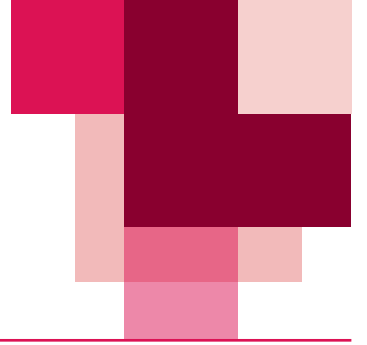


# Developing tenant scrutiny and co-regulation in social housing

## Lessons from the co-regulatory champions





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## Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)

The Centre for Public Scrutiny is an independent charity that promotes transparent, inclusive and accountable public services and supports and celebrates excellent and effective scrutiny across the public sector. We support scrutineers by producing guidance, creating and supporting networks and sharing our expertise through seminars, consultancy, training and events. Our website [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk) contains the largest on-line collection of scrutiny reviews and reports, as well as other publications and information to tell you more about what scrutiny and accountability can do for you.

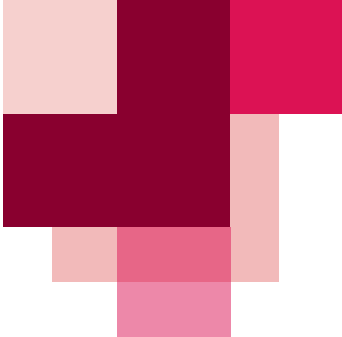
## Acknowledgements

This report has been researched and written by Jessica Crowe of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and Yvonne Davies and Linda Levin of Scrutiny Empowerment Partners Ltd (SEP), with additional contributions from Alison Yates at CfPS and Catherine Little from Soha Housing on behalf of the Co-Regulatory Champions.

The report has benefited greatly from inputs and comments from the residents, staff and chief executives from the ten Co-Regulatory Champions, who gave their time to provide us with information, be interviewed and attend discussion and consultation meetings. We are very grateful to all the Champions for all their assistance:

- AmicusHorizon
- Community Gateway Association
- Family Housing Association
- Helena Partnerships
- New Charter Housing Trust
- Riverside Housing Group
- Salix Homes
- Soha Housing
- Wherry Housing Association
- Wirral Partnership Homes

We are grateful to Cheshire West and Chester Council and to Bromford Housing Group for adding the perspectives of tenant scrutiny in a Local Authority setting and for enlightening us around the use of social media (respectively), which the champions felt were missing elements from their particular experiences.



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We are also grateful to the representatives from a number of national housing organisations, DCLG and others who attended a roundtable discussion and provided feedback on our emerging findings and the tenants and landlords who attended the First National Tenant Panel Conference in York run by the Northern Housing Consortium and SEP in November 2011, who all took time to give their hints and tips for those involved in scrutiny, many of which have been captured in this report.

The report is accompanied by a shorter Top Tips for Tenants: holding your landlord to account through scrutiny and a document with detailed case studies: Stories in Tenant Scrutiny and Co-Regulation.

Any mistakes are ours alone and all views are those of the authors, except where others have been quoted.

### **CfPS and SEP**

February 2012

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# Foreword

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I am really pleased to have been asked to write a foreword for this publication. It is timely due to the changes in consumer regulation, and also celebrates the work of some excellent social housing providers and their tenants.

I met with the TSA Co-Regulatory Champions shortly after they were selected and was impressed with their different, diverse and various approaches to co-regulation, exhibiting genuinely local approaches. I am also familiar with and a great supporter of the work of the Centre for Public Scrutiny. It is therefore pleasing that CfPS and Scrutiny Empowerment Partners have worked with the TSA Co-Regulatory Champions to pull this publication together, setting out the learning from their experiences of developing tenant scrutiny and co-regulation.

This report provides valuable lessons for others embarking on the journey to ensure tenants and residents can hold their landlord to account in a meaningful way.

The regulation of the Consumer Regulatory Standards moves into a new phase from 1st April 2012, with the emphasis squarely on the resolution of complaints and concerns at local level, and no central regulation save for incidences of serious harm. The emphasis is on the importance of tenants having real opportunities to scrutinise their landlord's performance and influence service delivery and improvement – this report provides excellent hints and tips that will help tenants and landlords deliver this vision and help ensure accountability of landlords to their tenants.

I commend the report to Boards, local councillors, housing staff and tenants - and hope that the tenants' top tips guide that accompanies it will be particularly useful for tenants taking on their new responsibilities.

**Claer Lloyd-Jones**

Chief Executive, TSA

The Social Housing Regulator

# 1. The national context: co-regulation and scrutiny in housing

Since April 2010, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) has overseen a framework of co-regulation in the social housing sector. The Coalition Government, with its commitment to rolling back central regulation, now intends that the Regulation Committee of the Homes and Communities Agency will take on a number of scaled-back regulatory functions of the Tenant Services Authority once it is merged into the Homes and Communities Agency through the Localism Act.<sup>1</sup>

The role of consumer regulation will be refocused on setting clear service standards for social landlords, with a much higher legal threshold for regulatory intervention, based on serious detriment to tenants. In November 2011, the TSA set out its proposed approach to assessing this new 'serious detriment' threshold in a statutory consultation on the new regulatory framework. Revised regulatory standards for landlords' accountability to tenants mean that tenant panels, or equivalent bodies, must be supported by landlords to allow tenants to scrutinise performance, services and complaints.

In its November 2011 consultation document on the new regulatory framework, the TSA set out six principles underlying its approach to co-regulation in the new environment. These are set out in the box below.

## TSA proposed principles of co-regulation (2011)

- a) Boards and councillors who govern providers are responsible and accountable for delivering their organisation's social housing objectives
- b) Providers must meet the regulatory standards
- c) Transparency and accountability is central to co-regulation
- d) Tenants should have opportunities to shape service delivery and to hold the responsible boards and councillors to account
- e) Providers should understand the particular needs of their tenants
- f) Value for money goes to the heart of how providers ensure current and future delivery of their objectives<sup>2</sup>

These principles and the detailed provisions set out in the proposed revised Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard by the TSA make clear the government's expectation that tenants should have real influence and 'opportunities to shape the tailoring of services to reflect local priorities'. It is envisaged that tenants should be able to 'scrutinise their provider's performance, identify areas for improvement and influence future delivery', and that they will be supported by housing providers in 'developing their skills and capacity so that engagement and scrutiny are effective'<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Julian Ashby, deputy chairman of the Tenant Services Authority, was appointed Chairman-designate to the Regulation Committee in October 2011

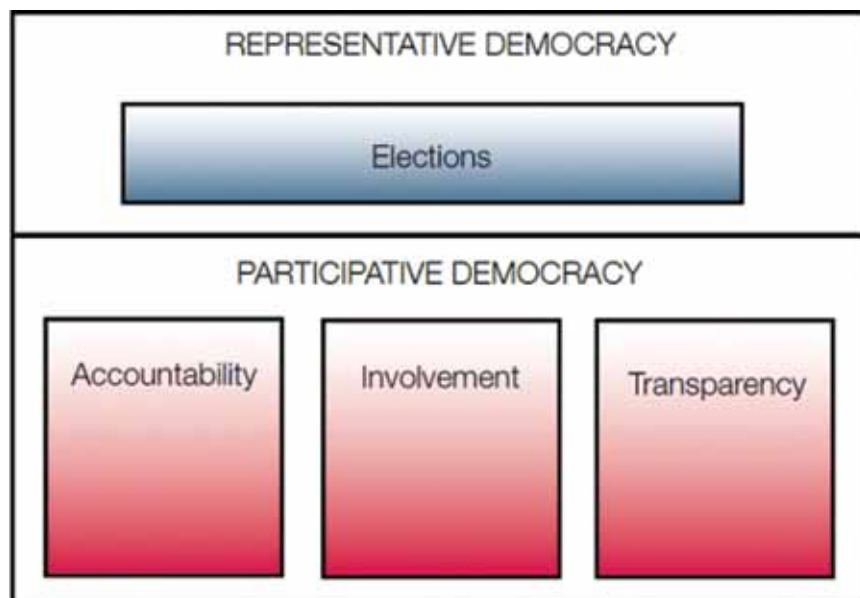
<sup>2</sup> TSA (Nov 2011) Revised regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2012 – statutory consultation

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

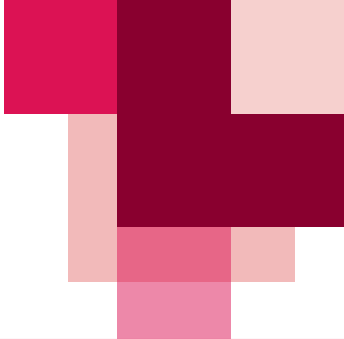
Although the government acknowledges that much in the TSA's existing standards should remain, as they are well-understood and accepted in the sector, there are some changes of emphasis in the new framework, which the revised standards seek to encapsulate. Firstly there is greater emphasis on the importance of securing value for money (VFM), which is one of the six new principles of co-regulation set out by the TSA. Our research with the Co-regulatory Champions suggests that residents can be powerful advocates for value for money and that they are often willing to consider more radical changes in service delivery than the provider's staff themselves might be, in order to achieve VFM.

Secondly there is a stronger emphasis on accountability and transparency directly from housing providers to tenants. The previous TSA tenant involvement and empowerment standard held an expectation of landlords discussing performance and improvements (amongst other things) with tenants. The latest consultation takes this expectation further, suggesting that tenants be supported and resourced to set up tenant panels or similar to scrutinise landlord performance. It also sets out clear expectations that landlords should provide annual reports to tenants, and carry out 'robust and honest self-assessments' of their performance.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny's recent work on accountability also emphasises the importance of having a range of mechanisms to secure accountability, transparency and involvement and support both democratic accountability and service improvements. For local authority landlords, where elected councillors have overall responsibility for strategic housing objectives, this explains why tenant involvement, empowerment and scrutiny are important additional elements in securing accountability for housing provision, and complementary to the accountability provided by elected members. This is illustrated in the diagram below, which comes from CfPS's analysis, entitled *Accountability Works!*<sup>4</sup>:



<sup>4</sup> CfPS (2010) *Accountability Works!*



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In summary, there is strong direction from the government that the principle of co-regulation should be ‘retained and enhanced’ including ‘a clearer role for tenants in scrutinising performance’.<sup>5</sup> The government is not planning to be prescriptive about how a landlord achieves this accountability to tenants and has argued that many landlords are already ‘delivering sufficient involvement and accountability pursuant to the TSA’s existing Involvement and Empowerment Standard’.<sup>6</sup>

This non-prescriptive approach is welcome as it enables housing providers to respond to what their tenants and residents want and to develop approaches that work for them. In this report we have taken the same non-prescriptive approach. All the co-regulatory champions have developed different systems of resident involvement and scrutiny, and we do not emphasise one as necessarily better than the others or suggest that other providers adopt any of their approaches wholesale. We hope that the lessons from the champions’ experiences – set out in more detail in the case studies in the accompanying Stories in Tenant Scrutiny and Co-Regulation in Social Housing – will help others to develop their own approaches.

Responsibility for ensuring individual landlords and housing providers genuinely meet the standards around accountability and transparency in practice will fall directly on tenants themselves. The central regulator will have no role in either monitoring landlords’ performance against these standards or promoting best practice in meeting them. This provides some challenges where landlords are unresponsive or fail to see the benefits that can arise from genuinely listening to tenants and acting on their concerns.

Tenants of housing providers that have traditionally performed poorly or been disinterested in listening to their residents may have low expectations and thus not actively demand the responses and services they are entitled to expect. However, we hope that this report and the lessons from the co-regulatory champions will demonstrate the benefits in terms of higher customer satisfaction, improved services and greater value for money that can arise from effective resident scrutiny and prompt both providers and residents to action.

“AmicusHorizon used to tell tenants first and ask later. Now they ask first and we tell them. Consultation has moved from ‘rubber stamping’ to genuine engagement.”

**Resident of AmicusHorizon, London**

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<sup>5</sup> DCLG (Oct 2010) Review of social housing regulation

<sup>6</sup> DCLG (Jan 2011) Localism Bill: reform of social housing regulation – impact assessment





## 2. Jargon busting: what's in a name?

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As with any area of public policy there is some jargon involved, and different organisations use different words or phrases to mean the same kind of thing. The best advice from the co-regulatory champions is not to get too worried about which language or structure is “right” or “wrong” but to find something that works for you and means something to residents.

### Resident, tenant or customer?

In this publication we have tended to use the word “**residents**” to describe the people who live in homes that are owned and/or managed by a landlord or freeholder who they seek to hold to account. However, amongst the co-regulatory champions – and indeed amongst other landlords and organisations – there is great variety. Salix, for example, use the word “customer” and take pride in being “customer-focused”. For them, this means they are focused on delivering the best service possible to residents.

Official documents talk about tenants and “tenant panels”, so where we are referring to government policy we tend to use this language. However, this does not mean that if your organisation does not have a body called a “tenant scrutiny panel” you should rush to set one up. We prefer the less prescriptive term “resident” as we believe that the principles of scrutiny, accountability and transparency can be delivered through any structure or arrangement in any context:

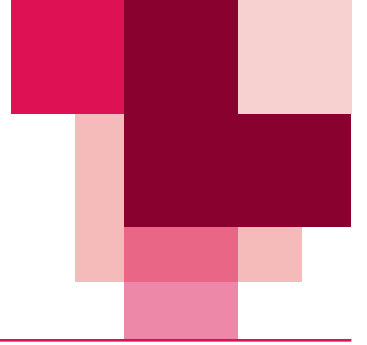
- whether the tenants are residents of social landlords, private landlords or local authorities;
- whether they are leaseholders whose freehold is owned by a local authority or private landlord;
- whether their homes are managed directly by their landlord, by a managing agent or an ALMO; or
- whether they are members of a housing co-operative.

### Co-regulation or scrutiny?

In this publication we distinguish between the wide range of resident empowerment and involvement activities that are covered by co-regulation, and one of those activities – scrutiny – with which this document is primarily concerned. In other words, resident scrutiny is part of co-regulation, but so are resident inspectors, mystery shopping, local area committees or panels, and other mechanisms which enable residents to give feedback to their landlord, hold them to account and help to improve the services they receive.

Resident scrutiny can also take place in lots of different places and ways, using different groups, panels or forums of residents to challenge and hold their landlord to account. The terms used to describe the activity are not important – so long as they are understood and clear to residents. It is more important to meet the aims set out in the TSA principles of co-regulation, which complement CfPS’s principles of effective scrutiny, which are discussed in the next section.

# 3. The four principles of effective scrutiny: lessons from the co-regulatory champions

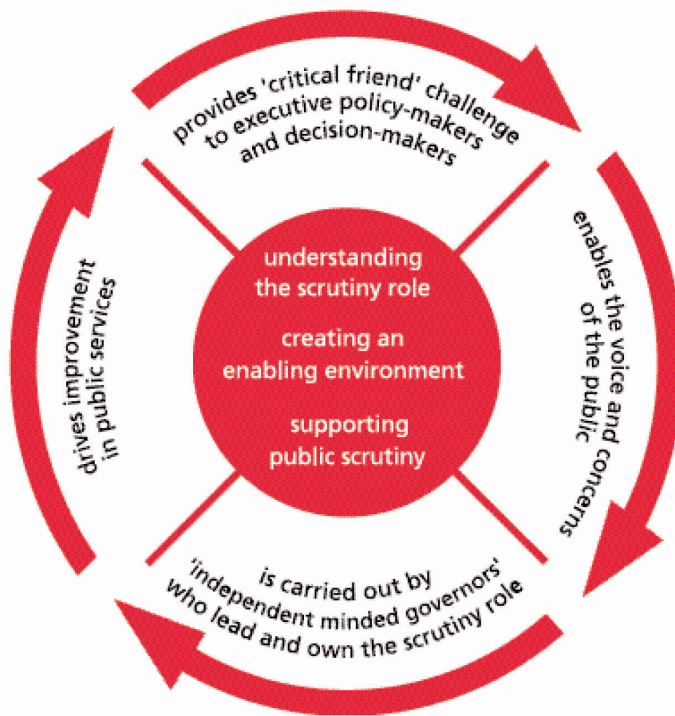


CfPS has developed four principles to support effective scrutiny<sup>7</sup>. These are set out in the good scrutiny cycle below, demonstrating how providing ‘critical friend’ challenge leads to improved services. In the centre of the cycle are three important enabling factors that help good scrutiny to take place.

“I met with the TSA Co-Regulatory Champions shortly after they were selected and was impressed with their different, diverse and various approaches to co-regulation, exhibiting genuinely local approaches.”

**Claer Lloyd-Jones, Chief Executive of the TSA**

## the good scrutiny cycle



This section will reflect on the lessons from the co-regulatory champions on their experience of developing resident scrutiny: what works and what barriers need to be overcome. It sets out the benefits for residents, Boards/ councillors and staff of having arrangements that enable and support effective resident scrutiny as part of co-regulation and strong accountability between landlords and residents.

“Get the culture right... Residents, Board and staff need to trust and respect each other for co-regulation to work well.”

**Soha Housing**

<sup>7</sup> CfPS (2006) Good Scrutiny Guide (2nd edition)





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## Principle One: Providing critical friend challenge

It can be hard to get the balance right in being a ‘critical friend’, providing challenge to decision-makers which is both robust and constructive. The role of the Chair of the resident scrutiny panel is vital in keeping scrutiny members focused and setting the tone for meetings to constructively challenge the landlord to support improvement. Good Chairs ensure that relations with the landlord and partnership principles of co-regulation are maintained by ensuring that residents challenge the evidence not individuals. The Chair also has an important role in building respect for resident scrutiny throughout the organisation. The Chair can and should act as an ambassador for residents’ and residents’ right to constructively challenge.

### **Choosing the right Chair at Salix Homes Customer Senate**

Salix Homes supported the recruitment of a new Chair by offering advice to anyone who was thinking of applying by discussing this with them ahead of the agreement of the process. They discussed:

- How they might challenge someone who had breached the code of conduct
- How they might chair a meeting
- How they might identify the important issues and draw out everyone to speak in a meeting.

Staff worked with the Senate to help them draw up role description and responsibilities and then to agree the election processes. A secret ballot took place to elect the Chair and everyone who applied had to give a 5 minute speech on the issues they would address as Chair. Senators serve for 3 years to mirror the Board term of office. The qualities customers wanted from the chair, were someone who was fair, approachable, open and when necessary firm to bring meetings to order.

To get this dual ‘critical friend’ role right, it is also important to have the right enabling environment for resident scrutiny. Developing a clear statement

“Many organisations have only got the ‘critical’ aspect of co-regulation. It is the ‘friend’ side which enables us to work together to solve problems.”

**AmicusHorizon**

of scrutiny’s purpose and working protocols that spell out rights and responsibilities for resident scrutiny can help make it work effectively. These can set out what information resident scrutiny panels need and can expect to be provided with, how and to whom they can make recommendations, and what action is expected from decision-makers in response to scrutiny reports. The Co-Regulatory Champions have developed tools such as clear Terms of Reference for resident scrutiny, and a Code of Conduct which can include safeguards such as confidentiality agreements.



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## The benefits of critical friend challenge...

### For residents:

- It can provide direct access to Boards and councillors and a formal way for residents to challenge decision-makers in the meetings where those decisions are made
- Residents can make sure that the people who originally made a decision (the Board, councillors or senior officers) are not the only ones to question whether it was the right decision or whether it has been properly implemented
- Residents can hold the people responsible for managing their home and spending their rent money or service charge to account and make sure they are providing value for money.
- Residents get to scrutinise the Board and Executive and from this develop their own skills in strategic thinking
- Processes are open, transparent and accountable.
- Access to information helps residents get a clear understanding of the business and the constraints in which it operates.

“It’s been really empowering for tenants... as a result we feel we’ve had a bigger impact.”

### For the Board and councillors:

#### Chair of Way Ahead with Wherry

- ‘Critical friend’ challenge from resident scrutiny can prompt them to consider things afresh from a different perspective
- It can provide evidence of how decisions are really working on the ground
- It requires decision-makers to explain and justify their decisions to their customers, which is a vital part of good governance and accountability
- Residents who are Board members are already involved in helping the organisation improve, but excluding them from scrutiny structures (in order to avoid a conflict of interest) gives other residents a chance to have their say
- It provides feedback to the Board regarding what savings and costs residents may find acceptable
- A clear and structured process means feedback from residents directly to the Board
- It offers a way of being transparent and working together with residents.



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### For operational staff and managers:

- Gives vital customer feedback on performance which supports effective management
- Requires staff to think about the services they provide or manage from a different perspective and to explain decisions to residents
- It can provide evidence to help improve services in a systematic way
- Business improvement teams have benefited from getting involved in supporting and understanding resident issues through scrutiny, as well as the involvement team
- Tailors services to needs of residents and reduces waste, by listening to what residents want and helping staff understand what residents think “good” looks like.

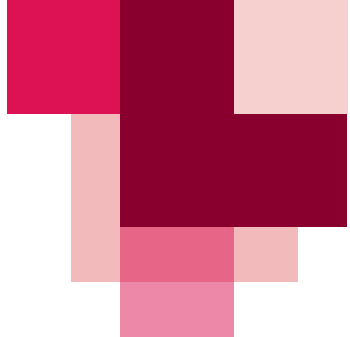
“Scrutiny gives focus to specific whole service reviews; there has always been challenge but this has a greater impetus.”

### Community Gateway

#### What works - supporting critical friend challenge...

In the experience of the co-regulatory champions there are some key elements of support that resident scrutiny needs in order to make the ‘critical friend’ role work effectively. These include:

- Tailored support for residents, particularly at first, and a good induction process for newly active residents;
- Developing good chairing skills is crucial
- Providing the right level of information to residents to enable them to challenge effectively: too much information can swamp residents who are, after all, volunteers; too little information does not give enough basic knowledge to enable them to ask the right questions;
- Residents’ groups must have teeth in your system of co-regulation;
- Investing time in building a collaborative relationship between residents, operational staff and decision-makers – this means finding residents who can give the time as well as the landlord’s staff and senior management being ready to invest time;
- Clear processes to guide the work of the residents involved in scrutiny and ensure all residents understand how to get involved at a range of different levels;

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- Presentations and training on how services operate ahead of any service scrutiny
  - Doing work in bite sized chunks and keeping focus
  - Task and finish groups to look at specific issues and on-going teams which will do detailed work.

## Principle Two: Enabling the voice of the public and service users

Bringing the real experiences of tenants and residents and their communities to bear on decision-making and policy-setting processes is a unique selling point for scrutiny. It provides evidence to support 'critical friend' challenge and lead to improvements in public services.

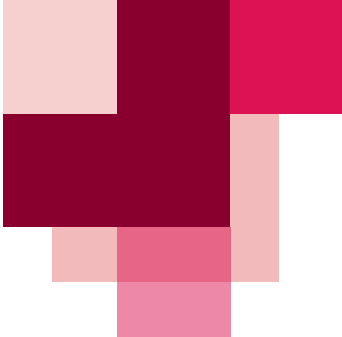
The way in which resident scrutiny works can help put this principle into practice. Providing a variety of ways for different residents to get their voices heard and contribute their views, individually or as a group, is vitally important. Whether through in-depth service reviews, questioning managers on performance or examining policies and proposals, ensuring the voices of all residents are heard brings huge benefits for both residents and their landlord.

Soha Housing acknowledges that meetings are always hard for some people and their scrutiny groups are as inclusive as possible. For example they use Skype, video conference and online chat, and offer full expenses, including childcare. In 2010-11, around half of their meetings were in the evenings or at weekends to maximise opportunities for resident involvement.

### **The benefits of enabling the voice of the public and service users...**

#### **For residents:**

- They can ensure the landlord is focused on what really matters to residents
- Resident scrutiny is a way of feeding views and experiences into those who make decisions in a structured way and ensuring feedback has an impact where it counts
- Residents can make sure that the different views and needs of different groups of residents – including those from minority groups – are not ignored or forgotten when services are planned and reviewed
- It can provide genuine two-way communication
- Gathering information from other residents through mystery shopping gives residents' perspective of services out there and instigates recommendations for change.



In Family HA, residents are paid in points for their involvement, from returning questionnaires to being involved in scrutiny. Points can be exchanged for vouchers. This encourages all residents to be involved in giving feedback, in whatever way suits them. The system also recognises that some residents do more than others and rewards this.

#### **For the Board and councillors:**

- It provides a reality check about the quality of services the organisation is delivering to customers
- It can help meet statutory equalities duties towards minority groups of residents
- When residents have more of a say and more opportunities to get their voices heard, satisfaction ratings increase
- Scrutiny can tighten up involvement and made it more focused, which helps to trigger actions on real priorities
- Resident scrutiny helps to remove assumptions and presumptions of what is happening based only on officer reports.

#### **For operational staff and managers:**

- Resident scrutiny reviews can help ensure residents' experience is considered alongside performance data and other information
- Resident scrutiny is a structured way of ensuring staff pick up on the views and needs of all residents, not just the majority or those who shout loudest or have individual complaints
- It can help develop a better relationship between residents and front-line staff as residents feel listened to and that their views make a difference
- Training residents on services and policies provides an opportunity for staff to refresh and check their own knowledge and acts as a development opportunity
- Residents do recognise excellent services and praise staff for this in their reports on scrutiny
- Back office staff can be involved as well, for example using Facebook and Twitter involves and interests communications staff
- Staff can see what a difference residents can make
- Moving resident scrutiny into the Performance team while other involvement structures report into the Involvement team has given some clarity and spread the workload.

## What works: enabling the voice of the public and service users...

The co-regulatory champions found that the following helped them hear from a wide range of residents and develop this principle of effective scrutiny:

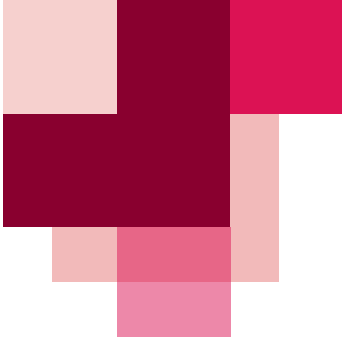
- Providing genuine opportunities for residents to influence decisions and give them a voice that helps them make a difference within their community
- Ensuring there are links between formal structures and the wider body of residents and that there is awareness of how to feed views into resident scrutiny panels – get the whole organisation behind the conversation that scrutiny can facilitate
- Ensuring there are links between scrutiny and involvement structures and the wider decision-making and performance management structures of the organisation – it is important not to be ‘silo-based’
- Setting up representative groups can ensure a diverse range of voices are heard, for example finding innovative ways to involve young people, ethnic minority groups and people of working age or with families who may find it difficult to come to meetings
- Offering a flexible range of opportunities for residents to get their voices heard so that it doesn’t require people to come to formal meetings
- Getting out into different settings, ie where different groups of residents live and spend time, in order to reach them and gather views
- Working with other organisations who may find it easier to reach isolated or ‘hard to reach’ groups of residents
- While making efforts to engage wider groups of residents and those who do not easily get involved, it is important to recognise and value the contribution made by active residents who can sometimes be criticised as the ‘usual suspects’.
- Keeping hints and tips, to review and reflect on the journey and share learning in an informative way
- Not automatically having a meeting – keep refreshing the approach, don’t let it go stale, continuously think of ways to revise and renew opportunities for involvement

“Be proactive in trying to get people involved. Offer a range of opportunities across diverse communities but don’t be discouraged if they don’t want to be involved – they have the right to say no!”

### Community Gateway

The annual customer inspector conference in Riverside HA gets all mystery shoppers together nationally to share ideas, findings, good practice and common issues.



- 
- 
- Comprehensive impact assessment to show what residents have influenced
  - Fun days like road shows, large gatherings on local estates and trips out to get families and young people engaged and then involved
  - Providing the right amount of information to help residents in understanding issues, alternatives, opportunities and solutions
  - Vodcasts and use of YouTube can help to get messages across
  - Giving residents project management and time management skills so they feel that they are getting a practical personal benefit.

“Engaging tenants in staff groups, like equality and diversity, has led to recruitment of tenants in other involvement mechanisms.”

#### **Family HA**

#### **Principle Three: Led and owned by independent-minded residents**

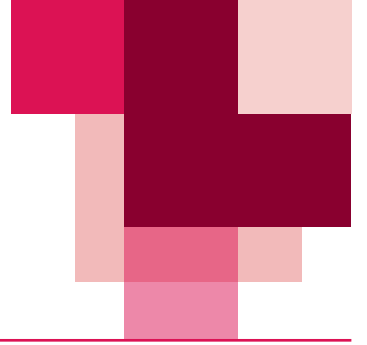
It is vitally important that scrutiny is resident-owned and resident-led. This makes it unique in systems of governance and regulation, which often focus on reporting on performance about government or national objectives. If scrutiny is resident-led this ensures it is reporting to residents about the issues that really matter to them. It is important as a principle that scrutiny is independent of the Board and decision-making – just as select committees in Parliament are independent of ministers and the government.

Good scrutiny is worthwhile and interesting but it may require persistence, hard work and a good deal of time and effort and it is important to remember that residents get involved as volunteers. Chairs have an important role in creating the right conditions for the resident scrutiny group to work as a team - in agreeing agendas for meetings, setting out how and when meetings take place and leading the work programme for the panel. To find residents who are willing to contribute actively to the scrutiny role it is vital to put effort into

getting your recruitment right, and also into retaining their interest over time and refreshing the pool of volunteers on a rolling basis.

“Co-regulation and scrutiny are not cheap... be prepared to invest time and resources training your volunteers...be honest about the amount of time residents need to commit.”

#### **New Charter**



It can sometimes be hard for residents who get involved in scrutiny arrangements to make sure they are not only acting on issues that affect them personally but to tackle strategic issues that may affect a wider group of residents. Being 'independent-minded' means setting aside personal prejudices and preconceptions and focusing on the bigger picture. It is important to genuinely listen to the evidence scrutiny is presented with, which can come from lots of different sources. Residents are often able to do this effectively because they can bring a common-sense attitude that cuts through the bureaucracy to get to the real issues, bringing a range of benefits.

**“Keep recruiting and aim for a diverse range of residents to be involved. Be inventive and don't be afraid to try something new to attract a different demographic group. Succession planning is also important. We've found mystery shopping and complaints to be two of our best recruitment grounds!”**

### **Soha Housing**

#### **Recruitment processes need to be rigorous to find the right people**

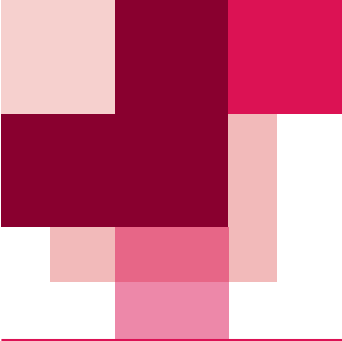
A rigorous and tough recruitment process for the TASQ group in Riverside Housing Group (RHG) meant 80 applicants were reduced to 40 and then to 8 residents. Training was delivered to just 6 residents and then RHG went back out to advert for another 4 residents. The work the group has completed is excellent as a result, though it caused some dissent when residents were rejected. For RHG, it was the right thing to do to ensure quality.

#### **The benefits of being led and owned by independently minded residents...**

##### **For residents:**

- If residents are involved in designing the resident involvement and scrutiny structures and processes right from the start it is more likely to work for them and keep them involved
- It provides an opportunity to learn from other residents' experiences and gain a greater understanding of what's involved in providing services
- Some residents have learnt so many new skills and confidence through being involved in scrutiny that they have gone on to get jobs and leave their tenancies
- New member buddying with existing involved residents offers a way to meet other residents
- Residents become confident over time in meeting with senior staff and expressing their views.





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“Involved residents have been recruited for work experience and many have applied for permanent work in the HA.”

**Family HA**

**For the Board and councillors:**

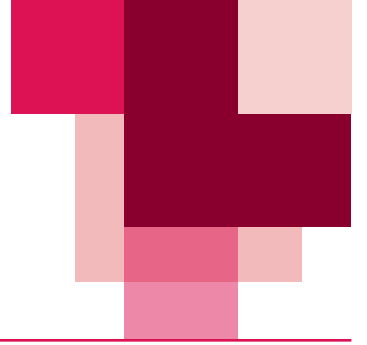
- If the resident scrutiny process is genuinely resident-led it will ensure they are getting feedback on what matters to customers and that they are hearing the authentic ‘resident voice’
- Independent resident scrutiny provides a different set of perspectives to the views and reports Boards may receive from managers and staff and helps improve services
- For housing associations that are also charities, ensuring they really understand beneficiaries’ needs and views is important for ensuring the Board of Trustees meet their charitable duty to deliver public benefit
- For local authority landlords, resident scrutiny provides an independent view about service performance which can complement the challenge provided by elected member overview and scrutiny.

“A review of governance has led to the Board delegating top level performance management to the Senate.”

**Salix Homes**

**Challenge to all levels of the organisation**

The Federation Executives in Riverside Housing Group meet annually for a day with the Group Board to influence business strategy. During the day there is a panel discussion where a resident, a Board member and an independent member are subjected to questions and challenge on outcomes from their role and what they can do to support each other.



### For operational staff and managers:

- Ensuring resident scrutiny is resident-led enables them to target resources on the issues that matter most to residents
- It gives practical feedback and information from customers, enabling changes and improvements to services to be made that you might not otherwise know are needed or important
- It can help link frontline services into the formal decision-making structures of the organisation and get practical issues raised at the highest levels
- Residents go out and pick up ideas from residents of other landlords and do the research
- Senior staff meet with residents and build relationships which enables them to understand the impact of their decisions
- Customer involvement in the procurement of contractors for responsive and programmed maintenance, brings a fresh perspective to quality from a customer viewpoint.

“As a member of the Terrington Neighbourhood Standards Panel, I have been able to help lots of my neighbours get issues sorted out. We like it as we are able to help and to be involved in making our neighbourhood better. For example, the footpath was widened to make it easier for wheelchairs and buggy users and the overgrown area near the park has been cleaned up. The estate inspections give everyone a chance to be involved and the panel checks that the actions suggested are being carried out.”

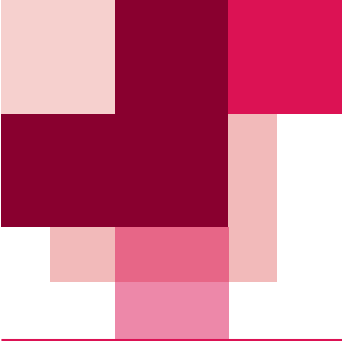
**Resident of Wherry Housing Association, Norfolk**

### What works in being led and owned by independently minded residents...

The co-regulatory champions found that to help them ensure scrutiny was genuinely resident-led, the following worked:

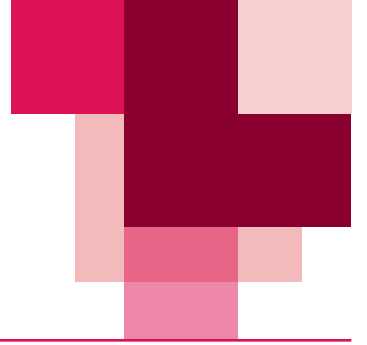
- Helping residents to see how many wider and strategic issues affect them can enhance their interest – even if it does not personally involve them
- Good recruitment processes and succession-planning, including designing the right kind of person specification or role profile for the kind of resident you want to get involved – don’t focus on skills (these can be learnt) but on commitment, interest and attitude eg to team work
- Ensuring a resident-led approach from the start, with structures designed by or with residents themselves



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- Independent advice right at the start can be vital to help build resident trust in the process and in their own rights and capabilities
  - Tailored, high-quality advice and support for active residents – and working one-to-one to ensure they are honest about their own strengths and weaknesses and seek help when they need it
  - Accredited training opportunities offer tangible, personal benefits to residents in terms of their own development and in return for the time that they give voluntarily
  - Involving residents in the design and review of training and development programmes and carrying out training needs analysis
  - Providing opportunities for residents to network with and learn from others
  - Finding the right balance between support for residents and direction of their agenda to ensure it is focused effectively
  - The relationship between the Board and the scrutiny panel needs to be one of open dialogue. The scrutiny panel's improvement plans need to be reported to the Board and discussed with residents at the Board
  - Reviewing the roles of TARAs to ensure they are accountable and deliver value as well, by ensuring they are representative, understand equality and diversity, have a code of conduct and have an open membership
  - A Community Call for Action, or Resident Trigger allows any customer to request that the scrutiny group considers scrutinising a certain area of the business.

### **Accredited training offers a route to scrutiny and benefits residents**

Helena Partnerships provides independent training and support to the resident members of its Customer Excellence Panel, including offering accredited training through the Chartered Institute of Housing (level 3 in resident scrutiny). This helps ensure residents carrying out scrutiny are both fully informed and have independent, un-biased information and support on which to base their recommendations.



## Principle Four: Improving public services through scrutiny

It is vital that resident scrutiny has a clear purpose and remit to improve the services provided to residents. Otherwise there is a danger that it could become a talking-shop. Resident scrutiny must be seen as a partnership between residents, landlords and staff and not as an end in itself – the outcomes that can come from effective scrutiny are what really matter. To be able to have an impact and contribute to improving services, it is also important that scrutiny's role is recognised and valued throughout the organisation so that its recommendations are accepted and implemented.

Scrutiny is not about duplicating internal performance management systems which any organisation is likely to have, but it can have a role in providing assurance to other residents that those performance management systems are working as they should. In other words that residents' money is being spent properly and that it is delivering good services.

**“Landlords should embrace co-regulation as a real opportunity to understand how customers experience services and actually start to deliver services how their customers want to receive them.”**

**Salix Homes**

### Practical tips for making scrutiny effective

The way in which scrutiny works has an impact on whether residents are able to use scrutiny to get improvements in their services. Meeting all the principles of effective scrutiny is important, but so are practical issues such as:

- Setting clear terms of reference for the panel and for individual scrutiny reviews
- Defining how meetings are conducted, to enable everyone to contribute – agreeing a clear code of conduct that everyone understands and signs up to can help set the tone and expectations
- Providing scrutiny panels with the right amount of easily understandable, timely information – not swamping residents with lots of performance data and spread sheets
- Making clear and practical recommendations that have a chance of being implemented in practice
- Following up recommendations to check whether they have been implemented as promised: the scrutiny process does not just end with the production of a report and recommendations.





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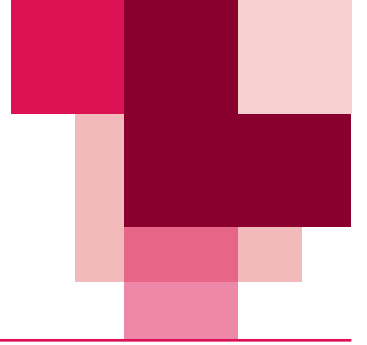
## **The benefits of improving public services through scrutiny...**

### **For residents:**

- Investing time in a scrutiny review that leads ultimately to real service improvements can be very satisfying for those who have been involved
- Resident scrutiny is a way of making a difference that goes beyond getting an individual complaint or problem resolved – it can address the fundamental underlying issues that caused the problem in the first place and ensure it doesn't affect other residents in the future
- Effective scrutiny can enable residents to engage in policy and strategy reviews that have a wider impact on the landlord as an organisation and contribute to improving the lives of future residents
- Scrutiny can re-engage resident interest in being on the Board of management
- Savings achieved have funded benefits like participatory budgeting where community groups can bid for funding and other environmental improvements.

### **For Boards and councillors:**

- Getting clear, evidence-based recommendations from scrutiny on how services can be improved helps Boards and councils fulfil their responsibilities and meet their organisation's objectives
- If scrutiny has reviewed a service area, this provides assurance to the Board and council executive about performance and contributes to good governance of the organisation
- Resident scrutiny reports are another source of evidence for Boards and councils about what their customers think of their services and will help the whole organisation improve
- Acting on quick-wins identified by residents ahead of the production of a final scrutiny report shows the Board is listening
- Having customers scrutinize services adds an extra dimension as they are the recipients of the service and know how they want it to be delivered.



**For operational staff and managers:** “I’ve been delighted to see residents and staff working brilliantly together over the past year. Everything we do together is focused on improving services and the lives of residents.”

**Steve Walker, Chief Executive, AmicusHorizon**

- Carrying out an in-depth scrutiny review of a particular service can contribute to continuous improvement and meeting standards – based on real experiences
- Although resident scrutiny requires proper resourcing and support to be effective, it can be cheaper than hiring outside consultants to carry out a service review
- It can help improve and develop trust between staff and residents by breaking down the ‘them and us’ culture and enabling staff and residents to come up with solutions together
- Resident involvement in scrutiny can back up what front line staff may have been reporting, but without the formal mechanism of scrutiny, their voices may not have been heard and actions might not have been taken.

### **What works in improving public services through scrutiny...**

In the experience of the co-regulatory champions, ensuring resident scrutiny contributes effectively to improving services requires:

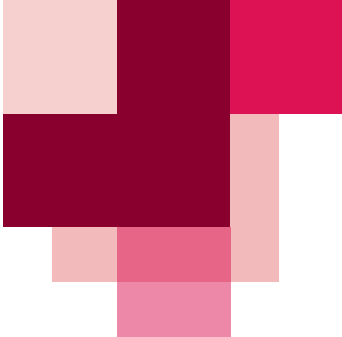
- Finding ways to involve residents in reviews of policies and strategies as well as looking at direct frontline services enables residents to have an impact on all areas of the business
- Ensuring scrutiny panels systematically assess what impact they might be able to have before carrying out a review to make sure their time will be well-spent – develop a checklist of criteria that have to be met
- Providing the right sort and level of information that helps scrutiny decide what to investigate, ask the right questions and develop relevant useful recommendations
- In particular, feeding in customer satisfaction and experience data and information from a variety of sources to ensure scrutiny’s work is well-evidenced and based on real experiences

“As the people who receive your services residents are the best to judge how well you’re doing. Sometimes the smallest changes have the biggest impact – and it’s these issues that staff can easily miss.”

**Helena Partnerships**





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- Reviewing the impact and effectiveness of a scrutiny review or your general approach to scrutiny and co-regulation overall – if it's not working or having an impact don't be afraid to change it
  - Ensuring resident scrutiny structures are linked to the organisation's wider governance and performance improvement systems and strategies, as well as its other resident involvement processes – it should not be set up as a new stand-alone entity but should fit in with what already exists and be complementary
  - Meetings on estates and local venues can bring people in who would not have gone to head office for a meeting, ensuring all service experiences are heard

### **Good scrutiny can encourage more residents to get involved**

At a community safety and customer services meeting held by Community Gateway, more local people came than were expected and listened to residents debating issues. Residents approached the active residents at the end of the meeting, saying what they heard was interesting and asked how they could get involved.

- Being open and honest is vital
- Using involvement staff to have 121s with new staff as part of induction helps to get the co-regulation message across early and to influence the culture of the organisation
- Trusting residents to do the job and trusting them to do the right thing is vital.

“Our Annual Report was large and costly in production; resident engagement enabled it to be reduced to a few pages of interest on what residents wanted to know.”

**Family HA**

### **Involvement of residents in scrutiny has wider social benefits**

Young people have influenced services at a Riverside Housing Group short life housing scheme by getting support focused on securing employment and suggesting improvements to the communal gardens and environment. This has built capacity and enabled the delivery of better life skills for example through individual coaching to run meetings, which has now been built into the support framework for the scheme.

## 4. Developing resident scrutiny – it's a journey



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“To make tenant scrutiny work:

- Landlords must make real efforts to **liberate the skills and enable the contribution of tenants and residents**, in order to understand their perceptions of services and how to improve
- We must **avoid being prescriptive** – what's needed is the best model for local circumstances
- Landlords need to use **new methods of communication** – if they get stuck with traditional patterns there is a danger not all voices will be heard
- It is vital to **improve the spreading of good practice** – insularity is the enemy!”

**Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP, Chair of CfPS and former Housing Minister**, summing up the CfPS-SEP roundtable on tenant scrutiny in November 2011

The co-regulatory champions have been recognised by the TSA for getting ahead of the game in developing resident scrutiny and co-regulation. In some cases this was based on a long-standing ethos and commitment to real resident involvement and empowerment, so they were coming from a strong base. However, this was not the case for all the champions, and all were keen to stress the length of time and effort that have to be invested in making resident scrutiny work so that it can have a meaningful impact.

They often talked about it as a journey, with some clear stages that needed to be gone through along the way, as set out in the diagram overleaf.

“It was hard to close down a national resident centre and review involvement to deliver co-regulation, it was costly in terms of time and officer resources and it took two years to get where we are now.”

**Riverside Housing Group**

## Developing resident scrutiny: the journey



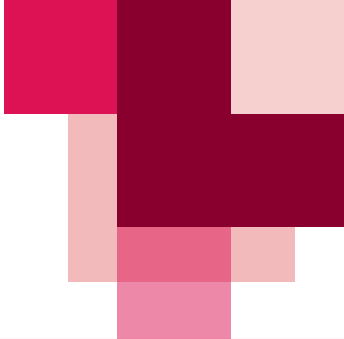
### A. Getting started

Knowing where to begin and getting commitment throughout the organisation to develop a new approach is a key first step – without that buy-in it can be difficult to deliver the aims of resident scrutiny and can lead to problems further down the line. Getting that initial impetus and commitment can be one of the hardest things – particularly if the provider does not already have a strong track record or history of involving residents. Managers may find it hard to see the potential benefits of more resident challenge and scrutiny.

All of our co-regulatory champions emphasised the importance of taking time at the start to get it right, put the necessary resources and support structures in place and ensure tenants are able to lead the process going forward. Ensuring there is understanding about this new function throughout the organisation is important.

#### Training is not just for tenants

- New scrutiny panels need to bond and build a team, but resident board members and other residents miss out on some good training if they are completely excluded
- Doing sessions with all staff, not just managers, can be helpful, so you know what message has been delivered.
- Leading and promoting scrutiny at the Executive team is a key responsibility for the most senior officer responsible for this issue.
- Staff need to understand that reports need to be done on time for residents in the same way as for Board meetings.



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Perhaps one of the most important elements of getting started is building the right culture and communicating the potential benefits to everyone involved. You need to find some champions and ambassadors who can really inspire and enthuse colleagues and fellow residents about what they can achieve, as these quotations from tenants and staff at the November 2011 SEP and Northern Housing Consortium First Tenant Panels Conference make clear:

### **Inspire people with the benefits that can come from scrutiny**

“Professionalising meetings and activities will keep large scrutiny reviews on plan, BUT this needs to be achieved without losing the natural and original impetus and passion of residents.”

“Enable the residents to understand the power they have to influence the organisation and its services, both individually and collectively, and remove scepticism.”

“Building skills and confidence has enabled residents to develop and play an active role in moving the organisation forward, build better and more effective relationships between staff, residents and the Board.”

## **B. Unpicking what went before**

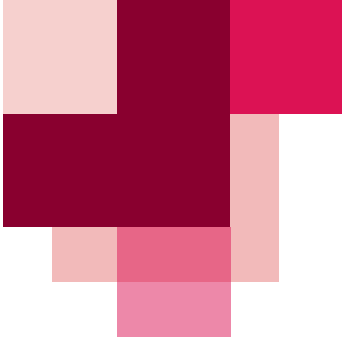
Often housing providers have had to accept that old ways of doing things did not really deliver meaningful resident involvement and challenge. There are two main options: tweak existing structures or start afresh more or less with a blank piece of paper.

Many landlords have chosen to turn an existing involved resident group into a scrutiny panel, as this can seem like it might involve the least upheaval. There are examples of where this has worked, but in others, issues have arisen which have led to delays in delivering real scrutiny and the group has since been closed down and a fresh start adopted.

Some things to consider if you go down this route:

### **Scrutiny requires a different level of commitment and new skills**

- Residents need to be given good information on time and skills required for scrutiny. Scrutiny operates more like a working party and can require a commitment of about 4 days a month – it is not the same as a monthly meeting where opinions are gathered by staff.
- Residents need to be given clear advice about the new commitment and to be upfront themselves about whether they have or are prepared to acquire different skills, like report writing, research and analysis and presentation skills.

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- Individual reviews for residents and offers of other opportunities which will engage volunteers in other structures can help tease out issues
  - Landlords need to invest heavily in existing groups to up-skill them for scrutiny – it's not a cheap or easy option.

### **Scrutiny requires a different culture – the ‘critical friend’**

- Residents who have worked in partnership with landlords may have to step back and become more objective in their analysis of what works.
- Landlords need to be sure that this will bring fresh challenges and that there are plans in place to include views from the wider group of residents.

### **Scrutiny arrangements need to be scrutinised too!**

- Landlords may wish to consider a timescale within which the existing group will deliver full scrutiny, after which, they will need to consider and plan for any restructure of involvement.
- An independent health check, commissioned by the landlord and the residents can help identify where the gaps are between existing and desired ways of working.
- Stock transfer HAs often have elected members present on groups like neighbourhood committees. These are long standing commitments, but may mean that formal places cannot always be given over completely to residents or are hard to unpick. It is important to take the opportunity of moving to resident scrutiny to review and refresh what you had in the past to see if it is still fit for purpose for the new environment.

## **C. Overcoming barriers**

The champions emphasised that it might not be a steady linear progress towards great resident scrutiny but could involve stops, starts and even reverses. For example, if key personnel (residents or staff) change and / or new priorities emerge in the organisation, this can knock plans off course, which can be frustrating for all who have put time into developing them.

There is a wide range of potential barriers to effective scrutiny that can emerge. Most of these can be linked to leadership, culture or communication issues but they often manifest themselves in quite small disputes over process or procedure, which can then derail the system unless resolved quickly. Resolution may require tackling not just the presenting problem, but also the underlying issue.



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There are two key principles that can help overcome potential barriers:

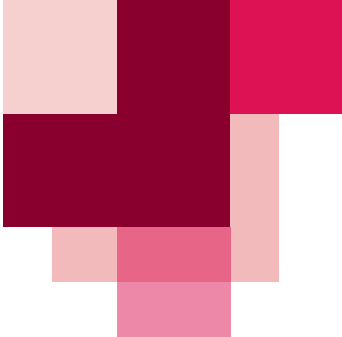
Firstly, **prevention is better than cure** – provide clarity from the start about expectations of all involved, and agree protocols that set out how potential disputes will be tackled.

### **Preventing problems emerging at an early stage**

- Provide a comprehensive briefing for panel members about the landlord's role, services and responsibilities (including regulatory and legal requirements, as well as service promises). This should also include a briefing about governance arrangements and the role and responsibilities of the Board.
- Share the panel's processes/details of their approach to scrutiny with the Board and all staff – this will avoid misunderstandings later on.
- Active residents can be happy to be on all available groups and many have the time for this. Set a review time which mirrors the Board term of office at an early stage to ensure you have opportunities to refresh membership.
- Residents can bring personal issues into meetings, where this is not appropriate. Clarity about terms of reference, roles and responsibilities and clear alternative routes to get individual service problems resolved are important.
- Ensuring findings, challenge and recommendations are based on robust evidence rather than a one-off personal experience. Evidence should be from more than one source – triangulate if you can eg from literature, interviews with staff and speaking to residents.
- The challenge is not always constructive when a poor service is identified. Residents are not always sure of what they want to happen, which can tie the panel up in knots. Support residents with access to good practice that can help identify solutions and make staff and managers' responsibilities to support the panel clear as well.

Agree arrangements for information exchange, for example through a service level agreement which sets out how your panel will request information, key contact officer arrangements in the provider and timescales for response. Develop a protocol or a working together agreement between the Panel, Chief Executive and Chair of the Board or Council Leader/Lead Cabinet member that sets out the behaviours expected between all parties.

### **Wirral Partnership Homes**



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Secondly, act fast, don't let things fester – follow agreed protocols to resolve disputes and differences, and if they don't work, review them too. Have a clear escalation process to get a resolution as fast as possible.

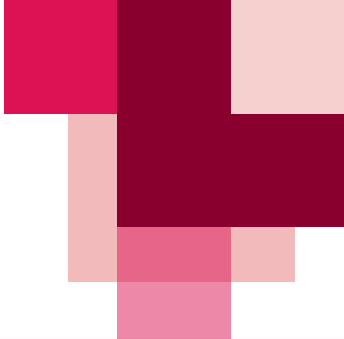
### **Possible barriers and their solutions**

- Involvement staff often play 'piggy in the middle'. They are seen by staff to be on the side of residents when poor performance is identified; and by residents to be on the side of staff when they challenge assumptions or where resident expectations are not met. Support them in their role.
- Keep focused, make sure Panels don't get involved in too many other activities with the landlord due to their new skills and burn out.
- For disputes between panel and officers, you should agree an escalation process for times when the Panel do not receive the cooperation they require/have agreed is appropriate. This could entail escalation to a Director or the Chief Executive for resolution, and kick in once officers have been given every opportunity to respond. If the dispute is not resolved once escalated to a senior manager, the Panel's communications plan should give them a route to speak to the Chair of the Board.
- Any protocol must include guidelines about when it is appropriate to escalate, i.e. build in guidance that makes it clear under that officers should be given a fair chance to resolve an issue before escalating it, and think about the circumstances under which escalation will happen.
- If the dispute is serious enough (eg between the Panel and the Board or councillors) you could consider appointing an independent arbiter – eg the chair of another panel and their Board perhaps in a reciprocal arrangement. The most important consideration is that whoever is chosen, the panel and board must agree in advance who they will ask, and both parties must agree to abide by the arbiter's decision (and not bear grudges afterwards!).

### **D. Being willing to review, learn and change**

Accepting that how you start out might not be the approach you stick to all the way through is strongly advised from the experience of the co-regulatory champions. They point to constantly needing to reinvent and re-invigorate panels with fresh challenges and new ways of working.

For example, giving residents opportunities to use their new knowledge to benefit the landlord and move to being resident Board members and then being able to recruit a new group of previously uninvolved residents brings new and fresh perspectives to bear.



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Early scrutiny panels have benefited from using a fairly restricted scope for service reviews first – like gas servicing and complaints services – and then moving into more difficult areas which are less easily defined, like voids management.

More mature scrutiny panels have moved onto more challenging issues:

- Review of the provision of new build social housing at Community Gateway
- Review of services subject to Service Level Agreements with Councils
- Moving their Scrutiny Panel to be a formal structure which looks at level one performance on behalf of the Board at Salix Homes.

### **Fresh challenges and opportunities to learn come in many guises**

- Networking opportunities through residents and staff attending external seminars can be a useful way to hear about what others are doing and use breaks to speak to others who attend and learning from them too.
- Returning from courses and seminars and sharing the detail of what has been learnt and bringing back actions to suggest to the panel
- Training needs analysis can back this up if new needs are identified
- Publications and good practice, like that available from membership organisations like tenantadvisor, the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Tenant Organisations, are useful sources of what other residents are doing to save reinventing the wheel.
- Health checks available through pursuing accreditation schemes, like that available through Tenant Advisor and the National Tenant Organisations
- External assessment from other residents and landlords
- Requests from the landlord for support on other issues and completing one piece of scrutiny per year targeted on problems which the landlord is experiencing.





## 5. Future challenges and recommendations

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This report and the accompanying case studies document, **Stories in Tenant Scrutiny**, have sought to capture the lessons from the early experiences of the ten co-regulatory champions in developing co-regulation and tenant scrutiny. As such they cannot pretend to have all the answers. We are aware of many providers and residents who have made equal strides in co-regulation which we have not been able to capture through this project.

Providers, staff and residents will need to develop approaches that work for them given their particular context, culture and history. However, we hope that it has given some food for thought and ideas on where to start for those providers who are developing their strategies for real resident involvement and scrutiny of their services.

As we produced the reports, the challenges faced by the social housing sector in the years ahead have been crystallised for us in a number of areas. Providers who are starting on the journey to greater resident scrutiny and co-regulation that we have described may benefit from sharing experiences with and learning from the co-regulatory champions as they move forward.

At the same time, we can see gaps in the overall approach to scrutiny and empowerment and we make recommendation to all parties involved as they develop and deliver a national and local vision with associated strategies:

### a) Recommendations to residents

We recognise that this is a challenge as well as an opportunity for residents, who are, after all, volunteers, and deserve a good service from their housing provider as a matter of course. Nonetheless we hope residents will embrace this new responsibility to hold landlords to account.

- Engage with other residents and go out of your way to gather the views of involved and non-involved residents.
- Forge a partnership with your landlord, which is robust and documented. Remember that scrutiny and this higher form of involvement is also new to staff and governors.
- Be clear about the support you need as a volunteer and make sure you have access to resources for skills, training and keeping up to date with housing policy changes locally and nationally, including through newtorking with residents in other housing providers.
- Consider when to discuss any insurmountable problems with the regulator as a last resort.



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## b) Recommendations to landlords

The challenge for landlords is to develop a culture throughout their organisations that welcomes challenge from residents and recognises the benefits to the organisation and its ability to deliver for its customers that come from learning from that challenge.

- Accept and understand the benefits of sharing best practice and collectively helping other providers understand and take steps to improve their practices
- Develop an approach to self-regulation with residents which is constantly refreshed
- Keep residents up to date with local performance and changes in national and local strategy.
- Ensure residents add value to your processes and are working on the 'big ticket' items which can make the biggest improvement in services or efficiency.

## c) Recommendations to the regulator

High expectations were built in the early years of the Tenant Services Authority as a champion for consumer regulation. The HCA must be clear about the new role of the regulator in terms of consumer standards and consumer protection.

- Engage with formal residents groups when you are their last resort to support them when co-regulation is not working for residents locally and offer advice on how to improve this position
- Be clear on the new ways to assess the threshold of “serious detriment” and give examples of when this might apply to co-regulation
- Be clear if there is a difference in how you will test co-regulation is working for Local Authorities (who do not have to conform to the governance standard) and for other Registered Providers
- Manage failure of individual landlords in co-regulation in a proportionate way to continue the freedom afforded to the majority of providers by self-regulation.



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#### d) Recommendations to local government

The key challenge for local authority landlords is to consider how elected member scrutiny and tenant scrutiny can complement not duplicate or compete with each other in holding housing services to account, and to deliver effectively on their responsibility for local strategic housing objectives.

- Consider the ways in which co-regulation is working across partner landlords and their role in local area co-operation
- Seek opportunities to share best practice across all local landlords
- Seek opportunities to share experiences from your own elected member overview and scrutiny arrangements with providers and vice versa. We all have an opportunity to learn.
- Consider the developed scrutiny and involvement arrangements between local providers and their residents when considering contract allocation and renewal.

#### e) Recommendations to central government

Increased self-regulation and less inspection has been broadly welcomed. The government's challenge is to consider how this can be maintained, even in the face of serious pressure from poor services in individual providers.

- Work with the regulator to give clarity to residents on serious detriment and intervention where co-regulation is not working
- Establish a clear framework within the National Standards of the regulator to enable you to measure if the directions to the regulator (November 2011) are working and could be enhanced and report on these to the sector
- Review the progress of co-regulation and self-regulation as an improvement tool in 3 years and refresh the strategy for involvement and scrutiny
- Consider earlier intervention if evidence show that services are not improving and that co-regulation is not being embraced by the regulator or the sector.

## 6. Find out more: resources section



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### **The Co-Regulatory Champions**

Together the ten Co-Regulatory Champions have helped more than 2000 tenants and officers from over 250 organisations get to grips with co-regulation.

The Champions have very different ways of working, but all agree on these ingredients for success:

- A genuine belief and commitment to staff and residents working together
- Transparency and accountability
- A formal, constructive challenge from residents
- Building skills and confidence for residents
- Accountability to all residents
- A representative, resident-led voice
- A belief that what residents think is good for them is good for the landlord.

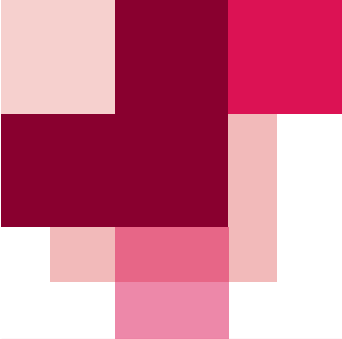
Tenants and officers from the Champions are speaking at a number of events throughout 2012. See [www.coregchamps.co.uk](http://www.coregchamps.co.uk) for useful resources and tips, or take a look at the Champions' individual websites:

- AmicusHorizon - <http://www.amicushorizon.org.uk>
- Community Gateway Association - [www.communitygateway.co.uk](http://www.communitygateway.co.uk)
- Family Housing Association - [www.family-housing.co.uk](http://www.family-housing.co.uk)
- Helena Partnerships - [www.excellenceathelena.co.uk](http://www.excellenceathelena.co.uk)
- New Charter Housing Trust - [www.newcharter.co.uk](http://www.newcharter.co.uk)
- Riverside Housing Group - [www.riverside.org.uk](http://www.riverside.org.uk)
- Salix Homes - [www.salixhomes.org](http://www.salixhomes.org)
- Soha Housing - [www.soha.co.uk](http://www.soha.co.uk)
- Wherry Housing Association - [www.circle.org.uk/wherry](http://www.circle.org.uk/wherry)
- Wirral Partnership Homes - [www.wphomes.org.uk](http://www.wphomes.org.uk)

### **Scrutiny and Empowerment Partners Ltd (SEP)**

SEP was set up to help landlords and their tenants to develop and sustain excellent tenant scrutiny, involvement and empowerment arrangements. SEP offers a comprehensive range of services and tools to help tenants and landlords achieve excellence across all services.

SEP is experienced in service review and can build the capacity of staff and tenants to work on Involvement, Complaints, Cashback and Scrutiny. SEP's approach is to review services with tenants, undertake customer surveys and



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deliver comprehensive and one off training and health checks, in a partnership that challenges ways of working as well as delivering practical outcomes for landlords and customers.

Check out [www.tenantadvisor.net](http://www.tenantadvisor.net) for more information, or better still join SEP in their quest for the best co-regulation, with a big impact on tenants' lives.

## Tenantadvisor

Scrutiny & Empowerment Partners (SEP) set up tenantadvisor ([www.tenantadvisor.net](http://www.tenantadvisor.net)) to enable the sharing of good practice. The information on the new pages is free to anyone. The information on the membership area is shared between members. Members share their own information, like their scrutiny panel reports, mystery shopping reports, terms of reference, code of conduct, as well as member contact details, benchmarking information and forward scrutiny plans.

SEP also share proformas and advice to help involvement and empowerment activities along the way and if SEP see good practice this is also shared with members. Tenantadvisor can save organisations time and give ideas and food for thought, it prevents tenants and landlords from re-inventing wheels.

SEP also run an accreditation scheme, as do CIH and others. Accreditation schemes can be useful in many ways:

1. They provide an independent health check of scrutiny arrangements, including the workings of the landlord and the Panel
2. They provide recognition for good work, which in turn motivates landlords and tenants
3. They pick up and promote good practice.

The SEP scrutiny accreditation works in such a way as to reward new groups and also recognise those who are experts:

**Bronze:** Scrutiny arrangements that are starting to deliver positive outcomes or tenants.

**Silver:** Scrutiny arrangements achieve the bronze award criteria and demonstrate a track record of maturity in positive outcomes and direction. Significant changes will be evident as a result of tenant scrutiny.

**Gold:** Scrutiny arrangements which achieve the silver award criteria and include elements of excellent practice or innovation, which have led to additional positive benefits, e.g. reduced worklessness, significant community/tenant/organisational benefits.

For more information, see [www.tenantadvisor.net/blog](http://www.tenantadvisor.net/blog) and check out the news pages for the summary reports for Salix and Soha who both achieved the Gold Award.



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## The Centre for Public Scrutiny

The national independent body for research and good practice on effective scrutiny and accountability in public services, CfPS has a wide range of free resources on its website: [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk), including an on-line library of past scrutiny reviews, a forum where you can meet other scrutineers, share ideas and ask questions, and regular newsletters and free publications.

CfPS has an experienced team of staff and expert advisers who can work with organisations on all aspects of scrutiny and accountability to help them review relationships with stakeholders, ensure their governance is transparent and inclusive, and provide a range of training, coaching and development offers for lay members and staff. Recent useful publications (freely downloadable from [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk) unless otherwise specified) include:

### *Accountability Works (2010) and Accountability Works for You (2011)*

Original research into what is meant by accountability, followed by a practical framework and methodology for assessing how organisations can improve their own accountability and governance arrangements

### *Successful Scrutiny (2011)*

Latest in an annual series of reports into the best examples of scrutiny and accountability across the public sector. Since 2008 these have been based on the winners from our Good Scrutiny Awards, open to any organisation to enter to demonstrate how their approach to scrutiny has resulted in improvements to the lives of service-users and stronger public accountability.

### *Library Monitor 11: Choice-based lettings (2010)*

A review and analysis of scrutiny reviews in the CfPS library on the subject of choice-based lettings. Library Monitors aim to be a one-stop-shop for all the information about a subject that you need in preparation for undertaking a review, adding value to the more than 3,700 scrutiny reviews stored in our searchable on-line library and providing guidance based on the experiences of other scrutiny practitioners who have completed a review into the subject. Mostly drawn from local authority overview and scrutiny committee experiences, they have wider application to other scrutineers.

### *The Good Scrutiny Guide (2nd edition, 2006: available to order)*

A practical guide to the four principles of effective scrutiny discussed in this report, with examples.

## Tenant Services Authority

Although the TSA will no longer exist and its successor body at HCA will not have a role in promoting good practice, there are some existing resources that are still available via their website: [www.tenantservicesauthority.org](http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org)



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### *Local Offer Trailblazers: from planning to practice (July 2011)*

An overview of 39 'local offer trailblazer' case studies that show, in their own words, how they 'moved from discussion and agreement of offers to their operation'. It draws out four key themes of common experience across the trailblazers: measuring performance; partnership working and shared services; value for money; resident involvement.

### *Local Offers Toolkit (July 2011)*

To help landlords get their local offers right. Offers practical advice on setting cost-effective local offers that make a difference to residents, including: a description of what local offers look like at the best providers; a step by step guide to setting local offers; a summary of the scope of local offers.

### *Making Voices Count: Reviewing practice in tenant involvement and empowerment (June 2010)*

Uses the trailblazer case studies to show how landlords have, and can, meet the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. Based on interviews with 23 organisations, findings were tested at workshops with 19 of the interviewee organisations and residents from six of the providers. Part one deals with latest developments and issues, such as empowering residents, strategy and culture, service delivery and locality, and impact assessment and value for money. Part two offers a set of questions that providers should ask themselves when reviewing their existing practices relating to resident involvement.

### **National tenant organisations (NTOs) (TAROE, CCH, NFTMO, TPAS)**

The Housing Minister has asked the National Tenant Organisations (NTOs) to lead the development of a framework for local tenant panels.

- A DCLG funded guide called "Tenant Panels: Options for Accountability" which sets out a wealth of information and resources on tenant panels and how tenants and landlords can work with each other
- The NTOs themselves will be launching NTO-approved as a basic voluntary approvals system - a checklist of elements that go towards making an effective tenant panel framework.

Both have been developed through consultation with tenants and landlords and both will be launched in March 2012.

### *Calling All Tenant and Landlords – Annual Reports: A tenant perspective; A good start but could do better (March 2011)*

A review of the first year when annual reports were required to be published by landlords for their residents; setting out what they liked and didn't like in order that the next year's reports would improve.

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