



EDINBURGH TENANTS  
FEDERATION

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Edinburgh's Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations

## A Briefing Note

August 2018

### Background

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

The Federation is an umbrella organisation of local associations that represent 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. In 2018, ETF changed its legal status and became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Charitable status brings new opportunities to ETF as we begin to plan for the future.

### Resources

The Federation is a voluntary organisation and our office is based at Norton Park. Much of our work is carried out by our office-bearers, Executive Committee and highly dedicated activists and volunteers. 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 citywide business. ETF obtained a grant from the Baring Foundation to fund a part-time Housing Rights Development Worker, with the aim of expanding our housing rights work in partnership with the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Participation and the Practice of Rights in Belfast. We also received funding through Community Jobs Scotland to fund a Communications Assistant. There is no membership fee to join ETF.

### Organisation and Decision Making

The Federation is a membership-based organisation and is run by its members. Memberships are renewed annually, and we currently have 16 tenants' and residents' groups in full membership.

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, the Annual General Meeting and Special Members Meetings (where appropriate). As the workload of the organisation is considerable and expanding, the Federation follows a detailed work plan which is discussed and approved by the membership and which form the basis of maintaining accountability to the membership.

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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, rents and high rise flats. These are open to individual tenants and 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.

### **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 bi-monthly newsletter, *Federation Matters*; members can also sign up to our monthly e-newsletter. Over 3000 copies of our quarterly newsletter *Tenants Voice* is distributed in paper form or downloaded from our website. Our website, Twitter and Facebook pages are updated on a regular basis. Ad hoc mailings are also circulated on occasion, which include Repairs, High Flats and quarterly members' meetings. 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 citywide groups, currently Repairs, High Flats and Tenant Led Inspections (TLI) 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.

Digital work is an emerging theme for ETF as we realise the need to support tenants' and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) to get online.

### **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. ETF's Outreach Worker supports this work. Intervention and the provision of support at a local level is only undertaken on request and usually for a limited period only. This development work is primarily for Council tenants.

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 take 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, volunteers and staff very busy and new activists and volunteers are always welcome. Our ongoing work includes areas such as:

- Carrying out Tenant Led Inspections (TLIs);
- Supporting the ETF Repairs and High Flats Group;
- Supporting tenants on the Council's Rent Matters Working Group and Housing Revenue Account Scrutiny Group;

- Support the work of the Sheltered Housing Liaison Group (SHLG);
- Attending bi-monthly meetings with senior managers of the City of Edinburgh Council to discuss issues such as tenant representation in the Edinburgh 2050 consultation, Tenant Participation Strategy Development and customer service improvements;
- Holding bi-monthly meetings with the Convenor and Vice Convenor of the City of Edinburgh Council's Housing and Economy Committee, to bring up strategic housing related issues of concern and ensure there is joint working between ETF and the Council;
- Keeping a close eye on the national scene, including responding to various housing related consultations where appropriate;
- Attending quarterly Stair Cleaning Project Board meetings to monitor the quality of service tenants receive from the stair cleaning contractors;
- Work with the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and the Participation and the Practice of Rights (PPR) to develop a human rights based approach to tenant participation in Edinburgh;
- Support to local groups, including the development of new groups;
- Holding Housing Roadshows in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council, for Council tenants to find out more about the City of Edinburgh Council housing services and raise awareness of ETF and local Registered Tenant Organisations;
- Holding learning sessions on topics such as 'Public Speaking: Finding Your Voice' and 'Finance Training: Balancing the Books';
- Supporting tenants and tenants' groups to get online.

We have been extremely busy already but there is a great deal more work still to be done!

### **Future Work**

- Represent and support tenants in joint strategic working groups with the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) and ensure this links into all ETF work;
- Work with Council tenants and staff to develop a Tenant Participation Strategy for 2019-2022;
- Carry out a review of previous Tenant Led Inspections to ensure that the actions from previous inspections are put into practice;
- Assist and encourage the establishment of new tenants' and residents' groups in localities with CEC tenants, encouraging them to join ETF and become an RTO;
- Jointly with CEC; develop and support the strategic approach to locality working;
- Jointly with CEC; support tenant engagement in developing locality plans;
- Develop tenant links for ETF in the localities;
- Develop a plan to enable younger tenants to become more involved in the work of ETF;
- Develop links with ethnic minority communities;

- Continue our Housing Rights in Practice Project with the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC), Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) using a human rights based approach with tenants in Leith;
- Continue our Housing Rights in Practice Project using a human rights based approach with the SHLG;
- Focus on developing a new approach to promote and encourage local input to contribute their issues to our local ETF Team. That will be their contact point and called '**Tenant Link**' and this will allow faster, no cost communication with ETF;
- Work to ensure the Federation has sustainable funding beyond March 2019 and explore all possibilities to achieve this;
- Prepare a Digital Transformation Plan for ETF office systems;
- Set up an ETF Development Group to plan for the long-term future of the Federation.