

# Tenants Voice



Issue 99 - September 2016

EDINBURGH TENANTS  
FEDERATION

## GATESIDE ARE WINNERS!

Gateside Tenants and Residents Association (GTRA) were extremely pleased, if not a little surprised to have been put forward for Tenants' Group of the Year. We were only reformed 18 months ago and although we have been lucky enough to have had several important improvements made to Gateside, we did not think it merited praise. We were delighted to have been nominated for Tenants' Group of the Year, but shocked to be placed in the final three. We were content finishing in third place, but when our name was read out as winners, at the Tenant Information Service Awards Gala Dinner in June this year, we were astonished and the look of joy on our faces was a sight to behold. Our award was presented by Magnus Hammer, Chair of the International Union of Tenants and Cat Harvey, Radio and TV presenter. We were delighted to have received this award but there is still much to do in order to merit our success.



Gateside Committee members with Magnus Hammer and Cat Harvey

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## **Build it and they will come!**

After a long and, at times, quite tiring consultation, we are pleased to report that our Community Garden, goes from strength to strength. Our Community Garden has given tenants and residents a focal point to sit, relax and meet other local people. Some of the local tenants, especially Dot Henderson, have taken it upon themselves to help maintain this area. Plans are already in place to establish a sub-committee as plans on the estate develop. We have started to make arrangements to hold meetings in a suitable venue and develop a community cycle track; all of which will need community input and support. I have found that as in the movie “build it and they will come” (Field of Dreams), people need something on the ground to take part in and hopefully this will bring in more support.



**The Community Garden in Gateside**

We have been incredibly lucky to have both our local Councillor Norman Work and Karen McKay, North West Edinburgh Housing Regeneration Manager work with us as we battle for long awaited improvements to our estate. We have also made strong ties with ETF, especially Justine Bradd who has guided us through some trying application forms. We would like to thank our nominators and supporters for their belief in GTRA.

**Bill Walker, Chair, Gateside Tenants and Residents Association**

## **THE BIG CONVERSATION: TENANTS DECIDE**

ETF would like to thank everyone who came along to our Conference and AGM in June. It was a hugely enjoyable day which featured discussions and workshops concerning the changing nature of tenant participation. Here are some of the highlights from what was an inspiring day:

### **The Theme**



The Conference theme was ‘The Big Conversation’. As Betty Stevenson, Convenor of ETF explained: “The Conference was an opportunity for our members to talk openly about the big things that are important to ETF – especially in the year ahead which may be one of change. We were very keen for the event to be interactive to allow members to have their say. I’m delighted the Conference gave people a chance to explore and exchange ideas. Thanks to everyone involved in making it a success.”



Betty welcoming delegates to ETF's Conference

### The 'Wicked Questions'

Delegates were asked to discuss a number of 'Wicked Questions'. These are questions that do not have obvious answers, as their value lies in being able to open up options, inquiry and bring to the surface the fundamental issues that need to be addressed. The 'Wicked Questions' centred on the following themes:

1. Who is the Federation for? What is our purpose? Do tenants still need ETF?
2. Our membership is based on tenants' groups and yet more individuals are getting involved;
3. We're a citywide organisation and we're doing more local work;
4. Are there any challenges and opportunities of ETF working in a contract with the Council?
5. How do we represent and support all tenants?



Discussions taking place at one of the tables



Paul Vaughan feeds back his views

There is no conflict in ETF supporting and representing tenants.

Even if people are not asking for involvement, it doesn't mean ETF can't help.

We need to change the way we work with younger people.

### Views from delegates

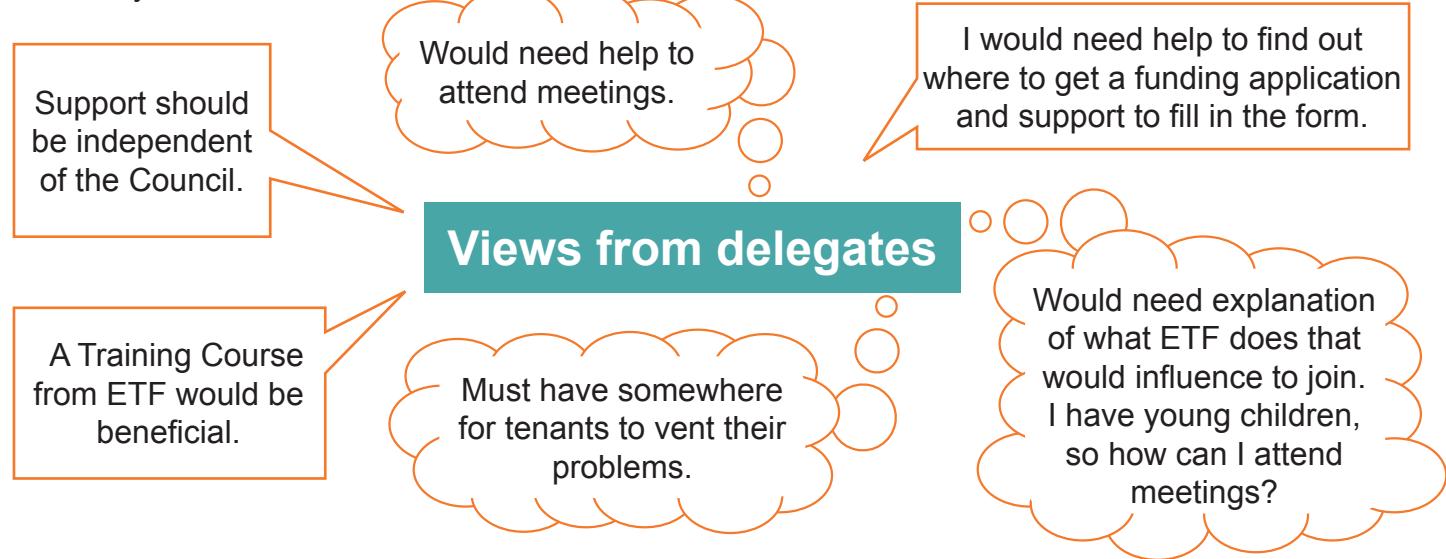
Unity is strength.

ETF is for all tenants, individuals and groups.

All tenants should have a say collectively and have a centre point of discussion.

## Tenants views on support for tenant participation services

The second part of the morning involved delegates discussing what support they need to take part in discussions with the Council. What support could be provided and how could things be done differently?



Comments from this session were fed back to the Council and focussed on ETF's response to the co-production of Tenant Participation Services. See pages 6 and 7 for more detail.

## The Annual General Meeting

The Federation's Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place immediately after lunch. The Annual Report, Finances and Work Plan were approved. Mark Mulgrew of Inch Community Association was elected onto the Executive Committee and Betty Stevenson, Maud Wylie and Davie Thomson were re-elected.



Delegates voting at the AGM

## Launch of Blog

After the AGM it was time to launch our blog. Designed to generate discussion about hot topics, the blog is another development in ETF's digital journey. See page 5 for more on our blog.

## The Social

Following the end of the AGM everyone had a chance to relax with refreshments and socialise.

## Big Thanks

ETF would like to thank all those who worked so hard in the planning of the day and those volunteers who helped to make the Conference and AGM a success. Here's to another great year for ETF.



We are currently looking for people to tell the story about what is happening in Edinburgh on our blog. If any of the following applies to you, we would certainly be interested in hearing from you:

- Are you a Council tenant?
- Do you work in housing?
- Are you interested in community development?
- Do you care about where you live?

If you are interested in contributing a blog or would like more information, please contact the Federation Office on 0131 475 2509 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk). The blogs will be included on our website and e-newsletter on a monthly basis and will feature articles from the world of housing. Some useful hints and tips for writing blogs can be found on our website at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/draft-blog>. Our first guest blogger was Judith Robertson, Chair, Scottish Human Rights Commission and her blog can be found at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/from-geneva-to-leith-bringing-human-rights-home>. Our second blogger was Bill Walker, Chair, Gateside Tenants and Residents Association and his blog can be found at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/build-will-come>.

## VOLUNTEER AWARDS



It's always wonderful when ETF representatives are recognised for the outstanding work that they do and the Volunteer Edinburgh Awards Ceremony on Tuesday 7th June 2016 was a great night for Edinburgh's tenants. The event was a huge success and we would like to give special praise to the winners.

Karma Lennon, Tenants and Residents in Muirhouse (TRIM) won the Tenant Participation Champion Award for setting up the community shop in her local area. Karma commented, "I was pleasantly surprised when I was told of the award and would like to thank Robert Pearson of TRIM for his nomination and nice words. I don't volunteer to get any special recognition as it brings its own rewards but it was great to feel appreciated, encouraged and to know that what I can offer makes a difference. I am very proud to be part of a team who are striving to make our wee bit on the map a little bit more awesome."

Heather Ford, ETF Executive Committee member won a Volunteer Award for her work in ETF's Tenant Led Inspection Team and the Human Rights and Housing Project. Heather commented, "I was very surprised to have been given an award. I think I am very lucky and I would like to share it with all as a community. I enjoy helping out at ETF as they are an



Karma receiving her award from the Lord Provost  
Donald Wilson

awesome team and without their help and advice a lot of tenants would have nowhere to turn for help and guidance. Thank you to all at ETF.”



Heather receiving congratulations at ETF's AGM

21st Century Gracemount won a Team Award for their fantastic work in the local area including their local community fairs and increasing community involvement. Elizabeth Page from the group commented, “We’re very humbled to win the award as there were many other participants nominated and we feel very honoured to have won. We would like to thank Justine at ETF for nominating the group.”

Well done to everyone who received an award and thank you to all our volunteers who help out on a daily basis.

## TENANT PARTICIPATION SERVICES: CO-PRODUCTION UPDATE

ETF has been involved with the City of Edinburgh Council and a number of other agencies over the summer to draft ideas about what a future service for tenant participation could look like in Edinburgh. Tenants had the opportunity to bring ideas forward to an event in the City Chambers in June 2016, and views from that meeting have helped to contribute to discussions with the Council.

ETF also assisted an Advisory Group of tenants in meeting with the Council. The Advisory Group has contributed positively towards generating ideas for the future of a tenant participation service. However, the group has also been critical of the timescales involved in the co-production process and commented that the Council event in June “did not make clear this was about the future of ETF and the Neighbourhood Alliance”.

The Federation agrees with these points and representatives have consistently said that the timescales in the co-production process are too short for tenants to actively take part. The Federation is also concerned that many tenants are unaware of the co-production process.

Federation staff currently provide support to tenants' groups and individuals wishing to get involved in tenant participation, and it is this service (and that of the Neighbourhood Alliance), that the co-production group is considering the future of.

The Federation's Conference in June considered what ETF Members require of a tenant participation service and Members were clear in outlining their priorities for the future.

## Our Members:

- Value the **independence** of staff providing support to tenants and tenants' groups. A future service should be independent of the Council;
- See **no conflict** in the roles of ETF representing tenants and our staff providing support to tenants;
- See ETF as a **strong and independent tenants'** movement that is required to hold the Council as a landlord, to account;
- Agree that according to the law, the Council has a duty to **adequately resource** the Federation, including its role in campaigning for tenants' issues, as well as for support for the Executive Committee and the Federation as an organisation;
- Strongly believe that the model we currently have (where tenants set the Work Plan for staff and monitor progress every quarter) should remain. This gives **tenants control** over the tenant participation services and means it is our priorities that staff work to;
- Believe that a **citywide service** is still required to ensure that tenants have the opportunity to come together. And that **resources at the grassroots** for outreach support should be increased. Ideas for this included an Outreach Worker for each Locality in the city;
- Think that more could be done to support tenants who don't get involved currently, especially **younger, Black, Minority and Ethnic and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender tenants**;
- Want **learning opportunities** – especially with other tenants in informal and formal ways;
- Want **Tenant Led Inspections** to continue to be a priority and the focus to be on tenant participation in **housing services** with opportunities to link to other issues in our communities;
- Think **resources for tenant participation** should be increased.

These points have been presented to the Council by ETF representatives in the Co-Production Working Group (CPWG).

Councillors are due to consider options for the 'tenant participation and engagement services' in the Health, Social Care and Housing Committee at the City Chambers on **Tuesday 13th September 2016, 10.00am**. Papers for this meeting will be available a week in advance on the Council's website [www.edinburgh.gov.uk](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk). ETF intends to have a deputation at this meeting. This is an open meeting and all are welcome to attend.

ETF is unsure (at the time of going to press) what will be included in the papers for the Committee, or if any of the points ETF has made to the CPWG will be taken into account. Therefore our next Federation Meeting on **Monday 12th September 2016, 6.00pm-9.00pm, Norton Park Conference Centre** will consider the report and help set the Federation's position for the Committee meeting the following day. You can find out more about the Federation Meeting on page 10.

## THANK YOU LYNNE



ETF would like to pay a special tribute to Lynne Tait who has stepped down from the Federation's Executive Committee after nearly 20 years. Lynne has been a real stalwart for ETF and in her local community of Southhouse and Burdiehouse, by being Chairperson of Southhouse and Burdiehouse Residents Organisation (SABRO) over many years and she will be a huge loss to the Executive Committee. For this edition of *Tenants Voice*, we have asked Lynne a number of questions relating to her work with both her group and ETF over the years.

## **How long have you been involved with Edinburgh Tenants Federation?**

I have been involved with the Federation since 1997.

## **What made you become involved with the tenants' movement?**

Through my own tenants' group I attended a meeting of the South Edinburgh Residents Council, where George McKie, who was ETF's Convenor at the time, was in attendance. He persuaded me to attend the Federation's AGM held in June that year. I was co-opted onto the Federation's Executive Committee that year and I became a full EC member the following year and as they say the rest is history.

## **What advice would you give to anyone joining the tenant's movement today?**

Make sure you have a strong voice as more voices together get more work done.

## **What has been your highlights of being involved with the Federation?**

Seeing the positive changes that have been made for tenants' living conditions. Let's make sure these changes keep happening with everyone working together.

## **What has been your low points of being involved with the Federation?**

Dealing with complaints against the Federation and EC members. Let's hope we never have to go through that again. Although as a result of this, ETF reviewed our Policies and Procedures which also included developing a Complaints Policy. So there were some positives from this.

## **What have you enjoyed most about being involved with your local group?**

I'm very proud of the work SABRO has done in our local community. Some of our successes include ensuring all the properties in Southouse would be renovated as the Council initially only completed some of the houses in the area. SABRO campaigned for all homes in the area to have gas central heating and double glazed windows. This has made a huge difference to tenants' homes. We now have a new Community Centre in the area which our group had long campaigned for. It's great to see it being accessed by local people.

## **Any other comments?**

I will miss being involved in the Federation's Executive Committee and I will miss the banter. Keep up the great work by showing the Council the right way things should be done.



Lynne at ETF's AGM

## **TENANT LED INSPECTIONS**

Well, what a busy few months it has been for our Tenant Led Inspection team. Firstly; our established Inspectors carried out an inspection of the Council's approach to insulating external walls. We sent a draft report to the Council with a number of recommendations on how processes could be improved and we will shortly be meeting with Council staff to discuss this in more detail. Once the report has been finalised, the Council will put together an action plan on how they aim to address the recommendations.

Secondly; our new Inspectors completed their learning modules, which included Dr Jo Ferrie from Glasgow University talking about developing interviews and questionnaires. Feedback from our learning modules was very positive.

“Thank you to all at ETF, I enjoyed this very much.”

“The learning modules gave me confidence.”

“There was a relaxed and friendly approach.”

“The facilitators were great in what they taught us.”

The Inspectors are currently making preparations to carry out the next inspection which will be on an aspect of the Council’s Rent Collection Process. The inspection will begin in the next couple of months.



**The Tenant Led Inspection Team meeting with Council staff**

Finally a group of Inspectors will be speaking at a Housemark event in September about how the inspection process has worked in Edinburgh and will be giving tips on how to carry out an inspection. There will be a further update in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.

**Heather Ford, Convenor, ETF Tenant Led Inspections**

## HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES REPORTED TO THE COUNCIL

It's been a busy few months for our human rights in housing project in West Cromwell Street, Persevere and Citadel Courts (WPC) in Leith.

The residents carried out a survey about issues in their area and results were present to Councillor Cammy Day, Council Officers and Ben MacPherson, MSP at a public meeting in June. Residents are looking forward to working with the Council to resolve the issues.

Dessie Donnelly from the Participation of Practice and Rights (PPR) organisation in Belfast was over for a visit to see how the project is progressing. PPR have successfully spearheaded human rights work with tenants in Belfast for many years, and are supporting WPC residents along with ETF and the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC)



**Dessie speaking to residents**

to assess and monitor their living conditions in relation to international human rights standards. Dessie met with residents in WPC to talk about what happened in the Seven Towers, Belfast and how residents of WPC can assert their human rights in practice.

Residents were also delighted to meet with three of the four Commissioners for Human Rights in Scotland to tell them about the project and take them on a walkabout of the area. The Commissioners have given their full support to the project.



Residents and Human Rights Commissioners on the walkabout

Residents from West Cromwell Street, Persevere and Citadel Courts, ETF and the SHRC met with Alicia Ely Yamin – a leading academic in human rights from Harvard University who is interested in our project. Look out for updates on the project in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.

## FEDERATION MEETING



The next Federation Meeting will take place on **Monday 12th September 2016, 6.00pm-9.00pm, Norton Park Conference Centre, 57 Albion Road**. The meeting will feature discussions about:

- Key changes required for ETF to meet Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation status; including a conversation about ETF's constitution and membership options;
- What should be included in the Council's Tenant Participation and Engagement Service specification?
- ETF's ideas for a Community Leadership Programme.

Members will also have the chance to hear what ETF has done over the past few months as we discuss our quarterly Progress Report. Come along and support each other to come up with what's best for the future of **YOUR** Federation. You can book online via [www.edinburghtenants.org.uk](http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk), contact the Federation office on 0131 475 2509 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk). Light refreshments will be available.



## EDINBURGH SHELTERED HOUSING LIAISON GROUP

is proud to announce its first

### CONFERENCE

In partnership with City of Edinburgh Council

on

**Wednesday 12th October 2016**

in

**Edinburgh City Chambers**

**10.00 am - 1.00 pm Registration from 9.30am**

*More details to follow soon*

**Contact 0131 529 7595**

*Refreshments will be provided*



Music



Discussion



Stalls

• EDINBURGH •  
YOUR COUNCIL - YOUR SERVICES

  
EDINBURGH TENANTS  
FEDERATION

# ETF LEARNING SESSIONS RETURN



The eagerly awaited ETF Learning Sessions are coming to you this autumn; look out for publicity in the coming weeks. The programme will include sessions on Committee Skills, Finance and Getting Your Message Across to name a few and will be FREE for Council groups and tenants.

Meeting support  
Connecting Fun informal  
Share people ETP Real  
Share ideas Inspire Personal  
Leaders for Social solutions Share  
Build communities RTO Confide  
Learning skills issues  
Sessions life Active  
Community Tenants development

## Calling all RTOs



We want to share stories from your area with our readers, good or bad.

Not sure how to write an article?

Fear not, we can provide assistance with writing an article. If you want to know more or want to run an idea past us, please contact Mark on 0131 475 2509 or email [mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

## Do you know someone who:

- Helps look after your house when you are away?
- Makes new residents feel welcome?
- Helps someone with their gardening or shopping?
- Visits and supports neighbours when they need help?

If so, nominate them for the City of Edinburgh Council's new Good Neighbour Award. Either the nominator and/or nominee must be a Council tenant.



**Nominate online:** <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/GoodNeighbourAward>

**Email us:** [tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk)

**Write to:** Housing Research, FREEPOST EH3030  
Strategy and Investment, The City of Edinburgh Council, 1.4 Waverley Court  
East Market Street, Edinburgh, EH8 8BJ.

**Winners will receive a £50 gift voucher.** Nominators will be entered into a prize draw for a chance to win a £50 gift voucher.

Gift vouchers have been provided by the Capital Credit Union.

To find out more, please visit <http://www.capitalcreditunion.com/>

**Entries must be received by Monday 12 September 2016.**

## Interested in finding out more about gas and electricity use in your home and saving money on bills?

Environmental charity Changeworks and the University of Edinburgh are looking for households in Edinburgh to participate in IDEAL, a two year, cutting edge research and advice project into home energy use. The benefits of getting involved include:

- Gaining insight into your home energy use;
- Receiving tailored advice from University experts;
- Possibly saving money on your gas and electricity bills.

Every household that participates will receive an Android tablet, used to display energy use information and for the University to communicate with you. In addition, you will be able to use the tablet as you would any other tablet during and after the research.



Households interested in participating would need to meet the following criteria:

- Based in Edinburgh (postcodes EH1-17);
- Property with a combi boiler and mains gas supply;
- Have home broadband;
- No prepayment or smart gas meters (smart electricity meters ok);
- Not planning on moving home before June 2018.

Participation in IDEAL involves:

- A two hour visit to your home; incorporating a short survey and the fitting of sensors measuring energy and heating use, light levels, temperature and humidity;
- Keeping the equipment in the property until June 2018 and reporting any problems;
- Responding to surveys and messages received from the University experts via the tablet provided;
- Leaving home broadband running 24/7 to allow the sensors to communicate;
- Saving energy and money through more efficient energy use and behaviour change.

To register your interest send your name, address and contact details to [ideal@changeworks.org.uk](mailto:ideal@changeworks.org.uk), visit [www.changeworks.org.uk](http://www.changeworks.org.uk) or phone 0131 539 8610.

**Drew Murphy, Changeworks**

# COMMUNITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Edinburgh's Community Councils are looking for new recruits. By getting involved you can make a difference to what matters in your area, meet new people, learn new skills and help organise events that improve where you live.

The nomination period starts on 5th September and closes on 26th September 2016. Elections, where required, will take place on 27th October 2016. You can apply as an individual or as a local interest group, such as a Residents' Association or Registered Tenants' Organisation.

Councillor Maureen Child, Convener of the Communities and Neighbourhoods Committee, urged people to get involved: "Community Councils are a fantastic way of making the local authority aware of the needs of local areas. By getting involved, you can help your local area keep thriving. They are all about local residents working together to make a difference to where they live. In my experience, the best community councils and community groups involve folks of all ages and backgrounds, but they rely on people putting themselves forward. It may be a little daunting for those who haven't been involved in anything like this before, but help and advice is available."

## What does a Community Council do?

Community Councils are made up of local residents and community groups such as youth forums, parent councils and student bodies. Each one is represented on the Neighbourhood Partnership for its area. They work with local elected members, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, NHS Lothian and the voluntary sector to identify and deliver local priorities.

There are 46 Community Council areas in Edinburgh, with more than 500 members. They receive an annual grant from the City of Edinburgh Council to support engaging with the local community, promotion and administration. They can apply for additional funding for projects and events to benefit the local area.

## A Community Council:

- Gives local people a say on decisions that affect their area;
- Acts as a focal point for local groups building stronger communities;
- Consults with local people on issues that will impact on the community;
- Gets involved in a wide range of local issues including planning, licensing, community safety, health and well-being and environmental projects;
- Sources funding for local improvements;
- Organises community events and activities to improve the area.

## Interested?

If you are aged 16 years or older and are registered to vote, you can join. Nomination forms will be available from 5th September on the City of Edinburgh Council's website at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/communitycouncils](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/communitycouncils).

You can find information on each individual Community Council, including maps, on the Neighbourhood Partnership website: [www.edinburghnp.org.uk/community-councils](http://www.edinburghnp.org.uk/community-councils) or contact the Community Council Liaison and Development Officer on 0131 469 3838, or email [community.councils@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:community.councils@edinburgh.gov.uk).

# GOING LOCAL!



For some time tenants have been telling the Council, their landlord, that they want to know their Housing Officers better and to be able to contact them more easily.

You may know that the Council is changing the way services are delivered to make sure that local services work better together to improve outcomes for tenants and communities.

The Council's Housing Service is moving to what's called 'patch working' where there will be around

100 Housing Officers managing about 200 homes each. The services will be delivered through four Council localities - North East, North West, South East and South West.

Each 'patch' will have one recognisable Housing Officer who will be out and about in the community making sure that they get to know their tenants. They will be responsible for carrying out a wide range of housing management tasks, including collecting rent, letting homes, dealing with repairs and helping tenants with any questions they may have.

This approach is a big change from the previous Housing Service focus on specialist staff teams. It seeks to bring the Council's locality model directly to tenants so that they will know their Housing Officer and their Housing Officer will know them.

We've already had strong support for this approach from staff, tenants' groups and ETF. Now we want to get your ideas on how these changes can be achieved and find out what you think will work well. If you would like to take part in discussion groups, or give us some feedback, please email [tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk) or ring 0131 529 7805.

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Social Security for Scotland Consultation

The Scottish Government has launched a consultation paper about how best to use the social security powers that will be devolved to the Scottish Government as part of the Scotland Act 2016. This is the start of a process that will define the way Scotland supports people who need assistance for generations to come.

We know that the benefits system affects many tenants, and welfare changes have deeply affected many ETF Members, so we think this issue will be one that tenants will want to get involved with.

ETF will be hosting an event for tenants to find out more and to contribute their views on Monday 3rd October 2016, 6.00pm-9.00pm, Norton Park. You can book a place online at [www.edinburghtenants.org.uk](http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk), email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk) or phone 0131 475 2509.

The consultation runs until 28th October 2016. Contact the Scottish Government on 0131 244 7763 or email [consult.socialsecurityscotland@gov.scot](mailto:consult.socialsecurityscotland@gov.scot). You can also access the consultation at <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/social-security/social-security-in-scotland> to have your say direct.

## Scottish Social Housing Charter

Members of Registered Tenant Organisations and individual tenants within ETF recently attended a review session on the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The aims of the session were to gain an understanding of the current Charter and discuss what needs to be included in the forthcoming new Charter. There were a number of lively discussions around themes, including:

- Do tenants currently have enough information to hold their landlords to account for their decisions and performance?
- How are tenants becoming involved in Charter reporting and monitoring?



Discussions taking place at the Charter Review Session

The session was facilitated by ETF's Development Worker Mark Henry and Michael Boal, Scottish Housing Charter & Regulation Manager, Scottish Government. ETF has submitted a response to the Charter and here are some of the main points raised by ETF.

- “Tenants don’t know enough about the Charter.”
- “Tenants don’t have enough information on what their rent money is being spent on.”
- “ETF would like to see landlords encouraging tenants to take part through tenant scrutiny.”
- “Tenants want to be involved in value for money discussions with landlords.”

A copy of ETF's response to the Scottish Social Housing Charter can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/etf-response-scottish-social-housing-charter>, or you can phone Mark at the Federation Office on 0131 475 2509 or email [mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

## ETF welcomes end of Right to Buy

ETF welcomes the end of the Right to Buy (RTB) as a historic day for housing in Scotland as the scheme was scrapped by the Scottish Government at the end of July.

Introduced in 1980 by Margaret Thatcher's Government as a way to enable Council tenants to buy their homes at discounted rates, nearly half a million homes were sold in a loss to the social rented sector described as “devastating” by Convenor of ETF, Betty Stevenson.



The end of the policy has been warmly welcomed by the housing sector in Scotland, with landlords, third sector organisations and tenants all supporting the move that will help regenerate Scotland's social housing sector.

Betty said, “The end of the Right to Buy in Scotland is great news for Scotland's tenants. It can bring a rebirth of Scotland's social housing sector by protecting our stock for future generations. Not losing our housing stock to the RTB means there is an opportunity for investment in much needed affordable housing. ETF is delighted that new Council homes are being built for the first time in a generation and we fully support the Council's ambition for much needed affordable homes in our city.”

## National Panel of Tenants and Service Users



The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has a National Panel for Tenants and Service Users. Anyone who is a tenant of a social landlord, are homeless, a homeowner receiving factoring services or common repairs, or a Gypsy/Traveller using a Council or housing association site can join. The Panel is a way for the Regulator to hear people's views. Panel members will be asked their opinion in occasional surveys and other ways. To join the Panel contact

Craigforth on Freephone 0800 027 2245 or email [shr@craigforth.co.uk](mailto:shr@craigforth.co.uk).

### National Panel Survey Report

This year's report on tenants' views about their priorities and experiences as users of social landlords' services is out now. Here are some of the main points tenants and service users have made.

- All landlord services are seen as important by service users;
- Nationally, tenants have said the most important services they use are repairs and maintenance, keeping buildings and entrances secure and dealing with antisocial behaviour;
- Value for money for rent is the most important aspect of service for tenants. Tenants want to be able to see a difference for the rent money they pay and be clear about how charges relate to services;
- Communication from landlords is important for tenants;
- Housing costs and condition of homes were issues for 75% of tenants;
- Most tenants who responded have seen their landlord's performance information, find the information useful and know how to make a complaint to their landlord;
- Less than half of the respondents had heard of the Scottish Social Housing Charter whilst more than half had heard of and value the work of the Regulator;
- Value for money is important to tenants and tenants judge this by the quality of service received, investment in homes, affordability and the size of the rent increase;
- 80% of respondents said they had concerns about future affordability of rents caused by rent increases or changes to their income;
- Tenants want the Regulator to focus on rent and service charges and more effective tenant scrutiny as priorities.



These are important results for tenants and ETF will take up some of the points raised by tenants nationally with the City of Edinburgh Council, since they reflect what tenants have been telling the Federation locally, particularly with regard to improved tenant scrutiny and value for money and affordability of rents.

For a copy of the National Panel's Report, please see the Regulator's website [www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk)

# ChooseLife

## Suicide prevention in Scotland

"When it comes to suicide prevention, everyone can be a life saver." That's the message that Edinburgh's suicide prevention coordinator Alan Laughland wants everyone to take home.

Choose Life coordinator Alan Laughland says, "People can sometimes be concerned that if they say something, it will make matters worse. This is a myth. Research shows that people who survive a suicide attempt are often crying out for help. Asking someone whether they have suicidal feelings is the first step to saving someone's life. Then you can connect them with someone like the Samaritans or a GP who can help."

Alan says, "The suicide prevention skills training programme has never been so extensive. This year to date; training has been delivered to professionals, volunteers, school children and at risk communities. Last year around 500 people received this training and Edinburgh is on course to exceed that figure this year. Three 'suicide alertness' safeTALK trainings will be delivered during this year's Suicide Prevention Week alone. Choose Life is also now working in partnership with an academic researcher to work out how to make suicide prevention activity even more effective."

During suicide prevention week, **Monday 5th September 2016 to Sunday 11th September 2016**, please be aware of the following free events:

**Wednesday 7th September 2016, 6.00pm with a post film discussion**, (Little Miss Sunshine), Filmhouse, 88 Lothian Road, Edinburgh.

**Saturday 10th September 2016, 9.30am-12.30pm**, Choose Life Challenge Cup, Hibernian Football Club Training Centre, Ormiston, East Lothian, EH35 5NG. Come along and support the tournament, find out about the issues and local services. To register a team to play in the event, call John Murphy on 0131 663 1616.

**Sunday 11th September 2016, 3.00pm**, St Augustine's Church, George IV Bridge. Non-denominational service for those touched by suicide.

**Helplines:** [Samaritans](#): 08457 909090 (24 hours a day).

[Breathing Space](#): 0800 83 85 87 (weekdays: Mon-Thurs, 6.00pm-2.00am.  
Weekend: Fri 6.00pm-Mon 6.00am).

For more information, please contact the Edinburgh Choose Life Coordinator on 0131 553 8311/ 07771379243.

# CONVENOR'S REPORT



One of the biggest pieces of work that ETF is currently involved in is the co-production of tenant participation services. We are presently in discussion with a range of agencies with a view to agreeing a plan for the future of tenant participation services in Edinburgh. We at ETF believe that the provision of tenant participation services is very strong at the moment and there is no need to change the current model. Throughout these uncertain times, we will still continue to fight for tenants' rights in the city.

I would like to thank everyone who attended our Conference and AGM back in June. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces, but also new faces in attendance and I enjoyed the chance to speak to so many of you. I would like to welcome Mark Mulgrew as a new Executive Committee member and I'm sure he will be a valuable addition to the EC. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Lynne Tait who stood down from the EC after nearly 20 years. Lynne has been an invaluable member of the EC and her local tenants' group and I wish Lynne all the best for the future.



As you will read elsewhere in *Tenants Voice*, week beginning Monday 5th September 2016 is Suicide Prevention Week. I am part of a group that includes Council officials and other stakeholders that meet on a regular basis to raise awareness of suicide and ensure that people receive help if needed. Talking openly about mental health is an important step in helping reduce the stigma and can save a life. So just do it. Have a conversation with loved ones and friends and ask "are you ok?"

We are very proud of the commitment our volunteers have shown in improving housing services. However we need to build on getting younger tenants more involved and encourage other people to join with us so we can make tenants' influence even stronger. If you have any ideas on how the Federation can do this, please let us know?

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## Suicide Prevention Week

Monday 5th - Sunday 11th September 2016

## Federation Meeting

Monday 12th September 2016, 6.00pm-9.00pm,  
Norton Park Conference Centre, 57 Albion Road,  
Edinburgh

## Public Holiday - Federation Office closed

Monday 19th September 2016

## ETF Session on Social Security Consultation

Monday 3rd October 2016, 6.00pm-9.00pm, Norton  
Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh

## Sheltered Housing Conference

Wednesday 12th October 2016, 10.00am-1.00pm,  
City Chambers, Royal Mile, Edinburgh

## World Alzheimer's Day

Wednesday 21st September 2016

## City of Edinburgh Council Tenants' Conference

Saturday 29th October 2016, time to be confirmed,  
Waverley Court, 4 East Market Street, Edinburgh

## Federation Meeting

Wednesday 23rd November 2016, 7.00pm-9.00pm,  
venue to be confirmed

## Comments, compliments, complaints

Please give us feedback on this publication. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints we would like to know. Just contact us at the ETF office.

## About Edinburgh Tenants Federation

Edinburgh Tenants Federation is the umbrella organisation for tenants' and residents' groups in Edinburgh and a Registered Tenant Organisation. Tenants' and residents' groups can become members of ETF and individuals can become Associate Members. Just contact the ETF office on 0131 475 2509 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk) for more information.

## Thoughtful Quote

*"I am a slow walker, but I never walk back".*

*Abraham Lincoln*

## Copy Deadline



*Tenants Voice* is usually published four times a year and is distributed to nearly 4,000 tenants, residents, decision makers and other interested individuals throughout Edinburgh. We always welcome contributions from our readers, though we stress that material included in *Tenants Voice* does not always represent the opinions of Edinburgh Tenants Federation. If you wish to contribute an article for the November 2016 edition please do so by Monday 17th October 2016.



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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ETF.

