



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

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Edinburgh's Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations

A Briefing Note

September 2014

Background

Edinburgh Tenants Federation was launched in October 1990. It is formally recognised by the City of Edinburgh Council as the city-wide negotiating body for Council tenants.

The Federation is an umbrella organisation of local associations that represents tenants at a citywide, policy level. This complements and builds on the work of the associations at local and area levels dealing with day to day service delivery issues. The Federation aims to promote the improvement of the quality of life of residents and the housing conditions of all tenants of rented accommodation and in particular those at risk of exclusion for whatever reason.

Resources

The Federation is a voluntary organisation and is based at Norton Park. Much of our work is carried out by our Office Bearers, Executive Committee and highly dedicated activists. The Federation is funded by the City of Edinburgh Council through a service level agreement which enables us to employ four workers, run a central office and support our main city-wide business.

Organisation and Decision Making

The Federation is a membership-based organisation and is run by its members. Memberships are renewed annually, and in 2014/15 we had 41 tenants' and residents' groups in full membership, there were 15 Non-voting Associate Members and 2 Non-Voting Organisation Associate Members. There is no fee for becoming a member.

We provide extensive opportunities for members to be involved in our work. The key to involvement and participation is information and we regularly inform members of our activities. All major policy decisions are made by our members through regular Federation meetings and the Annual General Meeting. As the workload of the organisation is considerable and expanding, the Federation follows detailed work plans which are discussed and approved by the membership and which form the basis of maintaining accountability to the membership.

Our members elect the Executive Committee which meets monthly to take responsibility for the day to day running of the organisation, the management of the staff and implementing policy. Specific city-wide Groups are set up to deal with major areas of ongoing work for example, on repairs, multi-storey flats and publicity. These are open to representatives of member groups from across the city and are an opportunity to undertake detailed work on behalf of the Federation with the Council. The Groups report regularly to the membership and Executive Committee, to whom they are ultimately accountable.



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Informing and Involving the Membership

Keeping the membership well informed and up to date on developments at all levels is carried out through a variety of methods. Member groups receive a monthly newsheet, *Federation Matters* and over 4000 copies of our quarterly newsletter, *Tenants Voice*, are circulated widely. The Federation's new website and branding were launched at our AGM. The website has a host of new features including a members' area where groups can access Federation papers and members only information. The website also has an online sign up for our mailing list to get regular emails direct to your inbox. Ad hoc mailings are also circulated on occasion. Members receive quarterly and annual reports on all areas of work and have an opportunity to determine future policy direction on all of these.

Each of the city-wide groups, currently Repairs, High Flats and Registered Social Landlord Tenants, are in regular communication with the membership. The groups are the most successful way of involving the broadest range of the membership. They address everyday concerns and issues and provide an opportunity to participate directly with the Council and other landlords in developing and monitoring policies and new forms of service delivery that will make a difference to tenants throughout the city.

Outreach Work

The Federation provides development and practical support to local people who wish to set up new tenants' and residents' organisations and those groups already established who wish assistance with strengthening their organisation. Intervention and the provision of support at a local level is only undertaken on request and usually for a limited period only. Increasingly, this includes development work with registered social landlords and private tenants as well as Council tenants.

We provide dedicated long term support to groups in regeneration areas and their participation in the regeneration process for their area.

Wherever possible, we identify alternative sources of locally based development support so that long-term support needs can be addressed locally. The Federation works with the support project that takes the lead on development work in Craigmillar. Our priority is the other large areas of affordable rented housing where social exclusion is marked and tenant and resident organisation minimal and poorly resourced.




Current Work

The current workload keeps activists and staff very busy and new activists and volunteers are always welcome. Our ongoing work includes areas such as:

- Support to local groups, including the development of new groups
- Regular ongoing meetings between ETF and the City of Edinburgh Council on a range of matters, including:
 - Meetings with senior managers
 - Rent Service Re-design and Welfare Reform Working Groups
 - Meetings with Edinburgh Building Services to discuss repairs issues
 - Review of the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy



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- Six weekly meetings with the Council's Housing Leader.

Future Work

ETF will scrutinise and monitor Council performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter. A short life working group will be set up to look at how tenants will be involved and informed about the Council's Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

ETF will establish a new Working Group with the Council on Housing Revenue Account Guidance.




ETF will set up a Rents Group involving tenants who said they'd like to find out more about rents to develop their understanding of housing finance.

ETF will continue to work with the Council and other partners to improve tenants' awareness of the Welfare Reform, particularly the forthcoming Universal Credit.

If you would like to get involved in any of our activities, please contact the Federation office.



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