



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# Tenant Panels and Empowerment

Training and Support Programme Prospectus

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# Ministerial Foreword

In the old days social tenants that wanted to improve their homes often struggled in the face of inflexible landlords and a lumbering bureaucratic machine.

But what gave us hope was that, every now and again, courageous tenants stepped up and with their local know-how and indomitable spirit, beat the system.

A few years ago social tenants took charge of Childwall Valley Estate in South Liverpool. They promptly transformed their area by reducing anti-social behaviour and introducing community wardens to work with local young people.

At New Barracks in Salford, tenants introduced community activities including street parties and children's play schemes, they raised funds for installing play equipment and they even contributed half the cost to installing CCTV on their estate.

Meanwhile, over in Pembroke Estate in Plymouth tenants set up a Youth Service to train excluded school pupils and other vulnerable youngsters and they are now in charge of a £5 million refurbishment programme.

But these inspiring examples are still few and far between. We want to encourage more tenants to get in on the act. That's why we have removed the old institutional hurdles and, in their place, we are giving more opportunities to tenants to challenge their landlords.

Tenants can have real power. They can check landlords are spending their money in the right way, make sure a new repairs contract is in order or even work together with locally elected representatives to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour.

But if people are to make the most of their new powers we need to make sure they recognise the opportunities that are now out there. And we need to equip them with both the skills and the confidence to take full advantage.

That's why I'm looking for organisations that understand the needs of local communities inside out - our charities and benevolent societies – to come forward. I'd like to see them inspiring local people to seize the new opportunities with both hands. And I want them to tell me how they will support local people to have a real voice in their communities. In return we'll give them the money they need to get started. You'll find more details of how to enter this competition inside.

And this prospectus also includes details of what we're calling the Community Cashback. The cashback encourages and rewards collaboration between tenants and landlords. Whether that means providing financial help to three or

four tenants who agree with their landlord to cut the grass in their communal grounds. Or offering cash to help a larger group of tenants work with their landlord to manage a £150k contract to decorate a communal area.

Tenants who are empowered have enormous potential. They can create better places to live. They can help landlords reassure investors and lenders that their money is being well spent.

But they can also do something more. In the past 12 months we've seen the power of local people in action. From the broom armies cleaning up after the riots to the Olympic volunteers helping this country put on the greatest show on earth.

If we can get more tenants involved, I believe the power of local people will help fundamentally transform neighbourhoods for the better.

So let's see your exciting ideas to enthuse and inspire. Because your success will not just be the success of tenants or the success of landlords but the success of all our communities up and down the land.



**Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps MP**  
**Minister for Housing and Local Government**

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# Section 1

## Tenant Panels and Empowerment

### Introduction

1. This Prospectus invites applications by **8 October** from eligible organisations for grant funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government to provide training and support that inspires social housing tenants to play a bigger role in their local community by:
  - setting up tenant panels;
  - becoming empowered to engage with their landlord and take control of local services.

### Tenant Empowerment

2. Government is committed to creating a Big Society. This means giving local people more say, influence and control over local services. Through measures in the Localism Act 2011, power has been transferred to local people to take more control over local decisions and exercise new rights to take over and run local services.
3. Social housing plays a crucial role for around 4 million households in the social housing sector in England, providing stability and security, and delivering key local services. Although some tenants play an active role in deciding how those services are delivered, many others may be unaware of the new opportunities to participate in the decision making process.
4. The Government's Review of Social Housing regulation announced that, from April 2012, the regulation of the social housing sector would be based around robust self-regulation by housing boards and councillors and an enhanced role for tenant panels in scrutinising performance, challenging landlords and shaping housing priorities and policies.
5. For this approach to operate effectively, tenants need to be aware of their rights and opportunities; understand the benefits of getting involved in the decision making process; and be confident in engaging with their landlord. Crucially, they need to be inspired to seize opportunities to get involved, whether this be through tenant panels, scrutiny groups, local dispute resolution or taking advantage of opportunities such as tenant cashback and housing management. Tenant empowerment also makes good business sense for landlords, since it provides effective challenge about service delivery and reassures lenders that the organisation is listening to customers.

6. To support tenant empowerment, Government is encouraging landlords to be more transparent about spend, and has directed the Social Housing Regulator to set standards requiring landlords to offer opportunities for tenants to influence and be involved in, among other things:
  - the formation and activities of tenant panels;
  - the formulation of their landlord's housing related policies and strategic priorities;
  - decisions about how housing services are delivered, including setting service standards;
  - the management of housing services.
7. Whilst some tenants play already an active role in their local community others may:
  - be unaware of the benefits/ opportunities of getting involved;
  - not feel they have the skills or confidence to play an enhanced role;
  - not receive support from their landlord in gaining the skills and confidence;
  - benefit from independent advice and support.
8. As a result, many tenants are missing out on opportunities to have their say about local housing or play an enhanced role in their local community.
9. DCLG is therefore holding two parallel competitions to identify an organisation that is eligible to receive grant for delivering a package of training and support to:
  - (a) inspire tenants to set up tenant panels, by maximising opportunities to use recognised good practice, and enable tenant panels to train prospective tenant panel members;
  - (b) inspire tenants to seize opportunities for engaging on a range of housing issues by gaining the skills and confidence to engage effectively with landlords. Part of this funding stream includes managing a small grants programme (Community Cashback) that draws on the principles of tenant cashback to enter into agreements with landlords to manage small scale community services.

## The amount of grant available

10. The maximum amount of grant that is available is as follows:
  - (a) to support tenant panels, a grant of up to £700,000 covering the period November 2012 – March 2015, though this is subject to satisfactory performance as part of on-going monitoring of progress

and continued funding available from the Tenant Empowerment Programme;

(b) to support tenant empowerment, a grant of up to £620,000 covering the period November 2012 – March 2015, though this is subject to satisfactory performance as part of on-going monitoring of progress and continued funding available from the Tenant Empowerment Programme. Within this sum, we have earmarked £120,000 over the period for Community Cashback (see paragraph 30 for more information).

## This Prospectus

11. This Prospectus sets out the basis on which grant is to be given by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (“the Secretary of State”). It describes the legal basis for the grant and how it will be provided, the amount of grant available, the organisations that may apply, how the Secretary of State will decide the applications he receives, and other terms and conditions on which grant will be provided. Further details on the operation of the grant and eligibility criteria can be found at **Annex A**.

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## Section 2

# Factors to take into account in the application

12. Applicants can apply for grant to boost tenant capacity on either tenant panels or on empowerment; or they can apply for grant for both. However, the factors that need to be taken into account are different for each grant, so the correct application form will need to be submitted. **Applicants wishing to apply for both grants should complete both application forms.** An eligible organisation may wish to involve other partners in a consortium bid, though the bid should highlight the role envisaged for each body and the skills that they bring.

### Applications for grant to support tenant panels

13. Our aim is to give grant to an eligible organisation whose mission and goals are consistent with our aim of empowering groups, such as tenants to set up tenant panels to monitor and scrutinise performance, involve tenants in decision making, shape services, and take advantages of new powers in the Localism Act to get involved in local dispute resolution and mediation.
14. The grant will enable the organisation to exploit the experience and knowledge amongst existing tenants and providers, by providing capacity building so that tenant groups have the skills, confidence, and understanding to set up effective tenant panels. The focus will be on supporting groups of tenants, rather than individual tenants.
15. To deliver this, we are looking for an organisation to devise an innovative national programme that draws on existing experiences to bring about more tenant panels across England. In doing so, applicants should involve registered providers and potentially community groups, in developing and delivering a national programme.
16. We are interested in innovative ideas from applicants about the content of a national programme, but would anticipate a range of activities, including, for example:
- tenant-to-tenant learning opportunities so that prospective tenant panel members can learn from the experiences of established members;
  - tailored capacity building to help tenant panels to support local communities;
  - targeted support to boost tenants' skills or confidence to participate on tenant panels;

- information support and signposting for tenant groups.

17. The training should provide a stimulating learning programme that inspires participants to set up a tenant panel. We would, therefore, like to hear applicants' ideas for a national programme. Applicants may wish to consider innovative approaches for delivering capacity support, for example, using social media to disseminate messages to tenants.
18. Applicants should explain how their ideas would exploit the wide range of existing tenant practices and how this can be applied to different circumstances, for example, to rural and urban environments as well as to small and large landlords. There should also be encouragement for panels to focus on wider community issues, for example, joining up with local agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour. Applicants should also explain how the programme would be tailored to the needs, skills, and experiences of tenants.
19. It is important that tenants from across England are able to take advantage of this programme. We would, therefore, like to know how applicants intend to identify existing gaps in provision and how they would publicise and market their proposals to ensure their reach is truly national. Applications should, therefore, demonstrate that they have a track record in delivery at a national level.
20. We would also expect applications to outline the outcomes to be secured, and would like to see an indication of how these might be measured and monitored. Crucially, we also want to see applicants specifying the outputs that they would deliver from the grant, for example, in terms of the number of tenants trained, the types of training available, number of attendees, and the information that would be available.

## Applications for grant to support tenant empowerment

21. Our aim is to give grant to an eligible organisation whose mission and goals are consistent with our aim of empowering tenants to play a bigger role in their local community.
22. With the abolition of the Tenant Service Authority and the Audit Commission, Government has removed top-down controls and performance monitoring and enhanced the role of tenants. We want to see more tenants seizing opportunities to engage with their landlord about local services, getting involved in key local decisions, and taking control of local housing services. Beyond this, we also want to see tenants helping to resolve issues that affect them and their wider community and improve where they live.

23. We are already encouraging greater transparency amongst landlords about spending, and placing responsibility on landlords to give tenants opportunities to get involved, for example, by forming tenant panels and providing performance information so that tenants can scrutinise and compare landlords' performance. We are also encouraging tenant cashback, so that tenants can take control of repairs and pocket any savings. Together these changes will ensure that landlords are more accountable to local people.
24. We want to ensure that tenants seize these opportunities. Recognising that some tenants may not be aware of the opportunities, or may not feel they have the knowledge skills or confidence to engage, we are looking for innovative ideas from applicants to deliver a national programme that empowers and inspires tenants. As part of this, we also want to see tenants spreading the message locally, energising local communities so that Big Society flourishes in their neighbourhood.
25. The programme needs to cover a range of empowerment options, so that tenants know how to complain if things go wrong and their rights of redress. It also needs to offer skills training for tenants so that they are confident to challenge their landlord, get involved in local decision making, act as local advocates, and in some cases act as tenant mediators.
26. The programme should offer tenants a range of accessible ways in which they can learn, such as basic (on-line) information about opportunities and rights; local training provision; and free e-learning on key tenant empowerment themes. This will enable tenants to access training anytime/anywhere.
27. We would like to hear applicants' innovative ideas for how this national tenant empowerment programme would operate. This should include proposed courses/ learning/ support opportunities, their content, and how they would boost tenants' capability, skills and confidence to engage locally. It should also identify the information that would be made available to tenants to explain their opportunities and rights, drawing on existing information and other good practice materials. Recognising tenants' preferences, the training/learning/ support should reflect a local approach and consider the innovative use of digital opportunities.
28. It is important that social tenants from across England are able to take advantage of this empowerment programme. We therefore wish to know how applicants intend to identify existing gaps in provision and how they would ensure their reach is truly national. Applications should, therefore, demonstrate that they have a track record in delivery at a national level.
29. We would also expect applications to outline the outcomes to be secured, and would like to see an indication of how these might be measured and monitored. Crucially, we also want to see applicants

specifying the outputs that they would deliver from the grant, for example, in terms of the number of tenants trained/ supported, the types of training available, number of attendees, and the information that would be available.

30. A key element of tenant empowerment is tenants taking control of local services. So, as part of this programme, we are also looking for applicants to administer a small grant programme – Community Cashback – designed to enable groups of social tenants to enter into agreement with their landlord to manage small scale community services. Drawing on the principles of tenant cashback, agreements would enable tenants to take greater responsibility for service delivery, either directly or through a third party, and decide how to re-invest savings back into the community. As grant administrator the successful applicant would be expected to provide grants to facilitate tenant control. We would be interested in ideas for how the administrator might be incentivised, through a payment by results model, to encourage take-up, and might work with private sector partners to develop a broader offer of support for tenants. More information on Community Cashback is available at **Annex B**.
31. Separately, we are also seeking innovative ideas for encouraging and assisting tenants to use social media as a means of sharing experience, information and best practice about tenant panels and wider tenant empowerment activities. These ideas should build on existing social networks which are widely accessible and offer opportunities for a forum to discuss social housing issues.

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# Section 3

## The Application Process – how to apply and how your application will be handled

### How to apply

32. We have sought to make the application process as simple as possible, whilst ensuring that decisions on applications will be fair, transparent, and soundly based, having regard to the information and any other relevant matters supplied by the applicant. Applications must be received on or before **8 October** and must conform to the requirements set out below.
33. Applicants need to ensure they submit the correct application form for the grant they wish to apply for. Applicants wishing to apply for both grants should complete both application forms.

### Information required

34. Applicants will need to complete the attached application form(s) bearing in mind the factors set out in section 2.
35. In addition, so that we can understand the remit and financial health of your organisation, we require copies of:
- your current strategy or business plan;
  - your organisation's annual report and accounts for the accounting years ended in 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12 (if available; otherwise draft figures to be provided); if these are not available your organisation will need to provide a statement, agreed with its auditor, explaining the situation;
  - your organisation's structure and governance arrangements.
36. Applicants may also provide such other information as they consider appropriate. At any time during the selection process, further information may be requested to clarify material previously submitted. This must be provided in accordance with any timetable included in the Secretary of State's request.

## How your application will be handled

37. Once your application is received, you will receive an email confirming receipt within five working days. All applications will be subject to a three stage internal assessment process, which is designed to be fair and transparent:

**Stage 1 will check all applications for completeness.** If any elements are missing, applicants will be given 48 hours to provide the necessary information. If this is not received within the deadline the application will be rejected.

**Stage 2 will assess compliance with the eligibility criteria for the Grant** as set out in **Annex A**.

**Stage 3 will assess the relative quality of the application from eligible organisations, which may include an interview if necessary and** having regard to the organisation's proposals for delivery, recognising its impact on empowerment and value for money.

38. The Secretary of State will make the selection, on the basis of the available information and having regard to all relevant matters including the criteria set out in section 2, with the aim of giving grant to the organisation which, in his opinion, would provide the most effective and efficient provision of training, having regard to the available funding.

39. We envisage notifying applicants of the result of the selection by early November.

40. We will meet with the successful applicant to discuss their plans for course content and topics which will need to be agreed prior to the commencement of the grant. The arrangements for monitoring and reporting progress, including delivery of outcomes arising from grant funding, will be also be agreed with the Department. It is our intention to monitor progress at quarterly intervals.

41. For the successful applicant, it is our intention that grants will be paid on a six monthly basis, subject to the organisation's satisfactory performance, as judged through the agreed monitoring arrangements. If performance is not considered satisfactory, remedial action may be required by a specified date. Should such remedial action not be taken, and effective use of public funding is considered to be risk, it would be open to the Secretary of State to suspend or terminate the provision of the financial assistance, after giving three months notice.

42. Completed application forms should be sent by **8 October**, preferably by email to the following address:  
[tenantpanels&empowerment@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tenantpanels&empowerment@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

Or to:

Begoña Vilaplana  
Tenant Empowerment  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
Zone 1/E1, Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

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# Grant to support tenant panels: the application form

(A different form will need to be submitted if you wish to apply for grant to support tenant empowerment).

**Name, address & contact details of applicant:**

**Background about the organisation applying** (max 500 words)  
(Including mission statement/ goals; track-record of delivery; organisational structure/ governance):

**Confirmation of eligibility to apply in accordance with Annex A:**

**Amount of grant sought** (max 300 words)

October 2012 – March 2013	April 2013 – March 2014	April 2014 – March 2015	Total

What difference would receiving grant assistance make to the scale and range of activities that your organisation undertakes?

**Nature of the application** (max 500 words)

- Proposed support to be provided:
- Proposed ways in which existing tenant experiences will be exploited:
- Proposed arrangements for reaching all social tenants:
- Proposed outputs to be delivered:
- Proposed outcomes to be secured and how these might be measured and monitored:
- Proposed arrangements for publicising tenant panel capacity building support:

**Other relevant information** (max 300 words)

Completed form to be submitted by 8 October to:  
[tenantpanels&empowerment@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tenantpanels&empowerment@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

# Grant to support tenant empowerment: the application form

(A different form will need to be submitted if you wish to apply for grant to support tenant panels).

**Name, address & contact details of applicant:**

**Background about the organisation applying** (max 500 words)  
(Including mission statement/ goals; track-record of delivery; organisational structure/ governance):

**Confirmation of eligibility to apply in accordance with Annex A:**

**Amount of grant sought** (max 300 words)

October 2012 – March 2013	April 2013 – March 2014	April 2014 – March 2015	Total

What difference would receiving grant assistance make to the scale and range of activities that your organisation undertakes?

**Nature of the application** (max 500 words)

## Tenant Empowerment

- Proposed support to be provided:
- Proposed ideas for how training/learning/ support would be delivered:
- Proposed arrangements for reaching a wide range of social tenants:
- Proposed arrangements for publicising the support:
- Proposed outputs:
- Proposed outcomes and how these might be measured and monitored:
- Proposed ideas for encouraging tenants to use social media to share learning (see paragraph 31):

## Community Cashback

- Proposed ideas for encouraging tenants to take up Community Cashback opportunities:
- Proposed ideas for incentivising the grants administrator to encourage take-up:
- Planned percentage fee for administering the available grant to encourage Community Cashback:

**Other relevant information** (max 300 words)

**Completed form to be submitted by 8 October to:**  
[tenantpanels&empowerment@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tenantpanels&empowerment@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

# Annex A

## The operation of the grant

### The legal basis for the grant

Under section 70 of the Charities Act 2006, the Secretary of State has power to give financial assistance in the form of grants to certain charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institutions.

### The provision of financial assistance

To be considered for this financial assistance, the organisation must:

- be eligible when judged against the criteria in this Prospectus;
- make an application for grant in accordance with this Prospectus;
- comply with any other relevant terms and conditions set by the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State will decide whether or not to accept an application for financial assistance and the level of grant to be provided. In taking this decision, he will have regard to the matters set out in this Prospectus, including the eligibility of the applicant organisation, its application and to all other relevant matters.

The terms and conditions on which financial assistance will be given will be agreed between the grant recipient and the Department.

Government spending is authorised by Parliament by a system of annual Estimates, which Parliament approves by voting on an Appropriation Act for each financial year. Entitlement to grant in each financial year is therefore subject to the Parliamentary approval of the Appropriation Act for the year in question.

### Eligibility criteria

An organisation is eligible to apply for grant funding if:

- it is a third sector organisation that falls within the scope of the Charities Act 2006 definition of being a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution;
- it has a proven track record of delivery in support of community empowerment activity;

- the total grant received from Government (including this grant application) is less than 50 per cent of the organisation's annual income in its accounting year ended in 2010/11, as demonstrated through its audited annual accounts. This is to ensure that the organisation does not become liable for consideration as an Arms Length Body;
- it is a corporate body or has a formal constitution if not incorporated.

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# Annex B

## Community Cashback

### Explanatory Note

#### *Introduction*

Government is inviting charities and benevolent societies to deliver a package of support that empowers social housing tenants. As part of this, the successful applicant would be responsible for administering an innovative new grant programme called Community Cashback.

#### *What is Community Cashback?*

Community Cashback rewards tenants who group together to manage small-scale local services and budgets in order to deliver better services and re-invest any savings back into the community. Drawing on the principles of Tenant Cashback, Community Cashback incentivises tenants who wish to play a bigger role in their local community.

#### *How will Community Cashback work?*

Social tenants know their patch and can often spot where communal housing services aren't responsive, accessible, or delivering value for money. Under Community Cashback, tenants will be able to group together to put a proposal to their landlord to take control of communal services.

Through a formal agreement with their landlord, tenant groups can manage the budget for that service, and arrange for the service to be delivered (for example by contracting with a third party).

Community Cashback offers:

- considerable discretion about the services to be covered (e.g. caretaking; cleaning; security/ concierge; communal gardening; grounds maintenance; minor repairs; maintenance);
- opportunities for tenants to decide how any savings might be re-invested in their local community;
- opportunities for tenants to learn new skills;
- an enhanced sense of ownership, pride and community spirit.

It will also provide safeguards since the total contract value of any Community Cashback agreement must be below the European Union competition regulations threshold (about £160,000) and can not last longer than 5 years. Recognising the importance of safeguarding public money, and potential

public liabilities, tenant groups may need to incorporate (e.g. as an Industrial and Provident Society or Community Interest Company).

Community Cashback draws on powers in Section 27 of the Housing Act 1985 to allow local authorities to enter into voluntary agreements that comply with the model form issued by the Regulator under their powers for general approval.

*Role of the grant administrator?*

As grant administrator, the successful applicant will be responsible for encouraging take-up of Community Cashback, issuing small grants to tenant groups, exploring how barriers can be overcome, monitoring outputs and outcomes, and reporting progress to DCLG.

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