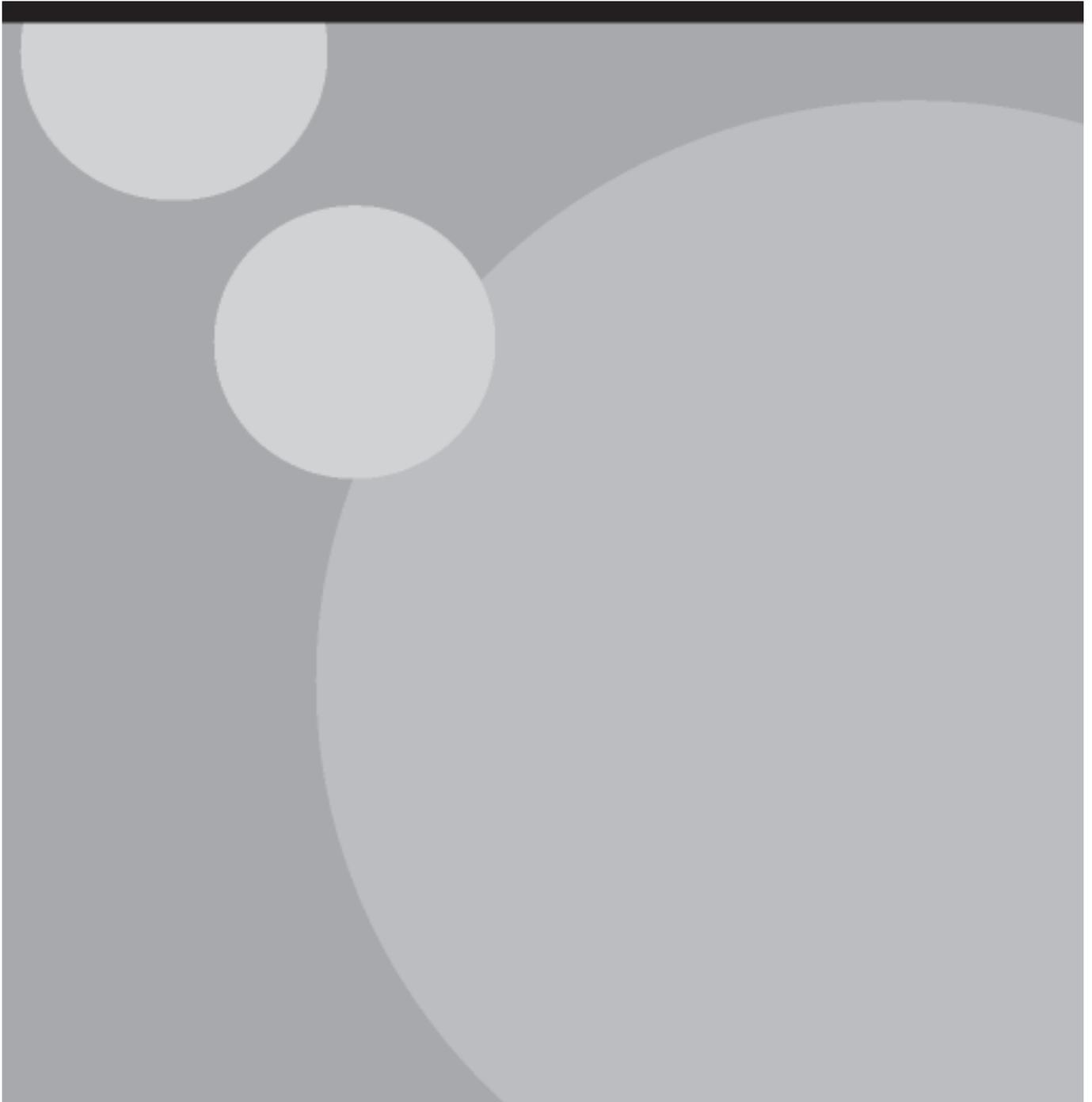


Regional and national tenants' organisations



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Regional and national tenants' organisations

IRIS Consulting

October 2010
Department for Communities and Local Government

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Our thanks are also due to Peter Fenn, Lesley Storer, Keith Kirby of CLG and Richard Crossley (who moved from CLG to TSA while this study was taking place) for their useful feedback, guidance and help.

Authors

The IRIS Consulting team who carried out the research and who collaborated in the production of this report were:

- John Harvey – project director
- Wendy Reardon Smith
- James Shaw
- David Sands
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- Marianne Hood – adviser.

1. Introduction and terms of reference

- 1.1 IRIS Consulting were commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in January 2009 to carry out research into regional and national tenants' organisations in England. The main fieldwork for the research was carried out in the period February to August 2009. In the light of comments received this report was revised in June 2010.

Terms of reference and context

- 1.2 CLG commissioned the research so as to inform it and the developing National Tenant Voice (NTV) of the current state of play of regional and national tenants' organisations representing tenants of social housing in England.
- 1.3 The remit for the study was to identify the regional and national tenants' organisations and to assess their strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. This information and assessment would be used by the CLG and the NTV and Tenant Services Authority (TSA) to make informed decisions about how best to develop and support such organisations in the future.

Purpose of the study

- 1.4 The key objectives of the study were to:
- identify regional and national organisations of social housing tenants
 - identify their aims and objectives, how they are organised to meet these, and how they are funded
 - what structures they have/would like to have for being accountable to tenants organisations in the region
 - ascertain how influential they are
 - ascertain their potential for enabling greater tenant involvement and influence over decision-making
 - ascertain whether or not the organisations are sustainable, and if not, what is required to make them sustainable.

Scope

- 1.5 For the purposes of the study the national tenants' organisations were defined as being:
- the Tenants and Residents Organisations of England (TAROE)
 - the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO)
 - the Confederation of Co-operative Housing (CCH).

- 1.6 The key questions that formed the prime focus for the study in relation to tenants' organisations in each region and the three national organisations were:
- how they are funded
 - their activities
 - their aims and their values
 - the spread and depth of tenant involvement in the organisations
 - the key links each organisation has regionally and nationally
 - the main focus of the organisations
 - an assessment of the influence the organisations have
 - the potential for greater influence
 - whether or not the organisations appear sustainable
 - what would be needed to make them sustainable.

Policy context

- 1.7 Our review was commissioned at a time when national policy on community empowerment was being revitalised and new or reformed delivery agencies and regulatory institutions had been created or were being introduced. The government had already indicated its intention to give social housing tenants a greater say through local compacts, choice-based lettings and tenant co-operatives. This was part of wider moves to put tenants as users of the service at the heart of housing service delivery. For example in the foreword to the 2008 White Paper "*Communities in Control: real people, real power*" the Prime Minister described the community empowerment agenda in the following terms:

*"an agenda for empowerment that reaches right across the board, from supporting people who want to take an active role in their communities to giving them better access to information and the chance to get more involved in key local public services. These themes lie at the heart of our public service reform agenda – the transfer of power both to front-line professionals and to users, who we want to be able to play a far greater role in shaping the services they use"*¹

- 1.8 The specific policy background and setting for this study were the reports commissioned by CLG Ministers into the way the social housing sector is regulated – in particular the Cave report published in summer 2007 and the Cole Report published in August 2008².

¹ White Paper: Command 7427: 9 July 2008

² Professor Martin Cave's report *Every Tenant Matters* published by CLG in June 2007; Professor Ian Cole's Report *Delivering cross-domain regulation of social housing* published in August 2008: ISBN: 978-1-4098-0373-7

- 1.9 These reports set the scene for the new regime of regulation across the whole of the social housing sector with the Cave Report recommending the setting up of a National Tenant Voice (NTV).
- 1.10 Shortly after we were commissioned the NTV's National Project Group, chaired by Professor Steve Hilditch, published its report *Citizens of Equal Worth* in February 2009 which set out detailed proposals for the role, remit and governance of the NTV³.
- 1.11 So at the time we started to conduct this research a number of major changes to the policy framework and institutional landscape had either recently been made or were afoot. These changes included the setting up of the new Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and the newly formed Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) – both coming into existence as from 1 December 2008.
- 1.12 These major changes had a significant impact on the research we were carrying out as many of the people from whom we were seeking views were still unfamiliar with the roles and remits of the new agencies. Also both the TSA and HCA had embarked on wide ranging consultation exercises that involved many of the tenant organisations we were researching. Apart from the general unfamiliarity about the roles of the new agencies the national consultations carried out as part of the TSA's "national conversation" and the HCA's "single conversation" created some confusion in the minds of the tenant groups we contacted about whether our research was part of these wider consultations. We also detected some sense of over-kill and research fatigue amongst respondents.

Research methods and timings

- 1.13 Our research consisted of the following activities:
- Literature Review (January-February 2009)
 - Initial stakeholder discussions (February 2009)
 - Scoping Paper (February 2009)
 - Research Design (March 2009)
 - Data collection fieldwork and interviews (April-June 2009)
 - Survey (May-July 2009)
 - Emerging Findings Paper (June 2009)
 - Final stakeholder discussions and completion of survey (July-August 2009)
 - Final Report (September 2009).

³ The NTV National Project Group Report *Citizens of Equal Worth* February 2009:
ISBN: 978 1 4098 0654 7

- 1.14 We briefly describe in the following paragraphs what we did under each of these headings.

Literature review

- 1.15 As part of our initial familiarisation and data gathering we carried out a review of relevant literature that included the published reports and White Paper documents mentioned above and papers relating to the setting up of the NTV. We identified relevant sources of information through the internet and other data sources including the websites of the HCA and the TSA. In particular we reviewed the contents of the websites and publications issued by relevant national and regional tenants' organisations – including TAROE, NFTMO, CCH and TPAS.
- 1.16 We also drew on our existing knowledge of the policy and organisational arrangements in the housing sector and published documentation.

Initial stakeholder interviews

- 1.17 We carried out an initial round of interviews with key stakeholders whose views we thought would be useful in identifying issues and useful sources of information for subsequent phases of work. These interviews were with:
- Mark Soundie and Darren Hartley of TAROE
 - Nic Bliss of CCH
 - Trevor Bell of NFTMO
 - Nigel Long of TPAS
 - Phil Morgan of TSA
 - Roger Jarman of the Audit Commission
 - Martyn Kingsford (honorary policy adviser to TAROE, RSL Liaison officer for CIH London and member of the NTV Accountability Committee).
- 1.18 Individuals in other organisations were also contacted during this initial phase of interviews. They included people working in the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Chartered Institute of Housing, the Priority Estates Project, London Councils, GOL and the Northern Housing Consortium.
- 1.19 These initial interviews were very helpful in highlighting areas of interest and concern and in pointing us towards other organisations and persons that would be useful for us to contact in the main data collection phase of work.

Scoping paper

- 1.20 We submitted a scoping paper to CLG in mid-February 2009 that set out issues relating to key themes for the research and methods of data collection and analysis.
- 1.21 One of the key issues highlighted in the Scoping Paper was the methodology for collecting views about the role and effectiveness of national and regional tenants' organisations. After discussions with CLG officials it was agreed to adopt a multi-pronged approach which would involve sending out and receiving the main survey questionnaire in as many formats as possible to cater for the wide range of potential respondents and their preferred forms of communication. In practice this meant that the main survey questionnaire was produced and issued in paper and electronic formats with the capability to complete and submit the survey form on-line. The final version of the survey questionnaire is reproduced at Appendix 1.
- 1.22 Groups of tenants were involved in piloting the questionnaire. The survey sought responses across a wide range of issues and it was found that as many of the issues being researched lent themselves to qualitative rather than quantitative responses a significant part of the questionnaire allowed respondents to enter comment and "free text".
- 1.23 Another key issue identified in our scoping report was that in order to maximise the level of response to the survey it would be necessary to allow respondents more time than the three weeks originally envisaged in the initial project plan. This extension of the original timetable was accepted on the basis that it would facilitate the collection of better quality data from as many interested groups as possible. In the event the "deadline" for receipt of completed survey questionnaires was first extended until the end of June (instead of end May as originally planned) and then again until the end of July 2009 with consequential effects on the completion of the research programme of work.

Project design: Data collection and fieldwork methodology

- 1.24 In the light of decisions made on issues identified in the Scoping Paper we submitted a paper to CLG in March 2009 setting out details of the research design and data collection methods. The final research design and data collection methods comprised four main strands. These were:
- **Strand 1) mapping of tenants' organisations** that operate at the national and regional levels across the whole of England
 - **Strand 2) a national survey of local tenants groups** and stakeholders seeking information about what they know/expect/would like from regional and national tenants' organisations
 - **Strand 3) case studies in selected regions** to explore issues in depth about effectiveness, sustainability etc with interested bodies
 - **Strand 4) carrying out a final round of discussions with key players** in the official realm (TSA, NTV and HCA) and with the national tenants' organisations (NFTMO, TAROE, CCH, TPAS) towards the conclusion of

the research to obtain views on the emerging findings and to get their perspective on the issues.

- 1.25 In the light of all the evidence collated the research team would then make assessments about the strengths, weaknesses and potential sustainability of the national and regional organisations identified and develop options for ways in which they might be supported in future.

Survey

- 1.26 The survey was designed to obtain independent information and views from the large array of local tenants' bodies and associations across the country on issues such as:
- levels of awareness of the existence and roles of national and regional tenants' organisations
 - levels of participation in activities organised by national and regional tenants' organisations
 - the nature and frequency of communications with national and regional organisations
 - awareness and attitudes about the way in which national and regional tenants' organisations are constituted - such as the way in which Board Members and officers are appointed
 - views on the range of activities that national and regional tenants' organisation should be carrying out.
- 1.27 We wanted the survey to be seen and completed by as many tenants' groups as possible. With this objective in mind we designed the survey to be capable of being completed both on paper and returned by post and on-line.
- 1.28 The availability of the survey was publicised in Inside Housing in the magazine's 1 May 2009 edition. We also arranged for the survey questionnaire to be sent by TAROE, NFTMO, CCH and TPAS to all their members to enable them to input their views direct to the research team.
- 1.29 This open survey was conducted during the period 1 May-31 July 2009.

Emerging findings reporting

- 1.30 In mid-June 2009 we reported to CLG the information we had collected by then with some provisional emerging findings. Those provisional findings were qualified by the fact that the national survey had not by then been completed (with the deadline having been extended until end July) and some of the interviews with national stakeholder organisations had not been conducted.

Regional summary report

- 1.31 In August 2009 we were asked by CLG to provide a brief summary of our key findings in respect of regional tenants' organisations. We submitted a paper at

the end of August which we understand was circulated to members of the NTV Project Group and discussed at a meeting they held on 8 September 2009.

Final report

- 1.32 This document constitutes our main report from the review and contains all our findings and recommendations. It sets out options and suggestions for how central government and its agencies might wish to consider taking things forward in order to help strengthen and develop national and regional tenants' organisations.

2. General findings

Presentation of general findings

- 2.1 The findings presented in this section of our report are drawn from four main sources:
- 1) our national survey of tenants' organisations
 - 2) our regional case study interviews
 - 3) our mapping of information about which tenants' organisations exist at regional and sub-regional levels
 - 4) our interviews with national stakeholder organisations.
- 2.2 We set out our findings in the following sequence so as to signpost readers to where relevant findings and supporting evidence may be found.
- findings relating to general policy and strategic issues
 - findings relating to national tenants' organisations in England
 - findings relating to regional tenants' organisations in England.
- 2.3 Our more detailed findings arising from our regional case studies and mapping of regional tenants' organisations are contained in Section 3 of this report.
- 2.4 Where relevant findings are available from our survey we present that information at the relevant points in reporting our findings below.

The survey

- 2.5 There is no national data base of tenants' organisations at the local, regional or sub-regional levels. Hence our survey faced the difficulty of seeking responses from an unknown and unquantified number of potential groups and organisations. Accordingly we adopted an "open" approach in carrying out the survey in the sense that we invited all tenants' organisations to complete it and we brought it to their attention through a variety of means. We describe below the approach we adopted in order to provide some context for considering the findings from the survey.
- 2.6 As a starting point in order to reach all those tenants' groups who are members of one of the national umbrella tenants' organisations we made arrangements with TAROE, NFTMO, TPAS and CCH for our survey questionnaire to be sent to each of their member organisations with the request that the completed survey questionnaire be sent back direct to the IRIS research team.
- 2.7 With the aim of reaching those tenants' groups who are not members of any national body we made arrangements to publicise the existence of the survey through the specialist housing press "Inside Housing" and also by having the existence of the survey publicised on the websites of TAROE, TPAS, CCH and NFTMO.

- 2.8 By disseminating the survey questionnaire through these methods it was expected that a large proportion of the responses would be from organisations that are already members of one of the national organisations. We found that all the responses were submitted on behalf of organisations rather than from individuals.
- 2.9 We also found that the survey was also picked up and completed by some organisations who were not already members of one of the national tenants' umbrella groups. Of the total 71 organisations that completed the survey just under three-quarters (72%) were members of one of the national tenants' organisations. Amongst these the breakdown of their membership affiliation is indicated in the table below:

National Organisation	% of respondents (number)
NFTMO	25% (14)
TPAS	20% (10)
CCH	15% (8)
TAROE	15% (8)

- 2.10 The other 25 per cent of respondents said that they were not members of any of the four national tenants' associations but some did indicate that they were members of other national bodies which they gave as being: NHF, ARCH, NTV, LEASE, TSA.
- 2.11 In interpreting the findings from the survey the nature of the survey population should be borne in mind. The members of TAROE, NFTMO, TPAS and CCH might be expected to have an informed view of the role and activities carried out by such organisations. It was these views that the survey was seeking to capture and it might be expected that these respondents would consider such organisations and their activities to be worthwhile.
- 2.12 The main findings are described in the following paragraphs.

General policy and strategic considerations

- 2.13 Not surprisingly we found amongst our survey respondents almost universal agreement that tenant participation is a "good thing" in that it serves to promote better delivery of local services and community cohesion. While these beneficial effects of tenant involvement are most clearly experienced at the local level, it is widely considered amongst the organisations and groups we consulted in our case studies and from the survey that there is also a useful function to be played by national and regional tenants' organisations. However, the national and regional tenants' organisations are seen as relatively under-developed and held back by lack of resources and capacity which is held to hamper their effectiveness.

- 2.14 A large majority of the respondents to our survey saw the role of national and regional tenants' organisations as beneficial – *"to give tenants a voice against the big bureaucracies"* as one of the survey respondents put it.
- 2.15 The role of national tenant organisations was more highly valued than that of regional and sub-regional groups. Nearly 80 per cent of survey respondents considered that national tenants' organisations served a useful role; 65 per cent thought that regional bodies were useful while only 50 per cent considered sub-regional tenants' bodies to be useful. These findings seem to reflect the membership patterns of those who responded to the survey.
- 2.16 However some expressed strong views about the number and potential duplication of the various bodies involved. As one respondent put it:
- "I do however think there are too many TAROE, TPAS, TSA, National Tenant Voice etc etc; it gets confusing and our tenants question the need. One body one voice makes sense and is far more economical!! We feel bogged down by the amount of tenant organisations at the moment and could spend virtually every week attending workshops; conferences etc addressed by one or the other. With so many there is also the potential for conflicting information"*
- 2.17 Many stakeholders and survey respondents commented that the profile of the national and regional tenants' organisations is fairly low – with the view expressed that few tenants know of their existence or what they do.
- 2.18 Some of the issues and questions touched on in this study were seen by many respondents and stakeholders as relevant to the future work of TSA which was still in its early stages and had embarked on its "national conversation" during the course of our research. In following up on these informal consultations in November 2009 the TSA published its formal proposals for "A New Regulatory Framework" which included a proposed standard on Tenant Empowerment and Involvement that proposed:
- "Registered providers must say how they will provide support to build tenants' capacity to be effectively engaged, involved and empowered."⁴*
- 2.19 While the TSA proposals are most likely to be directed at the delivery of social housing services at the local level, capacity for effective tenant empowerment at the national and regional levels was identified as a major issue by many of our consultees and survey respondents. This reflects both a resource and skills deficit.
- 2.20 Amongst the various stakeholders we interviewed at national and regional levels we found a general view that regional and national tenants' organisations could do much more if they were able to command resources and develop a clearer remit and focus. Some made an explicit connection between these issues (role and resources) and made the point that they felt that resources would follow if

⁴ Tenant Services Authority *A new regulatory framework for social housing in England* Statutory Consultation November 2009

there was a clearer focus and role for tenants' organisations at the national and regional levels. Many stakeholders and respondents acknowledged that in the past this had been hampered by factionalism and rivalries.

- 2.21 Some of our respondents suggested that there are potential economies of scale from having national and regional organisations that can use their scale and reach to achieve better purchasing deals through joint procurement – on things like training for tenants.
- 2.22 Many stakeholders identified the basic requirement as the need to devise a funding framework which is based on transparent principles that are accepted by the affected parties: that is by both the receivers and givers of funding. Underlying this point was a general lack of clarity or understanding about the respective roles and responsibilities of the national and regional tenants' organisations and as between the TSA and the NTV.
- 2.23 However there was a minority view that was cynical about the role performed by national and regional tenants' organisations. A small number of the respondents to our survey expressed the opinion that national and regional tenants' organisations merely served to legitimise centrally imposed solutions providing the appearance of consultation but not its reality. One respondent expressed this view in the following terms:

“The corraling of tenants into one group.....neatly fits the political objective, gives a simple and straightforward way of consulting and “authorises” the results with no validation from the general population necessary.”

Sustainability

- 2.24 Under our terms of reference one of the key areas to be researched related to “sustainability”. We have had much debate as to what this terms means in practice in relation to tenants' organisations. Some of the people we consulted took the view that an individual tenants' organisation was sustainable if it currently received funding from landlord organisations or from government sources. Others took the view that sustainability related to the long-term viability of an organisation in terms of whether or not it had a significant membership base and/or had a track record or future potentiality for attracting support and funding.
- 2.25 The view we have adopted is more or less the latter of these working definitions and in the later sections of this report we have sought to apply the following criteria (either singly or in combination) in order to reach a view on whether or not any tenants' organisation is sustainable:
- levels of membership (current and likely future potential numbers)
 - track record and profile
 - ability to raise income independent of central government grant.
- 2.26 An overriding issue that ran through much of the comment we received about “sustainability” was general concern that with the economic downturn tenant involvement is an area that could suffer as a result of local authority and RSL cut-backs. As a consequence “good” or “viable” tenants groups would suffer or

be faced with closure. Although this threat was seen as likely to have most impact on local groups there was likely to be a knock-on effect for national, regional or sub-regional tenants' organisations where they depend on income from membership fees from local affiliated groups.

- 2.27 Faced with these pressures we were told that many tenant organisations are actively seeking to diversify their income sources by carrying out activities in other areas. This point is expanded upon below.

Sustainability and tenants know-how in community empowerment

- 2.28 In July 2008 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced the setting up of a Communities Empowerment Fund with the purpose of giving financial assistance to 20-25 third sector organisations that operate across the whole of England to help them make the most of their potential in supporting empowered communities. In April 2009 CLG announced that 21 projects had been approved and would receive £9.25m over three years.

“The security of a three year fund will help these organisations plan ahead with confidence and we will be looking for them to show how they will make effective use of financial assistance from the Fund to do yet more⁵.”

- 2.29 We found a view (often held amongst tenant participation professionals) that the community empowerment agenda may offer opportunities especially for tenants' organisations which are concentrated in the more deprived areas of social housing. As social housing tenants' groups have been pioneers in developing techniques and forging relationships for community involvement it was felt that such groups are well-placed to expand and sell their expertise to the sort of partnership mechanisms being created under the community empowerment agenda.
- 2.30 We were told that some resident-led groups have negotiated service delivery agreements with local authorities and other delivery partners which gives them credibility and a position to extend their sphere of operations outside the confines of social housing services. This might offer the prospect of earning income (for services delivered) or funding in recognition of their facilitating role: but some respondents feared that this would be at the risk of losing focus on housing service delivery issues.
- 2.31 We mention these points in the context of sustainability because the pressures on tenant groups to raise income from as many sources as possible was mentioned by many respondents as diverting tenant organisations away from their original core function of promoting the interests of social housing tenants and distracting them from their focus on improving housing conditions and living environments.

⁵ CLG Press Release 1 April 2009

Findings relating to national tenants' organisations

2.32 The role of national tenants' organisations is generally regarded as clear and distinctive. Each of the national tenants' organisations covered by this research has developed a clear role and remit in relation to specific constituencies. We set out our general findings in relation to each of the national bodies in the following paragraphs.

Tenants and Residents Organisations of England (TAROE)

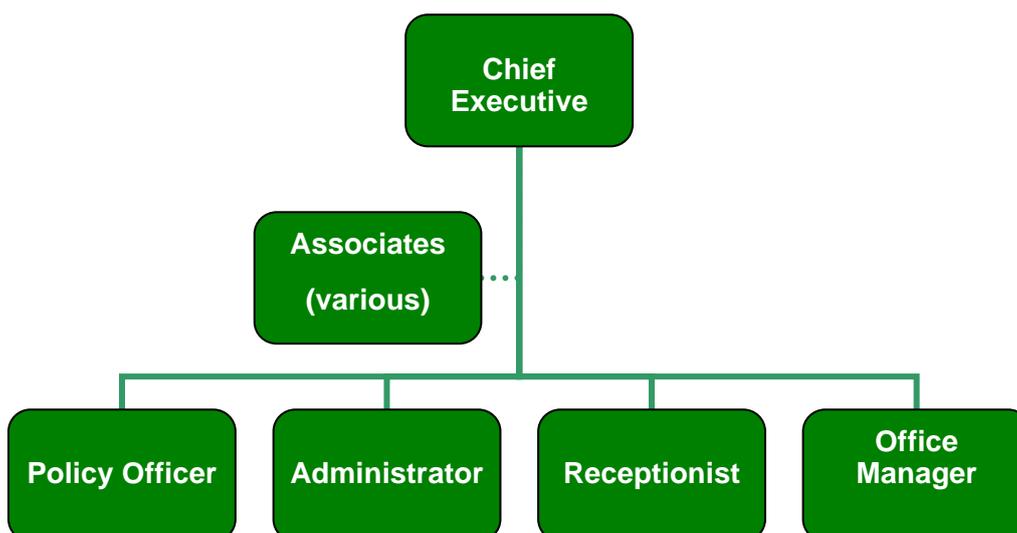
BACKGROUND AND STRUCTURE

2.33 TAROE was launched in 1997 bringing together the former National Tenants Organisation (NTO) and the former National Tenants and Residents Federation (NTRF) into one body to represent tenants from social housing across England.

2.34 The NTO had been set up in 1976 (with help from the National Consumer Council) to campaign for tenants' rights and a Tenants' Charter. The NTRF had been set up in 1988 by local federations campaigning for greater investment in public housing and although its main focus was on council housing it included housing association tenants in its membership.

2.35 TAROE is a company limited by guarantee with charitable aims. It is governed by a Board of Management of 12 members. All members of the Board are tenants and are elected from TAROE's membership. Governance arrangements are in place to appoint new members with a preferred balance of skills and experience. The Board is also supplemented by several co-optees.

2.36 TAROE is supported by a team of executive staff which, as at summer 2009, comprised:



ROLE AND INFLUENCE

- 2.37 TAROE has been identified by the TSA as their primary “membership stakeholder”. This is reflected in their being invited to bi-monthly meetings with the TSA’s Chief Executive alongside other members of its leadership team. TAROE has been asked by the TSA to undertake several *ad hoc* projects on an on-going basis (e.g. BME Tenants Research and Consultation Project). TAROE has sent representative to each of the TSA’s National Conversation events.
- 2.38 On a wider front TAROE responds to and seeks to influence all relevant government consultation exercises. Their recent responses include:
- Council Housing Inquiry
 - review of the housing revenue account funding system for local authorities.
- 2.39 TAROE was engaged with all NTV consultation exercises in 2009, with the HCA’s proposed consultation events and the second and third stages of the TSA’s National Conversation.
- 2.40 TAROE has been requested and given evidence to government select committees on housing related issues.
- 2.41 TAROE has recently (early 2009) appointed a Policy Officer which has enhanced its capacity to consult and respond to government consultations.

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.42 TAROE draws its income from a range of sources. These include:
- Tenant Empowerment Programme (TEP) funds
 - TSA project income
 - contract income (e.g. Housemark project)
 - training services
 - consultancy services.
- 2.43 In 2008-09 TAROE received TAROE development funding from the TSA’s Tenant Empowerment Fund of £124,600 (TAROE Moving Forward).
- 2.44 In its submission to this research TAROE acknowledged that, at present, it is heavily reliant upon grant funding from the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). TAROE has set itself a corporate objective to reach a 50/50 balance between grant funding and income from other services during the next two financial years. We have been informed that TAROE produces an annual business plan that sets out projected income and a resource strategy that shows the development of non-grant based activity.

SUSTAINABILITY

- 2.45 TAROE occupies a strategic position in the tenant landscape having been in existence for many years dating back to 1976 through its previous constituent

bodies. Although TAROE was not prepared to divulge its membership details to the research team it informed us that as at February 2009 it had some 230 individual tenants' groups as members.

- 2.46 From our wide-ranging discussions and from our survey we found that there was a perception amongst some of TAROE being primarily focussed on local authority housing tenant issues with a strong northern representation. However we have been informed that TAROE's membership is evenly spread as between southern and northern members – and that it takes a cross domain approach in all its work. We consider that on the basis of the information provided that TAROE does have a broad membership base and that some of the perceptions we found are historic rather than based on current working arrangements.

National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO)

BACKGROUND AND STRUCTURE

- 2.47 The NFTMO was founded in 1992 and is the national organisation representing Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs). It is a company limited by guarantee with an executive committee that includes 21 TMO representatives from all parts of the country and from the council and housing association sectors.
- 2.48 The Federation employs one part time paid co-ordinator but otherwise all of the Federation's work depends on voluntary effort. NFTMO does not have dedicated office premises and therefore minimises its fixed management and overheads costs. For meetings and events NFTMO makes use of the local offices and facilities of its member TMOs.
- 2.49 Much of NFTMO's work is done through partnerships. For example in recent years it has carried out projects and events in partnership with the National Federation of ALMOs, the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, House Mark, InStep, Trafford Hall, TPAS, Partners-in-Change, PEP, Open Communities, SNU, LACOG, TAROE, Tribal and Co-ops UK.

ROLE AND INFLUENCE

- 2.50 Most of the NFTMO's activities and events are to promote and facilitate the exchange of experience and ideas between tenant management organisations and like-minded community initiatives. It seeks to identify and share examples of good practice and excellence, sometimes through good practice guides and publications.
- 2.51 The NFTMO has worked with partners to produce good practice tools and guidance for TMOs. This has included a TMO Stock Options Guide, a TMO Business Planning Guide and CD, a TMO Benchmarking Guide, The Adapt Toolset for working the Modular Management Agreement, a TMO Guide to Best Value and Guidance on Working Relationships with ALMOs. (All of these publications and guides are available as downloads from the NFTMO website.)

- 2.52 The NFTMO administers the TMO Good Governance Kite Mark which acknowledges achievement and generally promotes the importance of Good Governance. It has also promoted and supported TMO benchmarking networks.
- 2.53 The NFTMO has established and manages a searchable list of advisors and trainers who offer services to established and developing TMO groups. It supports groups who are looking to appoint an advisor.
- 2.54 The NFTMO has recently established, with funding support from the TSA's Tenant Empowerment Programme, a network of ten "Guide TMOs" These are TMOs willing to promote and showcase the achievements of tenant management through offering study visits and to support developing TMOs through shadowing and mentoring. The Guide TMO model emerged from the experience gained by the NFTMO as a member of the national Guide Neighbourhood programme that was funded through the Home Office for three years.

WORK ON NATIONAL POLICY ISSUES

- 2.55 The NFTMO is an active member of many government and housing sector working groups. These include the Right to Manage Review Group, The Approved Assessor Steering Group, the Voluntary Route Working Party, the National Tenant Voice Project Group and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Resident Controlled Housing.
- 2.56 In recent years the NFTMO played a key role in the work to develop the new Right to Manage regulations and, in particular, a new system to assess and confirm the competence of prospective TMO groups. It regularly convenes the Tenant-Led Stock Transfer Forum which has been a vehicle for helping to implement government policy of Tenant-Led Stock Transfer.
- 2.57 The NFTMO executive committee members and the co-ordinator provide regular advice and support to individual TMOs and tenants' groups around the country. It provide speakers as conferences and events, contribute items to the housing press, meet with landlord representatives and general make ourselves available for opportunities to support and promote community control of housing.

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.58 Membership fees are calculated according to the size of a TMO and currently generate about 10 per cent of the essential running costs of the Federation.
- 2.59 In 2008-09 NFTMO received some £120,000 from the TSA's Tenant Empowerment Fund of which some £41,000 was for its organisational development and support. The main elements in the rest of the TEP funding were for specific activities broadly described as:
- promotional activities = £25,000
 - support for the ten TMO Guides = £30,000
 - support to networks = £10,000
 - conferences and events = £14,000.

- 2.60 The rest the NFTMO's income is raised through conferences, sales of good practice guides and sponsorship of events.

SUSTAINABILITY

- 2.61 The NFTMO has 130 organisations in membership which represent more than 50 per cent of operating TMOs. It has a narrow, but clearly, defined membership base and has carved out a distinctive role in terms of providing practical support, advice and dissemination of good practice relevant to the operational needs of TMOs.
- 2.62 Provided the TMO sector continues to expand or continue at its present size, we consider that the existence of the NFTMO is sustainable given its low fixed costs and its ability to attract project-based or output based specific funding and sponsorship.

Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)

BACKGROUND AND STRUCTURE

- 2.63 TPAS was formed in 1988. It is a not for profit membership organisation that provides information, consultancy, training and conferences on all aspects of involving tenants in their housing management. As a member organisation it is made up of tenants' groups and social housing landlords, which makes TPAS a hybrid organisation of tenants, TP workers and social housing providers. As at November 2009 TPAS members comprised 262 registered providers and 1,195 tenant and resident organisations.
- 2.64 TPAS structures are representative and accountable. The TPAS Board comprises five tenant directors and five landlord directors – all of whom are elected from the membership. The position of Chair alternates each year with a tenant one year and a landlord the next. The Vice Chair alternates similarly. The Board of Directors set the strategic vision and direction for the organisation assisted and supported by the Executive Management team.
- 2.65 In England TPAS works through six regional committees made up of landlord and tenant representatives. These are based broadly on Government Regional Office boundaries except for London and the South-East, the Midlands and the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside which form single TPAS regions. The six TPAS regions cover:
- London and the South-East
 - Eastern region
 - North East, Yorkshire and Humberside
 - North West
 - South West
 - West Midlands.

- 2.66 Each of the six regional committees organise four open meetings each year that provide opportunities for tenants and landlords to network and discuss topical issues. These meetings are attended, on average, by about 40-70 people. Other organisations often use these structures to carry out consultation and research. For example in 2009 the TSA attended meetings in all six regions during the consultation on its new regulatory framework.
- 2.67 There are separate TPAS organisations in Scotland and Wales who receive varying levels of core and project funding from the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies. (In 2008-09 TPAS Scotland received £63,300 under the Scottish Government's Housing Voluntary Grant Scheme and TPAS Cymru received core and project funding of around £600,000 under a contract with the Welsh Assembly.)

ROLE AND INFLUENCE

- 2.68 TPAS carries out a wide range of activities and is widely perceived as playing a significant role in the national social housing scene. Its chief executive, Michelle Reid, is a member of the TSA's Sounding Board set up to advise on and help shape the new regulatory framework. TPAS staff meet TSA strategic directors quarterly and have been actively involved in supporting the development of the National Tenant Voice and TPAS has three nominated places on the National Tenant Council.
- 2.69 TPAS works with small and large partners in the delivery of various initiatives and is widely acknowledged as the largest tenant membership organisation in the UK. As well as organising an annual tenant conference that is held to be the largest tenant conference in the UK, it also carries out the following activities:
- national policy development and analysis on housing and tenant involvement issues
 - briefings and case studies to promote best practice in resident involvement
 - a helpline and information service for landlord and tenant members
 - conferences and seminars on all aspects of tenant involvement and empowerment
 - accredited training programmes for tenants and housing workers
 - consultancy work with tenants' groups and landlords focussing on resident-led self-regulation, scrutiny and Independent Tenant Advisor work
 - Landlords and Contractor Accreditation Quality Assurance Frameworks and Awards
 - in-house training
 - National TPAS Connecting People Awards.
- 2.70 TPAS also makes frequent submissions to government and seeks to develop government policy around tenant involvement and empowerment issues. For

example in 2009 TPAS was invited to give written and verbal evidence to the Select Committee on Decent Homes. It is also involved in the Ageing Population agenda and has been commissioned by the Department of Health to write a report on the current and future issues for sheltered housing. In the past TPAS has worked with the Audit Commission and the former Housing Corporation on best practice toolkits for resident involvement.

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

2.71 In 2008 TPAS had an annual turnover of about £2m. Its income was derived from a mix of sources which were broadly as follows:

- consultancy services = 56%
- training services = 4%
- conferences/seminars = 23%
- membership = 17%.

2.72 At the time of preparing this report TPAS received no core funding from any government department for infrastructure or organisational development. It relied entirely for its income on membership, project funding and earned income. In April 2009 TPAS secured project funding of some £500,000 over three years under the CLG's Communities Empowerment Fund. This is to deliver an innovative E-learning programme for tenants and staff on best practice in tenant involvement. In 2009-10 TPAS has also attracted project funding from other government departments – such as the Home Office under its community cohesion programme *Not in My Neighbourhood*.

SUSTAINABILITY

2.73 Amongst the national organisations included in this review TPAS appears to have the highest profile. This reflects the length of time it has been operating, the scale of its membership base and its wide span of activities – especially its training with tenant groups and TP workers.

2.74 Although TPAS recently has received a considerable proportion of its income from project-based government sources these are from different funding streams rather than a single pot. **AS project-based initiatives they are dependent on TPAS delivering on asset of pre-defined criteria and outcomes.** TPAS also generates a considerable share of its income from consultancy, training and its annual conference thereby spreading its risks and dependency on any single source.

2.75 However this pattern of income generation does mean that TPAS is subject to the risks of fluctuations in the economy – which are particularly relevant in a period of downturn and recession. The scale of TPAS's operations is reflected in its commensurate levels of expenditure: while its consultancy work generates significant income it does not automatically generate high surpluses. The organisation has informed us that it has recently struggled to achieve a balanced budget which it attributes to a lack of core funding opportunities.

Confederation of Co-operative Housing (CCH)

BACKGROUND AND STRUCTURE

- 2.76 The Confederation of Co-operative Housing was formed in 1993 and registered as a company limited by guarantee in 1996. CCH membership is open to all housing co-operatives, tenant-controlled housing organisations and regional federations of housing co-ops. Its formal company objectives are:

“the promotion of co-operative production and management of housing, and representation of the interest of the housing co-operative sector within the United Kingdom”

VOTING STRUCTURE

- 2.77 The CCH has published its voting arrangements which are designed to ensure:
- a. that it remains an organisation with strong representation from members of housing cooperatives
 - b. that no one region of the country dominates the agenda (because housing co-op movements have developed differently in each area).

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

- 2.78 The AGM is a General Meeting at which all CCH members are entitled to vote. There are three types of CCH members:
- a. housing co-operatives - entitled to one vote
 - b. federations of housing co-operatives - entitled to three votes
 - c. special interest federations - organisations that support the CCH's aims and objectives - entitled to one vote.

CCH GENERAL COUNCIL

- 2.79 The AGM does not elect the CCH's governing body, the General Council. CCH members in each region determine who their representatives are and submit them to the AGM for ratification. The regions, all entitled to three places (except London with eight), are as follows:
- London (eight places)
 - South East
 - South West
 - Eastern Region
 - West Midlands
 - East Midlands

- North West
- North East.

2.80 Special Interest federations are also able to nominate one delegate to the General Council and there are five places for co-option and latter placed are voted on by the AGM.

ROLE AND INFLUENCE

2.81 The current aims and activities of the CCH encompass:

- to promote co-operative and tenant controlled housing as a viable alternative form of tenure
- to represent the interests of housing co-ops and other tenant-controlled housing groups
- to provide a forum for networking between housing co-ops nationally.

2.82 In pursuit of these general aims we have been informed that the range of activities carried out by CCH (in addition to its well-regarded annual conference) include:

- developing research and policy projects (such as that on the Community Gateway model)
- sponsored projects (such as that funded by the former Housing Corporation on models of involvement for registered social landlord tenants)
- developing the Community Land Trust model (with funding from Birmingham City Council and the former Housing Corporation)
- providing services to members (from which income is derived)
- maintaining and fostering links with the wider co-operative movement (both in UK and abroad).

2.83 This range of activities is often supported with project finding from the relevant sponsoring bodies in the public and private sectors.

FUNDING

2.84 CCH is a small organisation with an annual turnover of approximately £60,000 in 2008. We have been informed that as at November 2009 its membership comprised 110 organisations that included 56 members of the London Federation of Housing Co-operatives. It derives most of its income from conferences, consultative services and sponsorship. It receives no grant funding towards its administration costs – although some of the conferences it runs have received sponsorship from government agencies.

2.85 According to the responses to our survey its training events and courses are very highly regarded; it scored the highest rating of all the national and regional organisations for the quality of its conferences and training events.

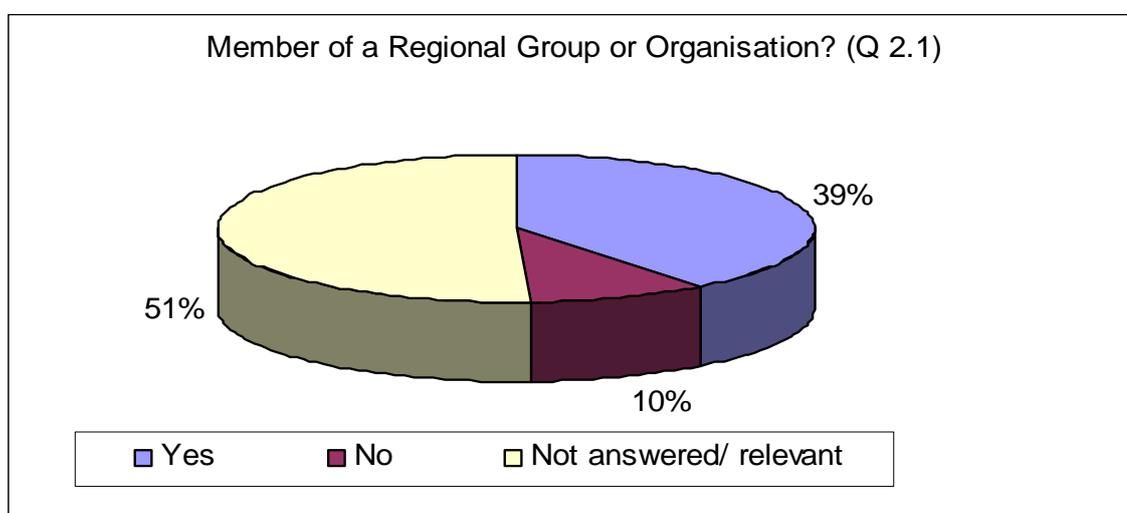
SUSTAINABILITY

- 2.86 In many respects the CCH appears to “punch above its weight” given its relatively small size and financial resources. It has a reasonably high profile (as borne out by the responses to our survey) and has a high reputation for the quality of its conferences. Its membership base is relatively small and likely to remain so despite current attempts to broaden the appeal and raise the profile of mutual housing.
- 2.87 The future role of CCH and its potential for growth will depend partly on the outcome of responses to the work of the Commission on Mutual and Co-operative Housing. If the wider housing movement decides to espouse the model then the CCH will be in a strong strategic position to expand to serve the growth in its sector.
- 2.88 At the time of preparing this report CCH was not in receipt of any direct government grant-aid although it has received significant project funding in the past. We understand that instead of core funding, CCH would prefer an alternative funding model which would involve a mixed economy of public and private funding in support of specific services delivered through contract type arrangements.
- 2.89 If in future government wishes to encourage a substantial expansion of the co-op sector then we consider that some “seed-corn” funding (from TSA or NTV) for CCH would be necessary to enable it to increase its organisational capacity to deliver services and support to newly formed co-operative housing organisations.

Findings relating to Regional Tenants' Organisations

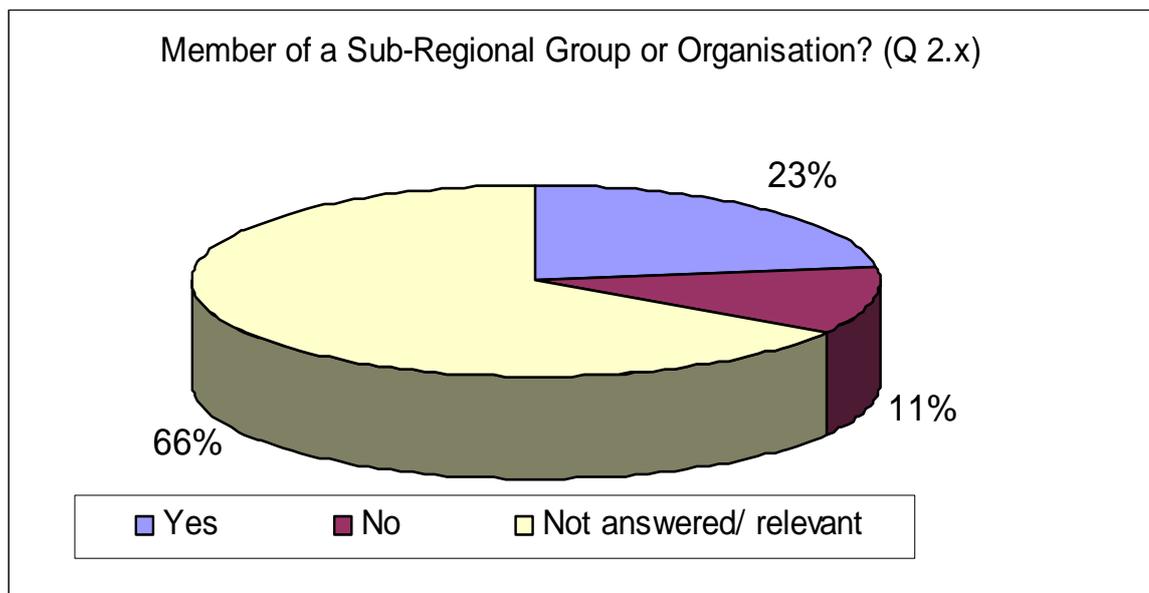
- 2.90 Only a minority (39%) of the respondents to our survey said they were members of a regional tenants' organisation: see Figure 1 below:

Figure 1



2.91 Even fewer (23%) said they were members of a sub-regional group (which would be a group covering more than one local authority area or a county-wide grouping): see Figure 2 below:

Figure 2



2.92 We found no common view about the effectiveness/need for regional groups. In fact there were conflicting views about their role and doubts about whether it made sense to have regional tenants' organisations in a standard way across the country.

2.93 However there are some significant drivers that point to the need for regional tenants' bodies. For example the development of regional strategies (both housing and planning) are important and tenants' views need to be represented at this level – for which regional tenants' organisations would seem to be well suited but for which they are not as yet much involved or geared up

2.94 There have also been some successes in tenants' organisations operating at the regional level. For example at the regional level we have been told that the EMTPF has been self-financing for the last 10 years. Its members are landlords with membership subscriptions based on stocks numbers with shared training. The organisation works on a partnership approach between tenants and landlords.

Role of Government Offices for the Regions (GOs) in supporting tenants organisations

- 2.95 Some of the participants in the research saw a pivotal role for GOs in supporting and fostering regional tenants' organisations. GOs play an important part in drawing together cross-sectoral work at regional level. They do this by having teams facing several different government departments for whom they work. Their role in Local Area Agreements (LAAs), planning and housing means they have relationships with all local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in their regions.
- 2.96 GOs are seldom direct funders of programmes, but their influence and knowledge is considerable. We found that that only a small number of tenants' organisations are coterminous with the boundaries of GOs. Where they exist at all they tend to be at the county or, at most, two county level with the exceptions of the tenants' organisations in the north-east (NECTAR), London and in East Midlands.

Regional profiles and mapping

- 2.97 A summary of our findings is provided for each region in the following paragraphs.

Eastern Region

- 2.98 Our researches have not found a regional organisation that represents all social housing tenants in this region – although we are aware that TAROE has recently (2009) been working to set one up for East Anglia. We have also been informed that TPAS hold four open meetings per year in the East Region alternating the venues between Norwich, Cambridge and Ipswich. These events attract an average attendance of 40-70 people. TPAS have 142 tenant organisations and 37 landlord organisations as members in the Eastern Region.
- 2.99 We did, however, find that a regional forum for RSL tenants was set up in 2005 which is called FREE - the Forum for RSL Residents in the East of England. FREE was launched at a conference held in Cambridge in the autumn of 2005 with approximately 150 residents in attendance. It currently has 100 members and 63 members on its consultative group. Its membership includes all RSLs in the Eastern Region (i.e. in the six counties of Hertfordshire, Essex, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk).
- 2.100 The Forum has been supported by housing associations across the region as part of their commitment to customers through the "iN business for neighbourhoods" initiative. The National Housing Federation facilitated and supported the establishment of the Forum. Funding is raised through affiliation fees that cover the administration and running costs of the forum. FREE is not a member of any other national tenant organisation as yet but many of its members are also members of TPAS. FREE has a formal constitution.
- 2.101 At the sub-regional level there are a number of county and district wide groups – such as the Mid-Suffolk Tenants Forum (who are members of TAROE and

TPAS). Across the region there are also a number of county-wide tenant participation groups – such as TP Herts.

East Midlands Region

- 2.102 The East Midlands Tenant Participation Forum (EMTPF) was established in 1999 and at that time was held to be the first Regional Tenant Participation Forum in the country. It is based at the offices of Corby Borough Council having originally been based in Nottingham in its early life with start-up support and facilities provided by the GO-EM. Government Office funding for the organisation ceased in 2008 leading to the relocation to Corby.
- 2.103 EMTPF exists to bring together tenants, leaseholders, residents, officers, councillors and board members working on Tenant Participation issues in the region. In its early days the Government Office East Midlands (GO-EM) played an instrumental role in establishing the Forum. It currently has about fifty member landlords who provide funding by individual landlord member subscription fees based upon stock size/number of tenants.
- 2.104 EMTPF runs training events, three regional conferences per year and has its own quarterly newsletter and Yahoo! web group. It is organised by a committee of 25 members comprising a mix of tenants and officers. The EMTPF employs a part time co-ordinator - Lynn Buckingham. The EMTPF exists to bring together tenants, leaseholders, residents, officers, councillors and board members working on Tenant Participation issues in the region. It has published aims and objectives.
- 2.105 In the East Midlands Region Derby Homes (which is not a member of the EMTPF) were selected to be the Resident Involvement Champions for the East Midlands in October 2008.
- 2.106 At the sub-regional level we found five county Groups: the Derbyshire Tenant Network; the Leicestershire and Rutland TP Forum; the Lincolnshire Tenant Forum; the Northamptonshire TP Forum and the Nottinghamshire Tenants and Officers Network. These all meet regularly and come under the umbrella of the East Midlands Tenant Participation Forum with county representatives also active at the regional level. It remains to be seen how this network will fit in with the Resident Involvement Champion scheme as it progresses.
- 2.107 We have also been informed that TPAS holds four regional meetings in its Midlands region (that covers both East and West Midlands). Each of these events are attended by about 40-70 people. In 2009 TPAS had 146 tenant organisations and 39 landlord organisations as members in its combined Midlands region.

London

- 2.108 The London Tenants Federation (LTF) has been in existence for many years seeking to represent the views of council tenants across all London Boroughs. The LTF is an umbrella organisation bringing together London's Borough-wide council tenant federations and organisations. It is formally constituted as a company and is not affiliated to party political organisations.

- 2.109 It currently receives funding (approximately £33,000 per year) from London Councils for a part-time co-ordinator (21 hours per week) who is based at the Camden Federation of Tenants & Residents Associations. This funding arrangement spans a four year planning period.
- 2.110 The existence of a London-wide elected Assembly and elected mayor with an active housing strategy has provided a focus for both council and RSL tenants to become involved jointly in developing the regional agenda and to contribute views to influence the policy debate. LTF has links with some London RSL tenants' organisations. Their members attend LTF conferences and receive copies of LTF newsletters.
- 2.111 We have been informed that as at November 2009 in its combined London and South-East region TPAS has 366 tenant organisations and 89 landlord organisations as members who have regular meetings.
- 2.112 An acknowledged weakness in the London scene is the lack of representation of RSL tenants on a London-wide basis although many of the large housing associations in the area do operate across the whole of London. In December 2006 a report was submitted to the London Mayor's Housing forum by the Community Engagement Task Force produced by Helen Cope that recommended the setting up of a group that would represent tenants from all tenures on a pan-London basis. We make suggestions on how this might be taken forward in the final section of this report.

North East Region

- 2.113 At the regional level the established and recognised group is the North East Council of Tenants and Residents (NECTAR) which has approximately 180 Tenant and Resident Associations as members. The establishment of NECTAR has been supported by the North East Tenant Participation Officers' Network and by BOW Community Projects, with funding from the Tenant Empowerment Programme.
- 2.114 At the sub-regional level there are the County Durham Residents' Association, the Newcastle Tenants' Federation, Gateshead Tenants' Forum, the Sunderland Federation and Community Network. In the region the majority of former local authority housing has now been transferred to RSLs or is managed by ALMOs. Hence with new landlords now often operating outside the former local authority boundaries some people consider the larger Tenants' Federations, such as Newcastle Tenants Federation and the Sunderland Residents Federation, to be regional/sub-regional players.
- 2.115 TPAS holds four regional meetings in its combined North East and Yorkshire and Humberside region each year which are attended by, on average, 40-70 people. As at November 2009 TPAS had 206 tenant organisations and 26 landlord organisations in this combined region.

North West Region

- 2.116 The North West Tenants' and Residents' Assembly (NWTRA) - that operates under the name of NWCO – North West Communities Organisation - was set up in 2001 by groups of tenants from Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire. There was some training input financed by Section 16 grants and by Tenant Empowerment Grant. With the ending of Section 16 funding the regional organisation suffered with the cost of travel and events having to be met from the tenants representatives' own pockets (which was the case concerning the interviews carried out with the regional group as part of this research).
- 2.117 During the first half of 2009 the regional organisation appears to have split into two factions. At the time of writing it looks as though one of these splinter groups NWTRA (NWCO) based in Liverpool and aligned with the Merseyside Residents Network (MRN) is continuing to operate as the regional group despite there being a rival organisation also calling itself the North West Tenants' and Residents' Assembly.
- 2.118 At the sub-regional level a number of groups operate at the county or conurbation level. These are mentioned briefly below.
- 2.119 The Cumbria and North Lancashire Tenants' and Residents' Forum is probably the most resilient sub-regional group in the North West region having existed continuously for 20 years. Its members include all tenant organisations in housing authorities in Cumbria plus Lancaster in Lancashire. Also the landlords operating in each housing authority are members. Financial support is provided through the membership fees from these tenant groups and landlords.
- 2.120 The Merseyside Residents Network (MRN) with offices in Bridport Street, Liverpool has member groups at local authority level in Wirral, Sefton, Knowsley, Liverpool and St Helens.
- 2.121 The Greater Manchester Tenants & Residents Association (GMTRA) seems to be in limbo at the moment. (A meeting of GMTRA was called in September 2008, but we have been unable to ascertain whether this actually took place.)
- 2.122 Despite attempts at initial meetings, no representative sub-group for Cheshire or Lancashire has ever got off the ground. But there are active and well-supported tenants' groups operating at authority level. These include the Wirral Federation of Tenants and Residents, the St Helens Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, and authority-wide groups in Stockport, Bolton and Trafford.
- 2.123 At the time of preparing this report (September 2009) we were informed that the Rochdale Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (RoFTRA) had become inactive having fallen out with its landlord authority.
- 2.124 TPAS holds four regional meetings of its members each year which are attended by about 40-70 people. As at November 2009 TPAS had 178 tenant organisations and 36 landlord organisations as members in this region.

- 2.125 Many of the RSLs in the North West region have strong commitment and track records in tenant involvement. Two of the national tenants' organisations (TPAS and TAROE) have their head offices in this region.

South East Region

- 2.126 We found no tenants' group operating at the pan-regional level in what is widely acknowledged to be an amorphous regional area. We did find a number of active tenant-led sub-regional and county-wide alliances and forums that already exist. These include:

- The Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Tenants Chairs' Forum
- The Kent Tenants Chairs' Forum
- Sentinel Tenants and Residents Assoc (STARA) that represents tenants of Sentinel RSL in Hampshire, Surrey and Berkshire
- Surrey Wise Involvement Group (SWIG) that comprises tenants from A2 Housing Group, Elmbridge Housing Trust, Guildford BC, Mole Valley DC, Peerless Group, Raven Housing, Rosebery Housing Association, Runnymede BC, Tandridge DC, Waverley BC, Woking BC.

- 2.127 Reading Borough Council's Tenant Participation Unit has been asked to lead on the development of a Residents Involvement Champion (RIC) network for south east region which is an initiative aimed at raising performance and sharing best practice amongst TP professionals. We understand that this project is being funded by the Communities and Local Government's Peer Support programme and by the Improvement and Development Agency's (IDeA's) Strategic Housing programme. The Residents Involvement Champions have arranged to hold a national conference at the Guildhall in London on 22 October 2009.

South West Region

- 2.128 There is a regional tenants' organisation - the Forum of Regional Tenants of the South West (FORT SW) which has been under separate independent review during the course of our research. Originally FORT was formed by a group of tenants and residents who were nominated by their residents associations to represent them at county level and regional level. The Tenant Empowerment Programme provided funding to FORT SW to bring together the counties and areas of the south-west and to develop, coach and train key regional representatives.
- 2.129 At the time of preparing this report (November 2009) FORT SW was under independent review to determine its future. Until the review is complete we understand that the Group is suspended although the officers remain in post and are keeping in touch with their members in anticipation that it will be reinstated.
- 2.130 At the sub-regional level there are five county Groups, namely:
- Cornwall Residents' Forum
 - Devon Tenants' Forum
 - Dorset County Tenants' Federation

- Gloucestershire and Severnside Tenants' Network,
 - Somerset County Tenants' Forum.
- 2.131 The landlords we interviewed as part of the research all gave the view that the county groups are currently working well. We understand that the Dorset County Tenants' Federation are the only one of these tenants' group with a five year business plan.
- 2.132 The Wiltshire Tenants Network was disbanded some two years ago. The Cornwall Residents Forum is the most recent and is the only one that does not have a membership fee. It is facilitated by Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change (CN4C). Some of the county groups have experienced problems over the years and have either disbanded or come close to it then restarted.
- 2.133 Resident involvement is widespread throughout the region. For example Bristol has Local Housing Forums and tenants are members of the Housing Management Board; Plymouth has a thriving organisation (Plymouth Tenants and Residents Association (PETRA)) and there is a well-represented Tenant Association for Sheltered Housing in Swindon.
- 2.134 As at November 2009 TPAS had 157 tenant organisations and 35 landlord organisations as members in this region for whom it holds four regional meetings each year attended by about 40-70 people.

West Midlands Region

- 2.135 At the time of preparing this report (November 2009) there was no regional organisation that represents all social housing tenants at a pan-regional level. However we have been informed that TAROE is working with tenants in the region towards the establishment of a tenant-led regional organisation. There are strong tenants groups focussed on some of the urban landlords the local authority and registered social landlords. These include:
- Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (DFTRA)
 - Walsall Tenants Federation
 - Wolverhampton Federation of Tenants.
- 2.136 In the rural parts of the region there is a county-wide body in Shropshire – the Consortium of Shropshire Tenants (COST) - which also has some members in Staffordshire.
- 2.137 There are some large housing associations in the region with a long-standing interest in active tenant involvement. These include: Accord Housing (incorporating the former Birmingham Co-operative Housing Society), Trident Housing and Midlands Heart (incorporating the former Prime Focus).
- 2.138 The West Midlands Region TP picture is richer than this summary might suggest through having the offices of two of the national tenant organisations located in the area: the NFTMO at Walsall and CCH at Tysley in Birmingham.

- 2.139 In November 2009 TPAS had 146 tenant organisations and 39 landlord organisations as members in its combined Midlands region for whom it holds four regional meetings per year.

Yorkshire & Humberside Region

- 2.140 At a regional level there is the Yorkshire & Humber Tenants' and Residents' Federation (YHF) – which has been in existence for over six years. More recently four South Yorkshire areas (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield) have come together to form the “South Yorkshire Network” (also known as South Yorkshire Tenants & Residents Federation). At the time of conducting our research the group was informal with no constitution, but had draft Terms of Reference that were being considered.
- 2.141 Many of the larger local authority based federations, such as Barnsley Federation, Kirklees Federation, Rotherham Federation and Leeds Federation, might be considered as regional/sub-regional players through the involvement of their members in activity beyond their own geographical boundaries.

3. Other Findings from the research

- 3.1 Our analysis of the information provided to us through our survey and case study interviews has thrown light on a number of issues that are of interest for this study. They include factors such as the things which local tenants' organisations or individual tenants want regional and national organisations to provide or champion on their behalf and the type of services and activities which tenants value.
- 3.2 We set out these findings with our commentary on them in the rest of this section before moving on to our overall conclusions and recommendations in the final section of the report.

What do tenants want and value?

- 3.3 Our survey asked questions about what activities and services are most valued by local groups and individual tenants. The responses indicate that most tenants value the following services most highly:
- networking/setting up new groups (60%)
 - briefings on housing issues (58%)
 - information exchange (57%)
 - running conferences (54%)
 - tenant training (54%)
 - sharing good practice (50%)
 - advice and guidance (49%)
 - lobbying (41%)
 - consultations on government initiatives (37%)
 - environment/planning issues (24%)
 - jobs training (13%).

What do tenants attend?

- 3.4 Levels of participation in each of these main types of activity varied. The most frequently experienced activity was attendance at conferences. The percentage of respondents indicating their participation in the main types of activity were as follows:

- conferences (84%)
- information exchange (79%)
- meetings (74%)
- sharing good practice (72%)
- training (68%)
- consultations on government policy (66%)
- briefings (62%)
- lobbying (43%).

What are the drivers and concerns amongst tenants?

- 3.5 The survey questionnaire was designed to allow plenty of scope for respondents to give their comments on the questions posed as well as providing quantitative rankings. Some of the main themes are highlighted below.

Lobbying

- 3.6 Despite, as indicated above, the relatively low ranking of this activity in terms of how well existing national and regional bodies are perceived as doing it (41%) and fairly low reported levels of participation (43%), the role of lobbying is mentioned by many respondents as the critical *raison d'être* for both national and regional bodies – in terms of expressing an independent voice for tenants at local and national levels. For example some of the typical comments made were:

“It is always useful to have a voice; Regional or National; that promote tenants involvement”

“they represent tenants’ views against the big bureaucracies”

“National organisations help share good practice; Regional and sub-regional can lobby for change in local areas”

“Guiding the government of the day with more influence than at present. Making the powers that be actually listen to what is being said at grass roots level”

“Looking after tenants’ interest, and lobbying government is essential”

“the housing field is not quite up to speed yet with tenant participation and involvement. They [social housing landlords] will try to find ways to fall back on the old ways so these organisations will be necessary for a long time yet”

One group saw the distinctive role for Regional Organisations as:

"Giving a REAL VOICE to social housing tenants OUTSIDE URBAN AREAS!!!"

Duplication

- 3.7 There were, however, some unprompted concerns expressed about the multiplicity of bodies and how their roles were difficult to distinguish from each other and that of the proposed NTV. Some of the comments on this point were:

"If the NTV is inclusive, I see no reason for the need for any other 'National' organisations. Regional tenants' organisations reach grass roots groups and thus are much better placed to consult & represent tenants' views"

"We have had many discussions lately about National bodies that currently exist and those that are on stream for the future.....there are too many doing the same things and the focus is very much on RSLs and if, like us, you are still local authority you are being left behind! TSA is a case in point. We do appreciate that the TSA are going to include local authority tenants in their remit but it is secondary."

"I consider National organisations to be useful; they are a tool for the tenants and residents to use for vital information; I do however think there are too many TAROE TPAS TSA National Tenant Voice etc etc; it gets confusing and our tenants question the need. One body one voice makes sense and is far more economical!! We feel bogged down by the amount of tenant organisations at the moment and could spend virtually every week attending workshops; conferences etc addressed by one or the other. With so many there is also the potential for conflicting information which makes it really difficult."

Suspicion/cynicism

- 3.8 While a large majority of the survey respondents and others we consulted during this research regard tenant involvement and its representative organisations as highly desirable we nevertheless encountered a recurring theme of cynicism and disillusion about their purpose and effectiveness. Typical comments included:

"Any organisation needs authority and power to have any real value or usefulness. They [tenant organisations] seem to be put together to allow others to get the boxes ticked that they need ticked".

"Stop "SPIN" and represent tenants"

"Stop spending money playing around with initiatives which cannot deliver what tenants want because they have no authority to get action done"

"I have worked as a voluntary tenant for over 20 years and have hardly any contact with either National or Regional Organisations. I was the chair of a TMO for 15 years and they never approached me to join any of them"

The problem with National and Regional Organisations is that few people in the South of England know who they are (I am not sure that I can state that in the North it is any better) and that they are organised along very traditional lines with a traditional "fan" base. There is no form of accountability and the messages that seem to come out of these organisations appear to have a political "bias"

"The government do not want to hear our views. They would rather we espoused theirs and they are prepared to train us for continuous improvement (cheek!)"

Analysis and commentary

- 3.9 These qualitative comments we have reported above about the role and effectiveness of national and regional tenants' organisations were obtained from people who are mostly engaged with tenants' groups at the local level. They indicate a mixture of support in principle for the role and purpose of umbrella tenants' organisations, but with reservations about perceived levels of duplication and doubts about the practical effectiveness of such organisations due to a perceived lack of representativeness and resources with which to do their work.
- 3.10 While it is not possible to attach any statistical significance to these qualitative comments from what was deliberately a restricted and targeted sample population, the various comments can be regarded as valid expressions of points of view from people who have considerable first-hand experience of the issues relating to tenant empowerment and involvement. They come from people who have, typically, many years experience of doing tenant involvement and living in the social housing sector and to that extent are well-informed even though their views come from a particular perspective.
- 3.11 With these qualifications in mind we provide our commentary on some of the key issues and questions arising from the findings from the research we have carried out. Two basic general questions that have cropped up during our study are:
- What is the role of national tenants' organisations and how should they be funded?
 - What is the role of regional tenants' organisations and how should they be funded?

What is the distinctive role of National Tenants' Organisations and how should they be funded?

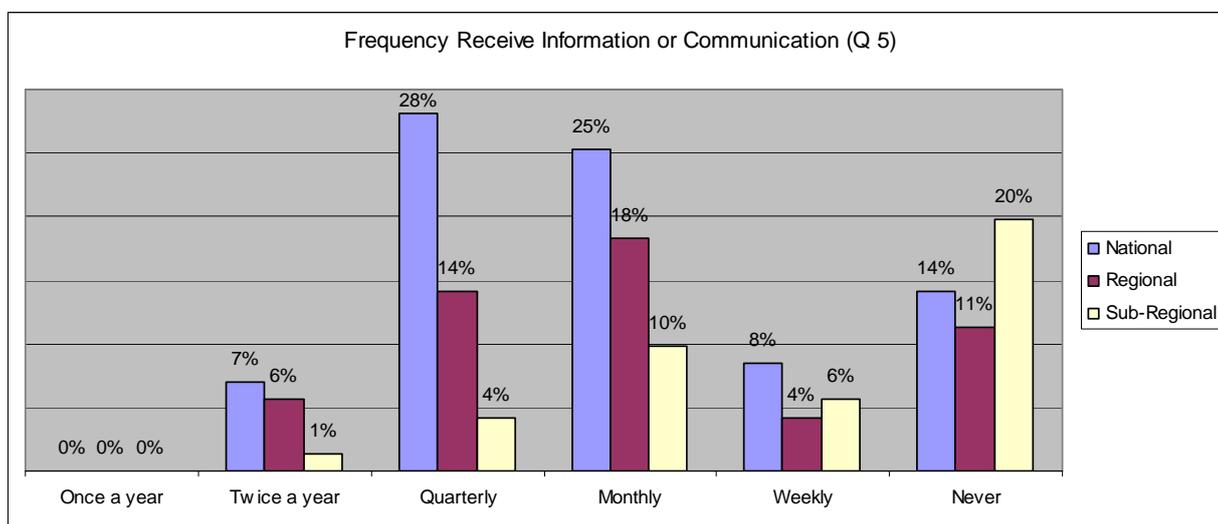
- 3.12 Our research indicated that there is widespread support for the role of national umbrella bodies that provide the opportunity for bringing together local tenants' groups. As indicated by the results from our survey summarised above and the consultations we have carried out with a wide range of groups and individuals across England there is a clear view that the interests of tenants in the social housing sector need to be represented to government and its agencies.

- 3.13 While there have been concerns raised about a possible duplication of activities by the various national bodies that have formed over the years and the more recently announced National Tenant Voice (NTV), it has emerged from our research that the existing national tenants groups tend to represent different constituencies and that their role as campaigning or lobbying organisations would not be duplicated by that of the NTV.
- 3.14 One of the findings reported above (at paragraphs 2.37-2.38) is that each of the existing national tenants' organisations (CCH, NFTMO, TAROE and TPAS) serves a different constituency of interests. Although each may provide a similar range of services to their members (such as conferences and information exchange) each organisation focuses on specific issues and concerns that are of particular interest to their membership.
- 3.15 The key question in terms of viability for each of these national organisations is whether their membership base is sufficient to sustain them in the future. For the reasons given in Section 2 above we consider that each national organisation has a sufficiently distinctive membership base to enable them to survive as membership organisations.
- 3.16 However other considerations come into play when changes in government policy, funding and regulatory regimes require the national bodies to adopt a much more intensive and pro-active role in representing their members' interests. If government and its agencies make demands on these national bodies in terms of frequent and wide-ranging consultation exercises and in disseminating information then this is likely to place demands on the resources of these bodies that cannot be met from their normal subscription income.
- 3.17 This raises the question of whether and to what extent independent national tenants' organisation should receive funding from exchequer sources. As reported elsewhere in this report the four national tenants' organisation have previously received government financial support in sharply varying degrees. During the period covered by this review the two largest organisations (TPAS and TAROE) have received different forms of funding: TPAS in the form of project funding under the Communities Empowerment Fund and TAROE as a mixture of project and organisational development funding from the TEP. NFTMO has received smaller amounts of funding and CCH none.
- 3.18 The rationale for government funding for these bodies has been a mixture of "project funding" (where the funding is paid like a fee for delivering a specific range of activities, services and outcomes) and "capacity building" where the aim is to develop and strengthen the organisational capability of the body receiving the funding. The former (project funding) is not a form of subsidy since it is paid in return for services delivered at an agreed price for the job and is usually secured through an open competitive tendering process with the fee set at level that does not contribute significantly to the infrastructure of the organisation.
- 3.19 In our view there is a strong case for government and/or its agencies providing funding to any national voluntary body from whom it has commissioned services or other types of support activities. The level of any funding would need to be determined on the basis of the amount of services being delivered or the extra organisational capacity that was being developed.

What is the role of regional tenants' organisations and how should they be funded?

- 3.20 As indicated in Section 2 our research found much more confusion and debate about the role of regional tenants' organisations. Such organisations have developed sporadically in different parts of the country and at the time of our research there were only three regions in England with active pan-regional tenants organisations, namely in East Midlands, London and the North-East. However there are fledgling regional and active sub-regional organisations in other regions – such as Yorkshire & Humberside, Eastern Region and the North-West.
- 3.21 The main types of activities which regional organisations provide include:
- briefings/meetings on policy issues
 - lobbying
 - training events
 - sharing good practice.
- 3.22 These activities are similar to those provided by national bodies.
- 3.23 Our survey respondents perceived that the amount of communication they receive on these sorts of issues from regional tenants' bodies as less than that they receive from national organisations – as indicated by Figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Frequency of communications received from national and regional tenants' orgs



- 3.24 These findings may merely reflect the distribution of membership of national and regional tenants' organisations amongst our survey respondents, but it does convey a picture that national bodies are seen as more active and stronger than their regional counter-parts.

3.25 Similarly when asked about the “usefulness” of national and regional tenants’ organisations a similar picture emerges –as indicated in the Figures 4, 5 and 6 below.

Figure 4: Percentage of survey respondents saying national orgs useful

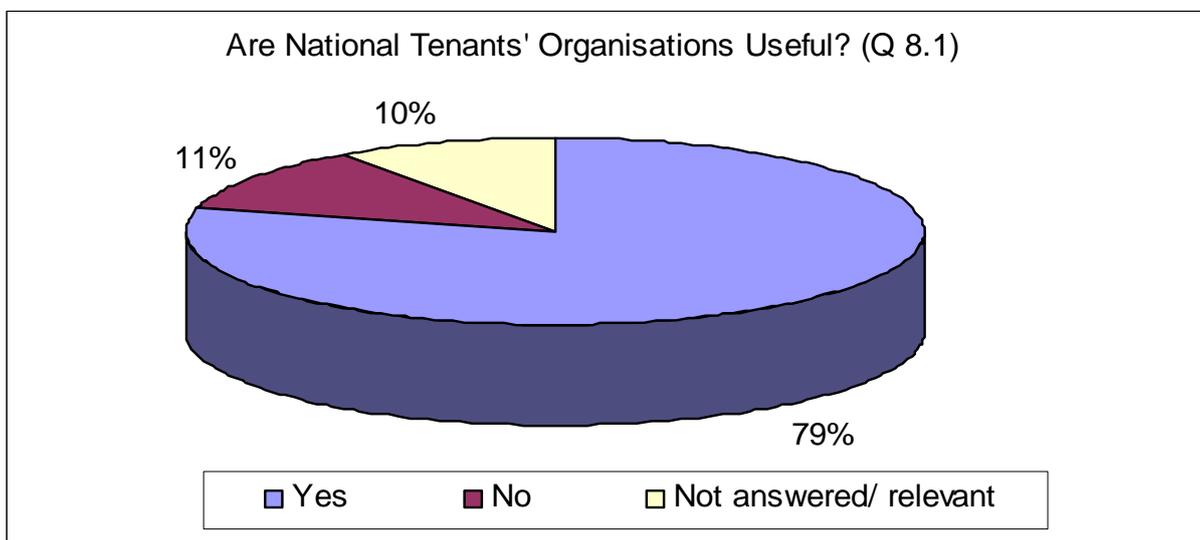
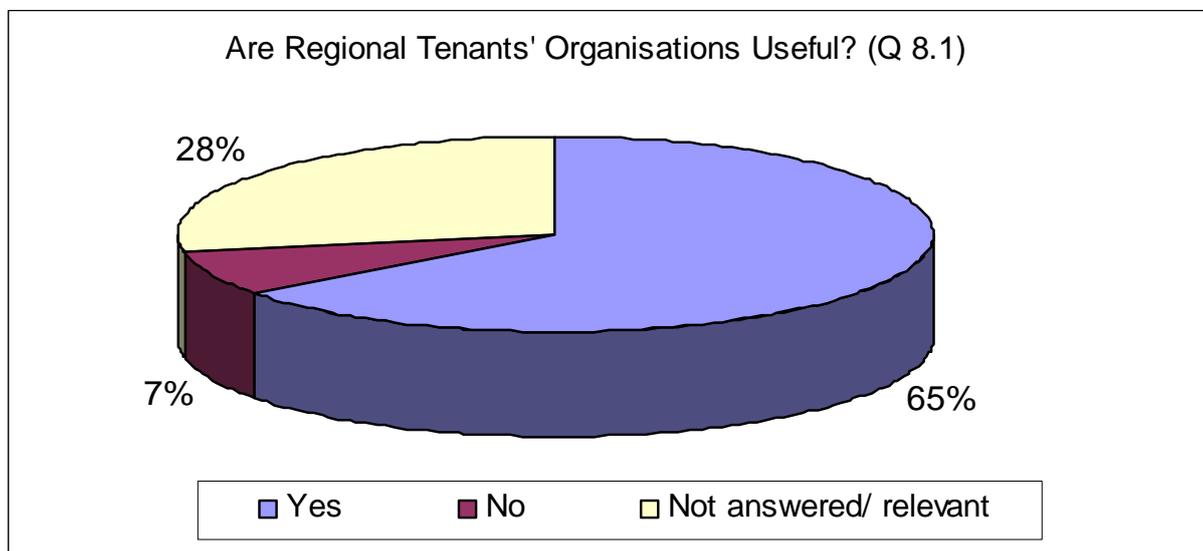
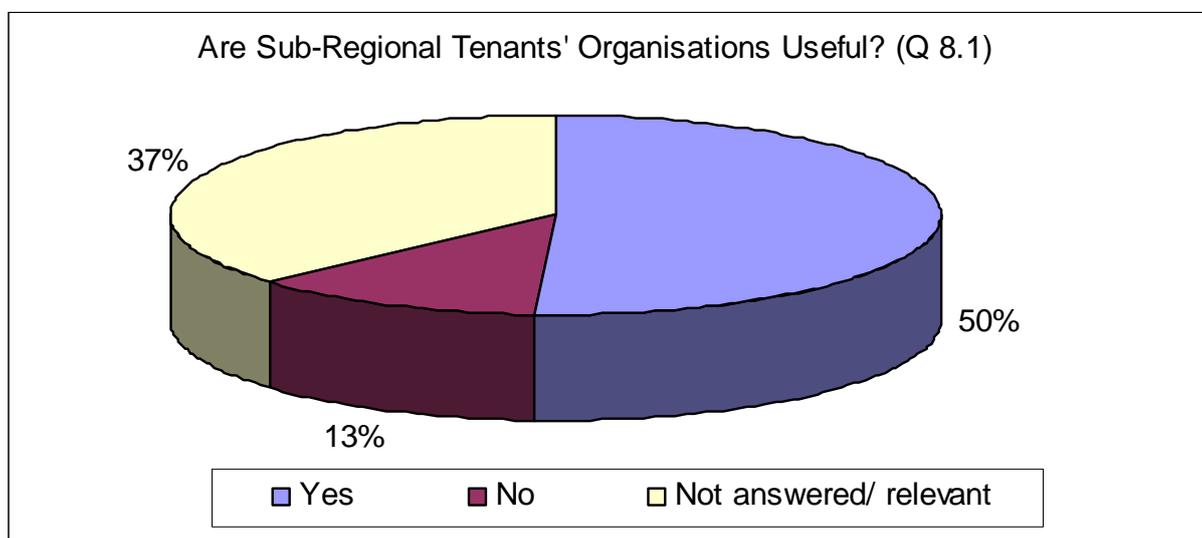


Figure 5: Percentage of respondents saying regional orgs useful



3.26 Whereas nearly 80 per cent of survey respondents consider national tenants’ organisations to be useful the percentage falls to 65 per cent who consider regional bodies useful and falls again to 50 per cent who rate sub-regional bodies as useful (see Figure 6). As emphasized above in interpreting these findings it has to be borne in mind that some 75 per cent of our survey respondents were members of national tenants’ organisations.

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents saying sub-regional orgs useful

- 3.27 In the light of these findings and our discussions with consultees in each region we considered what might be the rationale, if any, for providing government financial support to regional or sub-regional tenants' organisations.
- 3.28 While there appears to be no distinctive offering in the range of services or activities carried out by regional organisations (as compared with those provided by national tenants' organisations) the relative advantage of regional organisations would seem to be geographical proximity. They are physically closer to their constituent members which means that they can arrange meetings, conferences, events etc that involve shorter travelling distances and less time and cost for people wishing to attend. Although this may sound trivial or incidental it can be a powerful differentiator in the TP market which needs to attract people who are volunteers who have to attend events usually in their own time at their own cost.
- 3.29 In the three regions where successful regional organisations exist we found amongst their stakeholders some very positive attitudes towards the role and range of services provided. For example the role of one regional body was described in the following terms:
- "[name of regional body] is brilliantly useful in keeping us briefed on policy issues affecting tenants and residents region-wide and nationally"*
- 3.30 To some extent the effectiveness of regional organisations may be seen as calling into question the need for having a national body doing similar things. We also received comments that with the setting up of the NTV there was less need for national bodies and that regional organisations could feed in their views and contributions direct to the NTV without the necessity for an intervening national organisation.

- 3.31 Looking at previous funding histories it appears that none of the current regional organisations was able to develop and get established without some form of public financial assistance. Currently the London Tenants' Federation receives significant public sector financial support – although not from central government but instead through London councils. In the past NECTAR has received TEP funding (from the former Housing Corporation) and in its early formative days the East Midlands Regional Tenants Participation Forum received significant “help-in-kind” from the East Midlands GO.
- 3.32 Hence there is historical evidence that in order to get started and develop regional organisations need some form of “pump-priming” financial assistance. Having said that we are aware that in Eastern Region FREE has been formed in recent years without any government funding – as an RSL-originated group it has been able to raise income from its RSL members and facilitated by the NHF.
- 3.33 As we have commented elsewhere in this report there are considerable variations as between the nine regions in England and between different localities within the same region. Each region has strengths and weaknesses in terms of the organisational development of its pan-regional tenants' organisations. There does not seem to be a basis for having a standard model for regional tenants' organisations or to seek to impose a “one size fits all” approach.
- 3.34 The proposed new Standard on Tenant Involvement and Empowerment that the TSA published in November 2009 as part of its statutory consultation “A new regulatory framework for social housing in England” states:
- “The TSA has been directed by the government to set a standard in relation to tenant involvement and empowerment. Government's rationale for the terms of the direction is to ensure that not only do providers offer opportunities for involvement in the management of their homes, but that it is necessary to support tenants and build their capacity to make meaningful use of those opportunities.”⁶*
- 3.35 It may well be in future that in seeking to deliver on this new standard that social housing landlords will be ready to provide more generous funding for tenants' organisations than they have done in the past. If that proves to be the case they may include in their support some provision for supporting regional tenants' organisations that serve the areas where they have housing.
- 3.36 There is a patchwork pattern of regional tenants' organisations across the country and no single model that readily lends itself to central government financial support. Given this pattern it would seem logical for regional tenants' organisations to draw their support and funding from the local groups they serve rather than some form of central subsidy. These issues are debated further in the next section.

⁶ Tenant Services Authority: *A new regulatory regime for social housing in England* pages 39-40, November 2009

4. Conclusions and recommendations

National context

- 4.1 The information, views and findings we have reported in previous sections point clearly to the challenges and potential opportunities facing national and regional tenants' organisations. They also provide challenges for the new regulatory body, the Tenant Services Authority, and the proposed official champion for tenants - the National Tenant Voice. Both of these bodies are still finding their way with their respective roles still to be fully demarcated. The intensive consultations and soundings that have been carried out by both bodies will have provided them with a clear picture of where they want to be and how their respective roles should be developed and fit together.
- 4.2 We understand that the TSA has been working on putting in place a protocol that will define its role and relationships with tenants' organisations and that this protocol will be agreed with Communities and Local Government (CLG) and NTV when the proposed NTV is formally constituted and operational. While we do not know what will be contained in this protocol this delineation of roles should certainly help clarify what to many observers seems to be a rather crowded arena.
- 4.3 At the same time we understand that the NTV Project Group has been considering the role which the NTV might adopt in terms of providing support to tenants' organisations in future. We set out below some thoughts and suggested options on these matters which are based on our analysis of the needs and potentialities facing regional and tenants' organisations. Our suggestions are also based on the assumption that the Tenant Empowerment Programme will continue to be administered by the TSA and the CLG will continue to run its recently established Empowerment Fund rather than the whole, or part, of such funding streams being transferred to the NTV.
- 4.4 We mention these assumptions simply because the amount of resources available to the NTV needs to inform the type and level of support it will be able to provide in future.

Our brief relating to tenants' organisations and resourcing issues

- 4.5 Many of the consultees and respondents who took part in our research saw the "funding" question as the fundamental issue which they wanted our work to address. It has not been our brief to design a funding regime which the NTV might adopt in future. Instead our remit has required us to provide assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of tenants' organisations that operate across each region in England and at the national level. In the light of those assessments we have been asked to provide advice on the following questions in respect of the identified tenants' organisations:
- whether or not the organisations appear sustainable
 - what would be needed to make them sustainable
 - their potential for greater influence.
- 4.6 In the light of our assessments it will then be for CLG/TSA/NTV to reach decisions about future funding models and levels of support.

Our assessments

- 4.7 We set out our assessments for each of the identified national tenants' organisations and for each region of the country in the following paragraphs.

National bodies

- 4.8 In our view each of the four national tenants' organisations identified in this study (TAROE, NFTMO, TPAS and CCH) has a distinctive role and specific constituency of potential members and interests. We have listened to and reported the point of view that there are too many bodies operating at the national level in the social housing sector which some contributors to our study feel will become even more crowded with the setting up of the NTV. However we see a clear distinction in the roles and memberships of the four tenants' bodies and between all of them and the new "official" champion the NTV which will be constituted as a non-departmental public body (NDPB).
- 4.9 This is not to say that the working relationships are clear and easy to navigate. Also the relationships between some of the bodies have been bedevilled in the past with rivalries and factionalism. However there is evidence that these difficulties have now largely been overcome and that good collaborative working relationships have been adopted which augers well for the future.
- 4.10 We set out the results of our analyses of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for each of the four national bodies below.

TAROE

- 4.11 TAROE has now been running as an independent organisation for over ten years with its constituent founding organisations dating back for more than 30 years. It has, therefore, a track record and a profile. In recent years the organisation has established itself with a small team of paid staff and obtained permanent office premises.
- 4.12 TAROE has shown itself to be effective at lobbying (which is one of the activities most highly valued among tenant activists and potential member organisations). It has developed the capacity to produce good quality briefings and to contribute effectively to policy debates across a spectrum of housing and related areas.
- 4.8 Some of the organisation's possible weaknesses are based on perceptions that we consider are now out of date; specifically many of those consulted during the course of this research said their perception of the organisation was that it is "northern-based" and unresponsive to the interests of groups in the southern half of the country. Some others had the perception that TAROE has a pro-local authority stance and antipathy to leaseholders.
- 4.13 We have been informed that these areas of potential concern have been addressed and that TAROE has taken steps to become increasingly representative of all parts of the country. In the light of information given to us in response to these specific points we consider that whatever the previous history TAROE has now evolved into a more fully representative body that strives to represent the interests of all tenants whatever their domain or geographical location.
- 4.14 As regards its future sustainability although TAROE has relied heavily on TEP funding over the years it has a sufficiently broad potential member base that it should be able to be less dependent in future through a concerted membership drive amongst RSL and local authority tenant groups – especially in the south of England. Although TAROE's membership continues to grow across the country this will not necessarily lead to an increase in income as its membership fees are subsidised from its commercial activities. However its ability to raise more income should be enhanced by its increased scope to hold conferences in a greater variety of locations.

NFTMO

- 4.15 The NFTMO has now been running since 1992 and over that period of time has established a high reputation for the quality of its training and its focus on producing practical guidance and handbooks relevant to the operational needs of TMOs.

- 4.16 As at November 2009 the NFTMO had some 130 TMOs as members which represented more than 50 per cent of operating TMOs. While its membership base is narrow (compared to that of TAROE) it has carved out a distinctive role in terms of providing practical support, advice and dissemination of good practice relevant to the operational needs of TMOs.
- 4.17 In terms of its future sustainability provided the TMO sector continues to expand (or continue at around its present size) we consider that the NFTMO is sustainable given its low fixed costs and its ability to attract project-based or output-based specific funding and sponsorship.

TPAS

- 4.18 Amongst the national organisations included in this review TPAS appears to have the highest profile. This reflects the length of time it has been operating and its wide span of activities – especially its training with tenant groups and TP workers.
- 4.19 Its income was derived from a mix of sources which included consultancy services (56%), training services (4%) and conferences/seminars (23%) and membership fees (17%).
- 4.20 In April 2009 CLG awarded TPAS some £500,000 over three years under its Communities Empowerment Fund. In the recent past TPAS has also attracted funding from other government departments – such as the Home Office under its community cohesion programme *Not in My Neighbourhood*.
- 4.21 TPAS combines tenants, TP professional workers and landlord organisations in its membership with a commercial arm that provides training and consultancy. Some of our respondents regarded this “hybrid” nature as a weakness as they considered it presented TPAS with conflicts of interest in seeking to sell its services to the same groups from whom it drew its membership. Others regarded it as a strength in the sense that it provided opportunities for tenants to develop skills and become professionals while at the same time keeping TPAS focussed on practical issues of concern to tenants. TPAS training was mentioned amongst some of the critical comments submitted to our survey and this may prove to be a potential risk to the organisation in future.
- 4.22 In terms of sustainability although TPAS currently gets a considerable proportion of its income from government sources these are from different funding streams rather than a single pot. It also generates a considerable share of its income from consultancy and training and conferences thereby spreading its risks and dependency on any single source.
- 4.23 With an annual turnover of some £2m in 2008 it does not seem to be at imminent risk. However consultancy income can be volatile and if the CLG Empowerment Fund grant is not replaced in two years time TPAS may face some difficulties.

CCH

- 4.24 According to the responses to our survey the training events and conferences run by CCH are very highly regarded scoring the highest rating of all the national and regional organisations.
- 4.25 At the time of preparing this report the CCH did not receive any direct government grant-aid. We have been told that this reflects a philosophy that tenant organisations should not receive “core” funding on the grounds that organisations should only receive funding for things they actually deliver and because core funding makes organisations dependent on it.
- 4.26 Despite this absence of government funding, as observed earlier in this report, CCH appears to “punch above its weight” given its relatively small size and financial resources. It has worked closely with the other national tenants’ organisations in developing and supporting policy initiatives (such as that relating to the NTV) with CCH often taking the lead in preparing policy submissions to central government and its agencies. As a result it has a high profile (as borne out by the responses to our survey) even though its membership base is relatively small and likely to remain so despite attempts to broaden the appeal and raise the profile of mutual housing.
- 4.27 The future role of CCH and its potential for growth may depend on the outcome of responses to the work of the Commission on Mutual and Co-operative Housing. If the wider housing movement decides to espouse the model then the CCH will be in a stronger strategic position to expand to serve the growth in its sector.
- 4.28 If the co-op sector is to expand in future some seed-corn funding from TSA or NTV for CCH would appear to be necessary to enable it to increase its capacity.

Regional organisations

- 4.29 We have set out our detailed analysis of the position in each of the nine English regions in this report .
- 4.30 In summary the regions that appear to have viable tenants’ groups operating at the pan-regional level are:
- North East (NECTAR)
 - East Midlands (EMTPF)
 - London (LTF)
- 4.31 There is also a fledgling pan regional group in Eastern Region – FREE.
- 4.32 As regards both London and Eastern Region there are current weaknesses in that in London the LTF does not represent RSL tenants sufficiently and in

Eastern Region FREE is still heavily slanted towards RSL tenants.

Possible priorities for the future

- 4.33 In the future regulatory context NTV support could take a variety of forms including “seed-corn”, pump-priming and development funding). In relation to these two regions (Eastern and London) some form of assistance to help develop organisations that are more representative of all tenures of social housing would seem to us to be appropriate.
- 4.34 One possibility in London might be to encourage some of the pan-London RSLs to form a federation that could, initially, work alongside the LTF in representing the interests of RSL tenants in London. From informal soundings we have carried out various large registered social landlords would, we believe, be interested in forming such a federation – such as Peabody, London & Quadrant and other members of the G15 with large housing stocks in London.
- 4.9 If this idea is considered to have merit it would need to be developed and brokered with interested parties.
- 4.10 In other regions there is a lack of viable or stable pan-regional tenants’ groups for the reasons set out in Section 2. Many of the participants in our research expressed the view that government regional boundaries do not reflect natural patterns of settlement or local sense of identity. In view of the large distances and wide variations within most regions we do not consider that it would be feasible, or desirable, to seek to create regional tenants’ organisations in the absence of any sense of local cohesion or affinity. Also in some regions the history of factionalism and rivalries positively militates against setting up any pan-regional organisation.
- 4.11 In these circumstances we consider it would be more sensible to build on the sub-regional groups that exist in most regions: for example the Cumbria Federation in the north-west and the Dorset Federation in the South West. (Other similar groups are identified in Section 2)
- 4.12 Over time other regional groups may emerge and sub-regional ones coalesce (in much the same way that TAROE came into being in 1997 from the merger of NTO and NTRF). The availability of some funding from NTV could act as a spur and incentive for such groups to form over time. But it would be wrong in our view to seek to force the creation of such entities artificially where local support is lacking or where no natural affinity of interest is shared by the persons concerned.
- 4.13 In the meantime a more productive use of any available funding that NTV is able to give might be to commission some form of consultancy and support to work with the various groups with the aim of removing the obstacles that keep them apart. In particular some form of development work would seem to be warranted in north-west region where there is a long and proud history of active tenant groups but also rivalries that prevent them from sustaining stable organisations and relationships.

- 4.14 Similarly if the NTV were to run its own research programme on tenant involvement and support issues we suggest that one priority might be to investigate the underlying reasons for the apparent dearth of tenants' organisations in some parts of the country which this research has revealed. Our research has indicated that sometimes this might be due to geographical reasons (especially in rural areas) with large distances being a barrier that prevents the formation of cohesive groups. In other areas it may be more attributable to the lack of regional identity where the official regional office boundaries simply do not correspond to local affinities or local social-economic entities.
- 4.15 From the work we have carried out it is clear that at the sub-regional level a wide range of groups (formal and informal) exist but often they are working in isolation with little, or no, knowledge of the existence of other groups doing similar things. The NTV might wish to fund action research type projects that make the linkages between such groups and to help them work together more productively.

New context and regulatory regime

- 4.16 The proposed standards which the TSA proposes to adopt in applying the new regulatory regime for all social housing are described as being tenant-centred. They are designed to reinvigorate moves towards more effective arrangements for involving tenants. As stated in the Foreword to the TSA's statutory consultation paper:

"Our latest survey of existing tenants showed that only one in two tenants is satisfied with opportunities for involvement and only one in six tenants feels their landlord takes a lot of notice of their views. We want to work with landlords and tenants – we call this co-regulation. To make it really work for tenants, our standards place involvement and empowerment at their core⁷"

- 4.17 There is already a large corpus of "good practice" about what works in terms of effective tenant involvement and empowerment. The NTV would seem to be the natural agency for the collation, updating and dissemination of such good practice information. Bringing such "good practice" information to the attention of those who need to act on it in future will be a key challenge. There is clearly a significant role here for the NTV in bringing together the relevant parties in forums which facilitate effective learning for tenants and social housing landlords.
- 4.18 All these potential forms of funding and support will need to be considered by the NTV and its Board in the context of the new regulatory regime and the priorities which the NTV will be setting in order to achieve its aims and objectives.

⁷ Tenant Services Authority *A new regulatory framework for social housing in England: A statutory consultation*, November 2009

Appendix 1

Survey Questionnaire

This appendix contains the survey questionnaire that was used in carrying out the survey of tenant organisations during the period 1 May-31 July 2009.

Research into regional and national tenants' organisations: survey questionnaire

Introduction

This survey is being carried out as part of an independent research study that the Department for Communities and Local Government has commissioned IRIS Consulting to carry out. The research is intended to provide information about the role, effectiveness and future viability of regional and national tenants' organisations that operate in England.

We are seeking the views of tenants' and residents' organisations to obtain some information and views on the issues being researched. Other parts of the research include case studies and data collection from the national and regional organisations involved.

Confidentiality

All information you provide will be treated confidentially and we will not attribute the source of any comments or information supplied. You can return your completed survey form direct to IRIS Consulting at the address given at the end of the form. You may do this either by post or electronically by e-mail. This survey may be completed on-line by going onto the IRIS Consulting website at: www.surveys@irisconsulting.co.uk

Purpose

The research involves a number of different strands of work and this survey is just one element. The prime purpose of this survey is to seek views from a wide spectrum of interested parties about their perceptions and views on the role of national and regional tenants' organisations. This research is focussed on England only.

Definitions

For the purposes of this survey we are using the term "**national tenants' organisation**" to include those groups and organisations that seek to represent and serve the interests of tenants at a national level.

The terms “**regional tenants’ organisation**” and “**sub-regional organisation**” are intended to include those bodies that represent the views and interests of social housing tenants (including leaseholders) at a level larger than that of a single local authority area.

We want to know about any groups or organisations that cover a whole region, for example ‘the North West’. We also want to know about any groups who cover several local authority areas or even a county - such as Cornwall or Cumbria.

So in the way in which we are using the terms “regional” or “sub-regional” they do not cover those tenants’ organisations that represent an estate or single local authority area.

Question 1: Can you please insert the name, address and contact information (telephone number) for yourself or the tenants’ group on whose behalf you are submitting this form:

Name	
Address	
Tel number	
e-mail (if available)	

Where indicated please insert an X to indicate your response to the questions below or provide the information requested.

Question 2: Do you know of the existence of any regional or national tenants’ group or organisation? If yes go to question 2.1 below. If no go to question 8.

Question 2.1: Can you please indicate whether you are a member of any national or regional tenants' organisation and its name?

Type of body	Member: please indicate Yes or No	Name of organisation
National tenants' organisation		
Regional tenants' organisation		
Sub-regional tenants' organisation (ie an organisation that operates across more than one local authority area)		

Question 3: Have any of the organisations referred to in Question 2 above involved you in any of the following activities? If yes please indicate by inserting an X in the appropriate box below and indicate the name of the organisers in the boxes in the right-hand column.

Activity	Participated	Participated	Organisation name
	Yes	No	
Training			
Conferences			
Briefings			
Information exchange			
Sharing good practice			
Lobbying			
Consultation			
Meetings			
Other (please specify)			

Question 4: If you have participated in any of the activities mentioned in Question 3 how useful did you find these overall? Using a scale of 1-5 where 1 is the least useful and 5 is the most useful please indicate your rankings by inserting a number between 1-5 in the appropriate box below:

Activity	usefulness 1-5
Training	
Conferences	
Briefing	
Information exchange	
Sharing good practice	
Lobbying	
Consultation	
Meetings	
Other (please specify)	

Question 5: Whether or not you are a member of any of the type of organisations included in question 2 do you receive any information or communication from them and, if so, how often?

Type of organisation	Frequency Once a year	Twice a year	Quarterly	Monthly	weekly	never
National body						
Regional body						
Sub-regional body						

Question 6: When was the last time you received information from any national or regional tenants' organisation and can you please indicate the type of information you received?

Type and name of organisation for most recent communication	Date (approx month and year)	Type of information	Insert an X to indicate type of information received
National body (Please indicate its name below)		1) Newsletter: 2) Notice of meeting 3) Notice of conference/workshop 4) Notification of training event 5) Briefing 6) Lobbying event 7) Consultation 8) Web-site	
Regional body (Please insert its name)		1) Newsletter: 2) Notice of meeting 3) Notice of conference/workshop 4) Notification of training event 5) Briefing 6) Lobbying event 7) Consultation 8) Web-site	

<p>Sub-regional body (Please insert its name)</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Newsletter:2) Notice of meeting3) Notice of conference/workshop4) Notification of training event5) Briefing6) Lobbying event7) Consultation8) Web-site	
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Question 7: Do you know how the Board members and officers are appointed to any of the national and regional tenants' organisations of which you are aware? Please insert an X in appropriate box to indicate your response

Type of body	Board members Yes	Board members No	Officers Yes	Officers No
National (Please insert name of organisation below)				
Regional (Please insert name of organisation below)				
Sub-regional (Please insert name of organisation below)				

Question 8.1: Whether or not you know about or have had contact with any national, regional or sub-regional tenants' organisation, do you consider such organisations to be useful?

Type of organisation	Useful Yes	Useful No
National body		
Regional body		
Sub-regional body		

Question 8.2: If you wish you may say below the reasons why you consider the organisations in Question 8 to be useful or not useful:

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Question 9: If you have indicated yes to any of the categories in Question 8.1 what are the type of activities in which you consider that national and regional tenants' organisations can be potentially most useful? Using a scale of 1-5 (where 1 is least useful and 5 is most useful) please indicate your views in the table below:

Activity	Usefulness 1-5
Tenant Training	
Running conferences	
Briefings on housing issues	
Information exchange	
Sharing good practice	
Lobbying	
Consultation	
Meetings	
Advice and guidance	
Environmental/planning issues	
Jobs training	
Other (please specify)	

Question 10: If you are a member of a National or Regional tenants' organisation are you satisfied with what they deliver? Please indicate the organisation and your level of satisfaction on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 is least satisfied and 5 is most satisfied):

Type of service	Organisation name	Satisfaction Rating 1-5

Question 11: What activities and role would you like to see national and regional tenants' organisations playing in the future?

Question 12: If there are any additional comments you would like to provide relating to national and regional tenants' organisations please set it out below.

Please return your completed form by 15 May [extended to 31 July] 2009 either by post to:

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4 Ganton Street
London, W1F 7QL
Tel: 020 7 287 0822
Fax: 020 7 287 7495

Or by e-mail to:
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