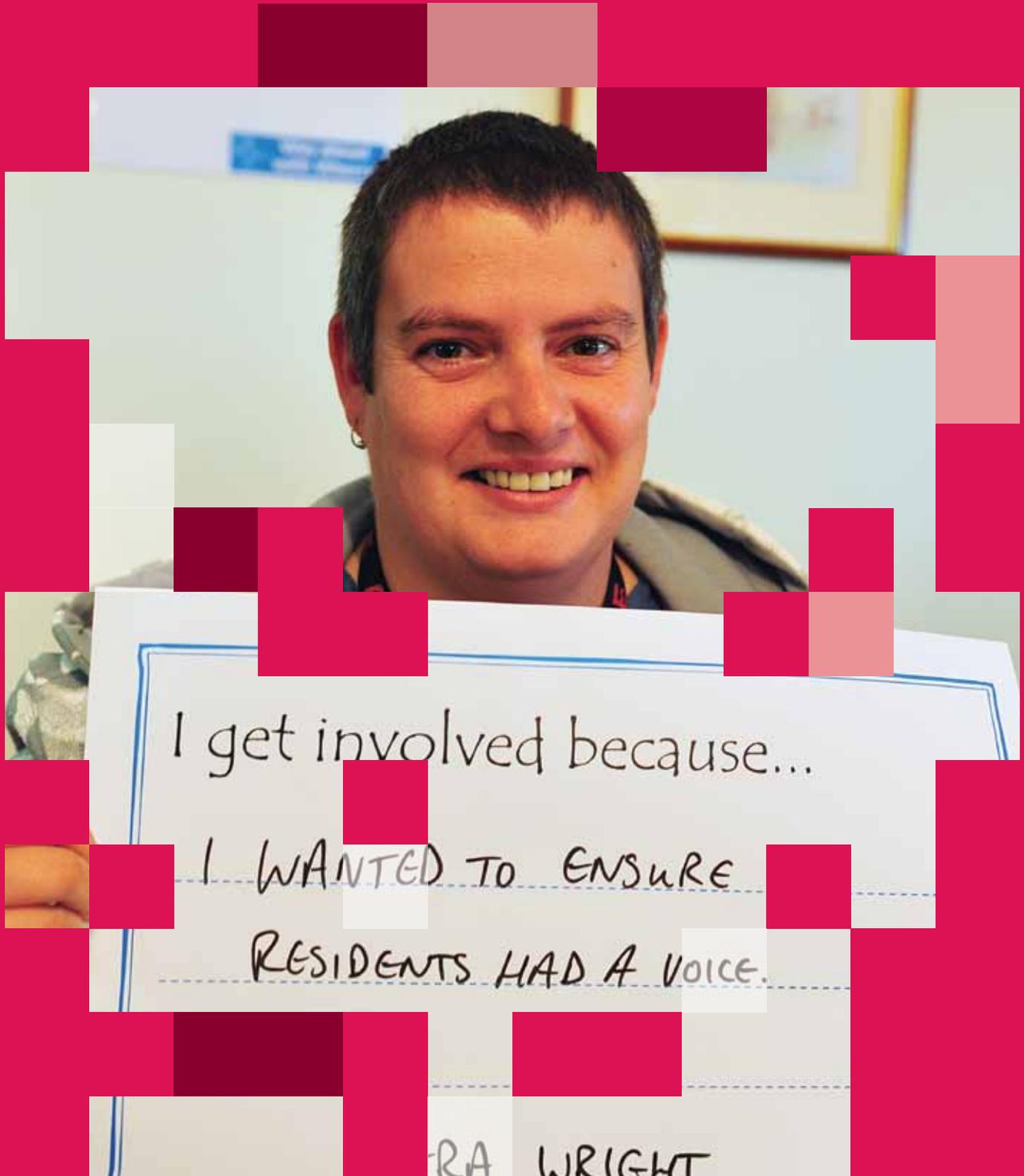
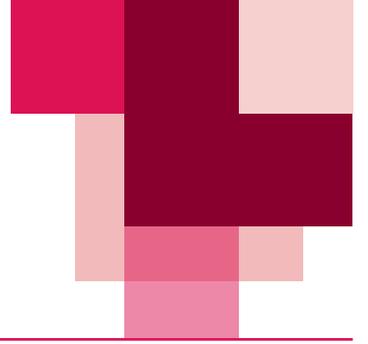


# Top tips for tenants: holding your landlord to account through scrutiny





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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

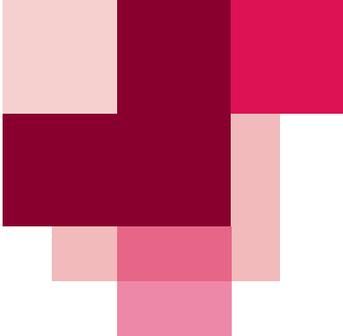
This guide has been researched and written by Jessica Crowe of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and Yvonne Davies and Linda Levin of Scrutiny Empowerment Partners Ltd (SEP), with additional contributions from Alison Yates at CfPS and Catherine Little from Soha Housing on behalf of the Co-Regulatory 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, respectively, adding the perspectives of tenant scrutiny in a Local Authority setting and enlightening us around the use of social media, 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 guide.

The guide is accompanied by a more detailed report, *Developing Tenant Scrutiny and Co-regulation in social housing: Lessons from the Co-regulatory Champions*, 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.

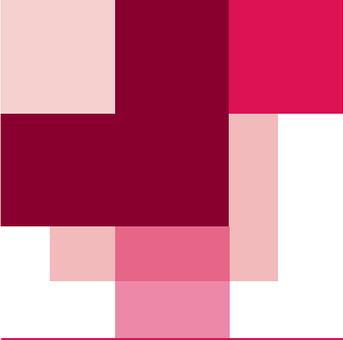
## **CfPS and SEP**

March 2012

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# 1. Regulation of housing is changing: new powers and responsibilities for tenants and residents

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Since April 2010, there has been a framework of co-regulation in social housing. This is now changing, although the principle of co-regulation – co-operation between landlords and tenants to improve services – remains. New requirements for landlords mean that tenant scrutiny panels, or equivalent bodies, must be supported by landlords to allow tenants to scrutinise performance, services and complaints. Landlords are also expected to provide annual reports to tenants, and be honest in reporting and assessing their own performance.

The government expects that landlords should support tenants to develop their skills and capacity to have real influence over the services their landlords provide. Tenants should be able to:

- ask questions about their provider's performance
- identify areas for improvement and
- influence future services.

Value for money for tenants whose rent pays for the services provided by landlords is a crucial area. The experience of the ten housing associations identified by the former Tenant Services Authority as 'Co-regulatory Champions' suggests that residents can be strong champions of greater value for money and come up with new ideas to improve it.

The government has not said precisely how landlords must meet these new obligations. This means that housing providers can respond directly to what their tenants and residents want at a local level. Everyone that we have talked to has developed different ways of involving and supporting tenants and residents. There is no single right way of 'doing tenant scrutiny'.

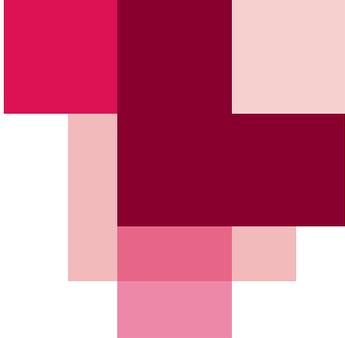
These new powers for tenants also mean more responsibility falling directly on tenants themselves. The central regulator will have no role in either monitoring landlords' performance or promoting best practice. Where landlords fail to see the benefits that come from genuinely listening to tenants' views it might be hard for residents to get the action taken that they need.

**“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**

But the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Scrutiny Empowerment Partners hope that this guide will help all tenants and residents get started on the task of challenging your landlord to do better. It is based directly on hints and tips that come from the experience of other tenants and residents.

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



As always, there is some jargon in all this, 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. Official documents talk about tenants and “tenant panels”, so sometimes we have used this language. However, this does not mean that if your housing provider does not have a body officially called a “tenant scrutiny panel” you should rush to set one up.

This guide is for all residents seeking to hold their housing provider to account whether:

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

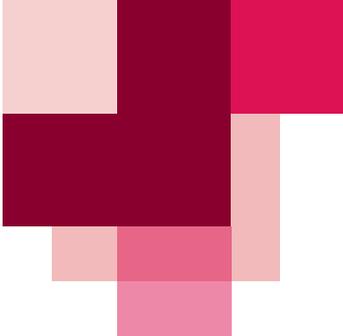
### Co-regulation or scrutiny?

There are a wide range of resident empowerment and involvement activities that are covered by the idea of ‘**co-regulation**’, and one of those activities is ‘**scrutiny**’ – which this guide is about. Resident scrutiny is part of co-regulation, but so are resident inspectors, mystery shopping, local area committees or panels, and other ways for residents to give feedback to their landlord, hold them to account and help to improve services.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has developed four principles to describe what scrutiny is all about:

- acting as a ‘critical friend’
- enabling the voice of all residents to be heard
- tenant-owned and tenant-led
- helping to improve services.

The rest of this guide sets out hints and tips about why each of these principles can benefit tenants and how to put them into practice. These all come from the experience of tenants and residents in the Co-Regulatory Champions and from other tenants and residents who we have consulted.



## 3. Holding your landlord to account: four principles, hints and tips

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### Principle One: Acting as a critical friend

It can be hard to get the balance right in being a ‘critical friend’, providing challenge 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. The Chair also has an important role in building respect for scrutiny throughout the organisation. The Chair should act as an ambassador for residents’ right to constructively challenge.

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

**Soha Housing**

Developing a clear statement 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.

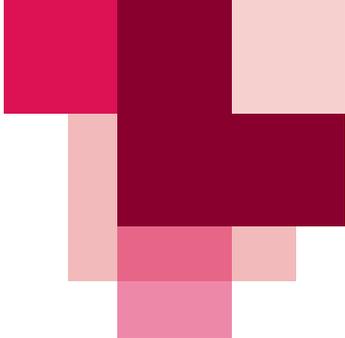
### The benefits of being a critical friend

#### 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
- You 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
- You can hold the people responsible for managing your home and spending your rent money or service charge to account and make sure they are providing value for money.

“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**



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### For the Board and councillors:

- ‘Critical friend’ challenge from resident scrutiny can prompt you to consider things afresh from a different perspective
- It can provide evidence of how your decisions are really working on the ground
- Residents who are Board members are 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.

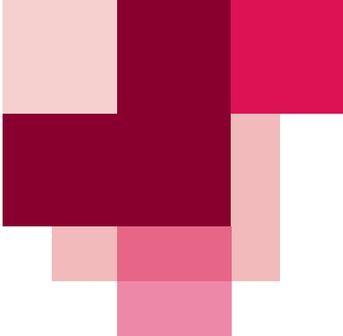
### For operational staff and managers:

- Gives vital customer feedback on performance which supports effective management
- 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.

### Hints and tips for being an effective critical friend

Tenants and residents need:

- Tailored support, particularly at first, and a good induction process for newly active residents;
- Good chairing skills are vital for the chair – even an experienced one can learn!
- 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;
- ‘Teeth’ for residents’ groups to really get things done;
- Commitment and time from everyone to build a collaborative relationship between residents, operational staff and managers/the Board – 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;
- 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 on a one-off basis, plus on-going teams to look at performance overall.



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## Principle Two: Enabling the voice of all residents to be heard

Bringing the real experiences of tenants and residents and their communities to bear on decisions and policies 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 is vital.

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 all residents**

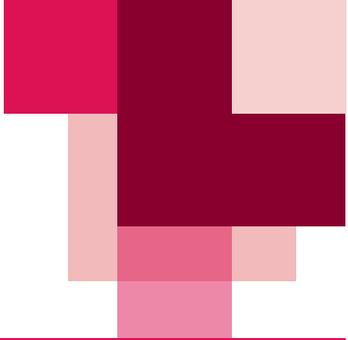
#### **For residents:**

- You can ensure your landlord is focused on what really matters to you and other residents
- You 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
- Having different opportunities for involvement in terms of time required to be spent and responsibility of decisions made gives residents a choice of how to get involved.

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.

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

**Chair of Way Ahead with Wherry**



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### For the Board and councillors:

- It provides a reality check about the quality of services your organisation is delivering to your customers
- When residents have more of a say and more opportunities to get their voices heard, satisfaction ratings increase
- 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
- 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.

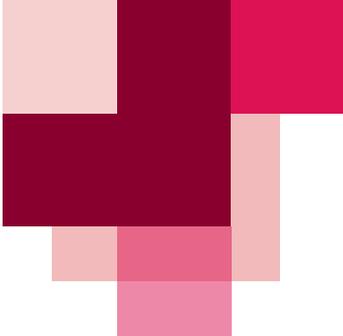
“Be proactive in trying to get people involved. Offer a range of opportunities across diverse communities but don't be discouraged if they don't want to be involved – they have the right to say no!”

**Community Gateway**

## Hints and tips for enabling the voice of all residents

Tenants and residents need:

- Genuine opportunities for residents to influence decisions and give them a voice that helps them make a difference within their community
- Links between formal structures and the wider body of residents and spreading awareness of how to feed views into resident scrutiny panels – get the whole organisation behind the conversation that scrutiny can facilitate
- Representative groups to 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
- A flexible range of opportunities for residents to get their voices heard so that it doesn't require people to come to formal meetings
- Staff 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



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

- Reports that show the difference that getting involved and contributing your views has really made
- 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.

### Principle Three: tenant-owned and tenant-led

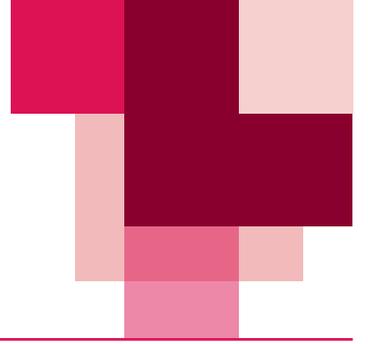
If scrutiny is resident-led this ensures it is reporting to residents about the issues that really matter to them. It is important as a principle that scrutiny is independent of the Board and decision-making – just as select committees in Parliament are independent of ministers and the government.

“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**

Good scrutiny is worthwhile and interesting but it may require persistence, hard work and a good deal of time and effort. To find residents who are willing to contribute actively to the scrutiny role it is vital to put effort into getting recruitment right, and also into retaining their interest over time and refreshing the pool of volunteers on a rolling basis.

Getting involved in scrutiny is different from being active in the local residents' association when residents are focused on getting improvements to their local area. In scrutiny residents are trying to see the bigger picture and look at lots of evidence and views that may not directly affect the members of the scrutiny group themselves. But residents can bring a common-sense attitude that cuts through organisations' bureaucracy and 'officer-speak' to get to the real issues. This is the real benefit of tenant-led scrutiny.



## 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 tenant-owned and tenant-led

### 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
- 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.

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

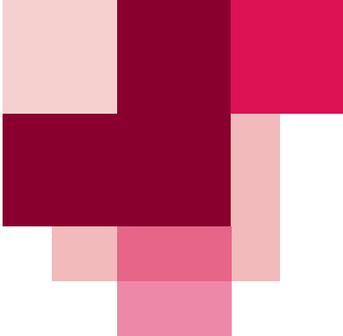
### Family HA

### For the Board and councillors:

- If the resident scrutiny process is genuinely resident-led it will ensure you are getting feedback on what matters to your customers and that you are hearing the authentic ‘resident voice’
- Independent resident scrutiny provides you with a different set of perspectives to the views and reports you may receive from your managers and staff and helps improve services.

### For operational staff and managers:

- Ensuring resident scrutiny is resident-led enables you target your resources on the issues that matter most to residents
- It gives you practical feedback and information from customers, enabling you to make changes and improvements to services that you might not otherwise know are needed or important.



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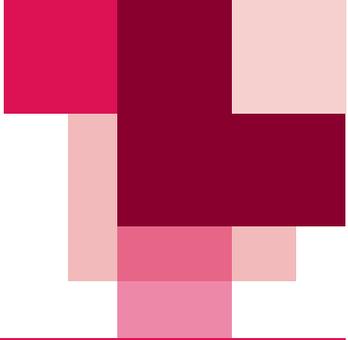
## Hints and tips for being tenant-owned and tenant-led

Tenants and residents need:

- 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 – it's not about skills (these can be learnt) but on commitment, interest and attitude eg to team work
- A resident-led approach from the start, with structures designed by or with residents themselves
- Independent advice and support right at the start to help build trust in the process
- Tailored, high-quality advice and support for active residents
- Accredited training opportunities which can offer real personal benefits to residents in return for the time that they give voluntarily
- Opportunities for residents to network with and learn from other tenants and residents including from other housing providers
- A Community Call for Action or Resident Trigger allows any customer to request that the scrutiny group considers scrutinising a particular issue or service
- Showing the difference made by active residents, allowing other residents to listen to meetings and realise that engagement can have meaningful outcomes.

### **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).



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## Principle Four: Improving services

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. 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.

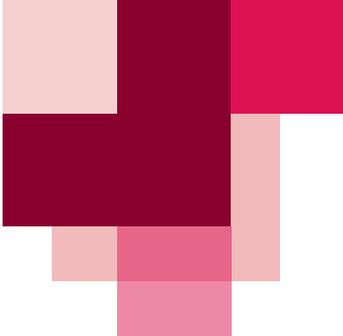
“Landlords should embrace co-regulation as a real opportunity to understand how customers experience services and actually start to deliver services how their customers want to receive them.”

**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 services through scrutiny

### For residents:

- Investing time in a scrutiny review that leads ultimately to real service improvements can be very satisfying
- 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.

### For Boards and councillors:

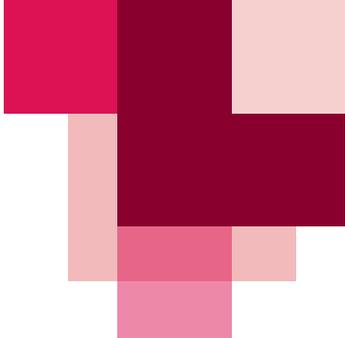
- Getting clear, evidence-based recommendations from scrutiny on how services can be improved helps Boards and councils fulfil their responsibilities and meet their organisation's objectives
- If scrutiny has reviewed a service area, this provides assurance to the Board and council executive about performance and contributes to good governance of the organisation
- Acting on quick-wins identified by residents ahead of the production of a final scrutiny report shows the Board is listening.

“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

### For operational staff and managers:

- 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
- 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.



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## Hints and tips for improving services through scrutiny

### Tenants and residents need:

- Ways to 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
- The right sort and level of information to help scrutiny decide what to investigate, ask the right questions and develop relevant useful recommendations
- In particular, 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
- Resident scrutiny not to 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 to 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.

- Young people to be involved on estates in activities like tree planting, DJ workshops and clean ups helps with engaging them then and also as they get older.
- Reports to be open and honest
- To be trusted to do the right thing in scrutiny.

“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**

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

All the Co-regulatory Champions were keen to stress the time and effort that have to be invested in making resident scrutiny work so that it can have a meaningful impact. Tenants and residents 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 below:

### Developing resident scrutiny: the journey

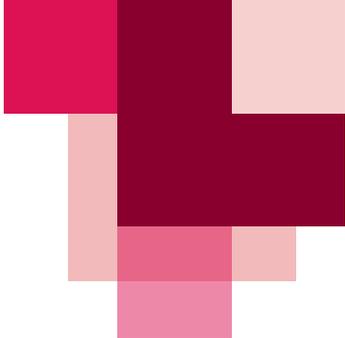


#### A. Getting started

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. All of the 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.

#### 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.

## 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. You can turn an existing involved resident group into a scrutiny panel, as this can seem like it might involve the least upheaval. But sometimes a fresh start is needed, for three main reasons:

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

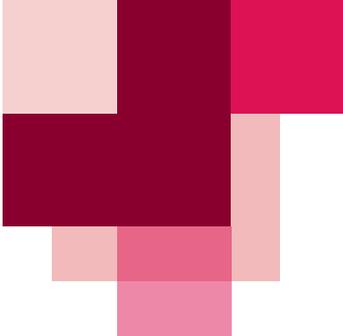
- Scrutiny operates more like a working party and can require a commitment of about 4 days a month – it is not the same as a monthly meeting where opinions are gathered by staff and just reported to residents.
- Residents need clear advice about the new commitment and to be upfront themselves about whether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

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

- 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!**

- An independent health check, commissioned by the landlord and the residents can help identify where gaps are between existing and ideal 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.



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## C. Overcoming barriers

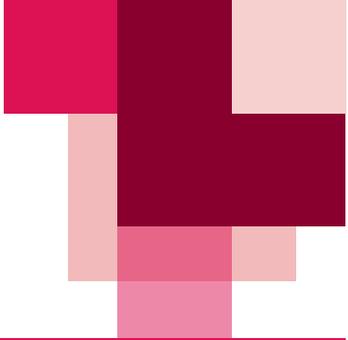
The champions emphasised that it might not be a steady linear progress towards great resident scrutiny but could involve stops, starts and even reverses. For example, if key personnel (residents or staff) change and/or new priorities emerge in the organisation, this can knock plans off course.

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.

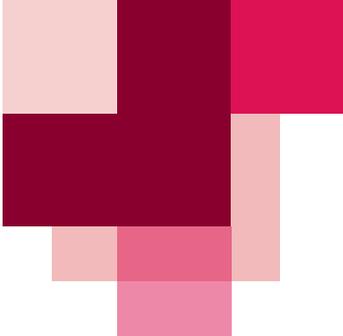


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Secondly, **act fast, don't let things fester** – follow agreed protocols to resolve disputes and differences, and if they don't work, review them too. Have a clear escalation process to get a resolution as fast as possible.

### Developing an escalation process

- An escalation process can be needed 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 should give the panel a direct route to speak to the Chair of the Board.
- Any protocol must include guidelines about when it is appropriate to escalate, especially that officers should be given a fair chance to resolve an issue before escalating it.
- 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!



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## 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 by the Co-regulatory Champions. Keep your approach under review – it's important to scrutinise yourself as well as others!

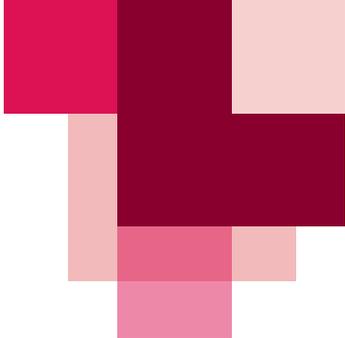
Early scrutiny panels have benefited from using a fairly restricted scope for service reviews first – like gas servicing and complaints services – and then moving into more challenging issues:

- Review of the provision of new build social housing
- Review of services subject to Service Level Agreements with Councils
- Changing the Scrutiny Panel into a formal structure which looks at performance on behalf of the Board

### **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. Find out more: resources section



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

Together the ten Co-Regulatory Champions have already 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:

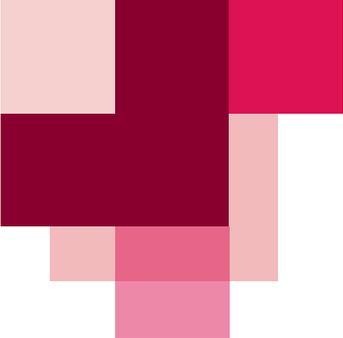
- A genuine belief and commitment to staff and residents working together
- Transparency and accountability
- A formal, constructive challenge from residents
- Building skills and confidence for residents
- Accountability to all residents
- A representative, resident-led voice
- A belief that what residents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



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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 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.

### **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 residents and staff, including questioning and chairing skills, running a scrutiny review and understanding issues like performance, value for money and scrutinising budgets.

### **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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[www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk)

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