This guide fills a gap in the good practice literature for those involved in exploring, planning and implementing stock investment options aimed at meeting the Decent House Standard. It builds on existing good practice on tenant and community involvement to consider the involvement of BME tenants who are often depicted as being ‘hard to reach’. Though the focus is on BME groups many of the examples of good practice and themes that run throughout the report are relevant to involving any ‘hard-to-reach group’.

Empowering communities, improving housing: Involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities

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Empowering communities, improving housing: Involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities
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key issues summary

- This guide is essential reading for tenant consultation on stock investment programmes to meet the Decent Homes Standard. Though the focus is on Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, many of the themes of the report and the good practice examples are relevant to involving any ‘hard-to-reach’ group.

- Housing organisations face many barriers to involving BME tenants. These range from basic barriers, such as insufficient information about community languages, to more difficult barriers, such as lack of trust, limited time and complexity of communities. Barriers should be assessed locally before consultation starts.

- Involving BME tenants and communities requires baseline mapping and good relationships with tenants and organisations. BME housing strategies and tenant compacts can provide a framework on which to build effective consultation.

- Organisations must be realistic about what can be achieved in the process. They must ‘deliver on the deliverables’ to increase trust and engagement.

- Option appraisal provides an excellent opportunity to reach out to BME tenants and communities, providing a foundation for later involvement. Authorities need to get the right team, get the right information and get help to include BME residents in empowerment and communication strategies. This requires capacity building at a local level with a longer timeline than option appraisal itself.

- Independent Tenant Advisors (ITAs) can play a key role in involving BME communities. ITA briefs should specify the work and skills needed for this. Authorities should consider using BME-led organisations to provide independent advice to ‘hard to reach’ BME groups.

- Periods of formal consultation (e.g. ballots) benefit from planning and prior contact with local organisations in touch with BME tenants. Formal and informal methods should be used and their effectiveness should be monitored.

- Recruiting BME tenants onto boards and steering groups can make these bodies more reflective of the communities they serve. Effective involvement is built by recruiting quality candidates, ensuring accountability to local communities and ‘tapping into’ board members’ networks. Succession planning is needed to refresh boards and provide skills and confidence for new members.

- All tenants can be ‘hard to reach’. Most people don’t want to be involved in high-level governance but do want the opportunity to express their views and influence decisions. A mix of formal and informal methods should be employed. Community events, local media and walkabouts can increase ‘reach’.

- Many stock investment programmes have achieved wider benefits, e.g. training and employment, better housing design, community cohesion, combating racist harassment and the inclusion of refugees. These benefits should be sought from the outset by identifying and incorporating issues raised by BME tenants and communities. This will build trust and increase involvement.
Introduction and policy background

This guide fills a gap in the good practice literature for those involved in exploring, planning and implementing stock investment options aimed at meeting the Decent Homes Standard. It builds on existing good practice on tenant and community involvement to consider the involvement of BME tenants who are often depicted as being ‘hard to reach’. Though the focus is on BME groups many of the examples of good practice and themes that run throughout the report are relevant to involving any ‘hard-to-reach group’.

The guide has been produced by a research team based at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham, but has benefited from the input of a much larger group of people. It draws on eighteen months research including surveys of local authorities and new landlord organisations, workshop discussions with independent tenant advisers, housing and tenant involvement staff in different parts of the country and eight case studies of different types of stock investment options.

The two relevant policy contexts for this project are the Decent Homes agenda and the Diversity and Community Cohesion agenda. Over 1.5 million council homes require improvements to meet the Decent Homes standard for all social housing by 2010. Each stock holding authority must complete an option appraisal by 2005 to show how they will meet this standard by considering alternative options (including stock transfer, ALMO and PFI1) to bring new investment in. Authorities must consult widely on each of these options and demonstrate that residents have played an active part in decisions. This raises our core issue of effective involvement of BME residents. This is a significant challenge given the long-standing housing disadvantage suffered by certain BME groups, the low levels of BME participation in tenant involvement structures in social housing, the more recent issues of community cohesion and the position of refugees and asylum seekers.

The report has been written to assist authorities wishing to secure effective BME tenant involvement. It begins by outlining common barriers and encouraging authorities to assess these barriers at the outset. It continues by identifying some essential preliminaries for successful engagement of BME tenants and communities. Next it sets out how BME involvement can be addressed in option appraisals, through the employment of Independent Tenant Advisers and in statutory consultation activities. Then two of the main forms of involvement activities, high level involvement in boards and steering groups and wider involvement of tenants as a whole, are reviewed in turn. The final chapter draws on the experience of authorities that have been through stock transfer to identify some of the wider benefits to be worked for including employment and training, community cohesion, combating racist harassment and including ‘new minorities’ and refugees.

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1 ALMO – Arms Length Management Organisations; PFI – Private Finance Initiative.
Barriers to Effective Participation

Recognising the barriers that prevent BME communities from being involved in housing investment decisions is the basis for doing something positive about them. Authorities planning consultation on stock options therefore need to be aware of potential barriers and to assess which barriers are most important in their areas. Local barriers can be assessed by undertaking a simple force field analysis.

Common barriers may be grouped into basic, intermediate and difficult:

**Basic barriers** include insufficient baseline information about BME communities and their key institutions and inadequate attention to the need for translation and interpretation. Our study showed that these are easily overcome by housing organisations involved in stock investment decisions.

**Intermediate barriers** are those that concern the housing organisation itself. Lack of trust by communities, an unrepresentative workforce taking on the task of involving BME communities and the practical problem of squeezing consultation within a short timescale are three issues that must be addressed.

**Difficult barriers** can arise where local BME communities are fragmented (e.g. by ethnicity, culture, language and politics). Authorities need to be aware of ‘minorities within minorities’ (e.g. women and young people may not be reached through approaches to formal community organisations). Reaching fragmented communities requires understanding and a strategic and committed approach.

To overcome these barriers housing organisations must be committed to the process of consultation, be realistic about what can be achieved and understand the complexity of BME communities.

Getting Started

Involving BME tenants and communities in stock investment decisions requires housing organisations to be practical and lateral in their thinking. There are a number of essential preliminaries for successful engagement of BME tenants and communities.

Authorities need to have good baseline data on the structure of BME tenants and communities and the capacity and reach of community organisations. Building, or ‘mapping’, a community profile will provide a sound basis for policy and practice as well as breaking down barriers and increasing trust. Working with community-based organisations can provide additional ‘reach’ for housing organisations but the roles expected and the relationships with these partners need to be audited.

---

2 This technique can be used to identify the most significant barriers locally and the resources available to overcome them (see chapter 2 and annex 3 for details)
BME housing strategies and tenant compacts should provide a sound basis for effective involvement. However, they need to be evidence based and designed to meet the actual rather than assumed needs of local communities. Issues of under-representation of BME tenants in formal structures may also need to be addressed. Implementation remains the key.

Committing resources at the start of the process will increase the chances of success; this cannot be done ‘on the cheap’. By careful preparation and planning beforehand, problems can be avoided in later stages.

**Option Appraisal**

All stock holding local authorities are required to undertake an Option Appraisal Study to be signed off by July 2005 and to ensure that tenants are at the heart of the decision-making process.

Option appraisal provides a good opportunity to assess organisational capacity to engage with BME residents and to begin to address barriers to involvement. For a successful option appraisal authorities need to get the right team, get the right information and get help. By beginning to address BME involvement as part of Tenant Empowerment and Communications strategies authorities can build for later stages of the process.

Unless an authority already has good information on BME residents and their needs and aspirations, and BME tenants are already involved in consultation structures, there is a limit to what can be achieved during the option appraisal itself.

Capacity building activities, which start from where tenants are and build on their concerns can provide a platform for option appraisal, but such activities are usually more locally based and have a longer timeline than most option appraisals.

Plans for BME involvement in stock investment options therefore need to have a short, medium and long-term perspective, but there is no better time to start to address barriers to BME involvement than at Option Appraisal.

**Independent Tenant Advisors and formal consultation**

Independent Tenant Advisers (ITAs) now carry out a range of tasks including the provision of information for all tenants, and enabling tenants’ groups to influence and negotiate on stock investment options.

The aim of informing and empowering BME residents is integral to all of these tasks but its achievement is subject to a number of potential barriers, including limited time and money, the absence of trust and inadequate baseline data. To overcome these barriers the ITA brief should include an explicit requirement to involve BME tenants and specify any work needed to achieve this. Recruitment of the ITA is usually carried out by a panel of tenants; this panel should be well briefed on equality and diversity issues and probe interviewees on how they will address these issues locally.
Empowering communities, improving housing:
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Where there are sizeable BME groups within the tenant population it is desirable that the recruitment panel itself reflects this diversity and that ITAs are probed on the ethnic profile, skills and competencies of staff and partner agencies they intend to work with to ensure BME inclusion. Authorities should consider engaging BME-led organisations to provide independent advice to ‘hard-to-reach’ BME groups.

It is crucial that ITAs are provided with information on the BME tenant profile and their housing needs and on the capacity of relevant community organisations at the start of the contract.

All stock investment options include statutory periods of formal consultation. These programmes benefit from good planning and prior contact with local organisations in touch with BME tenants, a mix of formal and informal methods, and monitoring to establish who has been reached.

BME involvement in steering groups

Tenant involvement in high level steering groups and boards is a requirement of all stock investment options. The challenge for organisations is to make their boards open to tenants who ordinarily do not take part – a move away from ‘the usual suspects’. A successful way of tackling this has been to treat steering groups for stock options as ‘new institutions’ with a variety of access routes.

A survey undertaken as part of this project indicated that in areas with a significant BME population, 79% of LSVT RSLs had at least one board member from BME communities. It was encouraging to see that BME board members were more likely to have been recruited through the tenant and local authority constituencies than through the independent route. However, our second survey of shadow boards and steering groups among authorities in the 2001 & 2002 programmes had significantly lower representation from BME communities, demonstrating that this remains an issue that option appraisals and subsequent investment options will need to address.

Concepts of representativeness should not dominate attempts to improve the level of involvement of BME communities in governance. Instead organisations should seek to secure high quality board members, promote the accountability of the board as a whole to local communities and utilise board members to access new networks.

In order to achieve increased participation, organisations need succession planning processes, to overcome the inertia that prevents BME tenants becoming involved and secure training to equip new members with skills and confidence to participate. Our research suggests that external support with training and confidence building (for example across a single authority or group of authorities) can help recruit a pool of tenants with the skills and confidence to get involved.

3 A BME population over 3% or more in the 1991 census.
Reaching Black and Minority Ethnic tenants

Most tenants do not want to be actively involved in high-level involvement groups, but many do want opportunities to express their views and to influence decisions that directly affect them. Providing a range of opportunities for involvement creates informed consumers, generates information that housing organisations can use to improve service responsiveness (e.g. where BME tenants have distinctive aspirations and preferences in relation to building design and facilities) and enables tenants to feel that they are contributing to a better community and environment.

All tenants can be ‘hard to reach’. Some BME tenants face specific barriers (such as language barriers, racism and harassment and mistrust of the organisation) which can make them harder to reach in most circumstances. Organisations therefore need to understand local community dynamics if they are to engage with BME tenants.

Community Leaders and organisations provide a useful access point into BME communities. Our surveys found that 36% of existing LSVTs and 52% of all proposed transfers, ALMOs and PFI schemes used community leaders and institutions as a means of access. However, their reach can be limited and authorities need to understand which organisations have the most effective reach into different parts of the community. This can be achieved through relationship building and service audits.

Language issues need to be addressed through interpretation and translations although it is important to avoid assumptions about literacy in community languages. Some authorities have undertaken surveys of linguistic minorities’ communication needs and preferences as a basis for service design. Many authorities now make use of ICT to provide translation and interpreting services in more flexible and accessible formats. For example, key details of stock option proposals may be presented on pre-recorded tapes or videos. More interactive services such as Language Line can provide interpreting services to facilitate question and answer by telephone.

Formal communication alone is unlikely to galvanise involvement so there is a need to explore additional ways of engagement. Organisations need to think beyond the traditional and formal methods. Innovative and informal methods may include:

- engaging front-line staff and using their individual networks;
- using venues frequented by members of BME communities such as shops, churches, community centres and schools;
- door-knocking and word of mouth;
- stalls, and displays at community-focussed events such as festivals, fetes and melas;
- ‘fun-days’ and other lighter events into which housing messages can be integrated. Opportunities can also be taken to involve BME groups in such events through ‘cultural’ inputs (e.g. food, costume or music stalls);
- community radio and other media.
All of these methods need to be used with sensitivity (e.g. respecting faith and gender difference and avoiding stereotypes) and intelligently (avoiding obvious diary clashes) to provide a wide menu of opportunities for participation.

Given that participation is often depicted as a ladder or continuum, it is important to provide opportunities for involvement at a range of levels on a continuum, not just at the highest and lowest levels.

**Wider benefits**

The stock investment process provides opportunities to address wider community issues. Case studies demonstrate a number of wider benefits secured for BME tenants and communities. These opportunities should be actively sought from the outset by identifying and responding to the issues of concern to BME tenants and communities. In this way a broader base of support for stock investment and the new organisations can be built.

Examples of wider benefits can include:

- harnessing the role of housing investment through employment and training initiatives, leading to greater investment benefits for neighbourhoods and communities and building trust between tenants and housing organisations;

- developing new homes of an appropriate design and mix to cater for the needs of BME tenants as part of an overall programme of matching supply to community needs and aspirations;

- seeking to promote community cohesion through the stock investment programme itself and related community capacity building activities;

- responding to community concerns such as racist harassment and replicating good practice from locally based anti-racist harassment projects to the stock investment process, for example by contract clauses included in PFI contracts;

- reviewing support and involvement strategies for refugees and asylum seekers. In some cases, these show a level of flexibility and dynamism that could be replicated in wider involvement strategies.
**Community Strategy**
- Provide interpretation:
  - Written
  - Spoken
- Advice sessions/meetings – suitability of:
  - Times
  - Venues
- Engage front line staff and use their networks
- Use community radio and other media

**Process Map and Report Structure**

1. **DECENT HOMES**
   - TENANT COMPACT
     - Develop BME element to tenant compact
     - Assess local barriers to involvement
   - RACE EQUALITY & COMMUNITY COHESION
     - Build and assess relationships with community organisations
     - Obtain base line data about BME communities
     - Built Capacity of Tenant Groups

2. **OPTIONAL APPRAISAL**
   - Assess gaps and barriers again
   - FORMAL CONSULTATION/TEST OF OPINION (e.g. ballot)
     - Decision
     - ALMO
     - Transfer
     - PFI
     - Retain Stock
     - NEW LANDLORD
       - Assess wider benefits, e.g. employment etc

3. **BME HOUSING STRATEGY**
   - Make data available for use
   - Tenant Empowerment Strategy
     - Appoint resident steering group
     - New Institution?
       - YES
         - Ensure committed to involving BME tenants
       - NO
         - Encourage wider participation

**Chapter References**
- Chapter 2
- Chapter 3
- Chapter 4 & 5
- Chapter 4 & 6
- Chapter 6
Chapter 1

Introduction and policy background

key issues:

• What this guide is about, why it is needed and how it was produced
• Key success criteria
• How the project impacts on practice
• Policy Context:
  □ Decent Homes, Stock Options
  □ Diversity and Community Cohesion
• Structure of the guide and how this relates to the stock investment process
• Learning from other sectors and ‘thinking outside the box’
What this guide is about and who it is for

1.1 This guide fills a gap in the good practice literature for those involved in exploring, planning and implementing stock investment options aimed at meeting the Decent Homes Standard. It adds to existing good practice on tenant and community involvement by giving particular attention to the involvement of some of those groups who are often depicted as being ‘hard to reach’. The focus is on black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, but many of the examples of good practice are relevant to involving any ‘hard-to-reach group’.

Why is it needed?

1.2 Despite the importance attached by Government to placing residents at the heart of initiatives to reach the Decent Homes Standard, all too often issues of resident involvement receive a lower priority than other aspects such as assessing stock condition and the scale of investment required, and securing the necessary finance.

1.3 Moreover, our research indicates that, within the resident involvement agenda, further limitations exist in the involvement of BME residents in particular:

- Performance of authorities in involving BME tenants and leaseholders in stock investment decisions has been quite patchy (our surveys indicate considerable variation in perceived success in involving BME tenants, and in the imagination and methods used to achieve this).

- Significant barriers still exist to the involvement of BME residents (our workshops highlighted the wide range of barriers found and form the basis of our discussion in Chapter 2).

- Too little planning and preparation occurs for involvement initiatives to succeed (our case studies indicated both the limitations to what could be achieved without prior information collation, relationship and capacity building, and showed how good planning and preparation could deliver greater success).

- Stock investment (and the range of options currently on offer) is a complex subject and not one that easily lends itself to large-scale resident involvement, particularly of groups who have been excluded or are ‘hard to reach’. Our case studies and workshop discussions indicate the importance of starting the involvement process from where residents are and allowing their concerns to set the agenda rather than starting from centrally-prescribed policy options.

- More transferable good practice is needed (throughout the project we heard that good practice ideas would be welcomed, but we were also concerned that what works in one context might not succeed elsewhere. This placed a strong onus on the project to test the validity and transferability of these ideas).
Empowering communities, improving housing: involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities

How the guide was produced

1.4 The guide has been produced by a research team based at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham, but has benefited from the input of a much larger group of people. It draws on eighteen months research including surveys of local authorities and new landlord organisations, workshop discussions with independent tenant advisers, housing and tenant involvement staff in different parts of the country and eight case studies of different types of stock investment options (see annexes 1 and 2 for grateful acknowledgement of the people who have contributed to the project and further details of the evidence base).

1.5 One of the most difficult issues the research has faced is in identifying examples of good practice that are capable of transfer to different settings. We decided to tackle this problem by working with an independent sounding board, recruited by an advertisement in the housing press, of ten people with direct experience of BME tenant and community involvement on the ground. By involving this Sounding Board in the research, agreeing key success criteria with them and by subjecting emerging examples of good practice to their scrutiny we hope that the examples included here are robust.

Key success criteria

1.6 So what constitutes good practice in this area? This question was central to our discussions with the Sounding Board throughout the project.

1.7 Figure 1.1 summarises the criteria set by the Sounding Board. Further detail on the criteria and how they were used as a tool by the Sounding Board is included in annex 2. These criteria emerged as desirable elements of practice and should be taken as a guide to some of the conditions that can bring success. We were conscious, however, that it is important to provide incentives for improvement and to avoid setting the standard so high that good practice becomes unattainable. Readers should aim to achieve as many of these conditions as possible while always seeking to improve on what already exists.

Figure 1.1: Key success criteria for involving BME residents

- The organisation is in contact with BME tenants and communities.
- The main community groups have been mapped by housing organisations.
- There is a clear plan for consultation with BME residents:
  - sufficient time is allowed for consultation;
  - targets have been set for contact and involvement from BME tenants and communities;
  - staff are well informed about the stock investment options and equipped to work with BME tenants;
  - capacity building opportunities are available for tenants who wish to become more involved in the process;
  - arrangements are in place to monitor compliance with guidance issued by the ODPM and Housing Corporation on BME involvement;
  - the consultation process is audited to enable residents to track how their views are taken on board.

Source: Discussions with Project Sounding Board
Impact of the project

1.8 The purpose of this project has been to influence and improve policy and practice to secure more effective involvement of BME tenants and communities in initiatives to improve the quality of their housing and neighbourhoods. Obviously we hope that the guide will be well used and that the examples included will be relevant to the needs of those planning future stock investment programmes. The project has been interactive and there have been significant opportunities to engage with and influence practice throughout. At an early stage the project fed into ODPM Housing Transfer Manual 2003 Programme, and there have been subsequent opportunities to input to new guidance including Community Housing Taskforce guidance on undertaking Options Appraisals and Appointing Independent Tenant Advisers. Workshops with Independent Advisers and other practitioners provided further opportunities to learn from and inform current practice. Case studies also involved an interchange between the project team and people engaged in planning and implementing consultation programmes. This was extremely productive for both parties and, by using these methods, the project has been able to secure some direct impacts on current practice.

Policy Context

1.9 The two most relevant features of the policy context for this project are the Decent Homes agenda and the Diversity and Community Cohesion agenda. These are briefly described here, but readers can find further details of the former on ODPM websites and of the latter in our scoping report.

Decent Homes, Stock Options

1.10 The first policy context for this guide is the Government’s policy to meet the Decent Homes standard for all social housing by 2010. This will require improvements to over 1.5 million homes. Each stock holding authority is required to complete an option appraisal by July 2005 to show how they will meet this standard by considering three alternative options for bringing new investment in. The main characteristics of these three options are set out in Figure 1.2 below.

1.11 The requirement for authorities to consult widely on each of these options and to demonstrate that residents have played an active part in decisions raises our core issue of effective involvement of BME residents. Each option has slightly different requirements and implications for resident involvement at each stage of the process.

6 See ODPM and Community Housing Task Force website for latest information on Decent Homes and stock options www.odpm.gov.uk/chtf
7 Early outputs from this project are on CURS website at http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/whatsnew/curent%20projects.htm
8 Information is clearly set out in a series of leaflets published by ODPM for tenants: Empowering Communities. Tenant’s Guides. Individual guides are available on Decent Homes, Option Appraisal, Stock Transfer, ALMOs, PFI and Supporting people (links to Option Appraisal).
For example, the early PFI schemes have involved an unusually extended period of involvement by core resident steering groups (four years in some cases) and periodic periods of wider consultation. Stock transfer, in contrast, has tended to involve relatively short consultation and ballot periods (around six months). Throughout the guide we have tried to discuss the general principles that affect consultation in all of these options, but using examples that are specific to a particular option. Chapter 4 provides more detail on involvement at Option Appraisal stage, while the final section of Chapter 5 includes examples of involvement from PFI and stock transfer options.

Figure 1.2: **Stock Options – main characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>PFI</th>
<th>ALMO</th>
<th>LSVT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stock ownership</td>
<td>Remains with LA for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and remains with RSL for Non-HRA</td>
<td>Remains with LA</td>
<td>Passes to new RSL landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant rights</td>
<td>Tenants of an HRA PFI retain their secure tenancies. Those of a non-HRA PFI become RSL tenants</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>Change to assured tenancies (preserved RTB for transferring tenants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock management</td>
<td>Split between LA and PFI Operator depends on terms of contract.</td>
<td>ALMO manages stock but strategic functions are retained by LA</td>
<td>New RSL landlord; LA retains some strategic and enabling functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation requirements for approval</td>
<td>Must demonstrate that consultation has taken place and residents’ views considered</td>
<td>Must consult, evidence of active support</td>
<td>Formal consultation requirement and evidence that majority of tenants not opposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot</td>
<td>Not anticipated</td>
<td>LA may hold one</td>
<td>Usual source of evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent tenant adviser</td>
<td>Not mentioned but increasingly common</td>
<td>Some LAs employ one</td>
<td>Good practice requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific guidance re tenant consultation/ involvement</td>
<td>Housing Act 1985 s105</td>
<td>Referred to but no detail</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific reference to BME issues</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future governance arrangements</td>
<td>Depends on terms of contract. No board required, but resident steering groups may be involved in contract monitoring</td>
<td>Company board of directors with third = tenants expected</td>
<td>RSL board. Newly established board to include tenants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: analysis of ODPM guidance on stock options
Diversity and community cohesion

1.12 The second key aspect of the policy context is set by the diverse nature of British society, the legislative response to discrimination, including the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000), and growing policy concerns about segregation and exclusion of some BME groups from the mainstream. All of these issues have been changing rapidly in recent years with perceptions of difference heightened by the spotlight on ‘new minorities’ and policy responses to asylum seekers and refugees. Concerns about segregation were heightened by the riots in northern cities in 2001, and subsequent policy debates included the role of housing improvement and area-based regeneration9.

1.13 These developments have added to long-standing concerns about housing disadvantage suffered by certain BME groups and low levels of BME participation in tenant involvement structures in social housing. For example baseline research on Tenant Compacts published in 2000 noted that:

‘Many respondents were frustrated that tenants who did participate did not represent the tenant population as a whole. In particular it was difficult to involve younger people and members of BME communities.’10

1.14 While later good practice research published by the Chartered Institute of Housing and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on encouraging participation found that:

‘Equal opportunities is an under-developed area of tenant participation – both landlords and tenants tend to rely on assertions of ‘equal treatment for all’. For black and minority ethnic tenants, in particular, many existing tenant participation structures may have little relevance.’11

1.15 Our two policy agendas (decent homes, and diversity and community cohesion) have increasingly joined together over the past few years. The early stock transfer programme had tended to bypass areas with significant BME communities but the focus after 1997, and particularly after the 2000 Green Paper, *Quality and Choice: A decent home for all* (DETR 2000) on tackling the investment backlog, inevitably brought the investment process into localities with much greater ethnic diversity. Add to that the increasing emphasis on democratic renewal and widening public participation, the requirements of Best Value for meaningful tenant involvement and the pro-active approach to involvement in transfers stimulated by the Community Housing Task Force (set up in May 2001 to support local authorities working on decent homes options), and the need for good practice on BME involvement becomes clear.

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9 A more detailed account of this policy context is provided by our literature review included as annex 2 to our Scoping Study available at http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/whatsnew/current%20projects.htm


Structure of the Guide

1.16 We have structured this guide to reflect the main stages of the stock investment process and some of the key issues faced in involving BME residents.

**Chapter 2: Recognising barriers to involvement**

is essential for any major change initiative such as improving levels of BME resident engagement. Therefore we start by outlining the most important barriers to BME involvement. Landlords need to take these barriers into account, assess their importance locally and use this information to develop more robust and inclusive involvement strategies.

**Chapter 3: Getting started**

outlines some essential preliminaries for successful engagement of BME tenants and communities. Time and again we found that, without certain baseline elements being in place, involvement activities were much less likely to succeed. By careful preparation and planning beforehand, problems can be avoided at later stages.

**Chapter 4: Option appraisal**

considers the first formal stage of the stock investment process established by the Decent Homes agenda. All stock holding authorities are required to complete an options appraisal study by July 2005 and must provide evidence that tenants have made a real contribution. This chapter considers how they can ensure that BME tenants are reached through their tenant empowerment and communications strategies.

**Chapter 5: Working with Independent Tenant Advisers (ITAs)**

ITAs are increasingly involved in working with tenants at all stages of the stock investment process. How can ITAs promote inclusion of BME residents in the process? The chapter explores the ITA role, the brief and recruitment process and the importance of the information provided to the ITA at the start of the contract. It also provides examples of successful BME involvement and of formal consultation processes.

**Chapter 6: BME involvement in steering groups and boards**

All of the current stock investment options provide opportunities for small groups of tenants to enjoy high levels of involvement. Often such groups are said to be the domain of the ‘usual suspects’. This has led to a focus on the representativeness of boards. This chapter questions the relationship between representation and participation, and looks at ways in which inertia can be overcome and how training initiatives can build skills and confidence to achieve wider participation in these groups over time.

**Chapter 7: Reaching BME tenants**

Most tenants do not want to be actively involved in high level involvement groups, but many do want opportunities to express their views and to influence decisions that directly affect them. This chapter explores the notion of ‘hard-to-reach’ groups and considers some of the ways in which BME tenants can be reached. It places a considerable emphasis on informal methods of involvement and the need to create opportunities for intermediate levels of involvement between high-level participation and low-level information giving.
Chapter 1: introduction and policy background

Chapter 8: Wider benefits
Stock investment processes have brought much wider benefits than participation in decision making alone. This chapter examines examples of wider benefits in relation to employment and training opportunities, responses to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and to racist harassment. Wider benefits are key selling points for new investment models and landlords need to scope these in when planning investment decisions to build sustainable communities.

A final thought! – Learning from elsewhere

1.17 This guide has been drafted on the basis of good practice examples emerging from our research surveys, workshops and case studies which have focussed on BME involvement in housing stock investment issues. We have become increasingly convinced during the research process that many of the issues faced by housing landlords are not new and that there is much to learn from community involvement and development practices in other sectors and indeed in other societies.

1.18 The resources listed in annex 4 include materials from outside the housing sector. In the context of BME consultation several people we met during the study pointed out the value of approaches to consultation found in other parts of the world, including places where some of today’s BME tenants and communities have their roots.

Figure 1.3: Thinking outside the box – participatory poverty assessments

Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) were carried out in Uganda – poor people’s own assessments of their poverty. Key lessons learned were:

- use outputs accountably – communicate what difference it made;
- generate ownership of the process at all levels;
- ‘gender’ the process and prioritise diverse voices;
- invest in the process and in building capacity at all levels – do it well and develop the skills. Allied to this was the fact that a real positive in the fact that those doing the PPAs trained in participatory methods together, despite being drawn from different backgrounds.

Source: Consultation for a Change? Involving Communities in making policy. University of Wolverhampton Conference 9th May 2003

1.19 A little closer to home it is well worth making contact with other public services in the area before launching consultation activities. There is a strong emphasis on public consultation by health, education and young peoples’ services (e.g. Connexions). Most local authority areas have active local strategic partnerships which will be using a variety of methods to access residents’ views. By making contact with other local services it may be possible not just to learn new ways of accessing BME residents, but also to join forces with agencies working with the same target groups. This may not only avoid consultation fatigue but also produce more effective results. The links between housing investment, other public services and neighbourhood sustainability are increasingly clear.
Chapter 2

Recognising barriers to involvement

key issues:

Recognising the barriers that prevent black and minority ethnic communities from being involved in housing investment decisions is the basis for doing something positive about them.

- Authorities planning consultation on stock options therefore need to be aware of potential barriers and to assess which barriers are most important in their areas. Local barriers can be assessed by undertaking a force field analysis (see annex 3)\(^{12}\).
- This chapter identifies common barriers emerging from the research and groups these into basic, intermediate and difficult. Tackling these barriers requires investment in consultation and involvement strategies. Greater investment will be needed to tackle the more difficult barriers.
- Basic barriers include insufficient baseline information about BME tenants and communities and their key institutions, and inadequate attention to the need for translation and interpretation. Our study showed that these are easily overcome by housing organisations involved in stock investment decisions.
- Intermediate barriers are those that concern the housing organisation itself. Lack of trust by communities, an unrepresentative workforce taking on the task of involving BME tenants and communities and the practical problem of squeezing consultation within a short timescale are three issues that must be addressed.
- More difficult barriers can arise where local BME tenants and communities are fragmented (e.g. by ethnicity, culture, language and politics). Authorities need to be aware of ‘minorities within minorities’ (e.g. women and young people may not be reached through approaches to formal community organisations). Reaching fragmented communities requires understanding, and a strategic and committed approach.

To overcome these barriers housing organisations must be committed to the process of consultation, be realistic about what can be achieved and understand the complexity of BME communities.

\(^{12}\) A force-field analysis is a simple technique, which assesses barriers and the resources or actions required to overcome them.
Chapter 2
recognising barriers to involvement

Background

2.1 Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities are sometimes regarded as ‘hard-to-reach groups’. These can be defined as communities and groups who continue to be inaccessible despite local and regional policy initiatives. Two themes emerge from the research on barriers that prevent active involvement of BME tenants and communities. The first re-iterates some of the barriers picked up by previous studies. These include lack of trust, language, lack of cultural awareness, transfer scale and timescale. The second is to consider some of additional barriers uncovered by this study. These include working with fragmented BME tenants and communities themselves, the relationship with ‘new’ and ‘old’ communities and the complex issue of reaching ‘minorities within minorities’ such as women and young people.

2.2 This chapter provides a context for the lack of involvement of communities in housing investment decisions. It identifies barriers with examples drawn from different stages of the research ranging from the scoping to case study reports. Examples of good practice, and ways in which the barriers can be overcome are highlighted in the text.

Context

2.3 The exclusion of BME tenants and communities in housing generally and housing investment decisions in particular is well documented. Chahal\(^\text{13}\) stated that the housing choices of BME communities are limited, as they do not want to live in communities where there is a perception of harassment. Following the disturbances in Burnley, Bradford and Oldham in 2001, the inquiry and report by the Home Office showed that the polarisation of communities was partly due to area-based housing investment by housing organisations. It concluded that housing investment decisions need to be structured to overcome barriers and to pull communities together rather than apart\(^\text{14}\). Whilst agreeing with these conclusions, Ratcliffe\(^\text{15}\) suggested that the fragmented nature of BME communities provided a basis for involvement. Specifically, younger members of communities did consider social housing as a viable form of tenure and would consider living in outer estates.

2.4 To what extent are these research findings confirmed by this project? The regional seminars (attended by practitioners and those involved in tenant and community organisations) showed that lack of trust of housing organisations, the type of jargon-filled language used to communicate with tenants, the failure to communicate this in community languages and the unrealistic nature of the transfer timetable to accommodate meaningful consultation with BME tenants and communities, were all barriers.

2.5 Barriers to engagement with hard-to-reach communities can be seen in Figure 2.1 to range from basic, to intermediate, to difficult. It seems at each stage the problems become more complex and the solutions more time-consuming and expensive. This being said we will see later on in the report how these barriers can, and have been, overcome by housing organisations across the country.

\(^\text{13}\) Chahal K (2000) Ethnic diversity, neighbourhoods and housing (Foundations Series). York, JRF.
\(^\text{15}\) Ratcliffe P (2001) Breaking down barriers-improving Asian access to social rented housing. London, CIH.
Empowering Communities: involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities

2.6 How important are each of these barriers in your area? It is important to answer this at the outset of any consultation or involvement activities since to proceed without ‘knowing the enemy’ is likely to end in failure. One simple technique that can be used to assess local barriers and resources to overcome them is to undertake a force field analysis. Members of staff responsible for planning your consultation strategy should brainstorm barriers and solutions, ideally with internal and external people who have some knowledge of local BME tenants and communities. A consensus should be sought on what are the most significant barriers locally and the resources available to overcome them. The consultation strategy can then be developed to harness the positive resources and ‘unseat the enemy’. Annex 3 provides an example of a force field analysis of barriers to BME involvement in stock options.

2.7 The experience of BME tenants and communities in an established transfer such as Derby Homes showed the problems of engagement. Social housing is regarded as the least attractive tenure by these communities. This is not helped by the fact that much of Derby Homes’ 15,000 housing stock is located in outer estates (away from the inner urban areas where BME communities are concentrated) and these areas are seen to be hostile to BME communities. Staff from this ALMO understood the problems of involving BME communities as the housing is not proximate to infrastructure such as shops, places of worship and indeed family support networks. However, drawing on research in Bradford, Ratcliffe (see above) states that younger members of BME communities may consider social housing as a viable form of tenure and may be more prepared to move to new areas. Interviews with staff from Derby Homes showed that some younger members of the BME community were amenable to moving away from inner city areas. Indeed, the process had started albeit on a small scale. It is therefore important to avoid stereotypes and to facilitate choice.

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**Figure 2.1: Basic, intermediate and difficult barriers**

Our research showed that housing organisations have to overcome various barriers to involve BME tenants and communities. Those that were mentioned most frequently have been grouped into basic, intermediate and difficult. These categories relate to the ease (based on policy development, practice, time and resources required) with which they can be tackled.

**Basic**
- Not enough information about BME tenants, communities and institutions.
- Language and communication.

**Intermediate**
- Mistrust of housing organisations.
- Unrepresentative core staff.
- Lack of corporate leadership.
- Inadequate timescale for consultation.
- Unrepresentative existing tenant organisations.

**Difficult**
- Fragmented BME communities.
- ‘Minorities within minorities’.

Source: CURS Project Team
Basic barriers

2.8 There are two basic barriers to be overcome.

Insufficient information about black and minority ethnic communities

2.9 Housing organisations that do not know the ethnic, gender and age breakdown of tenants are clearly at a disadvantage when designing and implementing housing services. Diverse communities will need diverse approaches to involvement and to service design. This may include the location, design and build of housing as well as the approach taken on housing management and tenant involvement. In the absence of information, policies for inclusion are developed in a vacuum because there is no clear way of finding out actual needs and aspirations. The danger is that housing organisations will assume that all BME communities are similar and adopt ‘a one cap fits all approach’. Interviews with key stakeholders demonstrated that such an approach was still far too common. The case studies seem to concur with this view. Though many invested a lot of time in scoping out communities, others continued to have little idea of the composition or location of BME black and minority communities.

2.10 The first pre-requisite to overcoming barriers is to establish empirical baseline information. Newham (see box) has shown that it can be the driver for extensive and successful consultation.

Newham Council developed a Delivering Equality in Housing Strategy (2002) based on ‘obtaining better intelligence about the needs and aspirations of BME Groups’. Objective 1 was ‘to build and maintain a knowledge base of BME customer information to inform policy development’. Local people and local conditions published by Newham Corporate Research Group is a rich compendium of key facts and figures for the Borough as a whole including area profiles. In addition information from regular tenant surveys is broken down by neighbourhood and ethnic group. This strategic approach has assisted the Housing Private Finance Initiatives in Canning Town and Forest Gate. Empirical information was used extensively to plan involvement strategies in these two areas.

Source: Newham Council Case Study

Language and communication

2.11 English is not the first language for some BME tenants and communities. In an increasingly diverse country, the inability of housing organisations to communicate in an effective way with all tenants and residents is an obvious barrier. This is especially the case for ‘new’ BME communities who have recently settled in the UK. In communities that include asylum seekers or refugees who have been given leave to stay, it is clear that language may be a much bigger barrier than among ‘old’ BME tenants and communities who have been resident for up to 50 years. These circumstances demand methods of translation and communication to ensure that ‘hard-to-reach’ communities have access to translation services.
Intermediate Barriers

2.12 Five factors can be classed as intermediate barriers (refer back to box Figure 2.1)

**Mistrust of Housing Organisations**

2.13 Housing organisations are often mistrusted by tenants including those from BME communities. This is a recurring theme drawn from the stakeholder interviews and regional seminars as well as the case studies. As one interviewee put it *'how can you trust housing organisations to organise effective consultation when they can't even do the repairs?'*. This quote illustrates the credibility gap that housing organisations have to bridge to involve BME tenants and communities.

2.14 Historic poor performance on basic services reinforces the belief that those leading transfers and investment decisions cannot deliver change and improvement. The starting process is marked in most cases by very low levels of trust. The perception is that housing organisations limit consultation with BME tenants and communities within an artificially defined transfer timetable. Senior staff of housing organisations may not see it as part of a longer-term process of engagement with tenants and communities.

2.15 We need simply echo a view from a delegate at a regional seminar who stated that housing organisations *'require credibility that can only be built up over a period of time'*. 

2.16 If tenants view consultation as a token gesture, this will confirm the suspicion with which housing organisations are viewed. There is need to move away from a ‘tick box’ mentality and simply seeing consultation as a way to secure an affirmative decision at the ballot box. Housing organisations should regard consultation as an effective way of finding out the views of their customers, delivering better quality services and gaining respect and trust.

**Representative Core Staff**

2.17 Teams who do not understand, or are not representative of, the communities they seek to house will meet considerable problems in engaging with tenants. Apart from not having the necessary language skills or cultural sensitivity, the image given is of an institution disconnected from the communities that it serves. The experience of some of the transfer local authorities in this study shows that successful transfers are based on winning the support of frontline staff, building ethnically diverse teams and empowering individuals to use their local networks and contacts within the BME communities.
2.18 Corporate leadership before, during and after the transfer process can play a pivotal role in overcoming barriers of lack of trust. However, in some of our case studies, staff taking the lead to work with BME tenants and communities perceived a lack of corporate commitment. Often the importance of equality and engaging with BME tenants was not prioritised within senior management teams and middle managers. This gap between rhetoric and reality was reflected by the comments of a dedicated equalities officer who, whilst reporting to the Chief executive, struggled on a daily basis to convince colleagues to make time, resources and staff available to undertake equality focused work. This was not an isolated incident and should not be seen as a deliberate obstruction. In many of the case studies, the importance of meeting the tight transfer timetable led to some issues, from time to time, being given lower priority.

2.19 However, as the London Borough of Newham illustrates, proactive and dynamic corporate leadership can play an important role in reducing barriers.

Newham Council identified BME consultation as a strategically important objective to build a better organisation. This was reflected both in the existence of formal Race Equality schemes and BME Housing Strategies and the requirement for all service managers to demonstrate how they were engaging in these strategies. Resources were allocated to identify groups and communities, to support work with residents and to carry out development work with ‘hard-to-reach’ groups to involve them in local housing investment decisions such as the authority’s two PFI schemes.

Source: Newham Council Case Study
Timescale for consultation

2.20 The timescale for consultation on stock investment options can appear either too short or too long. It is more often the former rather than the latter. Housing organisations with no record of engaging with BME tenants and communities squeeze the process within an artificially short timescale that is dictated by financial or government requirements rather than community objectives. The result is that consultation skims the surface leading to increased confusion and apathy amongst tenants. This view was confirmed by an activist at a regional seminar who spoke from experience when he stated that “consultation is always in a rush and is crowded out by other policies”.

How can an organisation achieve in five weeks what it has failed to achieve in five or even fifteen years? There is a need for housing organisations to be clear about what can, and should, be achieved in a very short timescale (see chapter 4). To echo the view of another interviewee, housing organisations should ‘deliver the deliverables’. It is perhaps unrealistic to expect that transfer timetables are extended, although the timescale for option appraisal is not prescribed (providing that it is completed by July 2005). The focus should be to deliver on basic tasks for BME involvement (see chapter 3).

2.21 In some cases the timescale for consultation has been seen as too long. For example the earliest PFI schemes have generally taken more than three years to reach the point at which a preferred provider has been identified and a contract negotiated. This is an extremely long period of time to maintain the intensive commitment required for resident steering groups to work with their authorities. In this situation some ‘quick wins’ are needed to enthuse tenants and communities. People want their housing authority to demonstrate in action as well as words that it is serious about renewal and regeneration. Consultation without results leads to growing apathy.

Existing tenant organisations

2.22 Tenant organisations were sometimes seen as the problem rather than the solution. They were often viewed as elderly, white and out of touch with the needs and aspirations of BME tenants and communities. They were not generally regarded as an effective way of engaging with all members of local communities and in some cases seen as excluding discussion and debate. This was recounted in the following example by a delegate to a regional seminar who stated:

‘Black and minority ethnic communities on estates are isolated. White tenant associations are developed for an exclusionary purpose. Black people are excluded from meetings. The language in some of the meetings is very inappropriate’.

2.23 Local authorities should consider some type of recognition criteria for community and tenants associations. They would need to demonstrate understanding, awareness and commitment to promoting diversity in return for support and funding.
2.24 Given this problem, our survey showed that 56 percent of existing stock transfer schemes had adopted specific measures to attract BME tenants in the consultation process. Existing tenant organisations were used but other measures were also developed.

‘Specific meetings with translators; specific events; meetings at alternative venues, i.e. not the tenants halls; events in local faith group facilities; newsletters and surveys; fun days’

Difficult Barriers

2.25 Some barriers are extremely difficult to overcome.

**Fragmented Black and Minority Ethnic Communities**

2.26 The 2001 Census showed that Britain is becoming an increasingly diverse and fragmented society. Labour mobility, increased migration and asylum dispersal policies have led to housing organisations having to overcome barriers in terms of:

- Communication – some of the case study housing organisations manage stock where over 60 different languages are spoken.
- Awareness – the difference between ‘old’ and ‘new’ BME communities.
- Community politics – the jostling for access and power between different ethnic groups.

2.27 These levels of fragmentation present barriers for even the most proactive organisation.

2.28 Understanding the needs and dynamics of ‘old’ and ‘new’ BME communities provides a good example of the challenging environment for housing organisations. Some of our case studies showed that ‘old’ communities had been successful in using existing consultative mechanisms such as political representation, management committees and public forums.
2.29 Authorities also need to consider ‘new’ BME communities drawn from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia. In some cases these communities were seen as less inclined to become involved because of language and cultural barriers. They were often perceived as having more limited access to local opinion formers. In contrast, in one case study, recent refugees were seen as being more discerning customers making more effective demands on local housing management services.

2.30 There is clearly a need for authorities to avoid a situation of a hierarchy of access where ‘old’ communities are at the top and ‘new’ communities at the bottom. This requires a constant process of adaptation so that channels of communication and involvement are accessible to each community on their own terms.

2.31 Our survey of existing and prospective transfer organisations showed that the fragmented and ‘churning’ nature of BME communities was a common barrier to engagement. The following quote is representative of the point that is being made.

‘Constantly changing nature of local BME communities; new languages introduced; attitude of non-BME residents towards events targeted at BME residents’

2.32 The boxes below illustrate other examples from the case studies of the complexities of ethnically mixed communities.

In Ocean New Deal for Communities (NDC) the Bengali community accounts for 73% of the BME community. It is the majority community in the area and helps to frame the consultation which takes place. The minority community in the area, the white community, feels that their needs are being ignored by the NDC. They contend that they have no voice and have become squeezed out from decisions. This is not correct as the white community is disproportionately represented on tenant organisations and the NDC Board.

Source: Tower Hamlets Case Study

Portuguese migrants have been drawn to Peterborough by the prospect of employment taking advantage of the free movement of labour within the European Community. The transfer organisation has faced language and cultural barriers in engaging with this growing community. Unlike the Pakistani community, the Portuguese are not networked into local structures or political groups. They remain detached but in chronic housing need with overcrowding commonplace. The housing organisation is taking proactive steps to employ translators, build links with community support groups and hold specific awareness days to fast-track involvement.

Source: Peterborough City Council Case Study
Minorities within Minorities

2.33 Black and minority ethnic communities are diverse not just in terms of ethnicity but also gender, age and geography. Recognising the complex mosaic of communities should help reach those groups, such as women and young people, who may get left behind in consultation.

2.34 These are ‘minorities within minorities’. Women activists note the patriarchy that sometimes underlines consultation with BME tenants and communities. As one interviewee stated ‘going to community leaders, as a woman, I did not get very far and did not get access to communities. But when my colleagues went, they did’. The problem is not just about the term ‘community leader’ (Who are they? Who do they represent? What are the measures for accountability?) but much more about the scope and depth of consultation with communities. In some cases, women were not included in the consultation process because of patriarchy. There was also a tendency for housing organisations to overlook the needs of young people. Again, the needs and interests of this group may be very different from those of a much older but better networked generation.

2.35 A consultant who was employed by a case study organisation to work with BME tenants and communities presented the issue of moving away from consultation based on community leaders in the following way:

‘There are diverse views regarding this from communities. Community leaders represent older BME populations; second and third generations want a different approach... there may be a clan culture, and politically there will be a need to cooperate with these interests but [name of consultancy] also work below the leadership level in accessing the views of local people by holding events with women and young people.’

2.36 Effective consultation should be based on better understanding of communities. This may be depicted as peeling away the layers within communities rather than simply touching the outer skin. Of course, lack of resources is a barrier that can prevent consultation. This is considered in more detail in chapter 3.
key issues:

Involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities in stock investment decisions requires housing organisations to be practical and lateral in their thinking. This chapter outlines some essential preliminaries for successful engagement of BME tenants communities:

- Building or ‘mapping’ a community profile will provide a sound basis for policy and practice as well as breaking down barriers and increasing trust.

- Frameworks such as BME strategies and tenant compacts can provide a good starting point to build effective consultation. However, action as well as words is needed to build trust and engagement.

- Working with community-based organisations provides additional ‘reach’ for housing organisations but this partnership has to be audited and roles and relationships clarified.

- Committing resources at the start of the process will increase the chances of success; this cannot be done ‘on the cheap’.

By careful preparation and planning beforehand, problems can be avoided later.
Chapter 3

getting started

Introduction

3.1 The previous chapter outlined some common barriers housing organisations face in engaging with black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. These may appear daunting. However, this research has shown how many housing organisations are overcoming these barriers to successfully involve BME tenants and communities.

3.2 Time and again we found that, without certain baseline elements being in place, involvement activities were much less likely to succeed. This chapter therefore outlines some basic steps that should be taken in the early stages of consultation on stock investment options to involve BME tenants and communities. Our workshops and case studies provided a range of real-life examples drawn from different contexts, programmes and locations of the methods used to get started with consultation.

Mapping Local Communities

3.3 Chapter 2 showed that lack of information about local BME tenants and communities is a basic barrier to effective involvement. Effective information about local communities is critically important. Information on the location and on social, economic, age and gender characteristics as well as ethnicity helps to build a profile of tenant and community stakeholders. Our research showed that the availability of good quality information remains a problem for a significant minority of housing organisations. A delegate from a local authority said that many housing organisations do not possess even the barest information about tenants.

3.4 Authorities need to undertake qualitative and quantitative research to identify their current and potential customers and to find out about their needs and aspirations. They also need to take account of change – in some communities it is not uncommon for 25 percent of tenants to move on each year. In these circumstances on-going research helps to maintain and improve business performance.

3.5 Mapping and research can also help to make links and build bridges with tenants in predominantly poor communities. We have already noted that one of the significant barriers is lack of trust in housing organisations and a record of poor delivery of local public services. Reaching out through the research process can turn housing organisations ‘inside out’. In this way they can be perceived as organisations that advocate on behalf of communities rather than simply acting as an enforcing landlord, only interested in collecting rent revenues and cracking down on the behaviour of tenants. Of course, such a change of perception is neither a quick nor a linear process. It may take some time and there will be both ‘ups’ and ‘downs’. However, it is important for the organisation to commit to the mapping and research process both for the basic information gathered and for making links with tenants and organisations which may be helpful in later stages of the process.
The following examples illustrate the importance and value of mapping and research on BME tenants and communities. The first is from a small organisation with a relatively small BME tenant population where a special survey was required, the second is from a generally well-resourced organisation with an extremely diverse population where it was possible to incorporate ethnic data into general tenant surveys.

**Ashton Pioneer Homes (APH)** is a partial stock transfer from Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council completed in February 1999. APH manages 900 properties and about 7 per cent of tenants are from BME communities (APH records). In May 2001, APH carried out a general tenant survey that had very low levels of participation from BME tenants and communities. This prompted the organisation to commission a follow-up needs survey to identify specific BME needs.

APH engaged a specialist consultant to carry out face-to-face interviews with all its BME tenants. In all, 31 out of a possible 44 tenants were interviewed and 22 participated in a focus group. The purpose was to get the views of the BME community who did not participate in the first survey, and to find out how APH was viewed as a landlord; to identify issues of racist harassment and racism and the competence of the housing organisation to deal with it; and to discover the general level of awareness of tenant involvement schemes. The impact was positive:

- It demonstrated commitment from APH.
- It generated excellent qualitative information.
- Policy and practice was changed as a result of the findings – specifically, the race equality strategy was revised and key leaflets translated into three Asian languages.
- Repeated in 2003 to check progress and perception of APH.
- The use of a specialist consultant can be seen as model for smaller housing organisations that do not have internal expertise in researching the needs of BME communities.

**Newham Council’s** work to build and maintain a knowledge base of BME customer information to inform policy and development was described in chapter 2. Annual surveys of tenants’ views about housing-related issues (repairs, maintenance, cleaning) and wider issues (neighbourhood, community, and whether and how tenants can get involved in the PFI) form a key part of this knowledge base. This information is available for small areas of the Borough and can be broken down by ethnicity. The PFI Team used this data to identify issues, concerns and opportunities for involving BME tenants in the PFI programme. The following tables show evidence from the 2003 Kwest survey on opportunities to get involved and on expectations of PFI.
Chapter 3
getting started

Black and Minority Ethnic Strategies

3.7 The context to working with BME tenants and communities is dynamic and fluid. The Macpherson Report\ref{macpherson} into the murder of Stephen Lawrence provided an important stimulus to more explicit consideration of race equality issues. Meanwhile the Cantle Report\ref{cantle} into the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham placed a new focus on issues of segregation. The Housing Corporation Black and minority ethnic housing policy\ref{housing} and more specifically the Race and Housing Inquiry\ref{race} called on housing organisations to develop strategies to meet the needs of, and to involve, BME tenants and communities.

3.8 Detailed guidance on the development of Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategies was produced by Bob Blackaby and Kusminder Chahal in 2000\ref{blackaby}. This set out the key stages in designing a BME housing strategy and some of the issues authorities are likely to face in implementation. A good example of this process is provided by Bristol City Council.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{pfigraphic.png}
\caption{How involvement of a Private Housing Organisation will affect future service analysis by ethnic group}
\end{figure}

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Service will get better} & \textbf{22} \\
\hline
\textbf{Service will get worse} & \textbf{18} \\
\hline
\textbf{Will be no difference} & \textbf{22} \\
\hline
\textbf{Can’t say} & \textbf{37} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Source: Ashton Pioneer Homes and Newham Council Case Studies

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{PFI}
\item \textit{How involvement of a Private Housing Organisation will affect future service analysis by ethnic group}
\end{itemize}

Each group balanced to the same age profile

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Group} & \textbf{Non BME} & \textbf{BME} \\
\hline
\textbf{Each group balanced to the same age profile} & \textbf{N 12} & \textbf{B 9} \\
\hline
\textbf{Can’t say} & \textbf{3} & \textbf{6} \\
\hline
\textbf{Will be no difference} & \textbf{7} & \textbf{6} \\
\hline
\textbf{Service will get worse} & \textbf{5} & \textbf{9} \\
\hline
\textbf{Service will get better} & \textbf{9} & \textbf{2} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\begin{itemize}
\item Housing Corporation (1998) \textit{Black and minority ethnic housing policy}. London, Housing Corporation.
\end{itemize}
Our survey found that in many authorities that had completed or were preparing for stock transfer had developed or were developing BME strategies and related measures such as racist harassment and consultation policies (see Table 3.1 below).
3.10 To be fully effective, however, housing organisations need to get beyond rhetoric and into reality. There were concerns that ‘although strategies are in place, they are not being implemented, especially by front-line staff’\(^{21}\). A strategy is only the start of the process. Getting front-line to be positive about involving BME tenants comes through a sustained process of increasing the awareness of staff (especially front-line staff) about the personal and organisational benefits that would accrue from the implementation of such a strategy. An effective strategy is one that all staff are fully cognisant of. In some instances, BME housing strategies have been the motor for change as this regional workshop delegate recounts:

‘In Sheffield, the black and minority ethnic housing strategy has opened up debate and dialogue. The Best Value review across the council raised a number of issues of involvement and consultation. We decided to work with established groups and organisations to get them to consult with local people and pay these organisations.’

3.11 The box below features a housing organisation which views its Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) Strategy and Action Plan as an important part of achieving business objectives as well as increasing the involvement of BME tenants and communities. The Strategy and Action Plan identified information as a key requirement missing at transfer and took steps to fill this gap. Unfortunately the stock investment programme was well underway before this information could be developed. This highlights the need for baseline evidence at the planning stage.

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Empowering communities, improving housing: involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities

**Whitefriars Housing Group** owns nearly 20,000 homes transferred from Coventry City Council in a large-scale stock transfer completed in September 2000. Soon after transfer Whitefriars identified the need for more co-ordinated action on issues affecting BME tenants and communities and established a strategy group to develop and implement their BAME Action Plan. A key priority for the first year of the action plan was to improve information on tenant’s needs and aspirations.

Whitefriars therefore carried out a BAME tenant consultation survey to equip itself with an understanding of the profile, experiences and aspirations of BAME tenants and applicants. The survey compares the needs of ‘old’ BAME communities with ‘new’ communities drawn from asylum seekers and refugees. Data will be generated on size and location of communities, customer satisfaction and aspirations for future services. The process has kick started tenant involvement by identifying:

- Interest in getting involved in Whitefriars.
- Preferred methods for getting involved.
- Interest in taking part in discussion groups.

The survey was sub-contracted to a research organisation with a track record of community consultation and an ethnically diverse field force. The steering group was involved in piloting and testing the questionnaire. Focus groups were held with different sections of the community.

The consultation process will be important to a new organisation that has inherited neither a tradition of involving tenant associations in policy nor specific methods for involving BME tenants. The policy has underlined the evidence-based approach that Whitefriars has adopted. Nineteen percent of the sample expressed a wish to be involved in future consultation. However, the downside of this approach is that the stock investment programme was over half completed by the time the survey was commissioned and information was generated. Ideally such surveys should be undertaken at baseline stage prior to stock transfer.

Source: Whitefriars Case Study

22 BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic – terminology used by Whitefriars Housing Group.
Tenant Compacts

3.12 The National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts\(^{23}\), together with a programme of grants, is part of a concerted approach by government to involve tenants in housing-related decisions. This framework gives explicit recognition to the need to involve BME tenants and communities:

*Council tenants will want to review existing participation mechanisms to see whether all groups including ethnic minority tenants, people with disabilities, tenants whose first language is not English etc. are involved*\(^{24}\).

3.13 However, research studies have discovered that traditional tenant structures are not involving BME tenants and in some cases are hostile to the very thought of widening participation\(^{25}\).

3.14 What have we found on the use of Tenant Compacts in stock investment strategies? Sometimes these have been seen as setting a framework for consultation. They are a good starting point and can set a benchmark for activity and help to formalise the process of involvement:

*City wide and neighbour compacts in [name of town] has provided a useful platform for increasing involvement. Feedback from tenants so far has been good .... As a result a framework for tenants to be involved in local lettings has been devised*\(^{26}\).

3.15 However, often Borough wide tenant compacts were seen as excluding BME tenants and communities. For example in one option appraisal case study it was observed that widespread consultation during the relatively limited period of the study seemed an unrealistic goal when the authority’s tenant compact had failed to engage BME tenants and other hard to reach groups over the previous two years (see chapter 4).

3.16 Given these problems, is there a need for thematic black and minority based compacts? Manchester City Council has found its BME Tenants Compact useful as a framework to consult and involve BME tenants and communities.


\(^{24}\) DETR, 1999, p.17.


\(^{26}\) Source: response to a small survey of delegates to CURS regional seminars in Autumn 2002 of their experience of involving BME tenants in Tenant Participation Compacts.
Empowering communities, improving housing: involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities

3.17 However, our survey of prospective transfers showed that very few other authorities had so far adopted this model. Thematic BME compacts were found in a small minority of authorities on current stock investment programmes (PFI 11%; LSVT 7%; ALMO 0%) (See Table 3.1 above). As one interviewee put it:

‘It depends on the situation, but I’m not convinced they are necessary. Most issues of BME tenants overlap with white British issues. The key is to monitor who is getting involved and developing a range of initiatives that pick up all sections of the tenant community.’

3.18 However, if existing structures fail to reach BME tenants and communities, alternative forums for discussion and debate become a necessity (see chapter 4 for discussion of the potential role of BME resident groups in Tenant Empowerment Strategies).

Community Organisations: Roles and Relationships

3.19 Housing organisations should identify which BME organisations they could work with to increase the reach of their involvement activities. As noted in chapter 2, lack of trust and confidence in housing organisations prevent BME tenants and communities from being involved in housing investment decisions. Thus mapping ‘first force’ organisations embedded within local communities is an important preliminary to extending the reach of the housing organisation. ‘First force’ organisations are often in the vanguard of participation and involvement but may not

The Manchester BME Participation Compact was developed following consultation with BME communities. It aims to address under-representation of ethnic communities in formal tenant involvement structures by seeking to involve BME communities so that future housing service is shaped, increase awareness of current services and opportunities for involvement.

The BME Compact is also used as a tool to widen participation beyond ‘community leaders’. Local focus groups and a BME tenants and residents panel were established and have completed surveys and been interviewed. The focus groups will consider a number of issues including the following:

- Identify barriers to BME community involvement.
- Address under-representation of black and minority ethnic communities in formal structures for tenant involvement by developing new mechanisms.
- Seek new and innovative ways of reaching BME communities.
- Work in partnership with City wide Compact process.
- Contribute to the ongoing development of the Manchester Housing BME Housing Strategy.

The success of the BME Compact is measured against an action plan and targets. Manchester Housing will publish these results each year in a new Manchester Housing Race Equality Report which is sent to each home in the city.

Source: Sounding Board 27
be related to housing at all. More often than not the community itself shapes these organisations and that is why they are potentially important in the transfer process. The accountability lines are short. Harnessed correctly, they could become an effective conduit between the community and housing organisation on the transfer process. Case studies showed that some housing organisations are already working with ‘first force’ community organisations as a way of involving BME tenants and communities. This strategy is based on a realisation that a wider range of options should be adopted. Our survey of those authorities who have yet to complete the process showed a range of initiatives targeted at BME tenants and communities. These include BME focus groups; use of community links and networks, visiting community centres, mosques, festivals; and establishing a panel or forum of community representatives.

3.20 The examples below show how case study organisations have worked with community-based organisations.

Newham's Forest Gate PFI developed networks with BME organisations operating in the area and building links with the Resident Steering Group (RSG). These included links with Hibiscus Caribbean and African Elderly Association (providing support for isolated and lonely elderly people in Forest Gate, Stratford area) and East London Black Women’s Organisation (ELBWO). ELBWO has visited the Forest Gate RSG, and then the Council and RSG have visited ELBWO, as well as the housing and day centre at Hibiscus, making a presentation on PFI. These visits helped target members in the PFI area.

The details of both Resident Steering Groups have been registered under a newly created database (live from 05/11/03) for local organisations under Newham’s Voluntary Sector Consortium (www.nvsc.org.uk). This new database of local community and faith and voluntary groups in the borough will provide current information on local groups to consult with on the PFI proposals.

The Council is a stakeholder in the Passmore Urban Regeneration Company, based in Forest Gate. Links with Passmore are already established with the PFI Unit, and Passmore have made presentations to the RSG and often attend PFI Information Days.

Source: Newham Council Case Study

In Tower Hamlets the network of community centres has been utilised as a two-way information process about ‘Housing Choice’.

Peterborough have used local Portuguese owned shops to get the transfer message across.

Sheffield have worked extensively with community groups.

Source: Tower Hamlets, Peterborough and Sheffield Case Studies

3.21 Working with community-based organisations seems to be an effective way of involving BME tenants and communities. For this to work there needs to be a trust based relationship in place involving the following basic elements:

- Local authorities and community organisations need to agree shared goals and on the process of reaching these.

- Local authorities need to consider the level and type of support they can provide to these community organisations so that they can maximise their constructive role.
It is also important to audit roles and relationships from time to time to ensure that these partnerships deliver wider reach as intended by asking such questions as:

- Are there shared goals between the authority and community partners?
- Which parts of the community are the organisations able to reach?
- Do they have the capacity to carry out the work agreed with the authority?
- What support can be provided to develop capacity to do this?

3.22 This type of reality check will enable housing organisations to maximise the impact of partnerships with community based ‘first force’ organisations.

3.23 Further discussion of informal methods of community involvement is included in chapter 7.

Setting a Budget Line

3.24 Case study organisations that have set a budget line for BME involvement have often reaped the benefits in gaining access to, and finding out the needs of, these communities. Newham, Whitefriars and Ashton Pioneer Homes – three very different organisations – each invested significant resources at the start of the process (see boxes above). The box below features a case study organisation which went one step further.

**Derby Homes** established a dedicated Equalities Officer to drive forward change, make links with community organisations and ensure that all equality-based issues are followed up. This person also developed a thematic approach to all work within the agency, becoming a central point of expertise as well as raising awareness for staff.

The Equalities Officer was appointed to support the work of Derby Homes in all aspects of equalities issues through:

- Dissemination of good practice
- Addressing under-representation in terms of employees and tenancies
- Developing a support network of community-based organisations
- Promoting greater understanding of local race equality initiatives and the work of local race equality committees

The Officer has worked through:

- Briefing employees, supporting community and institutional networks, organising external meetings
- Monitoring recruitment and selection at Derby Homes
- Convening a ‘tenants against racism’ seminar
- Delivering race awareness training
- Servicing support groups and a BME staff group in Derby Homes

The level of awareness on race equality within Derby Homes has increased. The post has acted as a conduit to reach out to community groups. The dedicated resource has acted as a driver for change for Derby Homes. Trust with local BME groups has increased.

Source: Derby Homes Case Study
3.25 Finally, the survey showed that a large number of housing organisations are trying to involve BME tenants and communities in a sensitive way. This is summed up by the following very full answer provided by a local authority.

‘Provision of translated materials on request. Hold meetings in specific areas of BME communities often using BME community facilities; create higher profile for race equality at/in tenant groups, Tenant Compact, discussing the Tenants Annual meeting. Actively seeking to encourage BME tenants to become part of the tenant umbrella body. Establishing focus groups with BME representatives looking at tenant participation. Encourage BME tenants to attend BV presentations. Making links with community groups and workers to promote tenant involvement and circulate relevant information. Distribution of material to places where BME tenants might visit’.
Chapter 4

Option appraisal

**key issues:**

- All stock holding local authorities are required to undertake an Option Appraisal Study to be signed off by July 2005 and to ensure that tenants are at the heart of the decision-making process.

- Option appraisal provides a good opportunity to assess organisational capacity to engage with BME residents and to begin to address barriers to involvement. For a successful option appraisal authorities need to get the right team, get the right information and get help.

- By beginning to address BME involvement as part of Tenant Empowerment and Communications strategies authorities can build for later stages of the process.

- Unless an authority already has good information on BME residents and their needs and aspirations, and BME tenants are already involved in consultation structures, there is a limit to what can be achieved during the option appraisal itself.

- Capacity building activities which start from where tenants are and build on their concerns can provide a platform for option appraisal, but such activities are usually more locally based and have a longer timeline than most option appraisals.

- Plans for BME involvement in stock investment options therefore need to have a short, medium and long-term perspective, but there is no better time to start to address barriers to BME involvement than at Option Appraisal.
Introduction

4.1 All stock holding local authorities are required to undertake an Option Appraisal Study to be signed off by July 2005. As part of these studies, councils are expected to consult with all tenants, including ‘hard-to-reach’ groups, about what they want for the future. One of the key requirements of Option Appraisal is that there is a real input from tenants and leaseholders into the decision process:

‘For an option appraisal to be signed off, it is not enough that tenants are consulted, they must also make real contributions to the option appraisal exercise and thus be at the heart of the decision making process.’

4.2 Guidance for Local Authorities on Option Appraisal was issued in June 2003, further advice is available from the Community Housing Task Force on Communication and Consultation Strategies, Tenant Empowerment Strategies and drawing up a brief for independent advice. Authorities are expected to agree two key strategies with the Government Office for the region and the Community Housing Task Force:

• A Communications and Consultation Strategy

• A Tenant Empowerment Strategy

4.3 The main focus of Communications Strategies is in providing information for all tenants so that they are aware of and can comment on the options. The main focus of Tenant Empowerment Strategies is on enabling tenants’ groups to influence and negotiate on these options.

4.4 The Option Appraisal stage provides an excellent opportunity for housing authorities to address some of the barriers to black and minority ethnic (BME) tenant involvement highlighted in chapter 2 of this guide. By getting things right at this stage it may be possible to avoid some of the problems that commonly arise at later stages when specific stock investment options are being progressed and new organisations set up.

Our survey of authorities on the 2001/2 and 2002/3 stock transfer, ALMO and PFI programmes found that, while almost all authorities had actively sought to involve tenants in the process (usually through existing residents groups), fewer had made specific attempts to involve BME tenants (with focus groups, open meetings in targeted localities and door-knocking the most common methods). Most respondents felt they had been fairly successful in involving BME tenants but a significant minority felt that they had been either not very successful or not at all successful.


31 Communication and Consultation Strategies in Option Appraisal, Tenant Empowerment Strategies in Option Appraisal, Appointing and Independent Tenant Adviser at Options Appraisal Stage, CHTF.
32 conducted in late 2002 before the current Option Appraisal guidance was in place.
33 Survey report is available at http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/whatsnew/curent%20projects.htm
4.5 Option Appraisal itself is a relatively short-term process and can suffer the same problems of competing priorities and speed of decision making that often prevent effective engagement, especially with ‘hard-to-reach’ groups of tenants. A fundamental constraint to what can be achieved during Option Appraisal is the baseline position from which the process starts. As one ITA put it:

'It is interesting that ITAs undertaking a short-term consultation exercise are expected to engage with a whole range of tenants that the Council as their long-term, locally-based landlord has often failed to achieve. This raises serious questions about the validity of their compacts etc.'

About this chapter

4.6 The chapter draws on case studies34 and workshop discussions to highlight some of the issues that arise at the earliest stages of the stock investment process and suggests ways in which Option Appraisal can be structured to enhance BME involvement. The chapter begins by considering local authorities’ organisational capacity to address BME involvement in the Option Appraisal process. It then considers some of the steps that can be taken to enhance the capacity of BME tenants and other ‘hard-to-reach’ groups to become involved in the process before reviewing how Tenant Empowerment and Communications and Consultation Strategies can respond to ethnic diversity and overcome barriers to reaching and involving BME tenants. Finally some lessons emerging from option appraisal case studies are summarised.

Assessing Organisational Capacity

4.7 Option appraisal is intended to be a challenging process for authorities in which they consider how best to meet not only the Decent Homes Standard but also the wider aspirations of tenants. The scale of change required is likely to be considerable and change management tools may be needed to review the current culture and to develop the vision and leadership required to make the change35. Capacity to address the needs and aspirations of BME tenants and communities is often an area where organisational change and strengthening is necessary. For example, as chapter 3 indicates, many authorities still do not have evidence-based BME Housing Strategies in place and few Tenant Compacts adequately address BME tenant engagement.

4.8 It is therefore useful at the outset for project teams to ask questions about their capacity to address BME involvement issues in the Option Appraisal process. This should form part of the baseline assessment recommended by the Community Housing Task Force in which authorities approaching Option Appraisal:

'...try to get a snapshot of the organisation and how it is viewed, a feeling for its...'

34 The case studies were undertaken before the current guidance on Options Appraisals came into force, but we are grateful to CHTF and to case study authorities for enabling us to explore the implications of the guidance for BME tenant involvement in Options Appraisal.
Strengths and weaknesses and what must change and what mustn’t.

4.9 Possible questions on capacity to address BME involvement are set out in Figure 4.1 below using the framework suggested by the Community Housing Task Force for a successful option appraisal. Answers to these questions will inform the approach taken by the authority to its Communications and Tenant Empowerment Strategies.

4.10 This framework has the advantage of seeing Option Appraisal as an opportunity to begin long-term strengthening of housing organisations’ capacity to address BME tenant needs. The extent to which this strengthening is required will vary considerably between authorities, depending on the quality and impact of their BME Housing Strategies, the inclusiveness of their Tenant Compacts and the severity of local barriers to BME tenant involvement of the sort identified in chapter 2.
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4.11 By asking these sorts of questions at the outset of the Option Appraisal process, it should be possible to set realistic short, medium and long-term actions to address any areas of weakness as an integral part of the overall stock investment process.
4.12 Action to ‘get the right team’ at the start of the option appraisal process could be taken by headhunting to fill obvious gaps in the types of households represented on existing tenant groups (see chapter 6 for some ideas on how potential new members can be found to fill these gaps). However, this may not be easy to achieve in the short term since trust and interest may be limited and there may not be people from relevant backgrounds ready and willing to become involved immediately. There are also dangers of tokenism and failing to recognise the contribution that can be made by those tenants (albeit not wholly representative) who are already involved.

4.13 Usually it will be decided to proceed with a Residents Steering Group that is not entirely representative of tenants as a whole (indeed it is questionable whether such groups can ever be truly representative). This pragmatic short-term approach carries with it the need for further actions in the medium term. For example, headhunting and informal recruitment activities may identify a pool of BME tenants who might potentially be interested in getting more involved in the medium and longer term. By providing training and support for people who express such an interest, it should be possible to develop a succession strategy. This will enable subsequent stages of the stock investment process to benefit from a more representative group of people with the skills and confidence to get involved in leadership roles in tenants’ associations and housing association/PFI/ALMO boards.

4.14 Recognition that the steering group is not fully representative will certainly mean that the group will need to pay even greater attention to ‘getting the right information’. It will not have the capacity to draw well-informed conclusions about the needs and aspirations of BME tenants unless it takes special steps to gather such information. To achieve this it will also need to ‘get help’. This should include building good relationships with organisations that do understand BME tenant needs and working with them to facilitate information gathering, consultation and active involvement.

4.15 Building constructive relationships with BME organisations and consultative bodies takes time and requires commitment to following through agreed actions and giving feedback. In one authority the response of the Race Equality Forum to requests for input into option appraisal was: ‘You’re just like the politicians. You only come to us when you want something.’

4.16 So, like BME tenant involvement itself, relationship building with BME institutions should be seen as a long-term process to which Options Appraisal should be expected to make a tangible contribution.

Capacity Building

4.17 Just as local authorities need to address their capacity for engaging with BME tenants and communities at the start of the Option Appraisal process, there is also likely to be a need to build the capacity of BME tenants and other hard-to-reach groups to get involved.
4.18 Despite the current policy emphasis on widespread engagement of communities in policy, the evidence on the ground is that such engagement is extremely difficult to achieve. Indeed, some would suggest that all tenants are ‘hard to reach’ since few are likely to attend formal consultation events such as meetings. Some of the reasons for this that have a particular relevance for BME tenants are set out in chapter 2.

4.19 Two of the key lessons to emerge from discussion with ITAs working with tenants in option appraisal areas were that successful involvement starts from where tenants are and builds on their interests and concerns. Involvement strategies which take these principles as a starting point are likely to prove more effective in reaching all ‘hard-to-reach’ groups, including BME tenants, than are strategies which start from the Council’s stock option plans and seek to engage interest in them.

Figure 4.2: Capacity building approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starting where tenants are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Local opportunities for involvement generally have greater impact and are seen as more relevant than authority wide events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Go to where people already meet:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parent &amp; Toddler groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Religious organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Community Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sports Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lunch clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cold Calling is also more effective at natural gathering places:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Supermarkets and shopping centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hairdressers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Festivals</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building on their interests and concerns:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Trigger issues for involvement are usually wider than housing:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Crime and anti-social behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Eyesores and dumping grounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parking</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Other public services</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Discussion with ITA working on Stock Option Appraisal

4.20 Building on these principles another ITA pointed out the need for consultation to go wider than tenants and residents’ associations and to build links with other agencies who may also be consulting residents (often in the same areas at the same time). Joining forces to develop area-based strategies can avoid unnecessary duplication and allow agencies to learn from each other as the following ITA noted. Once area-based structures develop it becomes natural for issues to be discussed in a way that brings in many different services rather than each service establishing its own forum:
'Because of limited resources landlords may only engage with existing tenants and residents’ associations in things like stock options...housing does not often link up well with other staff from community development teams to involve residents. If housing came together with other agencies in the area and worked out a good information and communication plan this could lead to more effective involvement.' (ITA working on local Options Study)

4.21 One of the ways in which authorities are putting these principles into effect is through area-based projects working with tenants and residents’ groups. Local options studies to build local capacity are funded through Section 16 Tenant Empowerment Grants from ODPM. Gloucester City Council has secured funding for two such studies in the City. This work was being undertaken by the consultants Partners in Change (PIC).

Tenants on one of Gloucester’s largest estates were working with the consultants PIC on an options study funded by a Section 16 Tenant Empowerment Grant. The study aimed, over a period of six to nine months, to enable residents to articulate, and get involved in resolving, real issues on their estate. A small residents’ group had been formed and was gradually building interest in involvement through word of mouth and links with a local community centre. There was a good age and gender mix and the group includes two workers at the community centre, one of whom is from a BME background.

The group had already identified core concerns relating to crime and anti-social behaviour, activities for young people and disrepair issues. It had succeeded in getting police representatives to attend its meetings and the co-ordinator of the County Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. The group was planning estate walkabouts with people from the police and other statutory agencies to draw attention to local problems, and a planning for real event to look at future options for the area and at provision for young people in the area (a ‘youth shelter’ where young people could meet informally off the street). Young people were seen as the key group to involve to secure these improvements. There were also plans for a community website and an audit of crime and anti-social behaviour to support the bid for youth activities (from the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership).

Source: Gloucester Case Study

4.22 If projects like this succeed they will provide a much more viable platform for wider consultation activities such as those required for Option Appraisal. This chimes with comments made by ITAs at our workshop that short-term consultation activities are unlikely to engage tenants, particularly in areas where there is limited existing involvement, unless there has been some preliminary capacity building work.

4.23 However, the timescales for this type of capacity building activity are generally much longer than can be accommodated within most option appraisal studies. There are also dangers that local groups at an early and fragile stage of development may be seized upon by authorities seeking to increase involvement in their Options Appraisals. Care is required to avoid overloading such groups and undermining the progress that has been made. Consultation fatigue is a real issue, particularly for neighbourhoods and communities that have been targeted by the programmes of many different agencies.

Tenant Empowerment Strategies

4.24 Guidance on Option Appraisal builds on the Best Value in Housing regime and Tenant Participation Compacts in the expectation that tenants and leaseholders will make real contributions to the option appraisal and be ‘at the heart of the decision making process.’
4.25 Tenant Empowerment Strategies are expected to set out how tenants are to be involved in decision making and how they will get the support they need to do this. A variety of methods could be used including working groups, commissions and juries. Training and support needs should be identified and resources provided, including employment of Independent Tenant Advisers (see chapter 5) and, in some cases, use of Section 16 Tenant Empowerment Grants (see Gloucester example above) to pilot innovative involvement and develop tenant-led approaches. It should also be noted that there is value in finding out more about the Innovation Into Action (IIA) grant programme managed by the Chartered Institute of Housing and funded through Section 16 Tenant Empowerment Grant, as a useful way of developing new approaches to involving BME tenants (and indeed all social housing tenants)\textsuperscript{37}. Arrangements for consultation and feedback need to be in place, with consideration given to the pace of the process, and the need for representatives on working parties to feed back to other tenants\textsuperscript{38}.

4.26 Some basic expectations are set in the guidance in relation to the engagement of BME tenants and other hard-to-reach groups, addressing diversity issues, and setting and monitoring targets for minority participation. However, experience to date indicates that many authorities have found it difficult to address these issues in the implementation of their Tenant Empowerment Strategies.

4.27 Often very few BME tenants are involved in formal tenants’ and residents’ groups that tend to be incorporated at the core of authorities’ empowerment strategies (see also chapter 3). This means that unless positive action is taken to involve new members from BME backgrounds in these core groups, expectations in relation to BME tenant engagement will need to be met in other ways. How should authorities respond to this problem as they plan their tenant empowerment strategies?

\begin{itemize}
  \item Assess existing involvement structures, identify gaps in membership.
  \item Treat the Option Appraisal Steering Group as a new institution and use a variety of routes to recruit, going beyond the usual suspects by ‘headhunting’, advertisement or other approaches.
  \item Engage the Steering Group itself in identifying gaps in its membership and secure common ownership of the need to reach these groups.
  \item Identify organisations that can provide access to members of these groups and organise events that allow their perspectives to be fed into the Option Appraisal process.
  \item Connect with existing community development, involvement and capacity building initiatives, many of which will not be housing specific.
  \item Consider the scope for developing a BME tenant forum that can be consulted during the Option Appraisal and feed into the tenant empowerment process.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{37} For more information about these grants log onto www.cih.org
\textsuperscript{38} Tenant Empowerment Strategies in Option Appraisal. Advice Note, Community Housing Task Force, 2003.
Using Separate BME Resident Groups in Tenant Empowerment Strategies

4.28 The final option listed above of establishing a parallel group to empower BME tenants during stock options consultations has some merit, but needs careful planning. The case for establishing such a group might be based on factors such as:

- Low (or no) representation of BME tenants in existing tenants groups.
- The greater prospect of such a group reaching other BME tenants.
- The opportunity for capacity and confidence building and developing a cadre of BME tenants with experience of leadership roles.

4.29 Where this approach was considered in our workshops and case studies it was usually seen as a time-limited measure with the longer-term goal of integration into mainstream groups. Option Appraisal could be a chance to test out this approach. However, care is required in developing such an approach to:

- Ensure that community cohesion is not adversely affected.
- Consider how the BME group will relate to mainstream groups in the short, medium and long term.
- Ensure that the approach reflects the wishes of BME tenants.

4.30 The experience of two authorities who encountered problems with implementing this type of approach illustrate some of the pitfalls that need to be considered.

In Case A, a large inner London estate with a substantial BME tenant population, regeneration funding was used to set up a BME tenant group in parallel with the (largely white) mainstream residents’ association during the run up to a stock transfer ballot. The group was seen as an opportunity for capacity building over a defined time period with the goal of integration into the mainstream residents’ association. However, there was resentment from the mainstream association because the BME association was much better funded. There was also competition because success meant BME tenants became well represented in the mainstream association and the function of the BME association became increasingly unclear.

In Case B, a City Council with a fairly low BME tenant population and almost exclusively white resident groups contacted all known BME residents to invite them to a ‘focus group’ meeting to discuss their issues in advance of an option appraisal study. Very few BME tenants responded to the invitation, but those who did attend indicated that they were opposed to the idea of a specific group for BME tenants as this would be divisive. They wanted to be involved in local and city-wide events and agreed to being included on lists to be used in future consultation but did not wish to proceed with the establishment of a BME tenants’ group.

Source: CURS Project Team
Communications Strategies

4.31 Communications strategies must be agreed with the Government Office for the Region and the Community Housing Task Force at the start of each options appraisal. They should set out how every tenant will have access to the appropriate information, presented in the best way for them so that they have a clear idea what is happening and can contribute their views and opinions. BME residents should be among the stakeholder groups identified at the outset of a Communications Strategy. The following paragraphs provide some examples of how reaching BME stakeholders can be integrated into Communications Strategies in relation to:

- barriers and targets;
- baseline information;
- involving front line-staff and partner agencies;
- sensitivity to difference: language and venues;
- planning and resourcing the strategy;

4.32 Many of these issues are dealt with in greater detail in other chapters of this guide and cross references are made here.

Barriers and Targets

4.33 Communications strategies need to take into account known barriers to involving BME tenants and take action to overcome these in the implementation of the strategy. There is no substitute for an early assessment of the common barriers to BME tenant involvement and how important each of these barriers is likely to be locally (see chapter 2). Strategies should include targets to reach all sections of the tenant and leaseholder population as well as other key stakeholders (such as trade unions, councillors and partner organisations). These aims are reflected in the following example.

The council will seek to remove barriers that prevent or discourage certain people or groups from accessing a service or information.

In recognition of the importance of reaching all sections of the community, the brief for the Independent Tenant Advisor made specific mention of the need to be innovative in reaching out to all tenants, specifically young single parents, the disabled and the Black Minority Ethnic communities.

Source: Extract from a case study Communications Strategy
Baseline Information

4.34 Authorities and tenant advisers need baseline information on the tenant population, including the location, key languages and cultural backgrounds of BME groups to plan effective communications strategies (see chapter 3 for further details). One authority acknowledged the gaps in its information base about BME tenants and undertook to use the Options Appraisal period to address this:

‘The housing service has incomplete information about the ethnic composition of tenants. It recognises that this is a weakness and will be progressively updating this information over the next year.’ (Extract from a case study Communications Strategy)

Involving Partner Agencies and Front-line Staff

4.35 Partner agencies and front-line staff together with tenant advisers (see chapter 5) are likely to play the key role in getting the information across and providing opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to ask questions and feed back ideas and aspirations so that these can be built into stock investment plans.

4.36 Partner agencies who are in contact with tenants may provide a primary method for getting the message across and obtaining feedback. By carefully identifying appropriate agencies, developing strong trust-based relationships with them and keeping them ‘in the loop’, authorities can improve the effectiveness of their communications during the option appraisal process.

4.37 As part of this partnership approach the local authority needs to identify the BME organisations that they could work with on the transfer process, the strengths and weaknesses in community infrastructure and early issue identification. Such partnerships can also help the authority to understand the specific concerns of BME tenants and communities and use this understanding to inform the stock options on offer.

4.38 Front-line staff are usually the main way to reach a wide range of tenants. This highlights the importance of keeping staff fully informed about the process. This is illustrated by the following example from a stock transfer campaign, but could apply equally to an option appraisal study.

In Walsall, there was a face-to-face door-knocking campaign during transfer consultation. This arose at the suggestion of some BME staff members involved in the transfer ballot consultation. They suggested that it might be possible to break down some of the barriers if tenants were approached by someone from the BME communities. These staff also made use of their community networks to publicise the transfer; this was beneficial in building trust for the process.

Each known BME tenant was visited by one of the team of four BME staff (2 Afro-Caribbean and 2 Asian). BME tenants were identified by drawing on data from the council’s ethnic record keeping system. It was possible to cover most of the minority languages as a result of the language skills of the two Asian staff. This campaign was successful in raising awareness and building trust among BME tenants in the transfer. Success was indicated by the high turnout in local consultation meetings.

Source: Walsall Council Case Study
Sensitivity to Difference

4.39 The Communications Strategy needs to reflect sensitivities concerning consultation and communication – awareness of prayer times, inappropriate mixing of men and women in public meetings, nervousness about home visits by strangers, the unacceptability of neighbour meetings/collective working/deliberation, need for appropriate refreshments and crèche facilities. Two of the key operational issues arising from sensitivity to difference are language and venues.

Language

4.40 Some authorities have decided that all consultation materials should be translated into the main local minority languages and made available through organisations where linguistic minorities are known to meet as well as through the authority’s website. Others have taken the view that it is more important to ensure that interpreting facilities are available for those who may be unlikely to read written information even in their own language. The following example covers both translation and interpreting.

In Gloucester it was decided that all written material for tenants issued during the Option Appraisal would also be available in large-scale fonts and audio tapes in all sheltered schemes and local housing offices and would be translated.

“All key documents will be summarised and translated into the four main ethnic minority languages, with full translations of all documents available on request.

The council’s translation service will provide summary translations of all main publications. Gujarati speaking tenants have requested that the key points be provided in a written translation, with additional information being made available through a local bi-lingual tenant. Representatives of the Chinese community have likewise requested a summary translation of main documents to be made available through support workers. Translations in these or other languages will be available to tenants on request.”

Source: Extract from a Gloucester City Council Option Appraisal Communications Strategy

Venues

4.41 One of the common findings of our case studies is the low level of participation of BME tenants (along with many other tenants) in formal meetings, for example those arranged at housing offices, sheltered housing schemes etc. In one case study only two BME tenants attended any of the 18 meetings arranged by the ITA at a variety of housing locations across the council area. The following extract from a Communications Strategy proposes using a variety of venues, described as ‘informal’ which BME tenants are expected to be able to access easily. It also takes account of the need to use other media such as radio to reach those who are unlikely to attend meetings however ‘informal’ the venue.

Meetings will be held in local informal venues, which the Black Minority Ethnic communities are able to access easily. Visits have been arranged to meet with the key organisations to seek their help in getting the information out and encouraging tenants to give their view. Special programs on local radio stations targeted at Black Minority Ethnic communities will also be enlisted to increase awareness of the options appraisal process.

Source: Extract from a case study Communications Strategy
Planning and Resourcing the Strategy

4.42 Communications Strategies need to set out the key messages, stakeholders and channels of communication. They also need to provide realistic budgets and staff resources, monitor impacts and consider interaction with other strategies such as the Community Cohesion strategy.

Realistic budgets and staffing resources

‘Where a transfer affects a significant BME population, we will consider the proposed project plan and timetable carefully to identify whether or not sufficient time has been built in for enabling effective BME involvement (home visits/translations, additional meetings etc).’ Housing Transfer Manual 2003 Programme – annex E, ODPM

4.43 ODPM Guidance on stock investment options (above) provides clear expectations on the timetabling and reach of BME communications activities. As chapter 3 makes clear, committing resources at the start of the process will increase the chances of success. This cannot be done ‘on the cheap’. Yet throughout our case studies and workshops, ITAs indicated that no additional budgets were generally included to enable known ‘hard-to-reach’ groups to be reached.

4.44 Unfortunately, the following example of an authority identifying an additional communication need and seeking additional resources to meet it remains the exception in our experience.

In Newham, the Residents’ Steering Group for a PFI project in Forest Gate, East London had undertaken a door-knocking campaign to raise awareness of PFI throughout the PFI area. It had identified tower blocks in part of the area with a significant Muslim community. Follow-up work had identified language needs and an interest in women-only meetings in this area. The authority therefore sought to engage a specialist agency to undertake locally sensitive consultation over and above that provided by the ITA working with the Residents’ Steering Group. Additional funding was being sought and specialist agencies contacted to work in partnership with the Residents’ Steering Group to increase involvement in this area.

Source: Newham Council Case Study

Monitoring Impacts

4.45 Special communication initiatives to reach BME residents through careful choice of languages, venues and advisory resources should contribute to extending the reach and participation in options appraisal. However, there is inevitably an element of trial and error involved and it is important for a flexible evidence-based approach to be adopted. Strategies need to be monitored to establish whether they are having the intended impact. Simple head-counts of who attends and responds can help authorities to review and refocus communications strategies in a flexible way. Ethnic monitoring should form part of the general evaluation of reach and impact, such as the following mid-term evaluation.
“To evaluate the success of the various methods and whether the message is reaching all tenants, awareness of the options appraisal process will be tested at the half-way stage through a 25% postal ballot of tenants”.

Source: Options appraisal case study

Joining Up with Other Strategies

4.46 We have already noted the benefits of linking tenant empowerment strategies with other capacity building and involvement activities that are likely to be happening in the same areas over the same time period. To maximise impact and relevance, and avoid unnecessary duplication, authorities also need to join up their communication strategies with other local strategies. In one case study area where BME involvement in option appraisal was quite low, no links had been made to a Community Cohesion baseline study which was happening over the same period and which raised issues in relation to housing improvement, ethnic monitoring and translations. BME public meetings in the area on other current issues were well attended at the same time as the stock appraisal study was having difficulty in engaging with BME residents.

Setting general goals for Option Appraisal

4.47 Authorities are encouraged by ODPM to set general goals for Option Appraisal such as ‘obtaining a better fit between the stock and housing demand’ and ‘ensuring that the range of services provided matches tenant aspirations’. It is important to recognise that these general issues may have specific dimensions for different BME groups. Without collecting information on community needs and aspirations or holding specific consultation events for local BME communities this opportunity is likely to be missed.

**Derby City Council** has developed a model to measure the scale of need in different parts of the city that draws on the Council’s own housing register and waiting lists as well as RSLs’ registers. The model distinguishes between the needs of black (African and Caribbean) and Asian (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) and white households. The Council is seeking to meet BME needs that have been identified by:

- Supporting bids to the Housing Corporation for new schemes from RSLs, including BME RSLs.
- Promoting existing housing, particularly sheltered housing in the inner city to BME communities.

Chapter 5
Independent tenant advisers and formal consultation programmes

**key issues:**

- Independent Tenant Advisers (ITAs) now carry out a range of tasks including the provision of information for all tenants, and enabling tenants groups to influence and negotiate on stock investment options.

- The aim of informing and empowering BME residents is integral to all of these tasks but its achievement is subject to a number of potential barriers, including limited time and money, the absence of trust and inadequate baseline data. To overcome these barriers:
  - The ITA brief should include an explicit requirement to involve BME tenants and specify any work needed to achieve this.
  - Recruitment of the ITA is usually carried out by a panel of tenants; this panel should be well briefed on equality and diversity issues and probe interviewees on how they will address these issues locally.
  - Where there are sizeable BME groups within the tenant population it is desirable that the recruitment panel itself reflects this diversity and that ITAs are probed on the ethnic profile, skills and competencies of staff and partner agencies they intend to work with to ensure BME inclusion.
  - Authorities should consider engaging BME-led organisations to undertake independent advice work with ‘hard-to-reach’ BME groups.
  - It is crucial that ITAs are provided with information on the BME tenant profile and housing needs and on the capacity of relevant community organisations at the start of the contract.

- Statutory consultation programmes benefit from good planning and prior contact with local organisations in touch with BME tenants, a mix of formal and informal methods, and monitoring to establish who has been reached.
5.1 This chapter considers the role that can be played by Independent Tenant Advisers (ITAs) in facilitating more effective involvement of black and minority ethnic (BME) tenants in stock investment decisions, including Options Appraisals and subsequent decisions on investment options. It draws on workshop discussions with ITAs and case studies to identify some of the key issues in the appointment, brief and selection criteria, core tasks and wider tasks played by ITAs. A number of ITAs have made very useful input into this project (see annex 1). Examples of the ways in which they have promoted the inclusion of BME tenants in these processes, particularly through informal methods, have been used throughout this guide and particularly in chapters 4 and 7.

5.2 ITAs often play an important role during formal and statutory consultation periods to ensure that tenants and leaseholders are able to make informed decisions. The final section of the chapter considers some examples of formal consultation processes and how authorities together with ITAs can plan for more effective involvement of BME tenants in such campaigns.

The Role of Independent Tenant Advisers (ITAs)

5.3 Independent Tenant Advisers (ITAs) have been involved in stock investment options since the early 1990s when the need for impartial advice on stock transfer was first highlighted\(^39\). This role has developed considerably over time and now includes involvement in Option Appraisal studies as well as detailed explorations of stock transfer, ALMO and PFI schemes. Good practice guidance on appointing ITAs and their involvement in stock transfer and Options Appraisal is available from ODPM\(^40\).

5.4 A small but growing number of consultants specialise in this role. Perhaps because of the areas in which early stock transfers were concentrated, there was not initially a strong emphasis on competencies in involving BME tenants and communities. Indeed most existing guidance makes very limited reference to this\(^41\). The context has changed considerably in the past five years with important implications for the skills and experience of diversity issues that ITAs should be expected to bring to the task.

5.5 ITAs are usually funded by local authorities but employed by panels of tenants. They are appointed to work with and on behalf of tenants and leaseholders to provide them with access to independent information and to support them in negotiations with the authority. These tasks are broadly consistent with the scope of Communications Strategies and Tenant Empowerment Strategies (see chapter 4), with their differing

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41 However, drawing on early findings from this project, CHTF Guidance on ITAs and Option Appraisal published in 2003 (op. cit.) suggests requirements in relation to appointment criteria and information needs of ITAs. These are discussed later in this chapter.
emphases in providing information for all tenants on the one hand and enabling tenants’ groups to influence and negotiate on the options on the other. ITAs may take on a variety of tasks within this general remit. Recent guidance suggests the division between core tasks and wider tasks that may be included in an ITA brief (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Core and wider tasks for Independent Tenant Advisers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Tasks</th>
<th>Wider Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Gathering information</td>
<td>• Canvassing tenants’ views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Validating and distributing information</td>
<td>• Developing participation mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Giving independent advice</td>
<td>• Setting up a Tenant Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supporting the Tenant Panel</td>
<td>• Participating in tenant board selection for the new landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Training tenants and leaseholders and members of the panel</td>
<td>• Supporting tenant board members for the new landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Briefing staff on the tenant adviser role</td>
<td>• Briefing staff on the tenant adviser role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Independent Tenant Advisers and Stock Transfers, DTLR, December 2001 p.14

Implications for involvement of BME tenants and leaseholders

5.6 Clearly the aim of informing and involving BME tenants and leaseholders is integral to many of these tasks. However, very limited advice is provided in existing guidance on how barriers to BME involvement can be tackled. Workshops held for ITAs during this project agreed that considerable barriers do exist and confirmed that there is a need for more specific good practice guidance on these issues. These workshops identified the following potential barriers to effective involvement of BME tenants by ITAs:

- The direct employment relationship between the tenant panel and the ITA can be an issue if the panel does not include members from BME backgrounds or does not recognise the need for targeted measures to ensure that ‘hard-to-reach’ groups of tenants have the opportunity to get involved.

- Budgets are often quite tight and do not allow ITAs to experiment or undertake ‘additional work’ to engage with specific hard-to-reach groups.

- Capacity building work is seen by some ITAs as an essential preliminary to effective engagement.

- ITAs may have a delicate path to tread in seeking out new ways of involving BME tenants, particularly where there has been no history of such involvement by the authorities involved.
Where there is already a lack of trust between an authority and local BME tenants and communities, it is very difficult for an ITA to restore this during a relatively short period of involvement.

Particular problems are faced where the number of BME tenants is relatively small and where the authority cannot provide information on the location of BME tenants or of institutions that they may be in contact with.

These potential barriers need to be considered at the outset and reflected in the ITA brief, selection criteria and appointment process. Particular attention needs to be given to information provided by the authority to the ITA. The following sections suggest action in relation to each of these issues. Some examples of how ITAs have succeeded in engaging with BME tenants and communities are then considered.

### ITA brief

5.8 It is now expected that the brief for ITA recruitment should be set by a panel of tenants who will be the employers, although the budget for this work needs to be agreed with the authority. This panel may be newly formed at Option Appraisal stage or may build on pre-existing groups (e.g. those established for Tenant Compacts). Time and support will be needed for the panel to decide on the scope of the brief (for example how long the ITA is to be employed for and the extent of the core and wider tasks to be included). Some authorities have appointed interim ITAs to help the panel develop their brief and to employ their longer term ITA.

5.9 Community Housing Task Force guidance suggests that the core brief should include a requirement to involve tenants from BME backgrounds. It is also desirable for BME tenants to take part in discussions around the scope of the brief. Where the tenant panel does not include BME members, co-options or special meetings with BME community groups might be used to meet this guidance. In any event, it will be important for issues of diversity and ‘hard-to-reach’ groups to be discussed and to ensure that these are reflected in the brief and tested in the recruitment process. General requirements such as the following are commonly used in ITA briefs:

> ‘Engage with ‘hard-to-reach’ groups who do not normally get involved through traditional means – including young people, BME and gay and lesbian groups.’ (ITA brief for option appraisal, Gloucester City Council)

5.10 Given the barriers posed by budgets, the extent of prior information on BME needs and capacity building work discussed above, more detailed specification than this may be appropriate. The brief should specify any work that is likely to be required to fully involve BME tenants. This might include provision for preliminary research to locate BME tenants and relevant community organisations (where this work has not been done in advance), for meetings at appropriate venues and times (e.g. women-only meetings), and for interpreting and translation facilities. The more this can be specified in the brief the less excuse there can be for ITAs failing to reach BME tenants during the course of the contract. Management of the contract should include careful attention to delivery in relation to involving hard-to-reach groups.
Selection criteria and the appointment process

5.11 Having specified appropriate tasks concerning BME tenant involvement in the brief, it is important to ensure that capacity to undertake these tasks is tested in the selection criteria and appointment process. This requires selection questions relating to BME issues relevant to the local context and weight being given to performance on these questions in the appointment decision. Some authorities also require contractors to complete a contract compliance equality questionnaire.

5.12 Panel members should be sufficiently well briefed to probe the adequacy of ITA responses to these questions and to make judgments about likely performance.

In one case study authority it was reported by the successful ITA contractor that tenants on the panel had asked how the ITA would seek to involve ‘hard-to-reach groups’. While this was a fairly standard question, in this case there was evidence that tenants had thought about this issue and were quite probing in their follow-up questions, which covered the ethnic profile, skills and competencies (including language skills) of the staff who would actually be working on the contract and sought proposals the ITA had for partnerships with BME organisations (e.g. BME housing associations) to resource more intensive consultation with ‘hard-to-reach’ BME tenants.

Source: Case study interviews

5.13 Because of the ethnic diversity among BME tenants in most local authority housing estates, relatively few opportunities arise for ‘ethnic matching’ of advisers with tenants. However, it is relevant to ask ITAs more generally about the representation of BME employees amongst their advisory staff and, where opportunities do arise, to ensure that relevant languages are covered.

5.14 Where there are sizeable BME groups within the tenant population, particularly where language and cultural differences are important, it is appropriate to ask how the ITA intends to resource consultation and involvement of BME tenants. As in the above example, this should include probing on the ethnic profile, skills and competencies (including language skills) of the staff who will actually be working on the contract and any proposals the ITA has for partnerships with BME organisations (e.g. BME housing associations) to resource more intensive consultation with ‘hard-to-reach’ BME tenants.

Appointing BME-led organisations to provide independent advice

5.15 BME-led organisations have to date played a fairly limited role in the provision of independent tenant advice. However, many such organisations have specialist skills (in particular language, cultural sensitivity and trust-based relationships with local communities) that may provide an attractive alternative to nationally based ITA specialists in meeting aims of widening BME involvement in stock options work.

5.16 A recent research report on stock transfer\(^{42}\) suggests that BME housing associations could play a key role in consultation and stock option appraisals. An example of such

\(^{42}\) Hann C and Bowes E (2004) Black and minority ethnic housing associations and their involvement in local authority stock transfers. ODPM.
involvement quoted in that report is the partnership between Trafford Borough Council and Tung Sing, a Chinese housing association, and Arawak Housing Association, an association with specialist knowledge of African Caribbean communities:

‘Trafford Council recently recognised that it needed help to address the needs of the BME community effectively and so it developed a relationship with both associations. Trafford has now decided to go to ballot for a full stock transfer and has chosen Tung Sing and Arawak as its BME partners. They will help the Council with its BME strategy in consultation with the community.’

5.17 Similar relationships can be developed with other types of BME organisations, for example those with specialist skills in community regeneration as the following example of Black Card in Sheffield illustrates.

Sheffield City Council engaged Black Card to undertake consultation to inform its BME Housing Strategy. Black Card is a community-based economic regeneration agency for BME people in Sheffield, linked to the Black Community Forum (BCF), an umbrella BME community organisation. Black Card has a core staff of 10 and BCF has 97 affiliated community groups. Black Card was engaged to improve consultation processes with BME communities and to enable BME communities to influence direct service delivery and strategy including private sector housing. This generated high quality information from consultation through outreach and led to some capacity building. This was positive in building trust with BME community organisations, but was quite time consuming and a relatively expensive way of involving quite small numbers of people.

Source: Regional Workshop

5.18 Authorities with large and diverse BME tenant populations should consider appointing specialist BME advisers to work with them to supplement the more general role played by the lead ITA. However, given the relatively limited budgets made available for independent advice in most stock options studies, it will be important to ensure that funding for ‘hard-to-reach’ groups is in addition to the main contract and that opportunities are provided for suitably qualified BME-led organisations to compete for the lead ITA role rather than being constrained to a niche ‘hard-to-reach’ role.

5.19 It is also important that issues of BME tenant involvement are kept on the agenda during the management of the ITA contract. Without regular review there is a danger that more difficult aspects of consultation and involvement may be overlooked.

What information do ITAs need at the start of a contract?

5.20 One of the most common barriers to effective BME involvement reported by ITAs is the failure of local authorities to provide adequate information on BME tenants and housing needs, and BME community groups at the start of the ITA contract. This appeared to be an equally common problem in urban authorities with significant BME tenant populations as in suburban and rural areas with small and scattered BME populations. Small partial transfers, where it might have been expected that authorities would have a good idea of the tenant profile, were reported to be amongst the worst cases.
Empowering communities, improving housing: involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities

5.21 The Community Housing Task Force advises that authorities should provide ITAs with a knowledge base including:

- Profile of BME tenants by ethnic group and housing management area.

- Language profile of BME tenants by housing management area.

- A map of key BME-led organisations and general organisations with ‘reach’ into specific BME communities, and assessment of the capacity of these organisations to disseminate information, host consultation meetings etc.

- Research evidence on housing needs and preferences of BME tenants and communities.

- Information on incidence, reporting and response to racist harassment in the area and implications for community consultation.

5.22 ITAs have suggested that where local authorities are unable to provide this type of information at the outset, they should be required to fund its production either by the ITA itself or by another body.

5.23 Chapter 3 provides further details of how local authorities can collate community-mapping information and provide this in formats that meet the needs of local and Borough-wide consultation.

Formal/Statutory consultation campaigns

5.24 All of the stock investment options include periods of formal consultation when tenants’ and leaseholders’ views are sought on specific proposals to improve their homes and neighbourhoods:

- Options appraisals must demonstrate tenant involvement and support for the preferred housing investment and management option before they are signed off by GOs and CHTF.

- Stock transfers may not proceed where there is evidence that a majority of affected tenants are opposed. This is usually tested through a ballot carried out by an independent body.

43 Of authorities on 2001/2 and 2002/3 PFI, ALMO and transfer programmes. For results go to http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/whatsnew/curent%20projects.htm
Approval of ALMO bids requires evidence that tenants have been closely involved throughout the appraisal process and tenant support for ALMO as the preferred option. Guidance suggests that this may be demonstrated through a ballot or other clear evidence of tenant involvement and support such as letters from tenant associations, reports of consultation meetings or conferences.

PFI schemes involve consultation at a number of stages, most importantly once a Management Agreement to delegate housing management functions to a preferred operator has been proposed.

Demonstrating tenant support for a preferred option or, at a later stage, for a specific transfer, ALMO or PFI scheme is a major undertaking. This usually includes the elements listed in box below.

### Consultation

- A formal ‘offer document’ and related information (where possible in plain English and community languages).
- A series of public meetings, drop-in sessions and events at which the proposals can be discussed and residents’ questions answered.
- Exhibitions and Planning for Real events to communicate proposals and provide opportunities for residents to comment.
- Home visits to residents unable to attend meetings.

### Decision making

- In the case of stock options a variety of methods have been used to firm up a decision on the preferred option. Commissions of Enquiry are one such method.
- In the case of stock transfer this is usually followed by a formal ballot.
- In the case of PFI the authority must demonstrate that formal consultation has taken place and that representations from tenants and leaseholders have been taken into account.

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**Engaging BME residents in formal consultation campaigns**

ITAs and authorities therefore need to consider how the goal of involving BME tenants can be delivered in these more formal stages of consultation activities. Lessons reported elsewhere in this guide suggest that this will not be achieved unless a variety of methods, including informal methods, are used; there is sensitivity to communication needs and cultural difference; and take-up of opportunities for involvement is monitored to identify the most effective ways of reaching different groups in the community. Where BME tenants have not been reached in one phase of events it will be important to include alternative strategies in planning subsequent phases, as the following example from an option appraisal case study indicates.

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44 Tenants have a statutory right to be consulted about changes in housing management arrangements under the Housing Act 1985 s 105. PFI contracts are treated as management agreements under s27 of the same legislation. Evidence of a formal consultation process and that representations from tenants been taken into account is required before the Secretary of State can approve such an agreement.
In Authority X the first round of ITA drop-in events during the Options Appraisal stage were held at 18 locations across the city, agreed with the tenant panel and the authority to include venues likely to be visited by a range of tenant groups including BME tenants. In the event 151 tenants attended including only two BME tenants. A further 35 tenants took advantage of the telephone hotline and 20 were seen by the ITA at meetings with other groups. Overall less than 5 percent of tenants have been reached in these ways, although all will have received the ITA’s newsletters.

The next phase of consultation will therefore involve going to groups where they are – close to home – but not specifically housing groups (parent and toddler groups etc). The ITA has been provided with the council’s list of BME organisations, but has already found that a number of these organisations are not in contact with council tenants. It is intended to visit the Race Equality Council and the Racial Harassment Support Group, which is more likely to be in contact with council tenants. The ITA is also liaising with community development consultants who are in contact with a small number of BME tenants on two estates in the area.

Source: Option appraisal case study

In Canning Town PFI a variety of methods and a network of community and especially church-based organisations were used to ensure that the views of BME tenants and communities, who comprise around 30 percent of residents in the PFI area, were heard during the formal consultation period. Without specific measures, there was a danger that the views of mainly recently settled BME communities (especially African) would not be heard. Considerable ingenuity was needed to reach BME residents in an area, which has traditionally been seen as ‘white’ and where few BME led institutions, had been established. This required careful preparatory work including:

• Engaging the Residents’ Steering Group in the aim of ensuring that all residents in the PFI area would have a genuine opportunity to give feedback on the PFI proposals.

• Preliminary visits to local organisations with ‘significant’ reach into BME tenant communities to build understanding and trust.

• Advance publicity through mail shots, posters and placement in local shops, community centres, GP surgeries, bus stops etc.

• Arranging and advertising child-care assistance so that residents could attend meetings.

• Holding meetings, drop-in sessions, exhibitions and attending meetings of groups in a variety of locations (including home visits).

• Setting up exhibitions using temporary show-homes, where the preferred provider installed new kitchens, bathrooms and central heating.

• Providing a range of opportunities for people to express their views, including individual taped interviews.

• Recording and following up all of the responses received and taking these forward in negotiations with the preferred PFI contractor.

Source: Newham Council Case Study
5.27 Here is how the Newham PFI Unit summarises the experience of integrating measures to involve BME tenants within the statutory programme.

In their report to the Mayor, Newham PFI Unit wrote: We were conscious to address the barriers that normally prevent excluded groups from being involved in project proposals. The consultation programme was therefore designed to include more informal consultation structures, as well as the more traditionally used structures. Researching websites to find good practice in BME consultation, as well as talking to a local organisation (Race on The Agenda) and undertaking consultation work with local BME groups before the statutory consultation programme, all helped to identify the barriers and good practice we could use.

When putting up posters and distributing flyers to advertise the events, we visited local Afro-Caribbean hairdressers and barbers, to ask them to help advertise the events, and chatted about the PFI proposals. We also visited local shops in Barking Road, which were non-English, such as food and clothes shops.

The PFI Unit and Independent Tenant Adviser, and the Council’s Neighbourhood Facilitator, visited local organisations that have a predominant BME membership. One was Families at Canning Town; another was Sure Start, who both support parents with young children. We also visited Abraham’s Nursery in Radland Road E16, where a women-only group attends English lessons and art classes. The group consisted of women from Somalia, Kosovo, India, and other countries. The general standard of English was very poor, and this was a very hard group to try to consult with. Two teachers gave assistance in communication with the group.

The PFI information packs also took consideration of language barriers. Attached to the cover letters were details of the Council’s language-line services, in English, Urdu, Gujurati, Bengali and Punjabi. Services for Braille, Cassette, large-print and translation were offered. We received requests for the information to be printed in large-print, which we sent. Translations were requested in Vietnamese, Chinese and Turkish. As the information pack contains a lot of information, we arranged appointments for the residents with translators, and a PFI officer explained the PFI proposals.

Written comments were taken by the translators and signed by the residents. Visits and telephone calls took place with local community workers involved in St. Luke’s church congregation, and the Vicar of the Keir Hardie church. They were sent information packs and posters to advertise the main events/meetings. They were chosen as a good point to contact to filter information through to their congregations and community groups, which are predominantly from BME communities.

key issues:

- Tenant involvement in high level steering groups and boards is a requirement of all stock investment options.
- The challenge for organisations is to make their boards open to tenants who ordinarily do not take part – to move away from ‘the usual suspects’. A successful way of tackling this has been to treat steering groups for stock options as ‘new institutions’ with a variety of access routes.
- Concepts of ‘representativeness’ should not dominate attempts to improve the level of involvement from BME tenants and communities in governance structures. Instead organisations should seek ‘reflect’ the communities that they serve and fulfil the following three criteria:
  - Quality of board members
  - Accountability of the board as a whole to local communities
  - Utilise board members to access new networks
- In order to achieve increased participation, organisations need succession planning processes that:
  - Overcome the inertia that prevents BME tenants becoming involved
  - Equip tenants with the skills and confidence to participate

External support with training and confidence building (for example across a single authority or group of authorities) can help to recruit a pool of tenants with the skills and confidence to get involved.
Chapter 6
BME involvement in steering groups and boards

Introduction

6.1 All of the current stock investment options provide opportunities for small groups of tenants to enjoy high levels of involvement. Often such groups are said to be the domain of the ‘usual suspects’. This has led to a focus on the ‘representativeness’ of steering groups and boards. Housing organisations need to provide opportunities for BME tenants to join boards and steering groups to enable the make up of these bodies to reflect the communities they serve. However, this chapter questions the relationship between representation and participation, and looks at ways in which inertia can be overcome and how training initiatives can build skills and confidence to achieve wider participation in these groups over time.

6.2 The current requirements for tenant involvement in the governance structures of transfer organisations vary according to the stock option which has been adopted:

- PFI contracts are tendered and managed by residents’ steering groups, made up of tenants and leaseholders in the properties affected by the proposed scheme.

- Requirements for ALMO and LSVT (shadow) boards are less strict, but:
  - The current option appraisal guidance makes clear the requirement for tenant involvement and engagement in the process.
  - The Housing Corporation emphasises the importance of ongoing tenant involvement in governance structures since ‘participation by residents in the activities of their landlord is essential to effective decision making on services and to implementing investment and regeneration proposals’.45

6.3 There is also an expectation that tenant involvement will continue after transfer has taken place. There is an explicit requirement that transfer contributes to meeting the needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities46. As part of this commitment there is an expectation that the successor landlord ensures the ongoing participation of BME tenants and communities in their work. It is therefore essential that tenants from BME communities are enabled to participate in these structures as members of the wider tenant body.

Role and constitution of boards and steering groups

6.4 These structures usually consist of between 10 and 20 individuals and the number of places for tenants is usually limited. However, they are important because they take many of the decisions which shape the stock investment process and the way in which their organisations develop. ALMO and LSVT boards and PFI steering groups represent high-level governance structures. Their decision-making is predominantly strategic and concerned with the future direction of the organisation and its activities. It is therefore imperative that all tenants are provided with the opportunity to engage

45 Housing Corporation (2000) Communities in Control. (p.2). This guidance together with the related guidance Making Consumers Count have been revised and brought together by the Housing Corporation into an Involvement policy for the housing association sector. The new policy was launched in February 2004.

46 Annex E, Housing Transfer Manual 2003 Programme (ODPM)
with boards and steering groups if they wish to. Tenant involvement is seen as an important element at this level to lend legitimacy to the organisation through providing a user input.

6.5 In the case of stock transfers and ALMOs, board members are usually drawn from three main constituencies, as illustrated in Figure 6.1. The routes to board membership often differ in terms of the method of selection of members, with independent members usually appointees of the organisation rather than being elected by a constituency membership. Authorities need to ensure that barriers to access by BME tenants are tackled in relation to each route of election/appointment of board members.

Figure 6.1: Common board constituencies for transfer organisations

BME involvement in boards

6.6 The survey undertaken as part of this project indicated that there is significant BME representation on boards of existing LSVT RSLs (in some cases the survey was carried out several years after transfer). In areas with a significant BME population, 79 percent of LSVT RSLs had at least one board member from BME communities.

48 A BME population over 3% or more in the 1991 census.
BME board members represented 19 percent of all board members, with representatives coming from all three constituencies. It was encouraging to see that BME board members were more likely to have been recruited through the tenant and local authority constituencies than through the independent route, where BME representatives might have been more easily headhunted. In these authorities BME representation may be more embedded in the formal processes that are frequently involved in electing/nominating tenant and local authority board members, indicating that they are following more democratic routes to the board, providing additional legitimacy to their role.

6.7 However, our second survey of LSVT, ALMO and PFI shadow boards and steering groups among authorities in the 2001 and 2002 programmes had a significantly lower representation from BME communities, demonstrating that this will remain an issue for the governance of housing organisations and one which all authorities undertaking option appraisals and subsequent investment options will need to address.

Why should organisations seek to Involve BME tenants in governance?

6.8 Whilst it is desirable for new organisations established to develop and manage stock investment options to encourage involvement of BME tenants and residents in steering groups and boards, they should not confuse involvement and participation with representativeness. In the survey undertaken as part of the project, some local authorities and new landlords had aimed to include at least one BME tenant on their board. However, there is a danger that this may be perceived as tokenistic unless it is backed up by other measures to involve BME tenants and communities in wider governance issues.

‘Reflecting the Community’

6.9 It is useful to distinguish between the goals of reflecting the diversity of the community served from that of ensuring the representativeness of new governance structures. Only a small number of tenants can be involved at high levels of governance. It is unrealistic to expect any tenant to represent the views of all tenants. Indeed in the case of registered housing associations it is clear that the responsibility of all board members is the well being of the organisation rather than to represent any specific interests. Similarly BME tenant board members cannot be expected to represent all BME tenants and communities, especially in areas with a diverse ethnic population. Tenants bring issues from a consumer/user perspective, but should be treated as interested individuals not representatives. It is therefore more realistic to expect boards to broadly reflect the diversity of the communities they serve rather than to seek the unattainable goal of ‘representativeness’.

6.10 Steering Groups and Boards can reflect the needs and aspirations of BME tenants and communities by operating in an open and accountable way and genuinely seeking out community views. This involves a two-way channel of communication between representative bodies and communities. Moreover, involvement of BME tenants and communities and other hard to reach groups should be a standard item on the agenda of meetings. In this way, the issue will not be squeezed out by harder considerations such as budgets and development programmes.

6.11 An organisation’s governance strategy should therefore be to widen the opportunity for all tenants to become involved and this goal should be ‘owned’ by all members of the board, not just those from BME backgrounds. All tenants should be encouraged and enabled to participate. Where there are BME tenants and communities it is essential that organisations ensure that individuals from those communities are enabled to take part if they wish to. In addition, organisations should seek to ensure that their boards meet three goals:

• Quality: The quality of individuals who emerge to participate is of greater importance than their representativeness of any one constituency. Their willingness and commitment to participate is paramount. To ensure that those who are willing to participate can do so, organisations should ensure that tenants are provided with the skills and knowledge to participate effectively (see below).

• Accountability: Boards need to be accountable to the wider tenant body and community, not just small pockets of residents and tenants. This involves communication and dialogue between the board members and the community. Only then will board members be able to make effective decisions, which benefit the community, and the tenants which the organisation serves. One method of achieving this is the estate walkabouts operated by some landlords in which board members as well as officers can participate to obtain direct feedback on residents’ views (see boxed example below).

• Access to other networks: Encouraging members of hard-to-reach groups to feel confident in participating in high-level decision making has potential benefits in accessing new networks which would otherwise not be represented within the decision making arena. It is not only tenants from BME communities who offer this, but also women and younger tenants – groups whose voices are often less well heard in the boardroom. Their participation does not guarantee access to these networks but provides more of an opportunity than if these individuals had not been involved.
How can BME tenants be involved in higher level decision making?

6.12 Chapter 2 outlined the barriers faced by BME tenants in being involved in decisions about stock transfer. Included in this was a discussion of the language and cultural barriers faced, along with issues of mistrust of organisations and the lack of ethnic diversity within the boards and staff of transfer organisations. However, our research indicates that BME tenant participation in steering groups and boards can be encouraged. Successful examples of involvement of BME tenants in governance structures found in our case studies involved three main elements:

- **Overcoming the inertia** to become involved.
- **Providing tenants with confidence and skills** to participate at higher level decision making
- **Succession planning** to enable new members to join boards and steering groups.

**Overcoming inertia**

6.13 There is a common view, particularly amongst hard-to-reach groups of tenants, that some existing local structures for participation and engagement, such as tenants’ associations, are dominated by ‘the usual suspects’ (often older, white tenants) and that there is no room for other groups to get involved. Organisations need to be creative to encourage BME tenants and other under-represented groups to participate.

6.14 One method of attracting improved participation is by treating participative structures such as shadow boards and steering groups as new institutions. Because of the negative view of some existing participative structures, stock investment can provide an opportunity to create new and more open structures. For example by creating a variety of access points, rather than starting only from pre-existing groups, authorities can send a message to all tenants that there is a genuine opportunity to get involved. Similarly by seeking residents’ views on what are the key issues for them it can be possible to engage with BME and other under-represented groups by highlighting the new agenda to be taken forward. Newham Council have been proactive in taking this approach with their PFI project in Canning Town.
In Newham, PFI has provided the impetus for a ‘new’ means of engagement to be developed. The PFI Resident Steering Groups (RSGs) have been treated as new institutions providing an opportunity to use innovative approaches to recruit tenant and leaseholder members:

- While existing Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) and Tenant Liaison Committees (TLCs) have been involved, there is no requirement that RSG members have previously been involved in such groups.
- Door-knocking, Fun Days and ‘headhunting’ have proved effective in identifying the issues that are important to residents, in attracting new blood and in achieving wider participation in RSGs than in other forums in the same geographical areas.
- Networks are being built between RSGs and the wider voluntary sector, including BME community groups, to ensure that they embody local social action and continue to be open to new members.

Source: Newham Council Case Study

6.15 However, there is a need to ensure that these boards remain open to new members and do not simply replicate the existing closed structures. The cycle of ‘forming, norming and storming’ needs to continue. This can be difficult to achieve in the short term, particularly with complex topics such as PFI where the ‘norming’ stage of developing a common language and collective capacity to recruit and manage a private contractor involves a steep learning curve for all involved.

6.16 An ITA interviewed in one of our case studies suggested that steering groups need to go through ‘closed phases’ where new recruitment would conflict with the need for the group to control the process. It is essential that once the need for ‘a closed phase’ has ended (e.g. the next stage of the process has been reached and the PFI contract has been let) there are routes which enable newcomers to become involved and that the culture of the governance structures foster inclusivity in the longer term.

Training – Skills and Confidence

6.17 In order to move away from closed boards and representative structures towards more inclusive organisations, organisations need to plan for succession. The two main barriers which prevent high-level engagement by more tenants are:

- A lack of skills for participating effectively in decision-making.
- A lack of confidence that they are able to:
  - Stand for election
  - Participate effectively at this level

6.18 BME tenants can be disproportionately affected by these, especially lack of confidence, in part because of mistrust of the organisation. A (perceived) lack of skills can also undermine the confidence of tenants to put themselves forward to be on the boards and steering groups of transfer organisations. The end result can be a self-fulfilling circle where boards have limited representation, restricted reach and pose a future problem in attracting new board members when existing members resign/retire.
Chapter 6

BME involvement in steering groups and boards

Succession planning

6.19 Succession planning processes should therefore be part of the agenda of boards themselves, but our research suggests that this process can be accelerated by external support for example with training and confidence building. In order to break this cycle, tenants need to be provided with the opportunity to acquire both the skills and confidence to stand for election to and then participate in boards and steering groups.

A number of our case study organisations were considering how such support could be provided, for example the ideas of a consortium of landlords in the West Midlands to commission a development programme was suggested by one interviewee. Greatest progress with such ideas was found in two east London Boroughs.

To provide tenants and leaseholders with additional skills and confidence they need to get involved in TRAs and RSGs, Newham Council’s Tenant Involvement Unit (TIU) has commissioned an independent trainer to provide 17 free courses open to all tenants and leaseholders. Topics include:

- Computer skills.
- Fundraising.
- Effective and Happy meetings.
- Public speaking.
- Increasing participation.
- Newsletters.
- Report writing, letter writing and committee secretary skills.
- Negotiation skills and striking a deal.

Courses are delivered in a central location with choice of evening (13) and day (4) sessions. Transport is provided to and from the venue and childcare costs are paid.

The intended outcomes of these initiatives are:

- Personal skills development for tenants and residents to enable them to participate in decision making as well as providing transferable skills for other areas of their lives.
- To provide a wider pool of tenants and leaseholders for future involvement.

This generic approach has been seen as very successful at engaging women and BME tenants, as well as other hard-to-reach groups. To acknowledge the achievement of students successfully taking a range of these courses a graduation ceremony was held in July 2002. Although it was not designed as such, the event was seen by the Council’s Tenant Involvement Unit (TIU) as the de facto BME event of the TIU calendar. Following the success of this programme TIU arranged a similar programme for 2002/3. It will be interesting to see what opportunities emerge for programme ‘graduates’ to get involved in tenant and resident associations and tenant liaison committees.

Source: Newham Council Case Study

The Ocean Estate in Tower Hamlets is a New Deal for Communities (NDC) area. The majority of the funding from this programme is now being used towards securing the transfer of the estate to Sanctuary HA.

It was recognised by the NDC team that participation in the NDC board and other representative structures was limited. However, it was also recognised that there was a shortage of tenants and residents who were willing to participate.

The Community Engagement Manager is currently in the process of establishing a series of courses aimed at providing tenants with the skills and confidence to stand for election to the board. In particular he is hoping to encourage younger people from within the community to participate.

Source: Tower Hamlets Case Study
Chapter 7
Reaching BME tenants

key issues:

• All tenants can be ‘hard to reach’. Some BME tenants face specific barriers that can make them harder to reach in most circumstances. Organisations need to have an understanding of their local communities and tenants if they are to engage with BME tenants.

• Community Leaders and organisations provide a useful access point into BME communities. However, their reach can be limited and partnerships with community organisations should be audited to ensure successful outcomes.

• Language issues need to be addressed through interpretation and translations although it is important to avoid assumptions about literacy in community languages. This can be tackled through surveys of communication needs and preferences and use of ICT to provide flexible formats for interpreting services.

• Housing organisations should use a mix of formal and informal methods to involve BME tenants in decisions on stock investment. Innovative and informal methods may include:
  ❑ Engaging front-line staff in information provision using their individual as well as job role networks
  ❑ Using venues frequented by members of BME communities such as shops, churches, community centres and schools
  ❑ Door-knocking and word of mouth
  ❑ Stalls, and displays at events community-focussed events such as festivals, fetes and melas
  ❑ ‘Fun-days’ and other lighter events into which housing messages can be integrated. Often opportunities are taken to build in opportunities for BME groups to get involved (e.g. through food, costume or music stalls)
  ❑ Community radio and other media.

• Given that participation is often depicted as a ladder or continuum, it is important to provide opportunities for involvement at a range of levels on a continuum, not just at the highest and lowest.
Introduction

7.1 Most tenants do not want to be actively involved in high-level involvement groups, but many do want opportunities to express their views and to influence decisions that directly affect them. This chapter explores the notion of ‘hard-to-reach’ groups and considers some of the ways in which BME tenants can be reached. It places a considerable emphasis on informal methods of involvement and the need to create opportunities for intermediate levels of involvement between high-level participation and low-level information giving.

Who are ‘hard to reach’ groups?

Who is hard to reach?
- Younger tenants
- Ethnic minorities
- Those living in remote areas
- Disabled and elderly
- People with literacy problems
- Those in work

EVERYONE

Source: Presentation to Welsh Federation of Housing Associations by Paul Smith, Heart of England Consultancy

7.2 The statement above on tenant participation encapsulates the difficulties faced in involving tenants. How many tenants turn up to meetings? How many tenants complete and return questionnaires without incentive? The answer in both cases is usually a small minority. Therefore, it is fair to say most tenants can be considered hard to reach, not just those who come from BME communities.

7.3 Engagement of BME tenants should be seen within the context of overall tenant participation. The Tenant Participation Manager of one authority suggested:

‘The tenant doesn’t have a problem communicating with the housing officer. The housing officer and organisation have a problem communicating with the tenant.’

7.4 The main focus of good practice on overcoming barriers to involvement of ‘hard-to-reach’ groups is on securing wider involvement through communication and consultation strategies during option appraisal and in subsequent formal consultation on preferred stock options (see chapters 4 and 5). This carries the difficult task of ensuring that:

- The majority of residents are aware of the investment options being negotiated; and
- They have the opportunity to express their views.
Why should tenants be involved?

7.5 It is worth reflecting why it is important that hard-to-reach groups are included. This is important – both for the tenants themselves and the organisation:

• Information provided to tenants enables them to be informed consumers.

• Information received from tenants can enable housing organisations to make informed decisions based on consumer opinion, preference and experience (this can be particularly important where BME tenants have distinctive aspirations and preferences (e.g. in relation to building design and facilities)

• Involvement in decision-making enables tenants to feel that they are contributing to a better community and environment.

Are BME tenants harder to reach?

7.6 Care should be taken not to conflate BME groups with ‘hard-to-reach’ groups in all instances. To label all BME tenants in all local authorities, and even in areas within local authorities, as being ‘hard to reach’ for the same reasons would be false. Power relationships, representation and reach within a community vary according to the community’s composition. Tenants’ views and perceptions will differ not just on the basis of their ethnicity and culture but also on the basis of more personalised factors such as age, gender and education. Indeed, in some areas white tenants may be considered ‘hard to reach’ because of the predominance of one or more BME groups.

7.7 Furthermore, local authorities and transfer organisations should consider the influence of established over less established BME tenants and communities. Newer BME groups may find access to decision making less easy than some older BME communities. On the other hand newer groups may be more ‘in touch’ with and therefore easier to contact through community organisations which reflect and respect their language and culture.

Why are BME tenants hard to reach?

7.8 Despite the caveats above, some BME tenants are often hard to reach and this is the result of very specific factors, such as:

• Language barriers

• Racism and harassment

• Mistrust of the organisation

7.9 These are outlined in more detail in chapter 2.
7.10 BME tenants often make up a small proportion of all tenants. Unlike some BME communities in the private sector, BME tenants from specific ethnic groups are often dispersed through the organisation’s housing stock and not spatially concentrated. This means that quite careful planning is required to reach specific BME groups.

7.11 Chapter 3 outlined how local authorities need to map their local communities if they are to understand their needs. The lack of knowledge of exactly who the BME tenants and communities are, is part of the reason why BME tenants remain hard to reach. Some organisations are aware of the main ethnic communities amongst their tenants, but only a minority have comprehensive data about their communities and tenants, first languages spoken etc.

7.12 Tenants’ ability to interpret the written form of languages when materials are translated can hinder the dissemination of information. And the problem remains that, just as English-speaking tenants often discard leaflets without reading them, so too might BME tenants with translated leaflets.

7.13 As outlined in chapter 6, traditional consultation structures (e.g. tenants’ and residents’ associations) can sometimes appear to be dominated by older white tenants. The effects of this can be two-fold. It may act as a barrier to encouraging BME tenants to participate, alienating them by creating an unfamiliar or uncomfortable environment, but it may also underpin mistrust of the organisation because it is seen to reinforce the perception that only certain sections of the tenant body are listened to and included in decision making.

7.14 It is important to recognise the difference between and within BME communities:

- Diversity between BME communities. It is easy to assume that all BME tenants and communities have the same needs. Yet as explained above, different communities have different levels of access to power and decision-making.

- Within BME communities there are differences of needs, opinions and power. Divisions can often open along lines of gender and age. For example, the Ocean estate in Tower Hamlets has highlighted the diversity and tension which exists within some parts of the Bengali community, where younger Bengalis feel a greater alienation than older generations.

7.15 Local authorities should also remember that BME tenants are part of a local geographic community based around neighbourhoods. Whilst acknowledging that BME tenants and communities may have specific needs and may require further enabling in order to engage with the process, it is equally important to recognise the concerns that they share with other tenants about their housing and neighbourhoods.

How are BME tenants reached?

7.16 Formal methods of involvement remain the focus for most organisations’ attempts to engage with tenants. Often these strategies are based on newsletters and meetings with the odd questionnaire or focus group to secure feedback. However, the evidence is that, in most areas, these formal methods fail to fully engage ‘hard-to-reach’ groups who are unlikely to have sufficient links with existing groups or to attend meetings or respond to written communications, especially where these are only in English.
7.17 It is increasingly recognised that informal methods can play an important role in overcoming the mistrust (sometimes perceived as apathy) which hinders attempts by organisations to engage BME tenants and communities and other residents in plans to improve homes and communities.

7.18 Our research provided a ‘menu’ of formal and informal methods that have been used successfully in different local contexts to engage BME tenants. It is important for authorities to select those methods that are relevant to the local context and not to be afraid of trial and error since not everything will work everywhere. Many of these methods will only work if authorities employ staff to reflect the communities they serve and if they are backed by a clear commitment to listen and to take on board what is said.

7.19 Figure 7.1 provides our menu of options, some of which are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus groups</strong></td>
<td>These can lead to an informed discussion on specific issues because the focus group can be controlled to take account of ethnicity, gender and location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Outreach workers</strong></td>
<td>The local authority can recruit link workers who will be able to bridge the gap between a community and the institution. Often these workers have specific language skills and cultural awareness to break down barriers with the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighbourhood Conferences</strong></td>
<td>A strategic approach to bring together local government with the governed. This often works best when black and minority ethnic communities have been involved in the design and issues agenda for the conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community surveys</strong></td>
<td>Black and minority ethnic tenants are trained to carry out a survey of their peers on preferred housing investment options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citizen Juries</strong></td>
<td>Local black and minority ethnic tenants are recruited randomly to work for a number of days on scoping a problem. Hearing expert advice and making recommendations. Again, this could work well on local housing investment options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using local media</strong></td>
<td>Community radio stations and newspapers can be used to advertise meetings or initiate a debate on housing options with black and minority ethnic communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women only meetings</strong></td>
<td>Women may feel uncomfortable about making practical contributions within a mixed setting. However, this may change substantially if the meeting is for women only and is convened with by a culturally aware and woman facilitator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate Venues</strong></td>
<td>It is important to map out local groups, organisations and places of worship. Meetings may need to be conducted in a local church, mosque, temple or synagogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Force organisations</strong></td>
<td>Use these grass roots organisations as a conduit between tenants and housing organisations and build trust with local communities. This could work well where there has been a breakdown of trust between tenants and housing organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community calendar</strong></td>
<td>Strategically focus on key events within BME communities that mobilise large numbers of people. Use this as a vehicle to access BME tenants and explain housing investment options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal networks</strong></td>
<td>This is based on outreach work (above). Housing organisations work with existing and informal networks of BME tenants and communities that are based on shops, clubs and schools. Individuals drawn from this network over a period of time can become a sounding board for advice on housing investment options.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CURS Project Team
We now consider examples of formal and informal approaches in turn.

**Formal methods**

*Translation and interpreting*

7.21 The most common means of engaging with BME tenants and communities is through *translation* of written material into community languages. But what about those who speak a language but cannot read it? Those languages which have no written form? Indeed, is the written form the best medium to get the message across to a large population? Are there more effective and efficient means of doing this? Care should be taken that materials can be understood by those groups who are being targeted.

7.22 *Interpreting services* may be essential if a two-way dialogue is to be established. For this to be effective it is often important to have an independent translator. Although housing staff members may be able to interpret, they may be unsuitable as conduits in participation. They may not be trusted by the tenant and may, albeit inadvertently, not provide a full translation of either party’s remarks. Housing organisations should consider establishing a scheme where staff are used to provide help with translation. This will help to accredit skills and also maintain consistently high standards. Similarly there can be problems with the common practice of using family members (especially children) to translate. Here there may be a failure to fully communicate key technical and financial details to tenants.

7.23 Many authorities now make use of ICT to provide translation and interpreting services in more flexible and accessible formats. For example key details of stock option proposals may be presented on pre-recorded tapes or videos. More interactive services such as Language Line can provide interpreting services to facilitate question and answer by telephone. The London Borough of Newham supports the Newham Language Shop to provide a range of services including a video based interpreting service supported by a strong evidence base on each of the local linguistic minorities.

7.24 The *London Borough of Newham* has commissioned surveys from the Newham Language Shop of each of the main linguistic minorities in the Borough. These surveys provide a profile of each minority, their language and communication skills (written and verbal), their contact with Council services and their preferred methods of communication with the Council. This evidence base enables services such as housing to plan effective communication strategies for each group. Newham Language Shop also provides a video based interpreting service available through ‘language kiosks’ in the Councils’ customer service centres and other outlets in the Borough. A summary of the findings of the Tamil speakers’ survey is shown below:
Empowering communities, improving housing:

involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities

7.25 Many LSVTs, ALMOs and PFIs attempted to access their BME tenants via known BME community organisations. The postal survey revealed that 36 percent of existing LSVTs and 52 percent of all current schemes used community networks or organisations (including ‘community leaders’) as a means of access. They were seen to provide an obvious access point into communities for landlords to engage with BME tenants.

7.26 However community leaders and organisations can only offer a partial reach into some communities. Although the power of some leaders is demonstrated through their ability to draw the ‘respect’ of substantial sections of the community, they may sometimes be paternalistic and prevent both wider dissemination and participation. This factor is recognised by some landlords. A useful approach is to audit the ‘reach’ that each community organisation has among members of target BME tenant groups (see chapter 3). It is important that such audits include not only BME specific organisations but also others with a high ‘reach’ into specific BME communities.
Where communities lack the critical mass in localities to form community organisations or are less visible, access via community leaders may be difficult. Therefore housing organisations need to be aware of the relevance, reach, representation and effectiveness of using such a gateway. It is also important to recognise that many of the community members that such organisations are in contact with may not be tenants of the authority, while conversely BME tenants may not be in contact with these organisations.

7.28 It should be noted that in addition to BME community leaders, bodies and institutions, other more generic organisations in local areas can have a significant reach to tenants from BME groups. In Canning Town, the PFI has utilised local Methodist and Anglican churches where a significant number of the congregation are African tenants.

7.29 However, sensitivity and respect should be exercised in working with these organisations, especially where their main purpose is faith based, e.g. churches and mosques. As the Chair of one local NDC Board in Tower Hamlets said: ‘The Mosque is a place for prayer’.

Informal Methods

Utilising staff

‘If you’ve got a population that is diverse, you have a workforce which is diverse.’

(Tenant Participation Manager, Peterborough CC)

7.30 Involving front-line staff in the delivery of information can break down some of the barriers to some BME tenants and communities. Staff from BME communities can act as a bridge to the communities and help to build trust between them and the organisation. It is therefore important that organisations look at the profile of their staff to see how they can assist in meeting their respective communities’ needs.
7.31 *Accessing Networks:* Officers within organisations can have their own personal networks within the community, involving both community institutions and leaders, and individual tenants and residents. These networks can provide invaluable opportunities for providing and receiving information and for enhancing engagement between the organisation and BME tenants and communities. In a number of organisations studied for this research, the researchers recognised that it was individual officers’ own networks, which were being utilised. In a number of cases this included outreach work beyond contractual commitments. Housing organisations must recognise that:

- These networks belong to individuals not the organisation.
- The resources which individuals expend in building these networks should be recognised.
- The fragility of these networks – if the officer leaves the organisation, the networks can collapse.

*Go to the people*

7.32 The image of *Desmond’s Barber’s shop* (from Channel 4) has been a common image from the research – the idea that there are informal venues, which become the focus for community discussion. Organisations are increasingly aware that venues frequented by members of BME communities are a valuable opportunity for the dissemination of information. Other venues in local areas include churches, community centres and schools. Birmingham City Council have even used the entrance of a local supermarket to meet tenants and provide information.

*Peterborough* has a significantly large Portuguese community in their locality, a number of whom are tenants of the authority. They have found it difficult to engage with this group because of their low visibility and lack of community organisations. However, they have recently utilised a local Portuguese café to distribute information about the transfer. This has primarily used posters and leaflets.

Also in *Peterborough*, 96% of tenants were reached by an intensive programme of door knocking. The main purpose of the door knocking was to alert tenants to the proposed transfer (prior to a ballot in November 2003). However, it had an important secondary purpose as it enabled the council to profile their tenants and to collect information about the ethnicity of tenants and their householders. The council employed a team of doorknockers made up of existing housing staff. Doorknokers were sensitive to the language needs of BME households and carried a card with a range of translations on it. Appointments were arranged for speakers of the required language to call back at a convenient time. Three visits were made to establish contact, with visits being made at a variety of times of day.

The council consider this to have been extremely successful. It has enabled them to profile their tenants and identify BME tenants, whilst a turn out of 65 per cent for the transfer ballot is seen as a success of this contact in raising awareness and providing information on the proposals.

Source: Peterborough City Council Case Study
Chapter 7
reaching BME tenants

7.33 The example from Peterborough shows the importance of using front-line staff in the consultation process. Findings from the Walsall and Tower Hamlets case studies consolidate this point. All three examples also show that it is important to get staff to be ‘on message’ about the aims and objectives of the transfer. Apart from having an opportunity to shape the transfer proposal, a structured training programme that increases awareness, communication and presentation skills is also needed. Outreach and involvement is not a one-way street from the housing organisation. The process from option appraisal to ballot and beyond provides many opportunities for housing organisations to listen and collate information about tenants’ aspirations, issues and problems. This will help with further attempts at consultation and involvement by providing a better base of data.

Using community events

7.34 A popular way of involving tenants in stock investment options is to use community events to spread the message. Organisations can have stalls, displays or even a presence at events such as festivals, fetes, melas and other community-focussed events. The focus should be on ensuring that the organisation is seen as a part of the community. However, sensitivity is required to ensure that housing issues are not seen to be ‘gate-crashing’ or subverting the purpose of such events.

7.35 Alternatively many organisations have organised ‘fun-days’ and other lighter events into which housing messages can be integrated. Often opportunities are taken to build in opportunities for BME groups to get involved (e.g. through food, costume or music stalls). Again there is a need to be aware of cultural sensitivities as the example of the housing organisation that decided to have a pig-roast as part of a fun-day seeking to attract Asian tenants. Another potential hazard can be diary clashes with other events that target groups are likely to be involved in. This was exemplified by the landlord that decided to hold a BME forum meeting on the night of an England-Turkey football match on an estate where Turks formed one of the larger BME groups.

7.36 Awareness days can also provide opportunities for service users to control the agenda. For example the user led Camden Homelessness Forum held an awareness day to break down misconceptions about homelessness and homeless households in the Borough and to secure the involvement and co-operation of other service providers.

Word of mouth

7.37 Word of mouth can be an effective means of spreading information about stock investment decisions. Where communities are close knit and there are obvious locations for conversation to take place, the opportunity for information to be exchanged by word of mouth is attractive. This method relies on providing accurate information in the first instance including:
• Displaying posters and leaflets in community centres, community shops and other well-used locations, facilities and service providers.

• Identifying prominent and influential community members to start the process.

7.38 The chair of the board of one case study organisation was keen to point to ‘word of mouth’ as being the most effective method of providing information to tenants. He suggested that residents meet in local shops, community centres and schools and talk about local issues. In addition, if a number of key individuals were provided with the information in the first instance it could be passed around the community by word of mouth.

7.39 Caution needs to be exercised over this method. Word of mouth communication can be effective in its reach, but accuracy may be compromised as the message descends down the chain. Misinformation and rumour spreads at least as fast and persuasively as ‘fact’. Organisations should attempt to ensure that this information remains accurate.

New forms of media

7.40 Innovative use of media opportunities can enhance the reach of organisations, particularly amongst BME communities. Use of local community radio stations has been an effective way of reaching BME tenants and communities.

Peterborough City Council utilised the local community radio station, Radio Ramadan, during the holy month of Ramadan. They were provided with a regular slot on the radio programmes, with information provided in three community languages. The staff feel it has been highly effective in reaching large numbers of BME communities.

Source: Peterborough City Council Case Study

The Continuum of involvement

7.41 One of the most enduring images used to consider involvement issues is Arnstein’s ladder of participation. A criticism made of this image is the assumption that ‘higher is better’. Instead it may be more appropriate to think of a continuum of involvement opportunities which people can select from according to their own preferences.
7.42 Our observation of the stock options process is that in too many cases participation is focused on the two extremes of this continuum and this can restrict the opportunities for tenants to become involved. This is a hindrance to involving all tenants and the challenge for organisations should be to provide a range of opportunities for involvement which meet tenants’ time, energy and resource commitments. As explained in chapter 6, enabling tenants to operate within this continuum is important. Training to provide both the skills and confidence with which to engage at a higher level is required if tenants are able to manoeuvre into a position where they feel confident.

7.43 It is important to recognise that people will only want to contribute a finite amount of time and energy to their participation. The challenge for housing organisations is to widen the options for involvement by training and skills, opportunities and structures.

7.44 Opportunities include:

- Estate walkabouts (see chapter 6).

- Area-based committees and panels – these require less intensive participation and require a lower level of commitment and responsibility than higher-level involvement.

- Tenants’ Associations – despite concerns about the representativeness and openness of these bodies, they provide an opportunity for engagement by all tenants.

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Resources

7.45 Finally a few words about resources, since time and money are always in short supply, not least during stock options decisions:

Time

“I think too many housing landlords employ one or two TPOs and expect them to do all the tenant participation type work, or ITA agencies. If more is done to find out what else goes on in the community, what other groups exist, who is best placed to talk to them and then time is made to go and meet them, ‘hard to reach groups’ can be accessed! It definitely needs a strategic approach and is not just about which tools and techniques work and of course it’s about the adequate resourcing for this.”

Source: Case study interview with Independent Tenant Adviser

7.46 Timescales for stock investment options are tight. This should not be used as an excuse for not engaging with tenants. Time should be used in preparing for tenant participation, engaging with tenants and assessing the results of this engagement.

7.47 Organisations also need to acknowledge the time which tenants put into participation without remuneration. In one PFI organisation, the RSG met every two weeks for almost four years.

Financial Resources

7.48 Effective consultation does require additional resources. However, if the resources are used effectively, increased resource allocation can result in wider participation amongst residents and tenants. An officer in one PFI authority said:

‘I think the issue is that the schemes have given residents a better choice in how they can communicate with the council, and this could be due to committing higher funding for PFI resident consultation than other schemes, e.g. the use of an independent tenant advisor and prize-draw incentives.’
Chapter 8

Wider benefits

**key issues:**

The stock investment process provides opportunities to address wider community issues. For BME tenants and communities the wider benefits have included:

- Harnessing the role of housing investment through employment and training initiatives, leading to greater investment benefits for neighbourhoods and communities and building trust between tenants and housing organisations.

- Developing new homes of an appropriate design and mix to cater for the needs of BME tenants as part of an overall programme of matching supply to community needs and aspirations.

- Seeking to promote community cohesion through the stock investment programme itself and related community capacity building activities.

- Responding to community concerns such as racist harassment and replicating good practice from locally based anti-racist harassment projects to the stock investment process; for example by contract clauses included in PFI contracts.

- Reviewing support and involvement strategies for refugees and asylum seekers. In some cases, these show a level of flexibility and dynamism that could be replicated in wider involvement strategies.

Opportunities such as these should be actively sought out from the outset by identifying and responding to the issues of concern to BME tenants and communities. In this way a broader base of support for stock investment and the new organisations can be built.
Chapter 8  
wider benefits

Introduction

8.1 Stock investment processes have brought much wider benefits to BME tenants and communities than participation in decision making alone. By tracking the progress made by some organisations after transfer we have identified some of the issues that can be addressed alongside stock investment strategies. This chapter examines examples of wider benefits in relation to employment and training opportunities, [housing development and design], community cohesion, tackling racist harassment and responding to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

8.2 ODPM guidance stresses the need to include broad aims in option appraisal to reflect:

- Delivery of the decent homes target and other national/regional priorities
- Tenants’ and leaseholders’ aspirations and priorities
- The authority’s statutory housing duties
- Wider housing market and supply and demand issues and
- Neighbourhood renewal and regeneration strategies.51

8.3 In the past consultation on stock investment decisions has been rightly criticised for a narrow ‘technocratic’ focus on housing investment issues and a failure to engage with the more immediate priorities of residents, which often focus on crime and anti-social behaviour or day-to-day repairs. This may provide little incentive for many people, particularly the young, to engage with such processes that are seen as irrelevant to their own concerns. If organisations can address more immediate concerns of residents, greater involvement in the stock investment process may be achieved.

8.4 Wider benefits are therefore key selling points for new investment models and landlords need to scope these in when planning investment decisions to build sustainable communities. By adopting these approaches from the outset, stock options may be seen as more attractive and relevant to BME tenants and communities and problems of low levels of engagement may be more effectively addressed.

Training and employment

8.5 Millions of pounds are being spent on housing estates and neighbourhoods to meet the Decent Homes Standard. This spending can also support the creation of local jobs, community-owned businesses, and increase the skills base of local people. Access to new jobs and capacity building for local tenant groups have been part of an agenda that has been described as ‘added value’ and ‘housing plus’.52 Supply-side initiatives such as these address issues of apathy and stir people to think about the area and communities that they live in. For housing organisations, it raises wider issues about how to facilitate the sustainability of neighbourhoods by creating jobs.

52 See People for Action for more information at info@pfanet.org.uk
8.6 Training and employment initiatives are generally welcomed by tenants and housing organisations alike. Tenants get access to locally based job and training opportunities. Housing organisations are viewed as advocating rather than coercing tenants. This helps to build trust and can involve communities more fully in the stock investment process. However, as the following examples indicate, this requires landlords to take a wider view of their role, to manage modest increases in the level of risk and develop relevant skills and competencies within their own organisations.

8.7 Whitefriars Housing Group and Kingsmead Homes are two case study organisations who have initiated new ideas on training and employment issues as the examples below demonstrate.

**Whitefriars** (Coventry) has funded outreach posts that focus on engaging BAME communities by creating local training, support and employment opportunities. Specifically, Whitefriars is supporting a BME community business – CBS Construction Ltd – as a sub-contractor to Wates to work on kitchen/bathrooms in empty properties.

Whitefriars secured European funding to appoint two community outreach workers with the brief to create employment and business opportunities with BAME communities. Whitefriars used its clout with Wates to enable the community business to be appointed as a sub-contractor and have provided further support through interest-free loan and finding premises.

Employment and business opportunities have been created for BAME communities. This has also led to increasing diversity within the construction sector. A great deal of initial support is required from the housing organisation, such as the loan and finding premises, but this has now led to new contracts being sought within the public and private sectors.

Source: Whitefriars Case Study

**Kingsmead Homes** (part of the Shaftsbury Housing Group, established for a part-stock transfer of around 900 homes from LB Hackney) has taken its regeneration role seriously. Some of the initiatives undertaken in the five years since transfer are:

- The Young Builders Trust, which has enabled over 50 16-24 year olds to attain NVQ training in construction industry skills
- Local labour clauses in refurbishment contracts have benefited Hackney residents
- Hackney Community College has been supported to run IT training using the Kingsmead IT suite
- Kingsmead has supported the development of local businesses including a café and workshops, a maintenance and repairs company and a cleaning company

These initiatives are seen to increase residents’ skills, income and well-being. They are also seen as a valuable way of engaging with young people on the estate.

Source: Kingsmead Homes Case Study

**Housing development and design**

8.8 Stock investment programmes can provide the opportunity to address past failures to meet BME community needs and aspirations. This is particularly the case where new housing development is to be included as part of subsequent works to existing stock.
8.9 BME strategies and needs surveys should provide an indication of the specific housing needs and preferences of the various BME communities who may be present in the area. Particular attention should be paid to the aspirations of people who are not already tenants but might become consumers of social housing in the future. With this in mind Whitefriars Housing Group including a sample of current housing applicants within its survey of BME tenants. It saw refugees and new BME groups as important to the future development of its business and was therefore keen to identify their aspirations and preferences.

8.10 Other transfer organisations have taken a similar approach and have then used new development or major refurbishment opportunities to adapt their product to meet BME community needs.

In developing the new build programme to replace demolished maisonettes, Ashton Pioneer Homes (APH) looked to the wider community needs. The former Chief Executive contacted key people in the Asian community in the adjoining area. The new family homes have significantly changed the ethnic mix of the estates. The Race Equality Strategy sets a 'measure of achievement' of at least 50% of new tenants in large family new build schemes to be from BME communities. Two houses were built with ‘Asian toilet’ arrangements on the understanding that these were wanted by the community.

The focus group observed during the visit showed that APH has not, despite trying to consult Asian people on design, been fully successful in pleasing tenants with its new houses. Some of the points of criticism raised perceived poor construction quality, but others relating especially to bathroom and toilet design and garden size suggest cultural insensitivity. APH has learnt from this feedback and is determined to build houses based on actual rather than perceived needs.

Source: Ashton Pioneer Homes Case Study

Community cohesion

8.11 Following the riots in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, the Home Office Community Cohesion report illustrated the levels of polarisation within and between communities in housing, education and cultural networks. Housing organisations have a supportive role to play in reducing these gaps and addressing harassment and intimidation (see below).

8.12 There is evidence that in a number of these northern cities BME communities have often avoided council housing, even where many members of the community were housed in poor quality privately rented or owner occupied accommodation. However, our survey, conducted in 2002, did not indicate that many authorities were actively addressing issues of segregation in their stock investment plans. Just 18% of proposed ALMOs and 17% of proposed LSVTs had developed policies to tackle issues of segregation.

8.13 One authority that had addressed community cohesion issues in a practical way at the same time as developing its stock transfer was Bradford. It had introduced a choice based lettings system known as Homehunter and had used this opportunity to market social housing more effectively to the city’s Asian communities who were significantly under-represented in social housing.

Empowering communities, improving housing: involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities

8.14 On a smaller scale another case study organisation; Whitefriars Housing Group was involved in a project aiming to build staff awareness of community cohesion through strengthening links with BME organisations.

8.15 In addition, the Home Office report also stated that community cohesion was about reaching out to BME communities to prevent isolation and encourage involvement. Again, over half (56 per cent) of the respondents in the survey had devised specific, and targeted approaches.

‘We arranged a tour of existing estates specifically for Turkish residents accompanied by a translator; held meetings; show flats were BME attended; translated publications into minority languages; held surgeries.’

8.16 The following example shows a number of initiatives taken by Kingsmead Homes in Hackney to address community cohesion, generate wealth and involve communities.

Bradford City Council’s choice based lettings pilot known as Homehunter was developed after its stock transfer to Bradford Community Housing Trust (BCHT) and shortly after the Community Cohesion report.

Homehunter, now managed by BCHT, included provision for marketing and support to the City’s Asian communities who had previously been under-represented in the council stock. It is credited in part for a rapid increase of council tenants from the Asian communities (reported to have increased from under 2% to 7-8% of council tenants since the scheme was established). This is seen as an important contribution to building community cohesion.

The community cohesion project was developed with Whitefriars, Orbit and Touchstone Housing associations. It was tendered by a black led consultancy, Mann Weaver Drew. There was an original vision of 16 participants, 50% from BAME groups. In the end, of 13 – 14 participants, there were 3 BAME voluntary sector representatives

The participants are a combination of social housing professionals and representatives from BAME organisations in Coventry. The programme has used a variety of venues within the community – Arabic café and West Indian centre. Participants work in pairs, strengthening existing relationships and building new ones. Each participant is charged with identifying potential links with a BME organisation and then taking practical steps to achieve this. The participants were explicitly told to mainstream their work, so it becomes part and parcel of their day job and looking at how their organisations change their policies and procedures. A questionnaire is used to evaluate it after each session and course debriefs are being run.

The Kingsmead Homes and Patchway Tenancy Support Service provides a basis for individual contact and support, which though not unusual needs to be re-iterated. An early decision to contract high vulnerability support to Patchway Community HA is seen to have been very successful to sustaining tenancies and preventing arrears evictions. For example, the direct employment of support workers has increased customer contacts further (including better contact with BME sub-groups).

Kingsmead Homes has also partnered up with a church based project – the Kabin – to provide an advice shop on the estate. This project is also an accessible point for tenants to access employment and training schemes as well as support for childcare.
Racist harassment

8.17 Trigger events play an important role in mobilising communities. These may not be related to housing or more specifically to stock investment options but can provide the basis for unusually high levels of participation, community action and solutions to deep-seated problems.

8.18 Addressing harassment is one of the most important trigger issues for BME tenants and communities. The most celebrated example of how BME communities can be mobilised by racist harassment and violence is the response to the murder of Stephen Lawrence. This follows in a line of resistance and rebellion that is documented in much more detail elsewhere⁵⁴. The important point to make here is to recognise that housing organisations can and should move quickly to address racist harassment. Decisive action against perpetrators will help to position the institution in a positive light amongst BME communities.

8.19 Again, it will tackle the trust issue. The housing organisation will be viewed as helping communities in need. Further, this will build relationships with locally based BME organisations that have a much bigger ‘reach’ into communities than housing organisations. Finally, the housing organisation brand may be seen as being more attractive to potential BME tenants as a result of robust action on harassment. Housing organisations need to develop policies on racist harassment. Those that do not have any such approach should initiate good practice⁵⁵ whilst others need to consolidate and move towards best practice. Ignoring the problem, or taking no action, is not an option.

8.20 Locally based anti-harassment projects and initiatives usually have the organisational characteristics that make community involvement easier. Being local helps them to respond quickly to incidents; language skills help with communication; community networks can be quickly mobilised at times of tension and formal networks help to access key institutional opinion formers. There is much to be learnt for the stock investment process from such an approach.⁵⁶ The following example shows how the Newham PFI integrated harassment into the work of the contractor and how this helped to increase levels of involvement.

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⁵⁶ See Chahal K & Julienne L (1999) ‘We can’t all be white!’ Racist victimisation in the UK. JRF,York
Involving Refugees and Asylum Seekers

8.21 Refugees and asylum seekers have already featured in this report (see chapters 2 and 3). They form part of ‘new’ BME communities that are less well established than ‘old’ BME communities, have fewer and less developed formal networks and access to housing organisations, and require translation services to make sense of transfer. Sometimes these ‘new’ BME communities can be amongst the hardest to reach of all communities. Though this report has not been about refugee communities and asylum seekers per se, these communities have featured significantly in most key case studies. There have been a number of reasons:

- Government policy has led to dispersal of communities across the country. Many have accessed low demand housing in the North and Midlands establishing new communities and indeed, in some cases, propping up demand in areas that have been abandoned by more economically mobile tenants.

- Social landlords in a number of low demand areas have contracted with the National Asylum Seekers Service to provide temporary accommodation for asylum seekers on a licence basis.

- Housing organisations have had to quickly respond to wider social issues on support and community cohesion driven by macro policy drivers.

8.22 It can be argued that housing organisations have shown a degree of flexibility and even entrepreneurialism in meeting the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. The good practice pointers discussed in chapter 2 and 3 of this report has been followed. Mapping out communities, developing parallel organisations, making contact with community-based organisations are all demonstrated in the example below. Some of this participatory zeal needs to be transferred to tenants across the housing stock. It should become the rule rather than exception.

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Coventry has been a prominent settlement area for both asylum seekers and refugees with leave to remain. Whitefriars Housing Group has one of a number of NASS contracts in the city for the temporary housing of asylum seekers. It has also sought to respond positively to the demand for housing in the city from refugees with leave to remain, including those moving into the area from elsewhere in the country.

The Whitefriars BAME action plan aims to ‘lead the way in a city wide inclusive approach to ASRs’ through:

- Coherent city-wide approach with Coventry Refugee Centre, City Council and other agencies.
- Monitoring waiting lists and lettings to refugees.
- Developing ASR policy.
- Allocating resources for effective delivery.

The housing organisation has agreed a Supporting People contract with the Refugee Centre for new tenants, a NASS contract has been referred by Social Services to house people in the Hillfields Estate and ASRs have influenced and shaped business plans.

Whitefriars has tried to capacity-build the Refugee Centre, and has collated data on ASRs through its Housing Demand Study as well as carrying out Focus Groups and a BAME tenant and application survey. Whitefriars has effective translation and interpreting services.

ASRs are regarded as an effective business opportunity. Since transfer, the increase in the ASR population has helped to transform some low demand areas. Whitefriars are reshaping approaches to housing management to meet this demand. However, it should be noted that access to social housing for ASRs remains low overall and Supporting People monies are limited to eight weeks in terms of resettlement support.

Source: Whitefriars Case Study
Annex 1

Support network of organisations and individuals who contributed during the course of the study

Sounding Board

Ahmed, Farida, Tower Hamlets ‘Housing Choice’
Bertie, Hilda, Equalities Officer, Walsall Council
Carson, Kaja Small Heath Housing Shop, Birmingham
Dillion, Gloria, Balsall Heath Forum, Birmingham
Fallon, Sue, Sandwell Health Project
Hawryliuk, Daniela, Assistant Manager – Equalities, Sheffield City Council
Kaur, Monika, Tenant Participation Officer, Leeds City Council
Millett, Jude, Policy Officer (Tenant Participation Unit), Manchester Housing
Sengen Fem-Taal, Tenant Participation Officer, Leeds City Council

Case study organisations

Ashton Pioneer Homes
Contact: Ian Ankers, Director of Housing Services (left APH at the end of June 2003) and Tony Berry, APH Chief Executive Officer.

Derby Homes
Contact: Sajda Kauser, Equalities Officer, Derby Homes (left September 2003) and Phil Davies, Derby Homes Chief Executive Officer

Gloucester Council
Contacts: Susan Black, Tenant Research Officer (left November 2003); Paul Smith, Heart of England; Bev Carter, Partners in Change

Kingsmead Homes
Contact: Nigel Poole, KH Chief Executive Officer

Newham Council
Contacts: Emily Light, PFI Project Officer; Zaidée O’Dell, DOME; Forest Gate Residents Steering Group

Brent Council
Contact: Mike Dwyer, Head of Customer Services, Brent Housing Partnership
Annex 1
Support network of organisations and individuals who contributed during the course of the study

*Peterborough Council*
Contact: Abi Ajoni, Tenant Involvement Manager; Mick Leggett, Director of Housing Services; Shelagh Grant, Director of Housing Strategy

*Tower Hamlets Council*
Contact: Jenny Pepper, Tenant Involvement Manager and Maureen McElaney, Director of Housing Services

*Whitefriars (Coventry)*
Contact: Andrew Burman, Business Development Manager, Whitefriars Services

*Poplar Harca*
Contact: Rob Lantsbury, Community Initiatives Manager

*Sheffield Council*
Contact: Daniela Hawyrliuk, Manager, Housing Strategy Equalities

*WATMOS (Walsall)*
Contact: Stuart Masters, Chief Executive

**Stakeholder interviews**
Bertie, Hilda, Walsall Council
Billings, Barrington, Senior Advisor (Stock Transfer), The Housing Corporation
Gilham, Rob, Walsall Council
Laniyan, Leslie, Chair of the Federation of Black Housing Organisations
Nixon, Lindsay, National Tenants Resource Centre
Patel, Dino, Policy Officer, National Housing Federation
Perry, John, Director of Policy, Chartered Institute of Housing

**Independent Tenant Advisors seminar**
Ahmed, Solma, Community Housing Task Force, ODPM
Bains, Jas, Director, Ashram Housing Association
Brown, Chris, Consultant, PEP
Lawrence, Julie, Research Analysys & Evaluation, ODPM
Quinn, Jane, Senior Housing Officer, Aldbourne Associates
Ryan, Brendan, Consultant, PCA Management Consultants
Turner, Sally, Housing Association & Private Finance, ODPM
White, Gary, Senior Project Worker, PEP
Regional workshops

Ahmed, Khalil, Marketing Officer, Bradford Council
Brown, Alex Regional Committee member, TPAS
Brown, Rob Senior Strategy Officer, Manchester Housing
Carson, Kaja, Customer Involvement Officer, Birmingham City Council, Centre
Churley, Mike, Tenant Involvement Officer, Bradford Council

Environmental Health Services
Federated Housing Association

Gill, Baljinder, Community Participation Assistant, Sandwell MBC, Hawryliuk, Daniela Assistant Manager (Equalities) Sheffield City Council
Jacobs, Jim Manchester Resident
Kaur, Monica Tenant Development Officer, Leeds City Council
Kyles, Iain, Development Manager, Leeds Housing and
Lorgat, I Community Worker, Woodsley Road Multicultural
McCall, Neil, Chief executive, Broomleigh Housing Association
Acharya, Ahsan, Head of Stock Transfer Strategy, East Thames Housing Association
Bernard, C, Policy Officer, Anchor Trust
Williams-Brown, A, Group Equalities Manager, Horizon Housing Group
Ubogagu, Franca, Resident, Southwark
Dipak Umeria, Consultant, Mindseye
Bromiley, Richard Research Fellow, University of Glamorgan
Cheeseman, Martin, Director of Housing, London Borough of Brent
Lantsbury, Rob Neighbourhood Empowerment Manager, Poplar HARCA

Miah, Hiron Marketing Officer, Northern Counties HA
Millett, Jude Policy Officer, Manchester Housing
Morton, Jim Community Development Manager, Leeds
Power, Tony, Projects Officer, Sandwell MBC
Reid, David Community Initiatives Manager, Leeds City Council
Samuels, L Project Officer, Manchester Housing
Sengan, F-T, Tenant Development Officer, Leeds City Council
Walford, Liz, Operations Director, Bromford Housing Group,
Annex 2

Evidence base

The main stages of evidence gathering for this report were as follows:

- **Scoping Study: Summer 2002**
- **Regional Seminars: Autumn 2002**
- **Postal Surveys: Winter 2002-3**
- **Case Studies: Summer and Autumn 2003**
- **Sounding Board: 2003**

Brief accounts of the research methods used in each phase are set out below:

**Scoping Study: Summer 2002**

A Scoping Study was carried out between July and September 2002 to test the research methodology and to learn more about the barriers to BME resident involvement and good practice solutions. The main methods used were:

- Review of literature and good practice.
- Semi-structured interviews with representatives from ODPM, Housing Corporation, National Federation of Housing Associations, Federation of Black Housing Organisations, Chartered Institute of Housing, National Tenants Resource Centre.
- Workshop with Independent Tenant Advisers, BME housing associations and ODPM.
- Mini-case study visits to Walsall and Poplar HARCA.

A 67-page report of the Scoping Study by David Mullins and Harris Beider was published in September 2002. It is available at [http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/whatsnew/curent%20projects.htm](http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/whatsnew/curent%20projects.htm)
Regional Seminars: Autumn 2002

Four regional seminars were held in November and December 2002 to advance understanding of the barriers to involving BME tenants and to identify examples of good practice that could be followed up. The aim had been to learn from inside and outside the housing sector and to inform the project. 31 delegates attended the events and while they brought a wealth of experience in involving BME residents, this was mainly drawn from within the housing sector. The main groups attending were tenant participation staff, tenants, housing managers from local authorities, housing associations and ALMOs, academics, Housing Corporation and Central Government.

A short report and full notes of the four workshops by Harris Beider, Steve Gayle and David Mullins was published in February 2003 and is also available at: http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/whatsnew/curent%20projects.htm

Postal Surveys: Winter 2002-3

Two postal surveys were carried out between November 2002 and April 2003 to provide a picture of past and current practice and to locate potential case study examples. The main features of the two surveys are set out below in Table A2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table A2.1: The Surveys</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survey A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aim</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample frame</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample frame</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Response</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questionnaire</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response rates

Overall response rates to the surveys were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey A</td>
<td>32/58</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey B (LSVT)</td>
<td>14/29</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey B (ALMO)</td>
<td>11/21</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey B (PFI)</td>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The samples were broadly representative of the sample frames geographically although some regions were not represented for some stock investment options (e.g. East and South East among proposed LSVTs). All survey samples over-represented the North West region. Effective samples were broadly representative of the sample frame in terms of the BME population percentage at local authority level in 1991 (2001 Census data was not available at this time). While there was some response bias, this was insufficient to significantly skew the findings.

A 35-page report of the survey results by Pat Niner and Rob Rowlands was published in April 2003. It is available at:
http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/whatsnew/current%20projects.htm

Case studies: Summer and Autumn 2003

Preliminary screening interviews were held in April 2003 with 12 authorities selected to represent a range of investment options, stages of the stock investment process and geographical contexts. A short list of 8 authorities was identified for detailed case studies, drawing both on the screening interviews and on new cases identified by Community Housing Task Force to represent more recent activity, including option appraisal studies. Case study visits took place between July and November 2003.

The main case studies included in the study were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashton Pioneer Homes</td>
<td>Partial stock transfer completed by Tameside Metropolitan Borough in February 1999.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby Homes</td>
<td>ALMO completed by Derby City Council in 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsmead Homes</td>
<td>Partial stock transfer by London Borough of Hackney to a special purpose subsidiary of Shaftsbury Housing Group completed in March 1998.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterborough</td>
<td>Whole stock transfer completed November 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower Hamlets</td>
<td>Borough Wide ‘Housing Choice’ Programme and Ocean Estate NDC Stock Transfer where consultation was in progress in Autumn 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitsfiars Housing Group</td>
<td>Whole stock transfer by Coventry City Council completed 2000.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further material was provided by the following authorities who took part in the screening stage of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London Borough of Brent</td>
<td>ALMO completed in 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council</td>
<td>PFI scheme withdrawn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield City Council</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Commissions on future of housing stock 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council</td>
<td>Whole stock transfer to Walsall Housing Group and WATMOS completed in March 2003.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of the case studies was to collect evidence in specific contexts, to make judgements about what constitutes good practice, to test this using agreed criteria and to generate good practice guidance for this report. Involvement in the case studies provided a good opportunity for organisations to take stock of progress and to help to transform the national pattern by generating good practice.

Case studies were undertaken by six members of the research team working in pairs following a briefing day on case study procedures. Each case study comprised a series of visits, interviews with key players from the local authority, new landlord, tenants and community organisations in contact with BME tenants. Information was collated on the local context, on the overall approach to stock investment, BME strategy, Tenant Involvement Strategy, Communications and Tenant Empowerment Strategies and any specific BME Consultation Strategies or practices. Site visits were made to estates and neighbourhoods and consultation events were observed to identify methods used and their impact on BME tenants and communities. Reports of each case study were produced and agreed with the authorities involved and presented in summary form to the project Sounding Board.

**Sounding board: 2003**

The final element of the research method was the recruitment of a Sounding Board of ten people with direct experience of BME tenant and community involvement on the ground. By involving this Sounding Board in the research, agreeing key success criteria with them and by subjecting emerging examples of good practice to their scrutiny it was hoped to generate robust and transferable good practice examples.

The Sounding Board was recruited by advertisement in the housing press and through contacts generated in the scoping stage of the project. The Sounding Board met on three occasions; to agree good practice criteria (April 2003), to review emerging good practice examples from the case studies (September 2003) and to comment on the draft report (January 2004). Individual sounding board members also took part in case study visits. We are extremely grateful to members of the Sounding Board (listed in annex A) for adding value to the research process.
Annex 3

Checklist of barriers that prevent involvement and ways to address them

The force-field analysis below shows the forces that are acting against (barriers that prevent BME involvement) and forces for (policies that help to overcome barriers). The thickness and length of the arrow suggest the extent of the barrier and the relative ease of overcoming it i.e. a thicker arrow will show that more commitment, time and resources are required.

Forces for
Mapping & research
Direct communication & translation
‘Deliver on deliverables’

Forces against
No information about BME communities
Language
Mistrust of housing organisations
Forces for

Recruit diverse & motivated Staff team

New tenant & community structures

Diverse approaches for diverse Communities

Forces against

Staff not representative of community

Existing tenant organisations

Fragmented BME communities
Annex 4

Guide to further reading

Earlier Project Outputs

**ODPM Transfer Manual 2003**
Annex E ‘Meeting the needs of BME communities’
[http://www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/transfers/index.htm](http://www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/transfers/index.htm)

**Working papers**

- *Report of Scoping Study*
- *Report on Two Postal Surveys* (of past transfer authorities and prospective PFI, ALMO and transfer authorities)
- *Summary of Findings* of four regional seminars are available at [http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/whatsnew/publications.htm](http://www.curs.bham.ac.uk/whatsnew/publications.htm)

**Articles**


Harris Beider and David Mullins ‘Becoming part of the picture: A major piece of research is investigating the role of ethnic minority tenants in key decisions such as stock transfer’. *Inside Housing May 23rd 2003* pp. 22-24.


**General**

*The Decent Homes Target Implementation Plan*
Community Cohesion

Kusminder Chahal & Louis Julienne ‘We can’t all be white!’ Racist victimisation in the UK. JRF, York (1999)

Race & Housing

Hann C and Bowes E (2004) *Black and minority ethnic housing associations and their involvement in local authority stock transfers.* ODPM.
Peter Ratcliffe *Breaking down barriers – improving Asian access to social rented housing* Chartered Institute of Housing, Coventry (2001)
Bob Blackaby & Kusminder Chahal *Black and minority ethnic housing strategies: a good practice guide* Chartered Institute of Housing/Federation of Black Housing Organisations/ National Housing Federation
Peter Somerville and Andy Steele *Race, Housing and Social Exclusion* Jessica Langley (2001) especially the chapter by Steve Gayle “Black & Minority Ethnic Participation and Empowerment”

Option Appraisal

**ODPM**

*Options Appraisals – A Tenants Guide* (November 2003)
*Delivering Decent Homes – Option Appraisal: Guidance for Local Authorities* (June 2003)

**CHTF**

*Communication & Consultation Strategies in Option Appraisal*
*Tenant Empowerment Strategies in Option Appraisal*
*Appointing an Independent Tenant Adviser at Options Appraisal Stage*
*Change Management at Options Appraisal Stage*
Independent Tenants Advisers

*CHTF Appointing an Independent Tenant Adviser at Options Appraisal Stage* (2003)


Tenant Engagement & Involvement


Confederation of Co-operative Housing *Stock Transfer – Creating Community Controlled Housing* (2001)

*Communities in Control* Housing Corporation (2000)


Community Development Foundation (2000)


Underwood S and Lamb D *Motivation Matters, Planned approaches to tenant involvement.*

Banks of the Wear (1999)

Cooper C and Hawtin M *Resident Involvement and Community Action. Theory to Practice* Coventry, Chartered Institute of Housing. (1998)

Governance

Housing Corporation and Charity Commission *Guidance for Charitable Registered Social Landlords (including the acquisition of tenanted housing and tenants as members of Governing Bodies* London, Housing Corporation and Charity Commission (2002)


Other Useful Websites:

Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Archive: http://www.racearchive.org.uk/
Chartered Institute of Housing: www.cih.org
Innovation Into Action (IIA) Programme: www.cih.org
Community Development Foundation: www.cdf.org.uk
Community Housing Task Force: www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=1221&l=2
Faith in the Future: www.fitf.co.uk
Federation of Black Housing Organisations: www.fbho.org.uk
Housemark: www.housemark.co.uk
Housing Corporation Bank of Good Practice: www.bankofgoodpractice.org
Innovation and Good Practice Research Database: http://cig.bre.co.uk/igp
ODPM: www.odpm.gov.uk/housing
People for Action: www.pfanet.org.uk
Quest Trust: www.quest-net.org
Race equality and harassment: www.raceactionnet.co.uk
Empowering communities, improving housing: Involving black and minority ethnic tenants and communities

This guide fills a gap in the good practice literature for those involved in exploring, planning and implementing stock investment options aimed at meeting the Decent House Standard. It builds on existing good practice on tenant and community involvement to consider the involvement of BME tenants who are often depicted as being 'hard to reach'. Though the focus is on BME groups many of the examples of good practice and themes that run throughout the report are relevant to involving any 'hard-to-reach group'.

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