, in line with council protocol
- promote and encourage membership of their network
- adhere to the council's 'Good Working Relationship' document
- complete an Annual Work Plan for their network, with assistance from West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Team
- be encouraged to investigate the possibility of funding from other sources
- ensure the Minutes and Agendas of meetings are available to the public through local offices and council website

For further information contact your local housing office, or you can contact your Tenant Participation team by:
Email: TP@westlothian.gov.uk | Telephone: 01506 775000

(This document forms part of West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Strategy pack - 2008)

Housing and Building Services will:

- provide information on service performance
- consult on service delivery, changes and/or developments
- work with your network to prepare an Annual Work Plan to set out your aims and objectives for the year by:
  - highlighting any support needs
  - estimating an annual budget
  - identifying training needs
- ensure your annual work plan reflects local priorities and the ability of your network and West Lothian Council to undertake this activity
- consider proposals for additional special project funding, however this will be dependant on budget constraints
- deduct any funds not spent, or any funds spent outwith the planned budget from the coming year's budget
- provide information relevant to your group, that has been collected from various sources, such as:
  - surveys
  - general enquiries relating to your area
  - Register of Interested Tenants
- ensure that an up-to-date copy of West Lothian's Registered Tenant Organisations is available from all Council Information Service Centres, libraries and on the council website
- provide new tenants with information about your Housing Network, and any Registered Tenant Organisations in your area

As set out in the Data Protection Act, we cannot divulge any personal details in any of the information distributed, without prior agreement

As a Housing Network you will:

- **have a written constitution that is available for inspection by the public, and it must set out:**
  - your Network's objectives
  - the area in which you operate. This area must include houses that are owned or managed by West Lothian Council
  - the networks procedures for meetings of members, including the Annual General Meeting (AGM) – meetings must be open to all members
  - ensure that membership of your Network includes West Lothian Council tenants
  - how decisions are reached democratically (the decision making process should be included in your constitution)
  - how your business is conducted, including delegated powers
  - how your funds are managed. Audited accounts should be presented at your AGM
  - how your constitution can be amended
  - your commitment to equal opportunities
  - how you intend to promote housing and housing related matters
  - demonstrate through your aims and objectives how you will keep your members informed
- **have an elected executive committee that:**
  - is elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
  - is in office for a specified period (as stated in the constitution)
  - consists of at least three office bearers, who can co-opt other members onto the group
  - includes at least one West Lothian Council tenant
  - is representative of their community

The Housing Networks will:

- each have identical constitutions
- gather and present the views of service users in your area
- be able to carry out consultation activities in your community e.g. mystery shopping, surveys
- be advised of all consultative activities being carried out in your area and the outcomes
- nominate up to a maximum of six council tenants to attend the Tenants' Panel
- nominate up to a maximum of four council tenants, to attend the council's Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel for Services for the Community and any other Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel that tenants may be requested to participate in (those nominated will be able to send a substitute if they are unable to attend)
- be responsible for arranging to meet together at least twice a year to discuss good practice and common issues
- be responsible for organising their meetings so that Networks meet on the same week of every month
- extend an open invitation for each Housing Network to attend one another's meetings
- support members to keep their Registered Tenant Organisation or community informed of the Housing Network's activities
- adhere to the council's 'Good Working Relationship' document
- be supported by the Council
- have its own budget based on the Annual Work Plan that has been agreed with West Lothian Council
- ensure their minutes and contact details are made available to the public via the council's website and, by request, from local offices or libraries, and the Tenant Participation Team

Training

Training is available from Housing and Building Services and from other independent sources, depending on what is the most appropriate and cost effective way to provide this.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Training)

Expenses

Claiming any care, travel or out of pocket expenses

- expenses will be paid by West Lothian Council Tenant Participation Team
- any expenses must be agreed prior to being incurred
- receipts must be provided
- reimbursement will be made within 5-10 working days

If you are a tax payer or are in receipt of an income-related benefit, then you must declare any payment, payments in kind, or expenses you receive.

(for more detailed information, see separate sheet on Expenses)

For further information contact your local housing office, or you can contact your Tenant Participation team by:
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