

Nomination Form

Tenant Group of the Year



TIS National Excellence Awards 2024

The **TIS National Excellence awards** recognise and celebrate housing organisations, staff, volunteers, tenants, residents, and community groups **who are leading the way and making positive change in the Scottish social housing sector.**

Categories honour excellence in everything **from partnership working, tenant participation and scrutiny practice, to digital creativity and innovation.** Hotly anticipated, the awards offer a seal of approval for the most outstanding work.

Finalists are selected by an expert and independent judging panel, and **winners announced at an awards ceremony on Thursday 7th November 2024 at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow.**

The closing date for applications is 5:00pm on Thursday 11th July 2024. TIS accepts submissions in more than one award category.

Category Overview

The **Tenant Group of the Year** award recognises a tenants, residents, or community group who has made an outstanding contribution and achieved great practice that others can learn from in the future.

Submissions must **evidence how the group has added value to their local area and improved community spirit,** strengthened relationships and communication, championed tenant participation, found innovative new ways to get people involved, **influenced decisions and housing policies, services and standards,** or driven community regeneration projects forward.

Who you can nominate

This award is open to tenant, resident, and community groups.

About you

Please note information about the individual, organisation, or group submitting the application:

Name	Jane Mack
Position	Snr Housing Development Officer (Tenant Participation)
Organisation	West Dunbartonshire Council
Email address	Jane.mack@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
Telephone number	0798 354 2993

About the nominee

Please note information about the group you are nominating:

Group name	West Dunbartonshire Tenants & Residents Organisation
Email address	harrymccormack.wdtro@gmail.com
Telephone number	07753145615

Background

Maximum 250 words

Please outline background information about the group that you are nominating.

For example, detail:

- The background of the group, including: when the group was established, the number of individuals involved in the group, and the aims of the group, etc.
- The specific role the group undertakes.

West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation (WDTRO) is an umbrella organisation for all tenants, and tenant groups, in West Dunbartonshire. They have operated since 2008 and their aim is to improve housing services and standards. This includes:

- working together with all Tenants and Residents Associations across West Dunbartonshire
- encouraging and supporting tenants/residents wishing to set up a Tenants and Residents Association or to get involved individually,
- working jointly with West Dunbartonshire Council and other agencies to make sure that they have as much influence as possible over decisions taken about their homes and community,
- working jointly with the Council through the WDC/WDTRO Liaison meetings with Councillors and Council officers to influence and improve housing services, policy and performance.

They are a constituted, registered group with 11 members. They are well organised, credible group that make themselves as accessible as possible to tenants through their Facebook page and their regular column in the Housing News, the Council's quarterly newsletter that goes out to all tenants, which they use to promote their own activities and encourage tenant involvement in local activities and consultations.

Actions

Maximum 500 words

Please outline specific actions the group has taken to make an outstanding contribution.

For example, outline:

- How the group has added value to their local area and improved community spirit.
- How the group has made a real difference to the lives of tenants.
- How the group has influenced decisions and housing policies, services, and standards.
- How the group has explored innovative new ways to get people involved.
- How the group has driven community regeneration projects forward.
- The work involved and their overall aim.

Members of the WDTRO were instrumental in the creation of the Joint Rent Group which has significantly benefited all WDC tenants. The Joint Rent Group was set up following tenant dissatisfaction with the rent consultation process and the WDTRO worked with Tenant Participation staff to review the process in 2016 and made recommendations for change. Their recommendations were accepted and their request for a joint approach, led to the creation of what was later named the 'Joint Rent Group' made up of tenant volunteers, Finance staff, Housing staff and the Housing Convenor so that all stakeholders were represented.

The Scottish Governments' HRA Guidance had been out since 2014 but like many Local Authorities, it had not fully informed practice in West Dunbartonshire and the WDTRO saw delivering compliance against the HRA Guidance as a lever to ensure positive change and increased financial transparency. The Scottish Housing Network (SHN) had developed a self-assessment framework which helped breakdown the HRA Guidance and make it easier to evidence compliance where it existed. The group used the SHN's framework to help map out priority areas and create a work-plan that then directed the JRG agendas. Using this joint approach ensured that tenants were central to discussions and influence.

The WDTRO have been greatly empowered through the Joint Rent Group –the initial training and then regular meetings had given the tenant volunteers an increased knowledge of how the HRA works and the confidence to actively be involved in discussions and pursue issues.

The aim was for full compliance with the HRA Guidance, and this has now been achieved. This has been a massive achievement and the perseverance of the WDTRO members on the Joint Rent Group made it happen. The Council's commitment to the Joint Rent Group also gave it leverage internally to get the changes needed agreed, despite the challenging financial position.

Outcomes

Maximum 700 words

Please outline positive outcomes achieved as a result of the group's work.

For example, detail the impact on:

- The delivery of housing services.
- The improvement of satisfaction levels.
- Adding value to their local area and improving community spirit.
- Communication, strengthening relationships, and partnership working.
- The inclusion and lasting benefits of tenants, residents, and communities.
- The skills and knowledge of tenants, residents, and communities.
- How others can learn from the group's good practice now and in the future.
- A specific community regeneration project.

The perseverance of the WDTRO has resulted in a benefit to the HRA of £1,755,000.

One area of non-compliance to the HRA Guidance which became a sticking point had been in relation to how Building Services housing related surplus was assigned, as it went into the General Services Fund. With financial pressures on the General Fund this was difficult to get movement on but the WDTRO were committed to pursuing the issue and following 2 years of correspondence and lobbying, in October 2023 the Council agreed to a change to its Financial Strategy and committed to phasing out the use of the surplus in this way over a 3 year period which will by 26/27 keep an extra £1,755,000 within the HRA.

Year	Current Finance Strategy Surplus Target	Old Finance Strategy Surplus Target	Change in Surplus
24/25	£580,000	£875,000	£295,000
25/26	£290,000	£875,000	£585,000
26/27	£0	£875,000	£875,000
Total	£870,000	£2,625,000	£1,755,000

The WDTRO have also shared their experience with the Regional Networks (now Tenants Together) so that others can learn from their work and benefit other Council tenants who will be in a similar situation.

The HRA Guidance is only 'guidance' but achievements like this help empower tenants to push for change. Tenants Together, which includes WDTRO members, have been working with bodies like the Housing Regulator and Audit Scotland, who also have a role to play, to push that Councils should meet the HRA Guidance or make it statutory – this would ultimately benefit all Council tenants and maximise the value of the HRA.

What makes this nominee stand out from the rest?


Maximum 100 words

Please provide a short testimonial on why this group deserves to win.

The WDTRO members have embraced their role in the Joint Rent Group and helped create real transparency on how tenants rent money is spent as well as maximising the money in the HRA at a time when every penny counts. The WDTRO used their credibility as JRG members and their HRA knowledge to persevere and ultimately this saving to the HRA, benefits every tenant in West Dunbartonshire – that's no mean feat and deserves recognition.

Declaration

As the proposer I have completed this nomination form to the best of my knowledge, and the information provided is a true representation of the nominee's achievements.

Name	Jane Mack
Signature	
Date	5/7/24

Thank you for taking the time to complete this nomination form.

Please submit your nomination by **5:00pm on Thursday 11th July 2024** to TIS by email at: info@tis.org.uk or by post to: **TIS – Clockwise Offices, 77 Renfrew Street, Glasgow, G2 3BZ.**

Next steps

- **All applications will be acknowledged on receipt by TIS.** If you do not receive acknowledgement within 3 working days, please contact us to ensure your application has been received.
- An **independent judging panel** will rate your application against the award criteria. The panel will consist of representatives from organisations across the Scottish social rented sector.
- Your award submission will provide the basis for both the shortlist and final decision of the winning entry.
- **TIS welcomes applications in more than one award category.**
- Please ensure you answer all questions as fully as possible and keep the content of your nomination focused – avoid exceeding the suggested word count.
- **TIS will inform all proposers of the outcome of their application Thursday 29th August 2024.**

- Finalists will be invited to the **TIS National Excellence Awards Ceremony**, as part of the TIS National Housing Conference and Exhibition, on **Thursday 7th November 2024** at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow.