

Drivers of Satisfaction
amongst Black and Minority
Ethnic (BME) tenants

Final report

Research Study Conducted for the
Housing Corporation



April 2008

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Topic Guide

Introduction

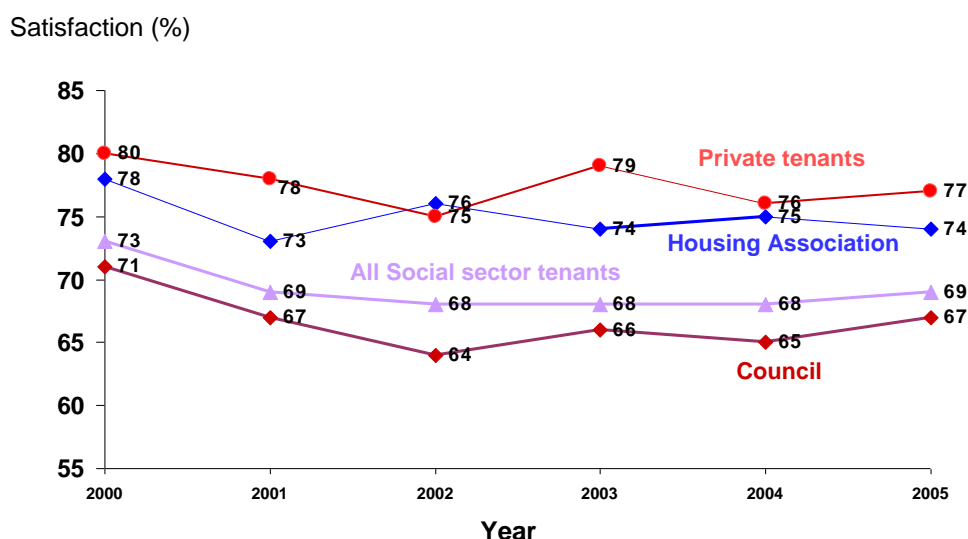
Background

The issue of higher levels of dissatisfaction among black and minority ethnic (BME) tenants was brought to the fore with the recent publication of the Hills report¹. This identifies higher levels of dissatisfaction within the social rented sector relative to the private rented sector, and higher levels of dissatisfaction specifically among BME and younger tenants within the social rented sector.

Social tenants are much more likely to report dissatisfaction with aspects of their housing quality than others, including private tenants...dissatisfaction with accommodation is particularly high for social tenants aged under 45. It is also significantly higher for black and minority ethnic tenants than white tenants, but this appears mainly to reflect the younger age structure of the minority population.

There is much evidence to support this observed pattern as demonstrated by results from the CLG's Survey of English Housing and the Housing Corporation's Existing Tenants Survey.

Trends in Satisfaction with Landlord by Tenure

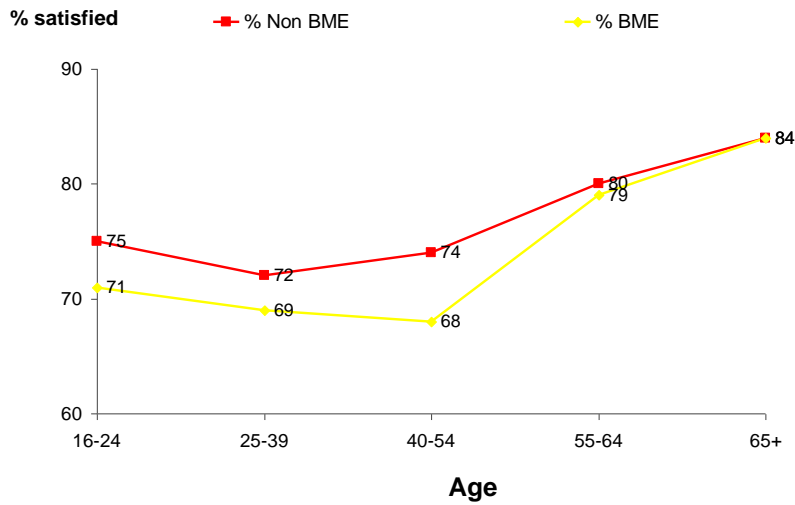


Base: DCLG Survey of English Housing 1999-00 to 2004-05

Source: Ipsos MORI

¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/strategiesandreviews/hillsreport>. The Hills Report, entitled 'Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England' aimed to examine the future objectives for social housing in the future and implications of potential policy decisions.

Satisfaction with the Overall Service Provided by Their Landlord by Different Groups



Base: Survey of Existing Housing Association Tenants 2006

It is also consistent with much of Ipsos MORI's work on tenant satisfaction and public service satisfaction more generally, as well as more recent work undertaken by the Housing Corporation – such as the quantitative key drivers analysis² of the Corporation's 2004 Existing Tenants Survey and Residents Consultation Panel data.

This key drivers analysis identified a link – though not necessarily a causal link – between tenants' satisfaction with their landlord and their level of satisfaction with their tenure; this link was particularly strong amongst BME tenants. Communications as well as perceptions of the repairs and maintenance services were also found to relate to tenants' satisfaction with their landlord.

Such quantitative approaches are extremely effective at identifying these trends but are weaker at explaining the direction of causality. Does satisfaction with the tenure drive satisfaction with the landlord or vice versa? To help gain a better understanding of some of these relationships, the Housing Corporation commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake some qualitative research amongst BME Housing Association tenants.

² This work involved key drivers analysis, factor analysis and segmentation.

Aims and objectives

It is important to stress here that the programme of research undertaken was guided by the requirement to focus on a number of specific factors potentially driving levels of BME satisfaction rather than considering every potential driver. For example, although language issues and location play an important role in determining levels of satisfaction, these factors are already well understood; the aim of this piece of research is to explore issues that are less well understood.

The groups have not, therefore, focussed in any great detail on language issues, although this did emerge during the course of discussions. Recruitment for the groups was also guided by an explicit direction to ensure a good spread of living environments and not just concentrate on deprived areas.

Specifically, the research objectives were to:

- Uncover the relationship between satisfaction with the landlord and perceptions of social rented housing as a form of tenure - which factor drives the other?;
- Explore why BME tenants record poorer ratings for communication and influence with the landlord and to identify how these issues can be addressed; and
- Understand whether differences exist between BME tenants and White British tenants.

Methodology

The original research design consisted of fifteen group discussions. However, due to the difficulty of recruiting the target group and to low attendance figures, a group discussion with Asians in London was supplemented by one mini group discussion and two paired in-depth interviews. The group discussion with black tenants in Nottingham was replaced by a mini-group discussion.

The research programme consisted of thirteen group discussions (each comprising at least six participants), two mini-group discussions and two paired in-depth interviews with Housing Association tenants. Each discussion / interview lasted 1½ – 2 hours and covered a range of BME groups, ages and geographical areas. The areas were broadly split between London and non-London and, within this, recruitment was concentrated in areas with a good socio-economic mix (not just the most deprived areas), containing the highest concentrations of ethnic groups and housing association tenants. A series of white 'control' groups were also undertaken to enable comparisons.

Qualitative researchers from the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute and Qualitative Hothouse moderated all the group discussions and in-depth interviews. The group discussions and in-depth interviews were guided by a discussion guide developed in close consultation with the Housing Corporation (set out in the Appendix section). All discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed with permission from the participants.

The fieldwork took place between 1 November 2007 and 12 March 2008.

Sample

The sample for the research was structured on the basis of the key criteria outlined below:

- BME groups, focussing on Asian and Black communities;
- Broad age group (covering 18-24, 25-45 and 45+ although some widening of the quotas was required to achieve recruitment); and
- Geographical area (London and non-London – mainly the North of England and Midlands).

Within each group we aimed for a good mix in terms of:

- Gender
- Socio-economic class (C2, D, E)
- Satisfaction / dissatisfaction with accommodation;
- Satisfaction / dissatisfaction with overall service offered by landlord;
- Informed / uninformed by landlord;
- Housing type (flat, house, maisonette etc); and
- Length of residency.

The table below details the sample structure.

<i>Group</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Location</i>
1	Asian	Mix	Birmingham
2	Asian	18-24	Leicester
3	Asian	40+	Leicester
4	Asian	45+	Manchester
5*	Asian	45+	London
6	Black mix	18-24	Nottingham
7	Black mix	45+	Manchester
8	Black mix	25-45	London
9	Black Caribbean	18-24	London
10	Black Caribbean	45+	London
11	Black (Somali)	Mix	London
12	New migrant (mix of ethnicities)	Mix	London
13	White	Mix	Birmingham
14	White	Mix	London
15	White	Mix	London

* This group was supplemented by one mini-group (with participants aged 45+) and two paired in-depth interviews (with participants aged 20-35) in London.

Recruitment

All participants for the group discussions and in-depth interviews were recruited face-to-face in the areas mentioned above by specialist recruiters. All recruiters were fully briefed by the project team and followed strict ethical guidelines as specified by the Market Research Society (MRS) Code of Conduct and IQCS.

Where the selection criteria were particularly restrictive (young Asian and new migrant groups for example) an element of 'snowballing' was allowed in the recruitment i.e. where selected tenants meeting the required criteria recommended friends or neighbours who could also participate.

Interpreting qualitative research

Qualitative research involves an interactive process between the people carrying out the research and those being researched. It provides a way of probing the underlying attitudes of participants, and obtaining an understanding of the issues of importance. The real value of qualitative research is that it allows insights into the attitudes, and the reasons for these attitudes, which could not be probed in as much depth with a structured questionnaire. The flexible nature of this research method allows participants to define their own issues and raise their own problems.

However, it must be remembered when interpreting these results that they are not based on quantitative statistical evidence. The findings are based on a small sample and are therefore illustrative rather than statistically representative. In this report we record *perceptions*, not facts; participants may hold views that are based on incorrect information.

Throughout the report, use is made of verbatim comments from participants. These have been selected to exemplify a particular view of a body of participants, although it is important to remember that the views expressed do not always represent the views of all the participants as a whole. Verbatim comments have been attributed based on the ethnicity, age and geographical area of the participant.

1. Executive Summary

Ipsos MORI were commissioned by the Housing Corporation to undertake a qualitative programme of research to consider in further detail the issue of dissatisfaction among Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) tenants in the Housing Association sector. The issue has been brought to the fore by John Hills in 2007 with publication of his evaluation of the social rented sector in England.

The research involved a series of discussion groups, covering a range of ethnic groups (including white tenants) and age bands and was designed to consider a number of specific issues:

- To identify particular issues specific to BME and white tenants that may account for differences in satisfaction;
- To understand if perceptions of the social rented sector as a form of tenure drive dissatisfaction with the landlord; and
- To explore the reasons behind different ratings for communication and influence with the landlord and how these could be addressed.

Regardless of ethnicity, age or location, **repairs and maintenance** issues came out as the main driver of satisfaction with the landlord. Responsiveness, reliability and quality of workmanship were all themes that consistently emerged.

This issue is clearly one of universal concern, but there are some subtle differences in response by ethnic group. Particularly older, Asian tenants indicate a greater willingness to take repairs into their own hands, a response symptomatic of a more general tendency for this group to disengage from their landlord. Black tenants, in contrast, demonstrate higher expectations about their repairs services and are more likely to push their case to get what they feel they need.

Communications, when handled well are recognised by all groups as having a positive impact on the landlord-tenant relationship, both in terms of satisfaction and influence. Personal forms of communication are universally preferred and dedicated ‘case-workers’ are seen as the most effective solution to poor communication structures. Newsletters, leaflets and letters are seen as important but sensitive tone and realistic content is essential, particularly among BME groups.

In contrast to white tenants, for many Asian and black tenants face-to-face contact is preferable. A perceived lack of opportunities for this reflects negatively on their views of communication and influence. Asian tenants also attach greater importance to hierarchy when communicating and show a greater tendency to disengage when communication is perceived to have failed.

A variety of suggestions emerged from BME groups to help improve communications and promote influence. Community events designed to bring communities together are frequently mentioned as examples of good practice and more locally focussed consultations are seen to help promote engagement. Greater provision to handle communications in non-English languages and increased representation of BME staff are also mentioned as important ways to improve communications.

Housing Associations are generally well recognised for the quality of **accommodation and local living environment** provided, though it should be noted that tenants involved in the research tended not to live in the most deprived areas. The biggest concern here relates to rising levels of anti-social behaviour, a factor which landlords are perceived to take some responsibility for – both for their role in introducing new tenants to an area and for failing to intervene when anti-social behaviour arises.

Asian tenants in particular demonstrate a range of specific accommodation requirements, reflecting not only a tendency to live in larger family units, but also specific space and design preferences. The lack of available accommodation that meets these preferences is a strong negative driver on satisfaction. This is less of an issue for black tenants but they too, just as with Asian tenants, place great importance on the local neighbourhood and community networks. The perceived dilution of communities for both groups is a much more important factor influencing levels of dissatisfaction, than it is for white tenants.

The research does not, however, provide much evidence of dissatisfaction being driven by negative **perceptions of tenure** among BME groups. Generally, the Housing Association sector is viewed as a low-cost, secure tenure relative to market tenures and offers better quality accommodation and less bureaucracy than the local authority sector.

Some limitations of the sector that appear to specifically affect both Asian and black tenants did nevertheless emerge. The strong aspirations for ownership and the importance of community links for Asian tenants meant the lack of right-to-buy opportunities is a major cause of discontent for this group. For black tenants, it is a lack of choice and mobility issues that are especially strong concerns with the sector. Whilst the research has been able to uncover these particular issues it has not been possible to conclusively say that these are stronger drivers of dissatisfaction than service, communication or accommodation aspects already mentioned.

Regardless of ethnicity, younger tenants tend to be more dissatisfied with their landlord than older tenants. This appears largely to be driven by higher expectations among the young which in turn are perceived not to be met. A lack of clarity over what their landlord is expected to do as well as mention of inappropriate forms of engagement for younger people are issues emerging here.

There is also some anecdotal evidence that the relationship between landlord and tenant and consequently tenants' levels of dissatisfaction are affected by the size of the association. However, the scope of this research prevents any firm conclusions being drawn on this aspect.

Tenants are generally more positive about their landlord when it is managed by a smaller specialist organisation, which are perceived to offer better forms of contact and a more personalised service, whereas larger associations are viewed as operating a more remote style of management and failing to foster personal relationships.

In returning to the main aims of the survey it is clear that BME and white tenants share many of the same drivers of satisfaction. The research does however indicate a series of ethnic specific issues, which in combination, are likely to be contributing to higher levels of dissatisfaction among BME tenants.

Particular space requirements, a lower threshold for engagement, strong aspirations for ownership and control over the property and dilution of community are all important factors for Asian tenants. The quality of the local area, choice of accommodation and weaker sense of influence are key issues for black tenants.

There is very little evidence from this study that dissatisfaction is driven by negative perceptions of social renting as a form of tenure. Only a small minority allude, either directly or indirectly, to a stigma associated with their housing. In the main this arises as a local issue, such as the reputation of a bad estate, rather than as a tenure issue.

In terms of communications, BME groups felt it is important for the landlord to understand the ethnic make-up and needs of their tenants and provide greater scope to communicate in different ways. Ensuring communications, such as newsletters, were not divorced from daily concerns and communications in different languages, particularly among first generation BME tenants, are also commonly mentioned.

2. Communications and Perceptions of Influence

Much of Ipsos MORI's customer satisfaction research in the public sector points to a strong link between communications and satisfaction. Views emerging from the groups indicate that communications, handled well, positively impact on the landlord-tenant relationship in terms of satisfaction, engagement and influence. Handled badly, however, and it can lead to more distant relationships.

This section looks to examine why BME tenants record poorer ratings for communication and influence and highlights actions that could help address this. We find that tenant consultation is viewed by many (including white tenants) as the best opportunity to influence their landlord, but that a responsive landlord is important here. Asian tenants demonstrate a stronger preference for face-to-face contact, place greater importance on hierarchy when making contact and show a greater tendency to disengage when they perceive communication to have failed. Black tenants in contrast are as assertive in their contact as white tenants, but many still feel their opportunities to influence are limited. Face-to-face contact is again important for black tenants, and limited opportunities for this appear to negatively affect their views on communications and influence.

A variety of suggestions were identified by these groups to help improve communications and promote influence. These include community events, locally focussed consultations, increased provision to handle communications in non-English languages (particularly first generation BME tenants), increased representation of Housing Association staff from BME backgrounds and sensitive content in formal correspondence.

Housing Associations' approaches to communication with their tenants is another key issue and is frequently mentioned spontaneously by tenants as both a 'positive' or 'negative' aspect of their housing situation. Since repairs and maintenance are key issues for tenants, the nature of the communication systems that support these is particularly important.

2.1 Communications are viewed both positively and negatively by all groups

Both good and bad examples of communication between landlords and tenants emerge from the research. Two-way, personal communications are perceived to be effective and tenants experiencing this are far more likely to view their Housing Association positively and as a 'friend' to be engaged with. On the other hand, those who have little contact with their landlord and/or experience impersonal, formal communications tend to be more dissatisfied. These tenants are more likely to view their landlord as a distant 'authority figure' which they are reluctant or unable to engage with.

It's really just communication, surely. If you're able to talk to someone you feel as though you have control and then you have the power. So basically, it's just someone at the centre listening to you, you getting your point across, someone listening to it and actually dealing with it. And that's where the power thing is. And I think that they certainly in some circumstances they seem to be doing that, in others they just don't get it right.

Black Caribbean, 45+, London

There is a clear link between communications and influence; those experiencing two-way, personal communications feel that they are more able to influence their landlord's decision-making than those experiencing impersonal, formal communications.

A case-worker system is believed to be a key enabler and tenant consultation is perceived as a more formal way of exercising influence. Both of these approaches are discussed in more detail below.

2.1.1 Personal forms of communications are universally preferred

Personal communications between Housing Association staff and tenants are viewed favourably by the majority of tenants and especially when dealing with repairs and maintenance issues. The 'case-worker' approach was most frequently mentioned by tenants as an effective form of personal communication. For those with experience of this type of contact, continuity is mentioned as a key advantage as well as demonstrating a commitment to providing a responsive service. Others experiencing more impersonal communications consider a 'case-worker' system as an effective solution.

I think that when the Housing Officer was involved it was better... she knows that 'Ok, it's that person'... There would be one Housing Officer who knows us well, we know them... so she takes it into maintenance and says, 'Look, this person living in this address had this problem and have you done anything about it?'

Asian, 20-35, London

Tenants talk of the importance of building up a relationship with Housing Association staff. Having a case-worker is thought to generate a friendly, non-threatening context in which to discuss issues and so facilitates communication and understanding between the two parties. Some tenants speak of being able to approach their case-workers for help with a range of problems, even those more loosely connected to their housing; this enables case-workers to consider tenants' housing issues in the wider context.

These tenants appreciate the in-depth knowledge that their case-workers have about their situations and feel they have a trustworthy advocate working on their behalf.

Well I feel good because when I get on the phone and give her my name... we first have a little chin-wag, see how we're getting on. And that's how it's supposed to be really and then we just go into what I really phoned up for.

Black Caribbean, 45+, London

Tenants favour a case-worker system for the clear line of responsibility (and accountability) and communication that this provides. This system leaves tenants in little doubt about who they need to approach when problems occur, ensures that Housing Association staff take responsibility for the resolution of problems and that staff and tenants are clear about how issues are progressing.

More impersonal approaches on the other hand, (commonly cited examples include the use of call centres or a large, rotating team of staff) often lead to miscommunication and to people's perceptions of an anonymous landlord and of being an unimportant tenant.

Housing Associations operating such communication systems are generally viewed as more distant or unfriendly by tenants. Many tenants also complain of unreliable and unresponsive staff; they often do not, for example, phone back when they say they will, action issues or even respond to complaints. In addition, tenants experiencing this approach tend only to be supported around their housing and feel they have to rely – sometimes uncomfortably - on their own level of resourcefulness.

If makes you feel, how do I say it now, like I don't exist. You're just there, a sort of nobody... I've been living there for seven years and they don't know my name, they don't know my address. It's just like I've been living here and I live around the corner there and they don't know it.

Black mixed, 45+, Manchester

So there was more of a personal relationship between the housing managers and the tenants. Whereas now people look at you like a number. They don't remember names, they don't remember anything. They just have to, literally go through your file and they've got to start from scratch.

New migrant, mix of ages, London

Well, I'm going to write a complaint to them and see what goes on. But they should have responded back after a week to that letter, but they've not responded back at all.

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

In addition, unless an efficient system is in place to track or log the progress of a case – which works well for some tenants - there is often a lack of continuity and therefore clarity about what has or has not been achieved. Tenants speak, for example, of being passed on the phone from one member of staff to another until someone can help them and of having to retell their story several times over to different members of staff. Their frustration is exacerbated by the length of time it takes to complete this kind of communication.

You ring and you are talking to a different person. And then after a couple of hours somebody's not there. Now you're talking to a different person again. And that's where all the confusion comes from.

Asian, 18-24, Leicester

I've been down there several times and each time I've seen a different person. I don't know exactly who my housing officer is. And they don't communicate with each other. They can't do.

White, mix of ages, Birmingham

They need to have a better computer system where each call is logged. So that way whoever comes to check they know who spoke to you at what time. They just answer a phone off any table. Nothing's recorded on paper, nothing. They need a better procedure than what they do.

Asian, 18-24, Leicester

A personalised service is a clear priority for tenants and the case-worker approach is most commonly associated with this. The perceived benefits of more personalised forms of communication, be it face-to-face or on the telephone, include better outcomes and faster resolution of problems. They are also clear that the process towards resolution is likely to be less frustrating for the tenant.

2.1.2 Communications from the landlord are generally important but content is key

Tenants tend to consider it good practice if their landlord is pro-active in communicating with tenants, for example through leaflets, newsletters or letters. These kinds of communications are instrumental in persuading householders that they are valued tenants, cared for by their Housing Associations. This in turn, encourages tenants to think favourably about their Housing Associations and increases their willingness to engage with them. Interestingly however, tenants tend to be more interested in reading these kinds of communications, if they are already satisfied with their landlord, specifically in terms of repairs and maintenance work.

They are thinking about us, they're communicating with us by letters, leaflets and so on. They are interested and we ought to acquaint ourselves with what is going on.

Somali, mix of ages, London

Yeah, it will be good if they tell us what's coming, what are the new things they're doing... so it makes you think and makes you feel comfortable that ok they are available for you, that you are living in their property, and they care for you, and you are noticed. These kind of feelings.

Asian, 20-35, London

Conversely, a lack of good quality communication from Housing Associations can distance tenants further.

Inevitably the content of newsletters impacts tenants' responses to them and their readiness to read them. Although some tenants find their newsletters an up-to-date source of useful information – in terms of tenant entitlements, details of up-coming activities in the area, job or shared ownership information, for example - others criticise their overt public relations role.

A newsletter is useful... I know what scheme they're running, like I got to know from there the part buy, part let scheme. I wouldn't have known if my association's doing that otherwise.

Asian, 20-35, London

Many tenants talk of the gap between the situations presented in the newsletters - brand new Housing Association homes or achievements for example - and the more disadvantaged reality of their own circumstances. Unsurprisingly, tenants receiving this type of newsletter can become resentful and distrustful of their Housing Associations. As we shall see later, this is a particular concern among BME groups.

Because we get this newsletter, it's a magazine and in there... You think 'Oh my God, where are these lavish estates?'. The way the gardens are and they always show this activity for children and for adults or for the senior people. But I never see this where I live in Newham... When you look at the newsletters... you think 'What? I'm a tenant, why don't I get that benefit?'

Asian, 20-35, London

Tenants respond positively to receiving rent statements or letters detailing rent increases from their Housing Associations. These enable them to manage their finances more effectively and are a useful reference if they need to discuss rent arrears with their landlords.

2.2 All groups recognise the importance of tenant consultation particularly as a means of influence, but it needs to be done properly

Some tenants are approached by their Housing Associations to take part in consultation exercises, specifically surveys, tenants meetings and estate inspections. Tenants tend to respond favourably to consultation in principle and feel that these exercises do, or potentially could, give them some level of influence or self-determination. Certainly, whilst tenants feel it is difficult to influence their Housing Association alone, they believe they can persuade their landlord to take action if opinions are voiced en masse.

They come to a designated spot, and whoever wants to be there comes along. They go round, not in the people's houses, just outside of the buildings, keeping the garden, what needs to be done, what do we want there... Yeah, and they make you feel good because... it's such a small estate that we'll tell them, well, we want this and we want that and whenever we ask them, we get it.

Black Caribbean, 45+, London

I would say if they have local forums, that helps them to know where the problems are, rather than building the estates and thinking people don't have problems.

Asian, 20-35, London

You get to lobby them. If there's something wrong you need to lobby them. A person on their own or even two doesn't count. You need to be a group.

White, mix of ages, Birmingham

There is however, at present, some objection to the way that consultation exercises are being carried out, often resulting in non-participation. A key element here is the importance of landlords being responsive to the views expressed in consultation. If Housing Associations do not feed back in terms of how they propose to respond or have responded to tenants' views, the consultation process is simply viewed by tenants as a tick-box exercise without purpose.

Another important aspect emerging is that face-to-face consultation needs to be more accessible than it is as present, both in terms of location and in terms of providing the right conditions for tenants to confidently express their views.

Some tenants speak of tenant meetings that are a long distance away from their homes, involving people from a wide catchment who are likely to have very different housing situations and opinions. A more local approach is thought to be better; this makes it easy for tenants to attend and involves people from the immediate area who are likely to have similar concerns. Ensuring appropriate means of consulting with younger tenants is also an important consideration, which is commented on further later in this report (section 6.2).

But those forums that are too out of reach of my area... I can't go there, then you think to yourself, what if there aren't any tenants with issues apart from myself? And I will look odd in there, so I don't want to travel so far and not achieve anything.

Asian, 20-35, London

Tenants who have experienced a particularly poor service from their landlord, for example, in terms of repairs or maintenance, may also reject consultation exercises. These people have been unable to influence their landlords previously and have become distrustful of them. They do not believe that their landlords are genuinely interested in finding out the views of their tenants and doubt that they will carry out consultation exercises professionally.

They listen but they don't do anything. It's a common problem that they say they are going to do something and then they don't.

Black, 18-24, Nottingham

Ensuring effective feedback from consultation exercises as well as promotion of new service improvements can play a significant part in promoting greater interest in participation as well as strengthening trust between the tenant and landlord.

We want them to explain what they have done since the last meeting to prove that they are listening

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

2.3 BME groups view tenant engagement as particularly important

Some participants from the BME groups were particularly keen to stress the importance of tenant community events, organised by their Housing Associations. These are seen as good opportunities for tenants to communicate with each other and with Housing Association staff, particularly if tenants are involved at the organisation stage. These events appear to be effective at brokering relationships and promoting engagement giving tenants the sense that their landlord cares about their welfare as well as the cohesion of the community in which they live.

Housing Association make these meetings, their annual meetings. And they have food and they give free drinks and that. In that way it's good so you get to know people in the area.

Asian, 18-24, Leicester

When they do social events they invite us to give them ideas, how communities want to contribute, is it towards food, is it towards activities. Sometimes when we do activities we invite them to come and have a look and be involved, so from my point of view they're good.

Somali, mix of ages, London

2.3.1 Face-to-face communication is generally preferred by BME groups

In terms of communication channels, face-to-face contact is favoured by many BME tenants and a lot of those that have easy access to a Housing Office make use of this resource, particularly if they do not have to make an appointment. BME tenants like the 'face' or identity that face-to-face contact gives to their Housing Associations and value the opportunities it provides for rapport-building; they believe that this approach is most likely to lead to the fast resolution of their problems.

The preference for face-to-face communications is greater among older tenants, and particularly those from a BME background.

I prefer to speak to a real person, you know to sit down and tell them properly the problems I have.. over the phone it's just too easy to forget

Asian, 45+ London

In contrast younger people are more concerned with communications being inaccurate and inefficient. They are more adapt at using the phone generally and only a minority indicate a preference for face-to-face contact.

A preference for face-to-face communication is also less apparent among white tenants where the telephone is considered equally as effective as a means of communicating.

For tenants who live further away from a Housing Office and even for some that do not, the telephone is the preferred channel; it is quick and convenient, allows for questions and answers and again is thought to lead to faster resolutions. Letters and emails from tenants to their Housing Associations are much less frequent and are often a 'last resort', only used by tenants if they have reached an impasse and feel the need to make complaints or threats.

Every time we have to write it. I think if you just make them a call they don't take it that seriously. If you do it in writing... then they really take it into consideration

Asian, 20-35, London

In term of Housing Association communications, tenants, particularly younger residents, value being able to choose the most suitable channel for them, for example, receiving newsletters via email rather than direct mail.

2.3.2 Face-to-face contact and hierarchy are important for Asian tenants

Issues surrounding communication and influence were largely similar across white, Asian and black groups but some specific differences did emerge. Asian tenants generally appear more reluctant to maintain contact when communication fails, have a stronger preference for face-to-face contact and place more importance on hierarchy when making contact.

In contrast to black and white tenants, Asian tenants appear more easily discouraged from maintaining contact and keeping engaged when responses by their landlord (particularly relating to repairs) are perceived to be inadequate. In consequence, engagement with the landlord and contact between tenant and landlord are more easily lost, with Asian tenants suggesting a weaker level of influence than the other ethnic groups.

We don't call because we know they won't come.

Asian, 45+, London

The level of influence exercised by Asian groups is further eroded by the limited opportunities for face-to-face contact with their landlord. This is the preferred choice of contact for many Asian tenants, particularly older residents and those with a lower level of English language ability. Face-to-face contact tends to be less of an issue for white and black tenants.

If it's [the Housing Office] is closer then obviously if I had a problem again, waiting four or five months, I could go straight directly to them, rather than calling them up and all that. So I could go directly and speak to someone there.

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

Added to this, is a strong sense that Asian groups are unable to contact the most appropriate people to deal with their issues, especially when they encounter difficulties. Here, hierarchy of contact appears to be a much more important consideration for Asian tenants, who are often left dissatisfied if they are unable to communicate with an appropriate member of senior staff.

When I said they are not good at communicating, when I came here seven years ago, every month somebody used to come from high management, they used to come and talk to the tenants and ask them have we any problems... so I will expect that this is a part of the service, right?. Suddenly they cut it to two months, then six monthly and now yearly we don't see them.

Asian, 45+, Manchester

The lack of contact that many Asian tenants experience with their Housing Associations, leads to a stronger sense that their landlord views them as unimportant.

2.3.3 Black tenants tend to be more assertive

In contrast to Asian tenants, black tenants appear to be more assertive in terms of contacting their landlord and generally seem to have a higher level of contact with them, approaching them for both major and minor matters.

As with the white tenants, many black tenants feel they know how to 'work the system' in an effort to resolve their problems. Younger black tenants in particular are confident about repeatedly calling their landlord until they achieve the outcome they desire.

Although this suggests that black tenants should feel they have a high level of influence, this often does not appear to be the case. One reason for this may be that black tenants show a strong preference, stronger than white groups, for personal communications with their landlord, that is, having a case-worker that they can talk to either face-to-face or on the telephone. Opportunities for this kind of contact are seen as limited however, impacting on black tenants' levels of satisfaction and levels of influence they feel they have.

I've got a very good relationship with my housing officer, she does schemes it's every three months she does a scheme with me and you've got the option of if there's anything you want to discuss with her you just ring up... and tell her and she'll meet you at your home and then sit and discuss it. It's good.

Black Caribbean, 45+, Manchester

More generally, black tenants also appear to demonstrate a healthier degree of cynicism about whether the landlord is really interested in the welfare of tenants, particularly in terms of communication. There is a strong sense among some black tenants that their landlord is only interested in collecting rent and that everything else was for 'show'.

2.4 Addressing communication issues among BME groups

2.4.1 English language issues

Although participants involved in this research were able to communicate effectively in English, several mentioned the need for Housing Associations to better understand the profile and identify the needs of their residents.

What they [the Housing Association] need to understand is they need to understand the clients. We don't have same people everywhere. They have people who could have special needs. They might have people who could have language barriers... so taking this into account could make communication easier.

Somali, mix of ages, London

There is a strong sense that first generation BME tenants are inevitably more disadvantaged than mother-tongue English speakers, who are more likely to express themselves clearly and confidently and push their case. Some tenants believe that Housing Association staff / contractors sometimes take advantage of BME tenants' vulnerability in this respect, offering a lower level of service than they would otherwise.

I think it's the attitude, I don't know if you all agree with me, a person who will come to you, it's the attitude that you get from the person who's coming to do something in your house... If it's a white person they're going to come and do the work for, yeah, they do it properly. If it's a person who is from ethnicity, might be whatever, black, Indian, they can't speak the language possibly, and they might not ... and be really grumbling about this and this, they don't do the job as they should do it. And that's a general attitude that sometimes I used to get when my English was [poorer] ... from whoever comes to do repairs in my house.

Somali, mix of ages, London

In many instances, it appears that BME groups are being disempowered by having to use unsuitable channels of communication. Having to write to make a formal complaint when you have literacy problems, for example, is a big deterrent. BME groups therefore feel it is important for landlords to provide greater scope for tenants to communicate in different ways.

Tenants also commonly speak of the need for ensuring communications, such as newsletters, are provided in different languages so that they are easily accessible to all.

2.4.2 Representation

Some tenants feel that BME groups are currently underrepresented within their Housing Associations. It should be noted however that the quotas set for the research did not allow scope to distinguish between general and BME specialist housing associations.

One issue mentioned is the low number of staff from BME backgrounds in some Housing Associations. BME tenants believe they are likely to feel more comfortable and empowered communicating with a member of staff from the same ethnic group as themselves.

Another issue mentioned by a small minority of tenants is the lack of BME representation in Housing Association communications, specifically in the form of photographs in newsletters. BME tenants are less able to relate to and engage with communications that do not include people like them.

In the worst cases, this can suggest that tenants are being discriminated against, for example a newsletter showcasing brand new Housing Association accommodation with a notable absence of BME representation contributes to the perception that BMEs are allocated inferior housing.

Yeah, it's not other communities in there, I hardly saw a couple of black faces, or the brown faces, but to me, you're promoting your own community to that regards... this is the very poorest boroughs, the Newham, the Tower Hamlets and so on, but, and all English people are living in such a lavish boroughs, and better than our boroughs, like Redbridge, Waltham Forest, and all that.

Asian, 20-35, London

2.5 Examples of best practice in communications

Some evidence of best practice among BME groups emerged from group discussions which are exemplified below.

Black (Somalian), mix of ages, London

Both the Housing Association and tenants are pro-active in their approach to communications. The Housing Association keeps its tenants up-to-date on the latest housing issues and events through regular newsletters, leaflets and letters. It promotes community engagement through the organisation of tenant social events on the housing estate. Residents are invited to participate in organising these and the Housing Association links up with the local school to involve children in the creation of materials.

Residents praise this approach – it suggests that their Housing Association cares and is genuinely interested in their well-being.

“We feel that’s very positive. They are thinking about us, they’re communicating with us by letters, leaflets and so on. They are interested.”

The Housing Association also encourages contact from its tenants. Tenants are in no doubt about how to speak to the right person within their Housing Association and staff are friendly and responsive. For tenants preferring face-to-face contact, there is a Housing Association office on-site. This gives a ‘face’ to the Housing Association – tenants talk of being able to recognise staff and vice versa and enjoy the informal relationships they have with staff. Tenants are also able to phone staff if this is more convenient for them.

“A smile, positive attitude, like ‘What do you need?’, ‘How can we help you?’ give you information, so it’s like that.”

Although residents feel that they are subject to their Housing Association’s policies, they believe they have some influence on their landlord’s decision-making. This is directly related to the communication systems in place. The strong relationships that tenants have with Housing Association staff mean that staff are responsive to tenants’ concerns and complaints. Formal channels of consultation, such as surveys and resident meetings are also used; residents are happy to take part in these, believing their Housing Association is prepared to action the findings.

I think surveys, sometimes they did questionnaires and surveys, and that’s a good way of making a point through to them.



Black, 18-24, Nottingham

Each tenant is allocated a Housing Officer who visits tenants' homes every six months to discuss any problems they may be having. This is a valuable opportunity for tenants to raise any maintenance issues they may have.

Tenants can access their Housing Officers easily at all times – they can either visit them face-to-face at the Housing Office, which is local, or telephone them.

The Housing Officers have an in-depth understanding of their tenants' situations and histories and tenants feel they can approach their Housing Officers with any problem that may have an impact – direct or indirect – on their housing situations.

Tenants are strong in their praise for this case-worker system; they feel fully supported and are more confident in their ability to achieve positive outcomes.

3. Accommodation, Area and Neighbours

Tenants view their accommodation as generally good and recognise the quality of their local living environment, although most highlight the issue of anti-social behaviour as a major concern. Landlords are often held accountable for not doing enough to intervene when anti-social behaviour problems arise.

Asian tenants in particular demonstrate a range of specific accommodation requirements that have an important bearing on satisfaction with their housing situations. We also see that the local neighbourhood and community networks are extremely important to both black and Asian tenants, with dilution of community and anti-social behaviour key concerns.

3.1 Housing Association accommodation is viewed positively by many

Housing Associations are generally viewed favourably by tenants in terms of offering good quality and/or newer accommodation, at least compared to Local Authority housing. There is some acknowledgement that high-quality housing instils a sense of pride in residents so that they are more likely to respect and look after their homes.

They're new, they're warm, they keep them up-to-date I suppose.

Asian, 20-35, London

I was just thinking, if people live in nice places they are generally happier and people will look after their homes, their environment.

White, mix of ages, London

In addition, Housing Associations are recognised by many as providing a good quality living environment, offering access to key local services – like shops, schools and transport - and a strong community feel.

We've got more play areas. We've got, I think, a friendly environment around the estate, especially after all the refurbishment. Because the refurbishment was not only in the houses, but there was lots of things being done with the estate, outside... In my block, we've got a nice space for those big bins. It's in a space where it's lit nicely... you can put your rubbish somewhere nice.

Somali, mix of ages, London

Mine one's old Victorian house conversion, and, yeah, it's quite, it's really actually a really nice place to live, and the area, really like the area. And buses and trains and transport...

White, mix of ages, London

3.1.1 Asian tenants are more negative about their accommodation needs being met

Although many Asian tenants acknowledge that their accommodation is good quality, a consistent concern among this group is the lack of appropriate accommodation to meet their particular needs. This is much less of an issue for white and black tenants.

The tendency to live in larger families, often with several generations, brings particular space requirements, specifically the need for extra storage, for additional bedrooms and bathrooms and for larger communal spaces. These needs are frequently considered unmet.

There's not really a place for storage. If we've got storage, we've got a triangle upstairs and you can't get much in there. And downstairs there's nowhere to store food really.

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

My daughter is nineteen and my son is seventeen. All their lives sleeping in one room. There's no space to walk.

Asian, 45+, Leicester

If you make four bedroom houses you should have another shower room at least downstairs. You've got three toilets, ok that's fine, but you've only got the one main bathroom.

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

Cultural factors also impact Asian tenants' space and design requirements, for example the need for two separate communal areas; one for women, the other for men, and the need for proper ventilation to free the air of strong cooking smells. Again, tenants' housing often does not meet these requirements.

That doesn't work with Asian families, because they need two living rooms... There should be two because the men sit in one room and the women sit in the other room. We don't want to have both in the same room.

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

The kitchen window doesn't open fully...our cooking methods are a bit different and whenever we cook all the odour and everything goes in the bedroom... it clings to your curtains, bed covers and everything. And obviously it gets smelly after a while. And we have been asking them can they provide extractor fans and nothing was done.

Asian, 45+, Manchester

3.1.2 Mobility issues are also important for Asian tenants

The limited availability of larger family accommodation is felt to impact significantly on this group's ability to move into more suitable accommodation in the Housing Association sector. This is less of an issue with white tenants with typically fewer family members.

Asian tenants are critical of the under-occupancy of large family homes, which they believe the Housing Association should attempt to free-up to accommodate families, like their own, which are in greater need. Tenants acknowledge however that even if more suitable accommodation becomes available, they are likely to have to wait for a long time until it is allocated to them. This is an issue we return to later in this section.

Why do people with smaller families get to live in bigger properties whereas us lot are suffering for space?

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

Because they were a big family... but the children had got married or they'd left and gone to live somewhere else. That place is meant to be for four people. A big mansion for four people and they want to move into a smaller, suitable property, but the Housing Association should be helping them to get that house and helping other people that are in more need.

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

3.1.3 Accommodation is less of an issue for black and white tenants

Black groups tend to have the same housing needs as white tenants and believe that their requirements, on the whole, are largely met. However, some of the Somali tenants have large families and encounter the same space issues as many Asian tenants with little opportunity to move to larger family-sized accommodation.

3.2 Local area and anti-social behaviour

Many tenants speak of the problem of anti-social behaviour and, to a lesser extent, crime in the places where they live, often caused by other tenants. Young people, drug addicts / dealers and mentally ill tenants are singled out as the groups that cause most of the problems. It is vulnerable tenants, such as single women and older people, who appear to feel the impacts most keenly. Inevitably anti-social behaviour and crime have a significant effect on the quality of tenants' lives – their sense of personal safety and security, for example - and so to the way they perceive their housing situations.

I'm in a raised ground floor flat, my neighbours, and below it's a woman's who's just, literally barking mad. The previous tenants there had put up with her for ten years, and went almost demented, and finally left, and this woman is still there. It's very difficult to evict tenants, even though they say they will for antisocial behaviour. This is a mental health case, so it's quite complicated.

White, mix of ages, London

Many tenants believe that their Housing Associations are not doing enough to control the problem of crime and anti-social behaviour. Tenants complain that they do not discriminate sufficiently in terms of the people that they let to; they call for Housing Associations to carry out rigorous checks on prospective tenants before providing them with accommodation.

They do not vouch for, they do not ask for references or anything. They just bring in whether he is whatever... We had an experience, we have a drug seller come in and you see at the moment they are not checking the credentials or anything.

Asian, 45+, Manchester

Maybe they should check a bit more. They should go a bit more deeply into the people

New migrant, mix of ages, London

Further, tenants are also critical of the fact that having contributed to the problem of crime and anti-social behaviour in their areas, Housing Associations appear unwilling to intervene. This is particularly frustrating for many tenants who feel too intimidated to confront the perpetrators themselves or who are reluctant to complain to their landlords about other tenants for fear of reprisals.

Some tenants also speak of being unwilling to carry the burden of dealing with an issue that is not of their own making, for example, keeping a diary to log issues as they arise. Further, the reluctance of some Housing Associations to deal with

tenant complaints on anti-social behaviour leads to feelings of helplessness and insecurity.

My daughter fell down and she had a bruise and I reported it to the police and I reported it to my Housing Association, but they did not do nothing about it.

Asian, 45+, Leicester

Some Housing Associations appear to be dealing with the problem effectively however, and tenants spontaneously praise them for this. Tenants speak of their landlords' zero-tolerance policy and how they swiftly evict tenants who are causing trouble. This is felt to be an effective way of dealing with the situation.

Anti-social behaviour and dealing with that, really good, yeah. Well, they come and get the people out, or they warned them and they do get them out.

Black Caribbean, 45+, London

Overall, there is a sense that Housing Associations need to be much more proactive in terms of dealing with the problem of crime and anti-social behaviour; by intervening early, for example by identifying problems before they escalate, by supporting tenants who are affected and by removing tenants who consistently cause trouble.

3.2.1 A strong sense of community is important for Asian tenants

Concerns about anti-social behaviour are almost universally expressed among the different groups. There is, however, a much stronger emphasis placed on the importance of the local neighbourhood and community networks by Asian tenants than by black and white tenants.

A key concern among Asian tenants is the perceived dilution of community as new, anti-social neighbours are brought in, particularly if these are from different ethnic groups. This leads to heightened concerns over quality of life and safety and to a greater sense that their support networks are being eroded. Housing Associations are seen as playing an important role in affecting this, which in turn affects the way landlords are perceived by this group.

There is also some evidence that Asian tenants tend to be less prepared than white or black tenants to complain about crime or anti-social behaviour, either directly to their Housing Associations; many situations are therefore left unresolved.

3.2.2 Concerns over crime and anti-social behaviour are strong among black tenants

Black tenants appear to more frequently state that crime and anti-social behaviour is a problem, particularly for those living on large estates in London. These people speak of having to contend with the behaviour of gangs, drug dealers, prostitutes and mentally ill people who they believe are insufficiently well to live independently.

It should be noted however, that it is difficult to disentangle the influence of ethnicity and location, that is, whether crime and anti-social behaviour is more of an issue for black tenants due to the specific nature of the places where they live, or because of cultural issues.

Another factor to consider here is whether black tenants are more likely to be allocated housing in deprived areas than white tenants. While this was alluded to in some comments, it is not possible from this type of research to be more definitive on this. Perceptions of the allocation process are commented on further in the following section.

4. Repairs and Maintenance

Repairs and maintenance issues consistently came out as a main driver of satisfaction with landlord across all tenant groups. This is consistent with results from Ipsos MORI's other tenant satisfaction research³. Speed, reliability and quality of workmanship are all frequently cited as issues of concern impacting on their view of their landlord.

However, some differences in attitude are apparent between different ethnic groups. Asian tenants in particular appear more likely to take the conduct of repairs into their own hands. This reflects a greater tendency to disengage from their landlord (also seen with communications), and contributes to feelings of dissatisfaction. In contrast black tenants demonstrate much higher expectations about repairs services than Asian tenants and are more likely to push their case to get what they feel they need.

4.1 Repairs and maintenance issues

The repairs and maintenance services offered by Housing Associations are a key issue for all tenants, regardless of ethnicity, and one which has a significant impact on their level of satisfaction. Most commonly the issues arising are negative ones relating to responsiveness and prioritisation, speed, reliability and quality of the work conducted. The consistent messages arising from the groups are presented below

4.1.1 Responsiveness to repair needs

In many cases there appears to be a gap between tenants' own evaluation of their needs and that made by their landlord, both in terms of repairs and maintenance work and refurbishments. Tenants mention they find themselves having to convince their landlord that work is required or that an emergency response is needed, often without achieving the outcome they desire. In some instances, particularly the young, tenants are unclear about their Housing Associations' contractual obligations in terms of repairs and maintenance, with expectations often exceeding reality.

I complained to them that for two weeks hot water is not coming into my bath. They said 'this is not an emergency, get a hot kettle and then fill the bath'.

Asian, 45+, London

³ Key driver analysis of 2006/7 BVPI tenant satisfaction data for London Boroughs conducted by Ipsos MORI

The only way they'll change a kitchen is if your doors are hanging off.

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

And so I'm arguing that I actually know that I've got the right to have it, and I'm still able to be treated like a human being.

White, mix of ages, London

4.1.2 Understanding priorities

Tenants' frustration at the lack of an appropriate response from their landlord is compounded by the apparently random or inconsistent prioritisation of repairs and/or refurbishments. Many find it difficult to understand why some repairs should take priority over others and why some homes are refurbished whilst others - seemingly in equal need - are not. The failure of Housing Associations to communicate the basis of their priority-setting leads to confusion and a sense of distrust among many tenants.

They know Winter's coming and they've got disabled people in that area and they've got young kids. So they know they should have done the windows and cabinets first. But they didn't. They spent loads of money on the fences outside.

Asian, 45+, Leicester

Again with the Housing Association they're very inconsistent because we've got our front door and back door done. But then they don't do anyone else's front door and back door. They just randomly come and do a job. They'll change a kitchen worktop in one house and then they wouldn't bother with lesser houses. So it's like it's being run by a bag of weasels.

Asian, 20-35, London,

In addition, tenants are often critical of their Housing Associations for basing repair decisions on a limited understanding of the actual condition of their housing stock. Many tenants, from both BME and non-BME backgrounds, complain that their landlord rarely, if ever, carries out in-home inspections and feel that these would enable Housing Association staff to reach better informed and fairer decisions about which repairs and/or refurbishments to carry out.

Many feel that Housing Associations need to adopt a more pro-active approach in understanding their tenants' situations. Some residents do receive 6-monthly / yearly in-home visits from their Housing Officers and find this approach very useful, since it enables them to clearly communicate the problems they are experiencing.

Sometimes on the phone you explain the situation, but you can't explain the situation so clearly. If he came and looked at it, it's different isn't it?... If I tell you on the phone you

won't be able to take the picture of it straight away. But if you come and have a look at it, you smell it, and you know how difficult it is.

Asian, 45+, London

So the housing officers should actually come to the properties, inspect the property, make sure everything is in order. And if it's not in order make a note of it and do a call sheet or whatever and address it. I don't feel that they're doing that enough.

New migrants, mix of ages, London

Linked to perceptions about Housing Associations' willingness to carry out repairs and maintenance is the belief that landlords are placing greater priority on the development of large numbers of new properties at the expense of the existing stock. This leaves tenants feeling neglected by their Housing Associations, particularly since they are unable to benefit from the new properties themselves.

Some Housing Associations are looking to expand, so instead of maintaining what they've got, maybe they've got that money and they expand, building new houses. But the question is what's happening for those existing ones.

Somali, mix of ages, London

4.1.3 Responsiveness is also a concern

A further issue is the length of time needed for repairs and maintenance or refurbishment work to be carried out. Tenants talk of delays due to long waiting lists or an initial lack of action or reluctance on the part of their Housing Associations and then of a drawn-out process once work has begun.

For some, delays have increased the damage and/or have contributed to their day-to-day discomfort. In some cases, tenants believe that their Housing Association could at the very least provide temporary measures to alleviate the problem, especially in emergency cases. One example is the need to provide electric heaters to compensate for a broken boiler. The frustration tenants feel at the length of time they need to wait for work to be carried out is compounded by the efforts they have to make to repeatedly chase their Housing Associations or contractors.

They take too long to come and fix it. Mine was about a week and a half that they came and fixed the heating and the Winter is really bad.

Asian, 18-24, Leicester

There were small patches in the bathroom, there was a pipe that was leaking. I've been keeping on asking them... They used to come round and say 'this is not a leak'... they'd never listen. Then the patch became this big and I called them again. So many times they came to check it. And in the end after two years they decided to dig the floor up... Now they find out that one of the pipes was leaking. All my carpet is ruined and it was such a dirty smell in my sitting room because it was from the toilet.

Asian, 45+, London

They've had to come and replaster the whole of my living room ceiling because they left the job that long half the plaster was coming off the living room ceiling.

White, mix of ages, Birmingham

Some delays are attributed to poor internal communications between Housing Associations and their contractors. Third party involvement is seen by many to increase the fallibility of the system and the likelihood of messages not reaching their destination. Whilst some tenants believe that the answer is to improve the current system, others call for more direct lines of communication between themselves and the contractors, cutting out the middle-man effectively.

4.1.4 Contractors are a problem but the landlord is seen, ultimately, as responsible

Tenants are largely dissatisfied with their Housing Associations' choice of contractor. Many contractors are criticised for being unreliable, often failing to keep to appointments. This is particularly frustrating for those who have to take a day off work unnecessarily to supervise contractors.

But last time he made an appointment with me. Because I work, I had to stay at home. He didn't turn up and then they said they'll give me another appointment and he'll phone me. I'm still waiting. Nothing has happened.

Asian, 45+, Leicester

Tenants also criticise the poor workmanship of the contractors and the fact that often work is started but not completed. The main reason for this appears to be the lack of accountability in the system; tenants talk of contractors feeling they can 'get away' with poor workmanship simply because many Housing Associations do not monitor the quality of their work on completion.

When they're doing the thing for example, central heating, and you think he's finished and he will say 'it's ok' and he will go and it's not finished.

Somali, mix of ages, London

If you've had a big job done, somebody should come and inspect it to see if it's done properly, but they don't.

Black Caribbean, 45+, London

The use of non-specialist workmen by some Housing Associations is another factor. Some tenants are also critical of their Housing Association's short-term approach to repairs and are sceptical about the longevity of the work; they believe that the fittings or materials used for repairs are low quality and not sufficiently durable.

And also they should send a plumber to do a plumber's job and a painter to do a painter's job.

White, mix of ages, Birmingham

Tenants tend to hold the Housing Associations to blame, rather than the contractors themselves, for the poor service provided. Housing Associations are considered responsible for the choice of contractor, for making sure that they work as efficiently as possible and for ensuring that they achieve a high level of workmanship through close monitoring.

I blame the Housing Association for not recruiting the right contractors. It's their responsibility... they should look for the best contractors and the right people who can do the job.

Somali, mix of ages, London

They should have a separate housing officer or surveyor who is independent now from the subcontractors, which actually go out there and check the work and they then sign off the work.

Black Caribbean, 45+, London

Only a minority expressed positive views about the use of contractors which more specifically related to the systems in place to ensure an efficient process rather than the actual work undertaken.

You just make a complaint, and they deal with it, they send you a letter, and then they send you a letter confirming that someone will be round on such and such a day and you can confirm. It's quite straightforward. I quite like the way they do it.

White, mix of ages, London

4.1.5 Repairs and maintenance services strongly affect perceptions of the landlord

For longer-term tenants, some contractual changes among Housing Associations that have led to cuts in the range of repairs services offered, contribute to the sense of a poor and deteriorating service. These residents have grown used to a certain level of service from their Housing Associations and are disappointed when this is no longer available to them.

Even with the toilet seat they used to repair it if it used to break. But now they don't, they've changed it.

Asian, 45+, Leicester

Across the board, there is a sense that Housing Associations should be offering a much better service in terms of repairs and maintenance. Tenants are clear that since they are paying for the service, Housing Associations need to be far more customer-orientated and effective.

It's a bit like breaking a contract, they're supposed to be providing a service and they've broken the contract by not giving us the service that we're paying for basically.

Black Caribbean, 45+, London

4.2 Asian tenants are more likely to take matters into their own hands

The comments on repairs and maintenance mentioned above were universally highlighted by all the different groups regardless of age, ethnicity or location. The most apparent difference arising from Asian tenants, in contrast to both black and white groups, is their greater tendency to take matters into their own hands when they feel their landlord is being unresponsive. This was particularly evident for minor repairs, with Asian tenants either more willing to attempt the repairs themselves or enlist the help of friends.

Well, once my sink was blocked. I got somebody to do it myself. I said 'No, I don't want to [contact the Housing Association], because it will take ages.'

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

I'll be honest with you. It's been three years and I'm still waiting for the electrics to be done... There's so many electrical problems in there that I have to call my own people in to come and do it. See, well lots of mates are in

the trade anyway... If I don't ask a friend, I've got another three year waiting list.

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

Some Asian tenants are resentful of the fact that they feel 'forced' into this situation by their Housing Associations, particularly when they are paying for the service.

Because we pay our maintenance in our situation, we should get out of it as well.

Asian, 45+, London

The greater tendency for Asian tenants to take repairs into their own hands is consistent with a greater tendency to avoid engagement with their landlord observed earlier in this report. In combination these appear to be symptomatic of a weaker relationship with the landlord than is observed among both black and white groups.

4.3 Black tenants have higher expectations

Again, repairs and maintenance issues are a major concern for black tenants with many of the issues identified above raised among these groups. The most apparent difference is that black tenants, Caribbean tenants in particular, appear to have higher expectations for the repairs and maintenance services offered than their white and Asian counterparts. As they are committed to getting what they believe they are entitled to, they are less likely to take repairs into their own hands as was apparent from the Asian groups. Although they are confident at pushing their case with their Housing Associations, they are often disappointed however as the reality of the service delivered by their landlords fails to meet their expectations.

If there is something a little bit wrong a lot of people will fix it themselves or call a plumber whilst black people will think you are entitled to this, let's take advantage.

Black Caribbean, 18-24, London

I'd say we're probably more fussy than White people.

Black mix, 18-24, Nottingham

4.4 Examples of best practice identified among BME groups

Examples of best practice emerged throughout the course of discussions, as exemplified below.

Asian, 20-35, London

Tenants can use a Freephone number to communicate the need for repair work to be carried out – this allays their fears of long waits on the phone. Although calls for repair work go through to a call centre, the calls are logged effectively on the system. This means that if a tenant needs to make contact again, another member of staff can understand the history of the situation, at a glance. Tenants are therefore able to avoid long waits on the phone and do not need to recount the same story several times.

They just check in the system, and your calls get monitored and logged in, so it's like if I've spoken with one person, they will never say to me, who did you speak to? So because they give you, you can write your reference number on, they leave the note, so if your job is not get done, another person sees the logging in, see the note, and just follow on.

5. Perceptions of Tenure

A key element of the research is to consider whether dissatisfaction among BME groups is driven by views of Housing Association accommodation as a form of tenure. Generally, the Housing Association sector is viewed as a tenure offering a number of advantages. It is viewed as a low cost and secure option relative to market tenures and offers better quality accommodation and less bureaucracy associated with local authority accommodation.

There was little evidence from the groups of the Housing Association sector being stigmatised but perceived limitations of the sector were seen to affect both Asian and black tenants. Asian tenants for example exhibit strong aspirations to own, often in the same areas where they have strong community links, and the lack of right-to-buy opportunities results in dissatisfaction with the sector. For black tenants, the lack of choice and mobility offered is a more apparent reason for discontent with Housing Association accommodation as a form of tenure. For some in this group, the opportunity to live in a place of their choice overrides issues of quality and security.

The groups have, therefore, identified aspects of the tenure that contribute to dissatisfaction among BME tenants, although the research is inconclusive as to whether these issues are stronger drivers of dissatisfaction than service and communication aspects commented on earlier.

5.1 Cost and security are key positives associated with the Housing Association sector

Tenants' perceptions of the Housing Association tenure and their levels of satisfaction with it are largely shaped by their own experiences of other tenures or, for younger tenants particularly, by the experiences of close family and friends.

Tenants' knowledge of other tenure types often depends on their own socio-economic background; those in employment are more likely to have owned or rented privately than unemployed tenants. In these cases it is apparent that tenants tend to be more aware of the comparative advantages of Housing Association accommodation, for example the relatively low cost and the longer-term security this tenure provides.

In this respect the Housing Association sector compares particularly favourably against the private rented sector and also has none of the financial risks associated with home ownership. There is an especially strong sense of this among white groups in London where appreciation of the affordability difficulties of gaining access to the market are strongest.

Then I think it's excellent, so it's the next best thing to having your own place, really. You feel more secure than renting in private.

White, mix of ages, London

Those who have experienced living in local authority rented accommodation also tend to record higher levels of satisfaction with Housing Association accommodation. There is a perception that Housing Associations offer better quality accommodation and better communications than Local Authority housing and are generally less bureaucratic.

The council flat, the buildings of the council flat, they don't really look nice and they don't really update the exteriors. And that makes it different as well.

New migrant, mix of ages, London

Tenants are also appreciative that Housing Associations offer flexibility around payment in times of personal trouble and acknowledge that other tenures do not offer this level of support.

I said look, I would like to pay in instalments, and they was very, fairly good. I must say, they are not as strict as maybe other organisations.

Asian, 20-35, London

So I think there's definitely a lot more leniency towards people who are living in low income housing association houses. And falling into arrears. So I think there's definitely some advantages. Not that I'd advise anyone to get into arrears or anything, but I found that that was quite helpful at that time. Because I look back on it now and think to myself, wow, if I didn't have it, I'd probably have been out in the street.

New migrant, mix of ages, London

In addition, it appears those who have spent a long time on the waiting list for Housing Association accommodation often feel a sense of entitlement and have higher expectations around their housing as a result.

5.2 A route into ownership and choice are key negatives with this form of tenure

The key negative of the Housing Association sector for many tenants is the fact that, in contrast to Local Authorities, it does not offer a route into home ownership through right-to-buy. Owner-occupation is an appealing option for many tenants who view it as a sensible long-term investment. Tenants consider, however, that right-to-buy is the only realistic route into ownership for many in their financial position and are disappointed that this option is unavailable.

It's a long term investment so when you do come to an age when you're 60 or 70 you can be mortgaging, downsize and it's part of your pension.

Black Caribbean, 45+, London

Tenants are also critical of the lack of choice they are given in terms of the Housing Association accommodation offered to them, both in terms of the accommodation itself and its location.

There is a general perception among BME groups in particular that they did not live in the most desirable areas which was compounded by confusion about the way the transfer list operated. Many indicated they had been on the list for many years but were no nearer moving to a different, more suitable home. There is a strong sense of a lack of understanding among tenants about the rules surrounding transfers and allocations.

In addition, some believe that Housing Associations fail to fully acknowledge the needs of their tenants when allocating their available housing stock. This is compounded by the fact that once in unsuitable accommodation, it is very difficult for tenants to move.

With Housing Associations, there's no choice. They give you a flat or a house, you might ask for a house but they give you a flat. You don't choose the area. You're just being dumped where they want to dump you.

Somali, mix of ages, London

It's the whole thing I was saying about moving, they should make it easier for everyone to get the property they want, really.

White, mix of ages, London

Only a small minority of tenants allude, either directly or indirectly, to a stigma associated with their housing, even when probed. In the main this arises as a local issue, such as the reputation of a bad estate, rather than as a tenure issue.

5.3 A strong aspiration to own among Asian tenants

Asian tenants demonstrate strong aspirations to own their own home and hold this view more consistently than either black or white tenants. The main reasons consistently mentioned include the long term investment potential it offers, as well as the opportunity home ownership provides to modify homes to best suit their needs – the freedom to build an extension to accommodate larger families for example.

The council, when you pay rent to them you feel good because at the end of it, about 25 years, if you rented a house, you're going to get something back. But with us, it's just pouring the money in.

Asian, mix of ages, Birmingham

Asian tenants are deeply disappointed that Housing Associations are unable to offer them the option of buying their homes. Local Authority rented accommodation is seen as a better alternative in this respect, offering an easier route into owner-occupation through right-to-buy.

Right-to-buy has a strong appeal for many Asian tenants because of the strong attachment they demonstrate to their homes – due to the time and money they have spent making their homes ‘their own’ – as well as the local area and the strong community links they enjoy.

I did loads of things myself like laminated the floor on my kitchen and things like that... Now this is like my own house because I know that I'm not going to move because I love this property.

Asian, 18-24, Leicester

I could afford to buy, to be honest, my own house... as a teacher you can get a mortgage. But there is sentimental value – we don't want to leave the area.

Asian, 18-24, Leicester

5.4 Choice is a key factor driving perceptions among black tenants

Black tenants appear to be more concerned than white or Asian tenants about the lack of choice available in the sector, both in terms of accommodation type as well as location. This is closely linked to the issue of mobility. Many black tenants speak of the need to move home either due to dissatisfaction with their present situation, for example the anti-social behaviour they are experiencing, or due to a change of circumstances, like the birth of a new child for example.

Many black tenants commented firstly on the difficulty of arranging a move and secondly, by the lack of available choice if they did secure a move. This leaves tenants feeling trapped in their circumstances, with little hope of improvement. One tenant, for example, describes how her space requirements changed with the birth of her child, but how the only option available to her was a bigger flat on a housing estate with high levels of anti-social behaviour.

Of course with Housing Association there's no choice. They give you a flat or a house. You might ask for a house but they give you a flat. You're just dumped where they want to dump you.

Somali, mix of ages, London

Black tenants, especially younger residents, tend to aspire to home ownership, with a preference for right-to-buy. They seem to favour this option more so than white tenants, who are more mixed in attitude. Black tenants seem to be less strongly attached to a particular property than Asian tenants so that the opportunity to buy a property is more of a concern than buying the property they currently live in.

For some tenants, the opportunity to buy a property overrides their concern to live in high-quality accommodation – one tenant, for example, describes how, in retrospect, she would rather have stayed in her council accommodation and bought it than rent a more modern and more suitable flat from her Housing Association.

6. Differences Between Age Groups

BME tenants are on average younger than white tenants in Britain. Since BME tenants are less satisfied with their housing than white tenants and young tenants less satisfied than older tenants, it is difficult to determine whether ethnicity or age is the dominant driver of dissatisfaction.

This section looks at some of the differences emerging between older and younger tenants from the groups and identifies some of the reasons why younger tenants tend to be more dissatisfied than older tenants. The main issue for younger tenants appears to be the gap between expectations for the service offered by their Housing Associations and the service they actually receive. The lack of appropriate forms of engagement for younger people is a further issue.

6.1 Higher expectations among the young

On the whole, younger tenants appear to have higher expectations around their housing than older tenants, regardless of their ethnic background. Several reasons emerged from the groups to provide insight in to why younger tenants have these higher expectations and in turn their impact on stated levels of satisfaction.

6.1.1 Experience of tenures

As noted earlier, tenants who have lived in privately rented accommodation or Local Authority housing are more likely to have more realistic expectations and so tend to record higher levels of satisfaction than those who have always lived in Housing Association accommodation.

Age of course will be closely related to experiences of tenure. Since younger people have less to compare their experiences of Housing Association accommodation against, they are more likely to be dissatisfied than older tenants.

6.1.2 Understanding of contractual obligations

Younger tenants appear to lack clarity over what their Housing Associations are contracted to do, particularly in terms of repair and maintenance work. Older tenants in contrast are more likely to have accumulated this knowledge through experience. In consequence, there is often a gap between younger tenants' expectations in terms of service-delivery and the service they actually receive.

There [are mixed messages] about what the Housing Association can and can't do, I saw a mouse and called the Housing Association and they don't do it.

Black Caribbean, aged 18-24, London

6.1.3 First- versus second-generation

Second-generation tenants tend to have a keener sense of entitlement and, therefore, higher expectations in terms of the service delivered by their landlords. In contrast first-generation tenants are generally more grateful to be in Housing Association accommodation and are more accepting of the service they receive.

The generation before us were more satisfied with stuff. But we were born here and know what we are entitled to.

Black Caribbean, 18-24, London

6.1.4 Consumer versus welfare-orientated

Younger tenants are more likely to think of their tenancy in consumer terms, whilst older tenants, particularly elderly tenants tend to consider it in a welfare context. With the consumer model in mind, younger tenants appear to be more demanding of the services provided by their Housing Associations, and hence are more dissatisfied when service delivery falls below the standards they may be used to receiving from companies in the private sector for example.

6.1.5 Future aspirations

Younger tenants also tend to demonstrate stronger aspirations towards buying their own home in the future than older tenants. The fact that their Housing Associations do not offer the right-to-buy is, therefore, a key cause of frustration for younger tenants, most of whom anticipate that they will not be able to buy on the open market.

6.2 Tenant consultation and influence

In general there appears to be a lack of appropriate forms of consultation for young people. Whilst older tenants tend to be open to consultation in the form of meetings for example, young tenants speak of being intimidated by the formal and very public nature of this form of consultation. There is also a sense that tenant meetings are designed for older people, lacking relevance for younger age groups.

Suggestions for more suitable alternatives include more intimate one-to-one sessions, or carrying out more informal consultation during Housing Association community days or events.

[With] a meeting, I imagine loads of pensioners and tea and biscuits. But with Sure Start we get some sort of day when you can go and talk about issues in your area... If you walk past and see it then you have no reason not to go in.

Black Caribbean, 18-24, London

7. Is Size and Ethnic Origin an Issue?

There is a general perception that smaller, specialist organisations are able to offer a more personalised and tailored form of service to their tenants than larger associations. The expectation then is that tenants of such associations are more likely to be satisfied. Given the specific requirement criteria for this research it has not been possible to consider this issue in any great depth – the quotas set for the research did not allow scope to distinguish between large and small associations. However, there is some anecdotal evidence from group responses that tenants of smaller associations are more positive, particularly in relation to communications and in examples of best practice highlighted.

This section also considers any evidence of prejudicial treatment affecting levels of dissatisfaction. For some of the latter groups, participants were probed directly about whether race was a particular issue. The overwhelming majority disagreed that this was a particular issue with their landlord and, in the case of black tenants, were more likely to highlight a sense of wider inequality in society generally as a key influence on their levels of satisfaction.

In commenting on these issues it is, nevertheless, important to be aware of the limitations of this research approach in gaining a complete picture on these matters. It is perceptions, and not facts, that are recorded here; participants may hold views that are based on incorrect information.

7.1 Small and specialist versus large

There is some anecdotal evidence that tenants are generally more positive about their landlord when it is managed by a smaller or specialist organisation, since these Housing Associations are perceived to have better forms of contact and have a closer relationship to their tenants.

I think the reason I keep saying that ours is good is because ours, it's not very big is it? It's just climbing up the ladder and that's why I think it's only two of them in the office and the communication is very good.

Black, 40+, Manchester

Larger Housing Associations, on the other hand, tend to be viewed as operating a more remote style of management and as failing to foster personal relationships with tenants. Although difficult to draw firm conclusions from this research there is anecdotal evidence that some tenants view the creation of larger associations as impacting negatively on some aspects of service quality.

Since my housing association has joined another housing association so it's like a merger, and I find that the bigger it's getting, the more difficult it is to get hold of people. Whereas before I'd just ring the housing association and it would be one person that's dealing with your property or your area. And I just find that now it's just so bureaucratic that it's very difficult these days to get anything done. You have to literally either write in or go in.

Asian, 45+, Manchester

Several tenants also commented on the effect of their original landlord being taken over or merging within a larger group structure. Again it is issues of communication, in terms of knowing who to contact and the loss of personal contacts, that are commented on most frequently.

7.2 Most agreed prejudice was not an issue driving dissatisfaction

Throughout the course of the discussions several unprobed comments from both Asian and black groups alluded to unfair treatment by their landlord. Some black tenants talked about being made to feel ungrateful for raising complaints, and some mentioned the lack of clarity over allocation policies resulting in them living in the poorest neighbourhoods. Some comments from the Asian groups suggested a perception that repairs contractors would lower the level of service to whatever they could 'get away with', which particularly affected those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with poor language skills.

Consequently this issue was probed directly in a number of subsequent groups. The majority did not recognise, nor agree, that their landlord was prejudicial with them. Among black tenant groups, what emerged was a much stronger sense of inequality throughout wider society. This was felt to heighten general feelings of dissatisfaction which in turn may also account for higher levels of dissatisfaction recorded for their housing situation.

The majority of black people are [poorer] compared to white people, so we find it hard to pay our bills and pay our rent... We don't have the quality of life that white people do. Because of that we already have our backs up.

Black Caribbean, 18-24, London

Asian groups, when asked directly were also unlikely to consider this as an issue in driving higher levels of dissatisfaction. Mention was, however, made by a small minority, about how a perception of this might arise specifically through communications from the landlord. In this case the notable absence of an ethnic representation within the Housing Association newsletter, and a general focus on new developments that were not reflective of the accommodation they lived in were, seen as potentially fuelling this perception (previously mentioned in Section 3).

Appendix

Housing Corporation - Drivers of Satisfaction

FINAL topic guide 15/11/2007

Core objectives

- To uncover the relationship between satisfaction with the landlord and perception of social rented housing as a form of tenure – which factor is driving the other?
- To explore why BME tenants record poorer ratings for communication and influence with the landlord and to identify how these issues can be addressed.
- To understand whether differences exist between BME tenants and White British tenants.

Discussion structure

Interview sections	Notes	Approx timing
1. Introductions	Sets the scene, reassures participants, provides contextual information.	10mins
2. Drivers of dissatisfaction/ satisfaction	Uncovers the full range of drivers of satisfaction / dissatisfaction under the two key themes of home and neighbourhood. By capturing spontaneous as well as probed responses and by using a prioritisation exercise, this section gives an indication of the main areas of satisfaction / dissatisfaction for respondents. It also gives us an initial sense of who / what is felt to be responsible for areas of dissatisfaction. This sets the scene for more detailed probing on the landlord and tenure themes in the following sections.	20 mins
3. Perceptions of landlord	Explores respondents' perceptions of their landlord, in terms of the services their landlord provides, the communication between tenants and landlord and their level of influence over their landlord. It also seeks to understand the relationship between communication and influence and to identify improvements in all three areas.	35 mins
4. Perceptions of tenure	This section explores respondents' perceptions of the social housing tenure further and looks at how this compares to other tenures. In addition, it seeks to identify whether the key driver of dissatisfaction is the respondents' tenure or the services provided by their landlord.	20 mins
5. Conclusions	This section closes the discussion and allows respondents to highlight their key messages.	5 mins
TOTAL		90 mins

THEMES:

- Home (i.e. flat / house)
- Neighbourhood

WRITE THEME AT TOP OF FLIPCHART PAPER

DIVIDE PAPER INTO TWO COLUMNS, ONE FOR POSITIVES, ONE FOR NEGATIVES.

ADD IN SPONTANEOUS POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES ALREADY ELICITED.

ASK RESPONDENTS TO CALL OUT ANY OTHER POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES THEY CAN THINK OF FOR EACH THEME (E.g. What are the positives about your home? What are the negatives about your home?) AND TO BRIEFLY EXPLAIN EACH POINT.

EXPLORE THEMES SPONTANEOUSLY FIRST, AND THEN USING FOLLOWING PROBES.

- Home (i.e. flat / house)
 - Space (too little / too much?)
 - Well-maintained?
 - Modernised – central heating / sound-proofed / secure
 - Meets health / mobility needs?
- Neighbourhood / area
 - Proximity and quality of services / facilities (e.g. public transport, doctors, hospitals, schools, shops). Are these culturally specific and does this matter?
 - Quality of services / facilities
 - Sense of community (friends / family in area?)
 - Environment (e.g. noise, cleanliness, green spaces)
 - Work opportunities

• **PRIORITISATION EXERCISE (BY THEME):**

MODERATOR: ONCE ALL POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES HAVE BEEN ELICITED GIVE EACH RESPONDENT 2 GREEN STICKERS AND 2 RED STICKERS (4 STICKERS PER THEME) AND ASK THEM TO COME UP TO THE FLIPCHART AND STICK THEIR STICKERS NEXT TO THE POINTS THAT THEY FEEL HAVE MOST IMPACT ON THEIR LIVES, EITHER POSITIVELY (GREEN STICKERS) OR NEGATIVELY (RED STICKERS).

- ASK THE FOLLOWING FOR EACH PRIORITY POINT (START WITH THE POSITIVES, THEN THE NEGATIVES):
 - Why does this have such an impact on your lives?
 - Do you think this has such an impact on everybody renting accommodation from your RSL? Why? Why not?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FOR EACH NEGATIVE PRIORITY POINT ASK: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is the cause of the present negative situation? And whose responsibility is it to turn it into a positive? EXPLORE WHETHER LANDLORD IS HELD 'RESPONSIBLE' ○ What needs to happen to change this from a negative to a positive? ○ How realistic is this solution? Why / why not? 		
3. PERCEPTIONS OF LANDLORD		35 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What kind of contact do you have with your landlord? Probe: do you know who it is? ▪ Overall how satisfied are you with your landlord? Why do you say that? ▪ What do you think of your landlord? What are the positives? What are the negatives? ▪ On balance, would you recommend your landlord? Why / Why not? ▪ How would you describe the relationship that you have with your landlord? Why do you say this? ▪ Using your imaginations...If your landlord were to come alive as... an animal, which animal would your landlord be? What feeling would your landlord be? What film character would your landlord be? Why do you say this? ▪ How do you tend to think about your landlord? Is your landlord, for example, a friend, an authority figure, an enemy? Why do you say this? <p>SERVICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What do you think about the services provided by your landlord? PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintenance / repairs of accommodation ○ Maintenance / repairs of estate / neighbourhood ○ Provision of information ○ How does this make you feel about your landlord? <p>COMMUNICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What kind of contact do you have with your landlord? (PROBE ON: Communication from and with landlord) ▪ How easy is it to communicate with your landlord? Why is that? ▪ Thinking about times when you've had contact with your landlord over the past year or so – either when the landlord has contacted you or you have contacted your landlord. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What were the positives? ○ What were the negatives? 	<p>This section explores respondents' perceptions of their landlord, in terms of the services their landlord provides, the communication between tenants and landlord and their level of influence over their landlord. It also seeks to understand the relationship between communication and influence and to identify improvements in all three areas.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SPONTANEOUS REACTIONS FIRST THEN PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accessibility (awareness of how to contact landlord, channels of communication, extent to which feel can contact landlord / landlord encourages communication). What impact does this have on perceptions of landlord and willingness/ability to make contact? ▪ Approach of landlord – attitude and behaviour when contact made (how helpful, interested, responsive). What impact does this have on perceptions of landlord and willingness to make contact? ▪ How does communicating with your landlord make you feel? Why is that? ▪ How does communicating with your landlord compare to communicating with other bodies (School? Health or benefits offices? Your employer?? Police???) ▪ Who is easy to communicate with? Why is that? What could your landlord learn from them? <p>INFLUENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the balance of power between you and your landlord? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In what ways does your landlord determine what happens to you? Give examples. How does this make you feel? ○ In what ways are you able to influence your landlord in terms of what happens to you? Give examples. How does this make you feel? ○ Is your ability to influence your landlord more important in some areas rather than others? Which and why is this? ▪ In what ways is your ability to influence your landlord connected with the way that you communicate with your landlord? <p>IMPROVEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What improvements does your landlord need to make in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The services they provide. ○ How they communicate with you / enable you to communicate with them. What would make communication easier? ○ The way they deal with your problems / queries? ○ The relationship you have with them? The balance of power between you and them? What would have to change to achieve this? ▪ Dream a bit... In an ideal world what would your landlord be like? What would your relationship be like? What 		
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would your landlord do / not do?		
4. PERCEPTIONS OF TENURE		20 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What do you think about renting your accommodation from a Housing Association? Why do you say this? ▪ What are the positives of renting your accommodation from a Housing Association? What are the negatives? ▪ Think about how it compares to other tenures i.e. private-rented sector and home ownership? ▪ IF NOT ALREADY COVERED PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Image (stigma?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What do your friends think about the fact that you live in social housing? Do you tell people? How do people react when you give them your address? ▪ If your house was to the standard you would like, does it matter to you that you are in social housing and not in council/private rented accommodation? Why do you say that? ○ Rent ○ Support (e.g. with maintenance) ○ Sense of security (i.e. accommodation for life) ○ Choice of housing ○ Quality of housing ○ Mobility issues ▪ What would your preferred tenure be? To what extent do you aspire to your preferred tenure? How far away from reaching this are you? Probe: waiting lists. How does this make you feel? ▪ What would need to be different for you to be happier with social housing? PROBE FULLY FOR LANDLORD-RELATED ISSUES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What could your landlord do to make you feel better about living in social housing? ▪ Would you feel differently about living in social housing if you had a different (better?) landlord? Why is that? ▪ Would you feel differently about living in social housing if it was the same landlord but a different estate/property? Why is that? ▪ Would you say that your attitude towards your tenure is shaped by your level of satisfaction with your landlord? Or that your attitude towards your landlord is shaped by your level of satisfaction with your tenure? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why do you say this? 	This section explores respondents' perceptions of the social housing tenure further and looks at how this compares to other tenures. In addition, it seeks to identify whether the key driver of dissatisfaction is the respondents' tenure or the services provided by their landlord.	
5. CONCLUSIONS		5 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thinking about everything that we have spoken about today, what are the three key things that need to happen to make you feel more satisfied with your landlord? ▪ and what would make you feel better about living in social housing? 	This section closes the discussion and allows respondents to highlight their key messages.	