

Tenant Voice Programme Factsheet

About the Tenant Voice Programme

The Nationwide Foundation has a vision for everyone in the UK to have access to a decent home that they can afford, and the Decent Affordable Homes strategy seeks to improve the lives of people who are disadvantaged because of their housing circumstances¹.

One key part of the Nationwide Foundation's strategy is the Transforming the Private Rented Sector programme. The Foundation has a commitment to transforming the private rented sector so that it provides homes for people in need that are more affordable, secure, accessible and better quality. One of the Nationwide Foundation's aims for the Transforming the Private Rented Sector programme is that tenants should be central to any changes to the private rented sector (PRS). To support this, the Foundation created the Tenant Voice Programme (TVP) which was designed to strengthen the collective voice of private tenants so that their voices could be used to influence debates on the PRS.

The Tenant Voice Programme funds a mixed portfolio of projects, which are trialling a range of models to strengthen tenant voice, through influencing both policy and practice. This enables:

- The projects to develop and deliver their work well, delivering impact for tenants.
- The programme team and wider sector to draw on learnings about the strengths and challenges of different models in different contexts, and how these can be used to drive change in the PRS.

In particular, the Nationwide Foundation encourages projects to focus on vulnerable tenants, a group whose voice is seldom heard or listened to.

Phase 1 of the TVP: a snapshot of key achievements

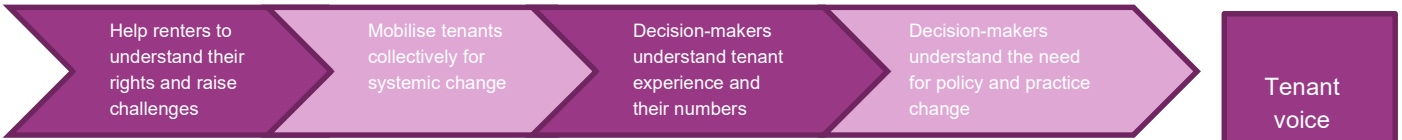
- Delivering a private renters' manifesto written by renters.
- Delivering renters' rights sessions and facilitating groups to share experiences.
- Mobilising tenants to contribute to government-led public consultations around housing reform.
- Influencing the government policy response to the pandemic, notably the eviction ban.
- Engaging tenants to plan and lead organising events.
- Collecting data on tenant experience.
- Supporting tenant representatives to provide evidence to policymaking committees.
- Bringing together panels of tenants to co-produce demands for a bill to end Section 21.
- Building relationships between tenants and key political stakeholders and civil servants.
- Producing media outputs such as podcasts, reports and articles informed and/or written by tenants within the projects.
- Securing commitments from local authorities to change PRS conditions in their areas.

¹ 'Decent Affordable Homes', Nationwide Foundation: <https://nationwidefoundation.org.uk/our-strategy/the-story-of-our-strategy/>

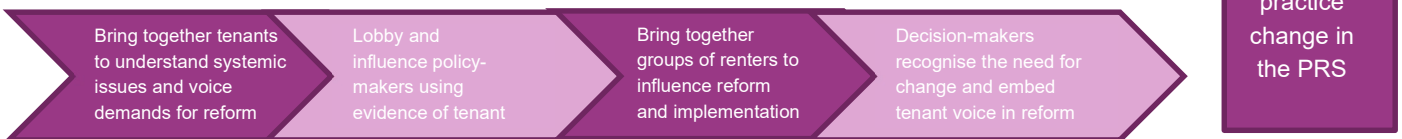
Different models for building tenant voice

The Tenant Voice Programme funds a mixed portfolio of projects which are trialling a range of models to strengthen tenant voice through influencing both policy and practice. While each of the seven funded projects took a unique approach to strengthening tenant voice, they broadly adopted two models:

1. Community organising models



2. Policy panel Models



Community organising models: These models aim to engage and mobilise a large group of renters, supporting them to challenge their landlords in their personal housing situations and to collectively call for wider reform. Projects that took this approach included:

- **Greater Manchester Tenants Union (GMTU):** The project aimed to bring together disadvantaged and low-income renters across Greater Manchester to develop a manifesto to use for campaigning in the mayoral elections. This involved delivering renters’ rights sessions and collaborative workshops to develop the manifesto, and building a relationship with mayor Andy Burnham and other political leads.
- **Tenants Together – Living Rent :** Tenants Together aimed to develop branches of the Scottish tenants’ union in two critical neighbourhoods. As a result of their work, tenants contributed to responding to government policy, attended national forums to mobilise renters and played a key role in campaigning for the extension of the national eviction ban.
- **Tenants United – Shelter:** Tenants United organises tenants around PRS reform and builds networks in the community. Examples of this include upskilling a core team of ten renters who went on to design a campaign strategy for their Bristol Fair Renting campaign and developed a manifesto for change.

<p>Community organising models are effective in....</p>	<p>... enabling people to take responsibility for driving change by establishing clear structures for them to engage in and influence organisational decision-making.</p> <p>...demonstrating the value of tenant voice by celebrating quick wins, at both the community and individual level.</p> <p>...running local campaigns which resonate across a broad range of renters, encouraging more renters to participate in consultation and advocacy.</p> <p>...building pressure on leaders to call for policy reform through mobilising action across voters.</p>
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<p>They can be effective for organisations that...</p>	<p>...represent large numbers of tenants, such as renters’ unions.</p> <p>...have reach into local community organisations and associations that allow them to mobilise action across a broader range of people.</p>
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Policy panel models: These models aim to bring tenant voice to those with influence over policy as part of their advocacy, often by bringing a smaller group of tenants together to share experiences and to influence and scrutinize policy by coming together to share their experiences. This included:

- **Renters’ Voice - Housing Rights Northern Ireland:** Renters’ Voice created a panel to engage with tenants vulnerable to harm. They met regularly with 10-12 core tenants involve at any one time and took part in various events in which their views were heard by key policymakers.
- **Z2K:** Z2K aims to help homeless and vulnerably housed tenants to access PRS accommodation. The project has resulted in tenants taking part in local campaigning by submitting evidence to key government committees on the effectiveness of government measures for addressing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the PRS.
- **PRS Research Panel – Citizens Advice:** This project features a core panel of nine highly engaged renters who work to influence in-depth policy development and co-produce policy, including taking part in events with key decision-makers and informing campaign outputs for Citizens’ Advice.

<p>Policy panel models are effective in....</p>	<p>... bringing together groups representative of private renters with diverse PRS experiences to build their voice and speak to power.</p> <p>...convening people quickly to gather data around tenant experiences and perceptions to influence policymakers and consult on the detail and implementation of policy.</p> <p>...building and sustaining engagement with a core group of people to develop their confidence to use their voice to co-produce policy demands and participate in advocacy.</p> <p>...targeting decision-makers responsible for policy change and pointing tenants in the direction of levers for change.</p>
<p>They can be effective for organisations that...</p>	<p>... are able to engage a small group of clients with whom they have established a trusted relationship, often because they also provide information and advice services.</p> <p>...operate in places with a relatively centralised local authority system and fewer key decision-makers to influence.</p>

A mixed model: One grantee displayed a mix of both models in their approach

- **Renters’ Rights London – Camden Federation of Private Tenants:** Renters’ Rights London works with local authorities and tenants in Greater London to put pressure on local authorities to focus more on supporting tenants’ rights and build renters’ capacity to engage in local political processes.

The strengths of different models:

The Tenants' Voice Programme has given organisations space to test different approaches to strengthen tenant voice; explore how this can drive change; and empower individual tenants to improve their housing situation. The programme has demonstrated the importance of having a range of approaches which can engage different groups of people, gain influence with different audiences and lead to different demands.

	Community organising models	Policy panel models
Support tenants to have a stronger voice in personal, local, regional and national decision-making on renting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Demonstrate the volume of renters, and their collective need for reform, to local-level political decision-makers: an effective way to incentivise them to engage. ✓ Build tenants' understanding of their individual rights – which can be a first step in developing their confidence to campaign for an expansion of these rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Facilitate groups of renters to navigate, understand and inform policy-making by making it less complex and more accessible. ✓ Bring the voice of tenants to policy makers to ensure that the detail of policies and their implementation reflect real experiences and power imbalances that renters experience.
Support the participation of tenants vulnerable to harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Support renters' rights through long-term projects that work with local community groups and leaders which are key to building trust with particular marginalised communities. ✓ Create safe spaces for tenants to share their experiences without feeling that it would go any further and allowing them to speak out anonymously. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Listen to and platforming the voices of the most vulnerable to ensure that reform will account for the specific challenges they face in the PRS and will improve their position. ✓ Build trust with groups that have experience of discrimination and exclusion from the system.
Build tenant skills, knowledge, leadership and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Collective and peer-to-peer advice and support for individual tenants to exercise their rights with their landlords and to build their voice and advocacy skills. ✓ Collective support for individual tenants to challenge their letting agents, which can lead to changes in practice that effect a broader group of people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Build the confidence and skills of a core group of tenants who can influence and advocate for policy change. ✓ Encourage tenants to see their experiences as reflecting a broader systemic injustice, which they can fight through policy change.
Build sustainable tenant voice and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Encourage peer-to-peer support to build a self-sustaining model for tenant voice. ✓ Draw attention to tangible changes and individual successes achieved by tenant movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recruit and develop representative tenant groups. ✓ Build a core group which can be sustained despite turnover in members.

