



TENANT INFLUENCE & ENGAGEMENT

The ALMO advantage

TENANT INFLUENCE AND ENGAGEMENT is one of six briefs that assemble learnings from the ALMO model and its potential for delivery of high quality, compliant and value-for-money local authority housing through a specialist council-owned organisation. Drawing on 20 years of operational experience, these findings will also be useful to other council housing management models, including housing advisory boards and direct in-house service delivery.

What the Regulator expects

"Social landlords must keep tenants safe in their homes, listen to what they say and put things right when needed." Fiona MacGregor, Chief Executive of RSH, February 2024

The much-vaunted promise of the 2018 Social Housing White Paper was that 'government will ensure residents in social housing are safe, listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong'. ALMOs were created to challenge a paternalistic post-war 'be grateful for what you're given' culture, and this why their governance structures all support and encourage some form of genuine tenant scrutiny or engagement. This demonstrable feeding of residents' views into governance, systems and services will be a huge advantage in the new regulatory regime. And very often, the ALMO experience shows, valuable knowledge from tenant engagement feeds into a council's wider strategic objectives and identifies entry points for well-targeted, value-for-money local authority services.

Effective tenant engagement and the ALMO experience

TENANTS JUDGE ALMO SERVICE DELIVERY TO BE BETTER THAN DIRECT LOCAL AUTHORITY MANAGEMENT

The new Tenant Satisfaction Measures oblige all registered providers to survey their tenants on their view of their landlord's efforts. Independent analysis of the first six months of TSM data shows that ALMOs significantly outperform direct council management on all 22 tenant satisfaction measures.

THE ALMO MODEL COMES PRE-LOADED WITH PROOF OF TENANT ENGAGEMENT

The ALMO framework includes an obligation to consult tenants. This duty has been translated into a range of training, engagement channels and levels of commitment open to all ALMO residents.

ALMO TENANTS ARE IN THE BOARDROOM

Usually ALMO boards are a 1:1:1 split between councillors, tenants or leaseholders, and experts from other sectors. At the inception of ALMO council housing management, the government stressed that "tenant/leaseholders Board Members [in ALMOs] are not on the board in lieu of consultation and involvement of other tenants and leaseholders; they are equal partners in all the decisions of the Board."

"I have to admit that I was a bit concerned that as a customer board member I would have a token role with no real input. But right from the beginning I played a full part in the board and its sub-committees. My views were both challenged and respected and I could respectfully challenge the views of other board members and the senior management team."

Jamie Hirst, former Tenant Board Member, Stockport Homes

Over the years in ALMOs, traditional residents' associations have evolved into resident-authored annual reports, tenant-led scrutiny panels that set their own agendas of service inspection, and tenant sub-committees that present directly at board level.

Many ALMOs regularly reach out to customers directly. For instance, they may be invited to join staff on area inspection 'walkabouts', or to take on monitoring roles. **Colchester Borough Homes** has around 70 active tenant/leaseholder Quality Assurance Advisors who monitor how maintenance and cleaning contractors do their work in housing blocks and sheltered schemes.



Shropshire Town & Rural Housing (STAR) created two area-specific residents' panels whose members set standards and targets for the services they want based on their own knowledge of local need. They also approve grants for community activities, give the Board feedback and comment on service change or new procedures.

- 100 per cent owned by and accountable to their local authority;
- expertise-led housing managers embedded in their communities;
- flexible and outcomes-focused organisations, ready to learn, develop and innovate;
- subject to strategic independent board oversight that involves tenants and external experts;
- tenant-focused, making sure residents' views are heard and acted upon;
- high-performing and value for money.