REFLECTIONS - 2025

IRISH TENANT ENGAGEMENT NETWORK



IRISH TENANT
ENGAGEMENT NETWORK

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01 | THE CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS

Our focus remains simple but important: making sure tenants are recognised not just as service users, but as active partners in shaping their homes, services, and communities

Over the past year, the Irish Tenant Engagement Network (ITEN) has continued to support and strengthen meaningful tenant engagement across Ireland's housing sector. Our focus remains simple but important: making sure tenants are recognised not just as service users, but as active partners in shaping their homes, services, and communities.

This report reflects the range of work carried out by ITEN members to support that ambition. Through workshops, shared learning, and ongoing collaboration, we've worked to build confidence across our membership and develop a clearer, more practical understanding of what good tenant engagement actually looks like on the ground. In 2025, we were proud to commission Just Economics to undertake and publish our research paper, *Tenant Engagement: Insights from Best Practice in Europe*. This work allowed us to look beyond the Irish context, learn from established models abroad, and bring those insights back to support the continued development of tenant engagement here.

We are now seeing encouraging progress as member organisations begin to embed tenant engagement practice within their culture and leadership structures, rather than treating it as a separate or additional activity. There is a growing recognition that meaningful tenant engagement is simply part of doing housing well; it strengthens decision-making, builds trust, and leads to better outcomes for both tenants and housing providers.

At the same time, 2025 reinforced the message that engagement needs to be inclusive, flexible, and grounded in the realities of tenants' lives. Across ITEN, we've seen thoughtful and creative approaches—from community-led initiatives to more accessible and informal ways of connecting—all helping to ensure that more tenants can participate in ways that work for them.



Going forward, there is still a lot more to do. Embedding tenant engagement at a sectoral level will require continued leadership, collaboration, and a willingness to learn from our successes and challenges. What is evident is that collaboration between tenants, housing providers, and stakeholders in a genuine way ensures that the impact is significant—not just for services, but for communities and the wider housing system.

I'd like to thank our members, partners, and funders, particularly the ICSH and the Housing Alliance. Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank the tenants who continue to contribute their time, experience, and insight to all of ITEN's work. It's their voices that will ultimately drive this work forward, and they remain at the centre of everything we do.

Darren Hudson

Darren Hudson, Chair, Irish Tenant Engagement Network

IRISH TENANT ENGAGEMENT NETWORK

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IRISH TENANT ENGAGEMENT NETWORK

"There is a growing recognition in Ireland that meaningful tenant engagement is simply part of doing housing well; it strengthens decision-making, builds trust, and leads to better outcomes for both tenants and housing providers."

— Darren Hudson, Chair, Irish Tenant Engagement Network

02 | INTRODUCTION - IRISH TENANT ENGAGEMENT NETWORK (ITEN)

Vision & Mission Statements

Our Vision
To serve as the definitive collective voice driving national best-practice and innovation in Approved Housing Body (AHB) tenant engagement.

Our Mission
To strive for excellence in tenant participation across ITEN member organisations by sharing knowledge and co-designing a unified Tenant Engagement Framework.



02 | STRATEGIC DIRECTION - IRISH TENANT ENGAGEMENT NETWORK

Strategic Objectives 2025-2027

OBJECTIVE 01:



EMBEDDING RESEARCH INSIGHTS

TO ENDORSE AND EMBED BEST-PRACTICE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RESEARCH ACROSS EACH MEMBER AHB AND WITHIN THE ITEN.

OBJECTIVE 02:



DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK

TO DEVELOP A BEST-PRACTICE FRAMEWORK FOR TENANT ENGAGEMENT.

OBJECTIVE 03:



PROMOTING TENANT ENGAGEMENT

TO SHARE INFORMATION AND PROMOTE TENANT ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE ITEN AND ACROSS EACH MEMBER AHB.

OBJECTIVE 04:



ADVANCING PRACTITIONER LEADERSHIP

TO ENHANCE THE ITEN AS A SUPPORTIVE NETWORK FOR TENANT ENGAGEMENT PRACTITIONER LEADERSHIP.

03 | THE JOURNEY SO FAR: IRISH TENANT ENGAGEMENT NETWORK

The ITEN is a network of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) that have come together to promote best practice in tenant engagement in Ireland

In recent years, the landscape of social housing in Ireland has been evolving—not just in terms of bricks and mortar, but in how tenants are being heard, valued, and included in shaping both the housing services they receive and the communities they live in. A key driver in this transformation is the emergence of tenant engagement as a professional and strategic development within the sector.

Recognising the need for a collaborative, strategic, and professional approach, the Irish Tenant Engagement Network (ITEN) was launched in November 2021. In February 2022, the network held its first meeting—an online gathering to explore how this new collaboration could support member work and ultimately empower tenants. The network brings together tenant engagement professionals from across the country, representing some of Ireland's leading housing organisations.

ITEN is more than a support group; it is a vision in action. Our mission is clear: to embed tenant engagement into the DNA of social housing in Ireland. From the outset, ITEN committed to operating in a democratic, collaborative, fair, and transparent manner. We encourage widespread participation and ensure equal consideration is given to all voices within our membership. It is this ethos that defines ITEN—not just as a network of professionals, but as a growing movement committed to changing how housing works in Ireland.

As the regulatory framework strengthens and tenant engagement becomes embedded in housing practice, ITEN is poised to play a crucial role in shaping the future. By building relationships across organisations, generating knowledge through research, and keeping tenants at the centre of the conversation, ITEN is not only responding to a regulatory requirement, but it is also building the foundation for stronger, more inclusive communities across Ireland.

A Collective Voice for Tenants and Communities

ITEN member organisations share a common purpose: providing secure, high-quality, affordable homes while strengthening the communities in which those homes exist. Across Ireland, our members work with and support tens of thousands of tenants in social and cost-rental housing, operating at community, regional, and national levels.

Tenant engagement within ITEN is not viewed as an optional activity, but as a core tenancy management function aligned with professional standards of governance, accountability, and service quality. This alignment ensures that services are shaped by lived experience, supports sustainable tenancies, and contributes to safer, more cohesive communities.

Across the network, members have embedded structured approaches to engagement through strategies, advisory groups, community forums, and informal relationship-building. Many organisations now operate co-created engagement strategies developed in partnership with tenants, boards, and staff, ensuring the tenant voice informs decision-making at every level. This collective approach recognises that housing providers are not simply landlords; they are long-term community anchors.

Meaningful engagement strengthens trust, improves services, and supports residents to participate actively in shaping the places they call home.

03 |IRISH TENANT ENGAGEMENT NETWORK MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

The ITEN is dedicated to sharing research, developing best practices, and strengthening resident and tenant participation

- Tuath Housing
- The Iveagh Trust
- North & East Housing Association
- Respond Housing Association
- Cooperative Housing Ireland
- Novas Housing
- Clúid Housing
- Fold Housing
- Hail Housing Association
- Cabhrú Housing Association
- Circle VHA
- Gheel Autism Services CLG
- Oaklee
- Apex Housing Association
- Focus Housing Association
- Foscadh Housing

04 | 2025: A YEAR IN REVIEW—IRISH TENANT ENGAGEMENT NETWORK



Photography: An ITEN member tenant pictured at a tenant engagement event in Dublin

"The value of tenant engagement lies not only in how tenants are involved, but in how their contributions shape decisions, improve services, strengthen future planning, and foster mutual accountability. Realising the potential of tenant engagement will require commitment, creativity, and courage—but the rewards, for both tenants and providers, are considerable."

— Tenant Engagement: Insights from Best Practice in Europe, Irish Tenant Engagement Network

04 | 2025: A YEAR IN REVIEW—THE POWER OF RESIDENT VOICE

Major Initiatives, Milestones, and Highlights from Irish Tenant Engagement Network Member Organisations





Listening in Action: What Irish Tenant Engagement Network Members Did Throughout 2025

Over the past year, ITEN members delivered a wide spectrum of engagement initiatives designed to understand tenants' experiences and respond to emerging needs.

Across the network, a consistent message emerged that tenants value authentic engagement and want their experiences to inform how housing services evolve.

Activities ranged from national consultations to hyper-local estate conversations, demonstrating the breadth of practice across the network. Some of the key approaches included:

- **Resident Advisory Structures**

  National and local advisory groups continued to play a central role in shaping organisational priorities. Residents contributed to policy development, service improvements, and design decisions for new homes and shared spaces.

- **Strategic Reviews and Consultations:**

  Many members undertook comprehensive reviews of existing engagement strategies, drawing on interviews with tenants, residents, board members, senior leaders, and frontline staff. These reviews examined performance against action plans and identified opportunities to enhance service standards.

- **Direct Resident Outreach**

  Engagement teams connected with tenants across the country through meetings, surveys, home visits, digital forums, and community events. This outreach ensured that voices from diverse locations and backgrounds were heard.

- **Service Improvements Driven by Feedback**

  Concrete changes emerged from engagement activities. For example, improvements to communication channels, the accessibility of services, and customer contact options were implemented in response to tenant feedback.

04 | 2025: A YEAR IN REVIEW—THE POWER OF RESIDENT VOICE

At the heart of ITEN members' work is the belief that tenants are partners in housing, not passive recipients of services

Tenant participation strengthens both individual empowerment and organisational effectiveness. Tenants involved in advisory groups across the board frequently report that participation:

- Builds confidence and leadership skills
- Creates connections across communities
- Provides a platform to influence decisions
- Leads to tangible improvements in services
- Strengthens pride in neighbourhoods

One resident participant reflected:

"Being part of a resident group shows that tenants can influence how housing organisations operate—and that our input leads to real improvements for ourselves and our neighbours."

Statements such as these illustrate how engagement contributes not only to service delivery but also to community development, social capital, and collective problem-solving.

What We Learned: Priorities Emerging Across the Network

Review processes undertaken by members revealed a shared set of priorities that will shape future engagement practice across the sector.

Some of the key themes included:

- Tenant-Led Leadership
  There is strong demand for opportunities that enable tenants to initiate projects, lead activities, and shape agendas, rather than simply respond to consultations.

- Authentic Engagement
  Residents emphasised the importance of being involved early—particularly during the development of policies, procedures, and service changes.

- Clear Standards and Accountability
  Transparent service levels and clear communication about what residents can expect are essential for building trust.

- Improved Complaints Processes
  Feedback highlighted the need for accessible, responsive, and learning-focused complaints systems.

- Staff Capability and Culture
  Training and support for staff in engagement practice were identified as crucial to embedding a genuinely resident-centred approach.

These insights demonstrate that effective tenant engagement is as much about organisational culture as it is about structures or activities.

04 | 2025: A YEAR IN REVIEW—BUILDING CAPACITY FOR PARTICIPATION

To Support Meaningful Involvement, ITEN Members Increasingly Invest in Initiatives that Equip Residents with the Knowledge, Skills, and Confidence to Participate Effectively



Emerging areas of development include:

- Resident training and learning programmes
- Scrutiny and oversight panels led by tenants
- Peer-support networks across estates
- Opportunities for residents to contribute to placemaking and sustainability projects
- Initiatives capturing lived experience to inform service design

These approaches move engagement beyond consultation toward partnership and co-production.

Looking Ahead: Strengthening Communities Through Engagement

ITEN members recognise that tenant engagement is an ongoing journey rather than a completed task.

Many organisations now operate multi-year action plans aligned with strategic pillars and resident priorities.

Future directions across the network include:

- Deepening resident influence on decision-making
- Strengthening advisory structures
- Enhancing digital and accessible engagement methods
- Supporting community-led projects in shared spaces
- Embedding feedback loops so residents can see the impact of their input

Ultimately, effective tenant engagement contributes to stable tenancies, improved services, and resilient communities. By working collaboratively with residents, ITEN members continue to demonstrate that housing is not only about buildings—it is about people, relationships, and the places where everyday life unfolds.

04 | 2025: A YEAR IN REVIEW—RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS

The research highlights several key priorities for strengthening tenant engagement across the sector

Offering a range of accessible opportunities at different times and through different methods can help ensure broader and more inclusive participation.

Importantly, engagement should be integrated into existing housing management practices, rather than relying solely on new or separate structures. Approaches such as “making every conversation count” can support staff to embed engagement into their day-to-day interactions, provided these are underpinned by clear processes for capturing and responding to tenant feedback.

The research also points to the need for a stronger use of data. Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) should prioritise gathering and analysing tenant insights to better understand needs, inform decision-making, and track outcomes over time.

Finally, ongoing evaluation and staff support are critical. Regular reviews of engagement approaches, combined with training and appropriate incentives for staff, will help ensure that tenant engagement continues to develop in a consistent, effective, and meaningful way.

Recommendations

Quality Over Quantity

Organisations should focus on the quality of engagement rather than the quantity. Meaningful, purposeful interactions that influence decisions are far more valuable than high volumes of superficial contact. Tenant engagement activity should therefore be designed with clear intent, ensuring tenants understand how their input will be used and see tangible outcomes from their participation.

Cultural Embedding

Tenant engagement needs to be embedded within organisational culture rather than treated as a standalone or occasional activity. This requires visible leadership from senior management and boards, setting the tone that engagement is a core part of good housing practice and integral to how services are delivered.

Balanced Approach

A balance must be struck in how engagement is approached. While proactive efforts are important, engagement must remain voluntary and respectful of tenants’ preferences.

“Tenant engagement is an increasingly important aspect of the design, delivery, and evaluation of social housing in Ireland. Beyond becoming a regulatory requirement, there is growing evidence of its utility in improving tenant satisfaction, operational efficiency, and tenant outcomes.”

— Tenant Engagement: Insights from Best Practice in Europe, Irish Tenant Engagement Network





Photography: Irish Tenant Engagement Network Panel members

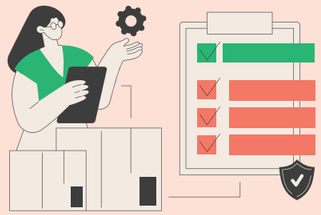
04 | 2025: A YEAR IN REVIEW—RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS

Seven principles of the Tenant Engagement Charter



PRINCIPLE 01: **MEANINGFUL**

Participatory processes must begin before any firm plans or decisions have been made, enabling these decisions to be genuinely informed by tenant input.



PRINCIPLE 02: **GENUINE**

Participatory methods require an investment of effort, time, and funding to be effective and to produce the best outcomes. This can involve years of dedicated work and include new professional roles.



PRINCIPLE 03: **COMPREHENSIVE**

Comprehensive participation structures provide a wide range of engagement options to facilitate inclusion. Achieving this requires mainstreaming tenant engagement across all organisational roles.



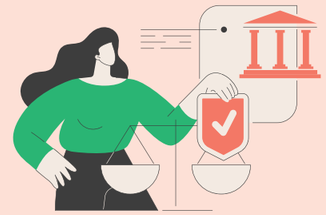
PRINCIPLE 04: **PARTICIPATION**

Tenant engagement should be included in everyone's job description, not treated as an optional extra. It must be reflective; processes should be evaluated to inform future implementation.



PRINCIPLE 05: **DEMOCRATIC**

Giving tenants genuine decision-making power in material matters is fundamental to achieving good outcomes.



PRINCIPLE 06: **COMMITMENT**

Senior management and the board must demonstrate a clear commitment to embedding tenant engagement.



PRINCIPLE 07: **INCLUSIVE**

Support for those facing barriers to participation should be provided to ensure processes are accessible to everybody.



ITEN RESEARCH - **JUST ECONOMICS:**

Tenant Engagement: Insights from Best Practice in Europe Developing an Evidence-Based Framework for Tenant Engagement in Ireland

"Ireland is still in the process of developing a comprehensive and consistent tenant engagement system. What exists is somewhat fragmented compared to countries like Denmark or the Netherlands, where engagement is legally embedded and well established."

— Tenant Engagement: Insights from Best Practice in Europe, Irish Tenant Engagement Network

05 | TENANT ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Supporting Older Residents to Access Pendant Alarms and Technology

When Technology Opens the Door

Hearing difficulties are often a barrier to tenants participating in meetings and group discussions. That changed following a chance conversation at a conference for Tom, a tenant from a member organisation.

He was introduced to Live Transcribe, an app that converts speech into text in real time. The impact has been significant. Over the past two years, he has participated more confidently in groups, meetings, and community events, contributing his experience and ideas to conversations that matter.

But this tenant's story is about more than technology. It reminds us that inclusion can sometimes begin with a simple solution and that tenants themselves are often our greatest educators. Tom introduced us to this technology, challenging us to think differently about accessibility and reminding us that meaningful engagement begins by removing the barriers that prevent people from taking part.

"Being able to follow conversations has made a huge difference to me. I feel more confident joining in, sharing my ideas and taking part in my community. Everyone should have that opportunity."

— Tom, ITEN member tenant, reflects on how technology has supported his participation.

The Age-Friendly Resident Panel identified that many older residents were unaware of the Government's Pendant Alarm Scheme and the support available to help them apply.

Recognising the potential benefits of the scheme, Resident Engagement staff worked to raise awareness and provide residents with the information they needed to make an informed choice. As a result, staff developed an information pack which was distributed to residents by post. Information sessions were then organised within age-friendly estates to explain the scheme in more detail, answer questions, and provide support to residents who wished to apply for a pendant alarm.

The initiative helped residents become more aware of the supports available to them and empowered them to access services that could improve their quality of life. Residents who received pendant alarms reported feeling safer and more secure in their homes, providing reassurance to both themselves and their families.

This project demonstrated the importance of proactively sharing information with residents and ensuring that support services are accessible and understandable. It also highlighted the value of engaging directly with residents to identify unmet needs and connect them with relevant supports.



Photography: An ITEN member tenant, Tom, pictured at a tenant engagement event in 2025.

"Residents are not always aware of the range of services and supports available to them. Providing clear information, practical guidance, and opportunities to ask questions can help residents access valuable services that will enhance their independence, safety, and wellbeing."

— Key Learning from the Age-Friendly Resident Panel

05 | TENANT ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

From Running Shoes to Community Connection

One of our member organisations ran a Couch to 5K programme. The aim was never just exercise. The starting point was listening to tenants who wanted more opportunities to meet neighbours, get active, and feel connected in a new and rapidly growing community.

By working together, participants broke down social barriers, built friendships, and turned a simple running routine into a supportive network that continues to strengthen the neighbourhood.

More than 70 tenants participated in the first session on a miserable winter's night. Some came to run, others to walk, and many came just because somebody they knew encouraged them. Over the following weeks, something bigger happened. Tenants who previously passed each other without a word began encouraging one another, swapping numbers, and making plans for further activity outside the programme.

Tenants helped shape how the sessions developed and what might come next. The activity became a doorway into wider conversations about the community, what people valued, and how they wanted to become involved.

Key Learning

The learning was simple: tenant engagement does not always begin around a meeting table. Sometimes participation begins by creating the conditions for people to meet, belong, and discover their own reasons for getting involved.

Tenant Testimony

"It's not really about the running anymore. I know people here now. The physical challenge brought us together, but the chats and laughs along the way are what kept us coming back."

"Meaningful participation is built across a spectrum—stretching organically from community fun days and local gatherings all the way up to structured regional panels. True tenant engagement means moving away from a purely 'transactional' housing model, shifting instead toward an everyday practice of relationship building."

— Core Principle from the ITEN Housing Insights Framework

IRISH TENANT ENGAGEMENT NETWORK 2025 - REFLECTIONS







Photography: ITEN member tenants pictured at the Couch to 5K tenant engagement event in Dublin

05 | TENANT ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Improving Repairs through Resident Feedback

The Property Services & Repairs Resident Feedback Panel was established to give residents a direct voice in shaping repairs and maintenance services.

The panel brought residents and staff together to discuss experiences, identify challenges, and explore opportunities for improvement.

Residents highlighted a number of areas where changes could improve their experience:

- More flexible appointment times for repairs
- Easier ways to report repairs
- Clearer communication throughout the repairs process
- Better updates on how resident feedback was being used to improve services

As a result of this feedback, several improvements were introduced, including extending some contractor working hours from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm and introducing a Freephone Customer Service Line.

The Freephone number gave residents a clearer and easier way to report repairs, particularly for those who may not use email or online forms. Together, these changes made the repairs service more accessible, gave residents more choice when arranging appointments, and helped build confidence that resident feedback was being listened to and acted on.

The panel demonstrated how listening to residents and acting on their feedback can lead to practical improvements. More importantly, it showed the value of involving residents in decisions that affect their daily lives and highlighted the positive impact that strong resident engagement can have on service delivery.

Key Learning

Residents are experts in their own experiences. When given the opportunity to share their views and see the results of their input, engagement becomes more meaningful and leads to better outcomes for everyone involved.

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Photography: ITEN Member Tenants pictured in their home in Dublin

"Historically, social housing maintenance across Ireland operated on a reactive approach—addressing critical home issues only after they manifested or were reported. Based on widespread tenant satisfaction surveys, we have identified that receiving an excellent repairs and maintenance service is the highest strategic priority for residents."

— ITEN Member Organisation, Strategic Report

05 | TENANT ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

A Community Comes Together for a Tree-Planting Day

Tenants, staff, and pupils from the local primary school recently took part in a Tree-Planting Day at our local green space.

The event saw native trees planted across the area, while staff also installed a new bench for those living in the locality to enjoy. The team prepared the site in advance and supported participants throughout the day.

As part of the event, the local nursery and gardening centre facilitated a planter workshop for tenants, with each participant receiving their own planter to take home—encouraging continued interest in gardening and biodiversity.

The local authority's Biodiversity Officer attended and delivered an engaging talk on biodiversity in Ireland. She also provided educational materials for the children to take back to their school, helping to extend their learning beyond the day.

Photography: ITEN member tenants pictured at various tenant engagement events held throughout 2025





IRISH TENANT ENGAGEMENT NETWORK
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05 | TENANT ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Tenant Complaints to Collective Community Action

Tenants on one estate were raising ongoing concerns about empty homes, communal areas, ventilation, bins, cleaning, and community safety. Individually, these could easily have been treated as separate service complaints. Working together, residents and staff focused on one question: what needs to change here?

Tenants walked through the issues from their perspective, challenged some organisational assumptions, and identified priorities that were not always obvious from service records. A tenant-led improvement group then worked alongside housing, maintenance, and estate-services colleagues to agree on actions and track progress.

The difference was not that every problem disappeared overnight. It was that tenants moved from repeatedly reporting individual problems to collectively influencing how the estate was managed. Staff also learned differently. Instead of arriving with a completed action plan, they heard directly how separate issues combined to affect people's experience of home and community.

One resident captured the shift:

"We don't expect everything we ask for. We expect to be part of the conversation about what happens here—after all, we're the ones who live here."

That's the difference between collecting tenant feedback and sharing responsibility for improvement.

Photography: ITEN member tenants pictured at various tenant engagement events held throughout 2025







"Going forward, there is still a lot more to do. Embedding tenant engagement at a sectoral level will require continued leadership, collaboration, and a willingness to learn from our successes and challenges. What is evident is that collaboration between tenants, housing providers, and stakeholders in a genuine way ensures that the impact is significant—not just for services, but for communities and the wider housing system."

— Darren Hudson, Chair, Irish Tenant Engagement Network

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