**10 Hints and Tips tips for researching best practice and networking**

1. **Get on Facebook and Twitter** – start following housing organisations, government sites, newspapers, national organisations (TPAS, CIH, Nat Fed, NHC and Tenant Advisor) and tenant groups. Fastest way to keep up to speed in a fast changing sector
2. **Learn to give as well as receive** – if you’re looking for a policy document or some information from someone, ask if there’s anything you can help them with too, and most importantly follow up on any commitments or promises.
3. **Join on-line blogs and discussion forums** – there are some good ones which have live debates eg Inside Housing, The Guardian, TP workers yahoo group.
4. **Sign up for e briefings** – a lot of them about but crucial for keeping pace and good lunchtime reading, short and snappy
5. **Form a regional group** (officers and/or tenants) – has worked well in the North East, supported by the Nat Fed, looking at a Regional Tenants group.
6. **Talk to senior staff as much as possible** – often an invaluable source of information and knowledge, they network for a living
7. **Go to conferences and seminars** – sounds obvious but if you’re not out there you might miss out, talk to people about them, not you, attend the socials on an evening, be nice
8. **Diversify your networking field** – try to network with people in related fields outside housing eg health, education. Lot of cross-cutting work can yield wider benefits and add value
9. **First impressions are important** – learn to listen as well as talk, wait don’t interrupt
10. **Merchandise** – nothing gets remembered more than a pen or a key ring

**Additional comments from the three groups**

* Tenant surveying other tenants for example in Sheltered housing to find out what people thought of their services
* Trafford Hall was cited by a few people as an excellent place for tenants to network with other tenants as well as other training events
* Housemark - good for sharing and finding out how you compare and where best practice lies
* Newsletter in with the rent statements was a good way to increase sharing of good practice and to network
* Social events, Fun Days, Community events were a good to network and recruit for involvement
* Strong feeling that a network of Scrutiny groups could be developed (Tenant Advisor cited a couple of times) so people knew who was on which groups and which areas they scrutinised
* Circle was mentioned as having 7 Housing organisations within a group and the benefits this brought from sharing info and best practice across tenant groups through joint events
* Visiting other organisations, though often expensive, was always of great use
* Join national tenant groups such as TAROE and the National Association of ALMOs
* Video-conferencing was mentioned as a facility which wasn’t used very much but which could help increase tenants living in rural areas to network with other tenants from other landlords
* Resident Associations !! we forgot about them….. they are key ways of networking and sharing what involved customers do, maybe we should return back to the localities and talk to people more on our estates ?!
* Forum Housing (Amy Butterworth) mentioned they do Tenant Exchanges where tenants visit each other in different parts of the country. Ireland and Birmingham were places they had visited
* Who wins Awards – this was mentioned as a way to see who is delivering best practice and learning from their methods and approaches
* Tenants Conferences
* Community Centre, maybe we should start using these more to share what’s happening with local people and to network with other agencies
* Forum Housing mentioned they are affiliated with the Rotary Club and that this brings benefits in raising money and delivering local projects, a good way of networking and raising your profile
* Golden Gates tenant said they carry out telephone surveys with other customers to find out what they think of services such as repairs and gas servicing
* Participatory budgets – a good way to network with your local communities and local projects, which can help you deliver your business objectives and improve your networking locally