



EDEN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

TENANT ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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This policy applies to Eden Housing Association and all its wholly owned subsidiaries, including Mitre Housing Association

1. POLICY STATEMENT

This Policy sets out how we aim to place tenants at the heart of our work and decision making, by offering multiple opportunities to influence and co- develop our services. Working with tenants, the policy was originally developed in 2021, then reviewed and revised in light of further feedback from tenants in November 2024.

In Eden Housing Association (EHA)' s Strategy 2024-2028, to ***“Continually strive to improve insight from how we listen to and understand all our tenants’ views”*** is a key corporate objective.

This policy will support the delivery of this objective under the following key aims:

- Provide our tenants with clear and accessible information across all aspects of the organisation
- Ensure our tenants’ voices are heard by encouraging and enabling all forms of feedback, reassuring tenants that complaints can be made without negative consequence
- Offer tailored engagement opportunities to meet our tenants’ needs and preferences, reducing barriers to involvement
- Empower tenants to make measurable changes: from the provision of feedback to influence change, to co-creation of our services
- Our tenants are treated with respect, in a relationship based upon openness, honesty and transparency
- Tackle loneliness by helping establish connections between tenants
- Support professional development through training and opportunities to allow greater opportunities for empowerment
- The value and benefit of engagement is appreciated and understood across tenants, EHA Staff and Board members
- Work with other organisations and local providers to establish best practice and continuous improvement

2. REFERENCES

Internal

- EHA Strategy – 2024-2028
- Tenant Engagement Strategy
- Customer Strategy
- Governance Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy
- Tenant Engagement Operations Manual

External

- National Housing Federation’s Together with Tenants Charter
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023
- Regulator for Social Housing Transparency, Influence and Accountability (including Tenant Satisfaction Measures)
- Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPas) National Tenant Engagement Standards

3. POLICY CONTENT

We recognise that as recipients of our services, tenants have the best insight into where improvements could be made. This policy outlines the ways in which we enable tenants to influence and shape the services we provide.

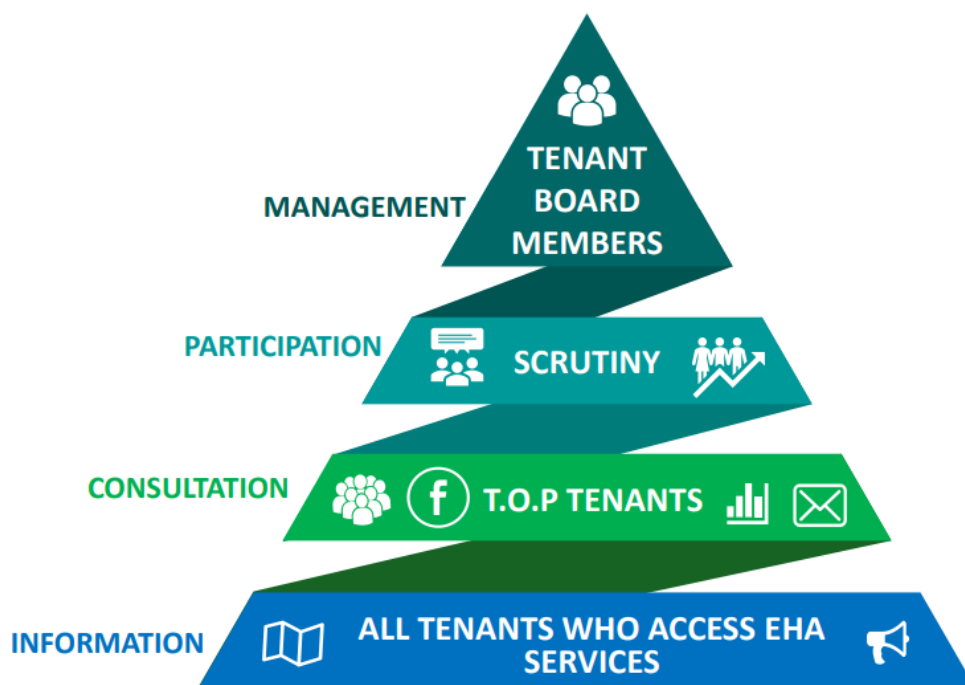
Specific work aimed to strengthen our engagement, tenant voice and influence offer was identified in the Tenant Engagement Strategy, approved by Board in May 2023. The strategy includes a 3-year roadmap of projects to ensure compliance with regulatory expectation, and ensure tenants voices are heard at all levels of our work.

Note that procedural and operational detail can be found in the associated Tenant Engagement Operations Manual.

'Tenant engagement' is the act of using tenant insight and input to improve services, and making them more efficient. Engaging with, and involving tenants can take place across four main, interlinking levels.

Management	–	leading on decision making and governance
Participation	–	working to inform services and co-creation
Consultation	–	giving opinions and preferences
Information	–	ensuring information is accessible

EHA's engagement structure provides opportunities for involvement across each level, supporting the needs and preferences of all tenants:



By providing dedicated officer support, we aim to encourage our tenants to move through these engagement levels towards governance and management. Our tenants should be able to see clear value in their involvement through the demonstration of tangible changes following engagement, and honesty where changes could not be made.

Detail of methods of engagement can be found in the associated Operations Manual however, the four primary levels of involvement are demonstrated below:

3.1 Information

Not all tenants will wish to be involved at all levels, the majority will just want to be informed. Our tenants have a right to know, understand and where possible help decide about matters that affect them. Positive engagement starts with the provision of clear, honest and timely information to *all* tenants relating to:

- Their homes
- Their communities
- How EHA deals with problems
- How the organisation is run
- How EHA performs as a landlord

Open, honest communication that actively encourages and facilitates feedback and discussion, particularly about more difficult news, can and should empower tenants to articulate their thoughts and feelings so that decisions are made from the most informed position possible. Honest communication in this way can also help tenants to understand when difficult or more unpopular decisions have to be made.

3.2 Consultation

Our 'Tenant Opinion Panel' (TOP) has a focus on consultation opportunities. TOP is a pool of tenants who are asked for feedback on our services through questionnaires/surveys, and focus groups.

Engagement is primarily digital, allowing members to complete surveys from the comfort of their home, in their own time. Each survey is incentivised with a prize draw voucher, and a consultation summary/ update is provided to all participants to demonstrate the changes made as a result of their input.

3.3 Participation

Our Scrutiny function is delivered across two engagement levels, with our Scrutiny Audit Panel towards Management and Governance, and each Scrutiny Taskforce at Participation.

Our Scrutiny Audit Panel sits within Management/ Governance. They select the subject of all Taskforce reviews (see 3.4)

One-off Taskforces are formed to review the identified area of service, comprising of tenants who have recently experienced the service/area under review. The key aim is to ensure all participants can feed into the investigation in ways which suit their needs, to allow flexibility and participation of those who are usually unable to join in due to commitments, transport and other barriers to engagement.

Taskforce recommendations are set out in a report for management, which is later presented to Board. Progress against the Panel's recommendations are monitored by the Scrutiny Audit Panel, supported by the Audit and Risk Committee who receive a summary report at every meeting.

Each one-off Taskforce is independent, but supported by the Engagement and Insight Officer (EIO).

3.4 Management and Governance

3.4.1 Scrutiny Audit Panel (SAP)

Our Scrutiny Audit Panel (SAP) link directly to our Board, using wider tenant feedback (Tenant Satisfaction Measures, KPI's and Complaints data) to instruct specific service reviews. These reviews are delivered by separate Scrutiny Taskforces.

The Scrutiny Audit Panel offers assurance to Board that each Taskforce review is led by tenants, and their views are acted upon in a timely manner by EHA colleagues. SAP also provide report 'signoff' against measures within the Regulator for Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

SAP carry out a quarterly review of all scrutiny action progress, with the authority to challenge where progress is not delivered within the original management timescale.

Tenants can join our Scrutiny Audit Panel via application. Tenants involved on other engagement groups may also be approached by the EIO to apply to join the Panel.

SAP is independent, supported by the Engagement and Insight Officer, and the Customer Service Manager.

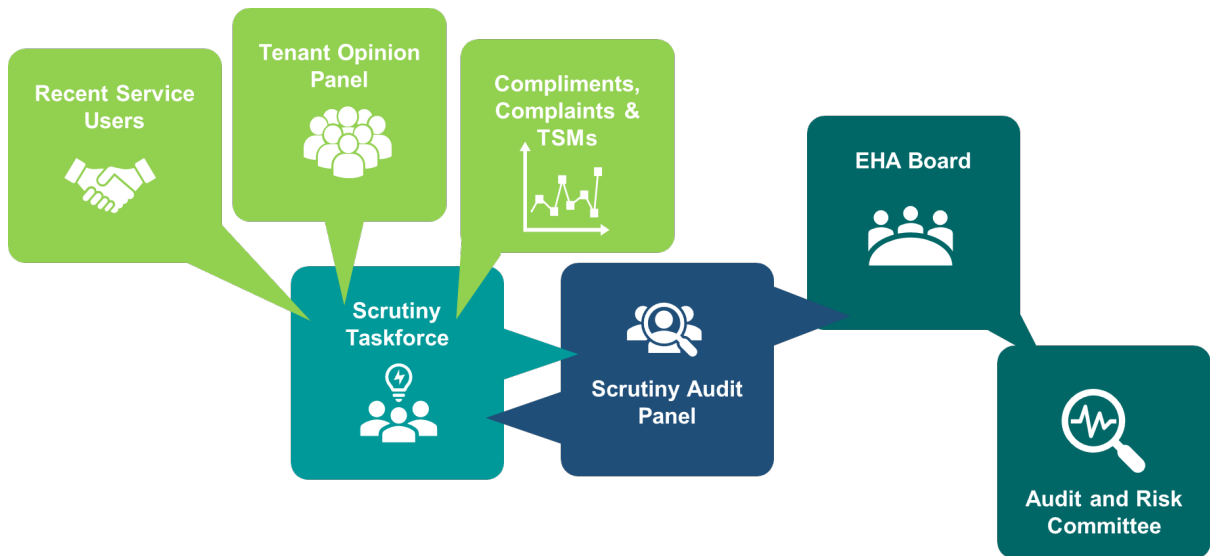
3.4.2 Tenant Board Membership

Our tenants can become directly involved in the governance of the Association by becoming a member of the Board. The Association's Governance Policy encourages two Eden Housing Association tenants to join. Board members are recruited based on their experience, and the skills they offer.

Becoming a member of the Board may preclude involvement in other participation choices (such as our Scrutiny Audit Panel) to avoid conflicts of interest.

3.4 EHA's Engagement Structure 2024

EHA's engagement structure, which includes the changes to our Scrutiny function under the engagement levels as outlined above, is presented below:



4. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director of Operations (DOO) retains the overall responsibility for the implementation of this Policy.

The Engagement and Insight officer (EIO) is responsible for the operational delivery of this Policy and its associated procedures. This includes responsibility for monitoring and reviews, staff awareness/ training, policy development and communication to customers.

5. EMBEDDING AN ENGAGEMENT CULTURE

Our Engagement and Insight Officer (EIO) facilitates engagement across all departments, supporting managers to gain important customer insight, and works with tenants to positively influence our services.

We are working to ensure our pro-active approach to tenant engagement is embedded across all departments, and within our organisational culture; setting the foundation for positive, tenant-led influence and change.

Our EIO works with our management team on a one-to-one basis providing guidance and support, and assistance with facilitating engagement activity. Regular feedback with teams helps underline the importance of tenant engagement and influence, and highlights the importance of all staff playing a part in tenant engagement work.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

The Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 2.

As part of our new approach, and to ensure we are inclusive, each engagement exercise will be tailored to the group with whom we are consulting; those who are directly impacted. The EIO and the policy/ service lead will work to identify the most appropriate method to suit the needs of the group. An integral part of the process will be to ensure inclusivity, by selecting the most appropriate method of engagement to reduce barriers of engagement.

7. ENGAGEMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The engagement impact assessment is attached at Appendix 3.

All new services and policy reviews require the completion of an Engagement Impact Assessment. This ensures engagement is considered in the developmental stage of a policy or service, and the impacted tenants have the opportunity to co-design the services they receive.

Where not determined by regulatory guidance or budgetary restriction, tenants' insight has been used to co-create this policy. This ensures our involvement structure meets the needs of our Tenants.

8. VALUE FOR MONEY

Effective involvement makes use of customer insight, tenant input, co-design and tenants testing of services. This policy aims to create value for money across the organisation through establishing what is important to tenants to co-create services and directing resources more efficiently – resulting in cost effective services that work.

9. MONITORING & REVIEW

The policy was originally approved by Board in January 2022, with a planned annual review in 2023. The 2023 review identified the need to develop a Tenant Engagement Strategy and 3-year roadmap.

EHA's Tenant Engagement Strategy was approved by Board in July 2024, which used TPAS (the Tenant Advisory Service – nationally recognised experts in tenant engagement) national engagement standards. These standards combine the expectations of the Regulator for Social Housing, Housing Ombudsman, the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance, and the revised building safety regime.

To identify areas where we need to strengthen our offer, we assessed our current approach against each of the 46 individual measures, included within the 6 themes of the TPAS Standards. That assessment was used to develop a roadmap, which will see us move forward during the 3-year life of the strategy.

The Tenant Engagement Strategy supersedes the original policy's Engagement Project Plan. The Strategy is reviewed separately by our Scrutiny Audit Panel on a quarterly basis, and Board annually. Progress against all projects is presented, with additional commentary. A quarterly overview of progress against Strategy progress is included in the Quarterly Tenants Voice report to Board.

Moving forward, the policy will continue to be reviewed bi-annually. An appropriate engagement plan will be implemented to ensure the policy is co-developed with our tenants. The review will consider whether:

- the current policy reflects current good practice
- the policy complies with the latest regulatory and legislative guidance
- the aims and objectives of the policy being met
- the current Policy outcomes reflect the needs and aspirations of our customers
- tenants are aware of, and understand the policy

- the service offers Value for Money
- the policy is inclusive to all customers, and meets Equality and Diversity requirements

The effectiveness of the policy, and the engagement structure itself will be monitored using a number of reports and evaluations:

9.1 Consultation summary reports

Following large scale engagement and policy consultation work, the EIO produces an engagement summary (included in the Operations Manual). Managers and service leads can clearly identify emerging themes and tenant preferences to incorporate into their policy or service updates. This ensures a clear record of tenants' input and the level of engagement achieved.

To aid continuous improvement, the report also includes potential barriers, and recommendations for improvement in future consultations.

9.2 Board reporting

The EIO produces quarterly Tenant Voice reports to the Board, who review the work carried out in the previous period. Engagement summaries are provided for publications, consultations, Scrutiny work and policy reviews, to highlight the number of tenants who have been engaged, the outcomes achieved and the difference that has been made by listening to our tenants.

9.3 Regulatory reporting

There are currently no requirements to report explicitly on engagement work with tenants. If reporting to the Regulator becomes a requirement, the EIO will be responsible for fulfilling the requirements, working with governance colleagues as necessary.

9.3.1 Consumer Regulatory Standard: Accountability and Influence Standard

The Association completes an annual self-assessment against the requirements of the standard to ensure we monitor progress against the requirements.

Progress is reviewed internally on an annual basis. Where required, the DOO allocates actions across teams to help drive improvement.

9.3.2 National Housing Federation's Together with Tenants Charter

EHA has signed up to meet the six commitments of the National Housing Federation's Together with Tenants Charter:

- Relationships
- Communication
- Voice and influence
- Accountability
- Quality
- When things go wrong

Compliance against the charter is currently being strengthened through the delivery of EHA's Tenant Engagement Strategy.

Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of the policy/practice/activity being assessed	Tenant Engagement Policy
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/practice/activity	This Policy aims to set out the ways we aim place tenants at the heart of our work and decision making, by offering multiple opportunities to co- develop our services and ensure our tenant's voices are heard
3. What involvement, consultation, engagement has taken place for the policy/practice/activity (e.g. <i>relevant groups/stakeholders</i>)	Consultation included with December 2024 Viewpoint to all tenants with email addresses. Hard copy for those who request it. Survey also included on website, EHA's Facebook and Instagram pages.
4. Who is affected by the policy/practice/activity	All tenants – as all should have the opportunity to engage
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of the policy/practice/activity	The policy will be reviewed bi-annually

Protected Group	Is there a potential for a positive or negative impact	Explain and provide evidence/data used	Action to address the negative impact
Disability	No		
Gender reassignment	No		
Marriage or civil partnership	No		
Pregnancy or maternity	No		
Race	Yes, potentially	Language barrier in wider participation	Where particular groups require
Religion or belief	No		
Sexual orientation	No		

Sex (gender)	No		
Age	Yes, potentially	The primary use of online engagement excludes those who do not have access or skills to use a computer	Where this group is directly affected by something we will select the most appropriate method of engagement i.e. in person or postal surveys

Evaluation

Question	Explanation	
Is it possible the proposed policy/practice/activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people	Yes – dependent on methods used to carry out consultations. However, we aim to select engagement methods depending on the audience directly affected	
Decision	Tick the relevant box	Include any justification required
1. No barriers identified – proceed		
2. Barriers identified towards one (or more) protected groups – stop		
3. Barriers identified towards one (or more) protected groups – adapt or change the policy/practice/activity	Yes	Increased use of online engagement can reduce participation from those without access to a computer. Where groups are directly affected, the most appropriate consultation method will be used to ensure inclusion and reduce barriers. Where non-English-speaking groups are directly impacted, consultations will be adapted accordingly.
4. Barriers identified towards one (or more) protected groups – no proportionate way to amend the policy/practice/activity so proceed with caution		

Completed by – and date	Jenny Webb, Engagement and Insight Officer, January 2025
Reviewed by – and date	Board – 21.1.25
Review Date (if applicable)	
Will this EIA be published?	Completed EIAs will be appended to each policy document. Any public related policies will be uploaded to the EHA website

Action (To be completed as required)

If the Evaluation has resulted in Decision 4, complete a risk assessment and record on Operational Risk Register	Date Completed:
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Change Log

Name	Date	Version	Change
	When published	1	

**Policy / Procedure / Strategy drafting / Review
Engagement Assessment
– is engagement with tenants necessary?**

Policy Name	Tenant Engagement Policy
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Impact	Tick relevant box	Note any details / justification
No Impact on current tenants – you can proceed without engagement.		
Direct or indirect impact on current tenants. Stop! Identify who will be affected i.e. all tenants or a specific group	Yes	Individuals' communication and commitment preferences vary, so in order for us to offer an engagement service which meets our tenants' needs, we need to ensure our existing service is fit for purpose, and work to remove any barriers to engagement.

Influence	Tick relevant box	Note any details / justification
No influence for tenants – i.e. wholly legislative – you can proceed without engagement.		
Possible influence on areas of policy/ practice/ activity impacting on tenants – stop. Arrange engagement with EIO	Yes	As before, aside from regulatory recommendations, our tenants should have a say in the <i>practical</i> areas of the policy.

Completed by – and date	Jenny Webb
Reviewed by – and date	
Review Date (if applicable)	
Will this assessment be published?	Completed assessments will be appended to each policy document. Any public related policies will be uploaded to the EHA website

Summary of engagement (To be completed as required)

Tenant group impacted and engaged (i.e. all/ sheltered)	All tenants who would like to be engaged and informed
Consultation method	Survey included in the Association's bi-monthly newsletter, Viewpoint. Those who receive Viewpoint this in a hard copy will receive a paper questionnaire. Consultation shared with EHA's Tenant Opinion Panel, on EHA's website, Facebook and Instagram pages.

Summary of engagement	Engagement survey circulated with Viewpoint December 2024 to 1,637 tenants. Questions focussed on reviewing existing service, preferred level of engagement, and preferred methods of communication for engagement.
Key themes/ implications	Respondents rated our existing service highly, at 4.1 out of 5. The majority of tenants would like to be informed and consulted about changes. Followed closely by those wishing to participate. The most preferred means of communication is email. The majority of tenants believe we share feedback positively, citing difficulty to encourage more tenants to access this information and actively take part

If you would like some assistance to work through this engagement assessment, please contact Jenny Webb – EIO.