

# Nomination Form

## Outstanding Contribution to Tenant Participation **Frances Nelson MBE**



### 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 **Outstanding Contribution to Tenant Participation** award recognises an inspiring, individual tenant who has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to driving tenant participation practices forward to achieve great practice that others can learn from.

Submissions must evidence how **the individual has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to adding value to their local area and improving community spirit,** empowered other tenants, residents, and communities to influence housing policies, services, and standards, explored innovative new ways to get people involved, strengthened relationships and communication, and **championed tenant participation practices.**

### Who you can nominate

This award is open to an individual tenant.

## About you

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

<b>Name</b>	Jonathan Read
<b>Position</b>	Strategy and Policy Advisor
<b>Organisation</b>	South Lanarkshire Council and on behalf of Shawlands Crescent Tenants and Residents Association
<b>Email address</b>	Jonathan.read@southlanarkshire.gov.uk
<b>Telephone number</b>	07385347916

## About the nominee

Please note information about the individual you are nominating:

<b>Name</b>	Tommy Bennett
<b>Position</b>	n/a
<b>Organisation</b>	n/a
<b>Email address</b>	tommylucyprice1@gmail.com
<b>Telephone number</b>	07494150164

## Background

### Maximum 250 words

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

For example, detail:

- The background of the individual.
- The specific role they undertake.
- When and why the individual first got involved in tenant participation.

Tommy Bennett is a tenant from Larkhall in South Lanarkshire who since 2017 has worked tirelessly to improve services for local residents and tackle the injustices that face the Gypsy/Traveller community across Scotland.

Between 2019 and 2023 Tommy was Chair of the Shawlands Crescent Tenants and Residents Association, the first of its kind for Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland. Under his leadership, the association grew steadily in both membership and in areas it was involved in. This led to significant improvements for the local community as well as individuals who were struggling to access support and services they were entitled to, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tommy was responsible for spearheading the community's approach to engaging with public services across housing, health and education, empowering long term disengaged residents to stand up and make their voice heard.

Tommy has recently formalised his efforts and now works within the national third sector organisation MECOPP, focussing his time on empowering and supporting ethnic communities across Scotland to have their say and tackle injustices they may face. Even with the demands of the position, Tommy still makes time to support those who reach out to him, continuing to make a positive difference across the local community.

A key aspect of Tommy's drive and motivation is that he has only ever asked for equality from all public services and is a strong believer in making sure children and young people have access to housing, health and education services that he did not have growing up in Larkhall.

## Actions

Please outline specific actions of the individual that demonstrate an exceptional commitment to driving tenant participation practices forward.

**For example, outline:**

- How the individual has gone above and beyond in championing tenant participation practices.
- How the individual empowered other tenants, residents, and communities to influence housing policies, services, and standards.
- How the individual explored innovative new ways to get people involved.
- How the individual has championed tenant participation practices.
- The work involved and their overall aim.

Under Tommy's leadership, membership of the Shawlands Crescent Tenants and Residents Association significantly increased with an array of residents now attending meetings and speaking up about what's important to them. This was a significant step forward for a community that has traditionally not engaged with services and had little understanding of opportunities to allow them to do so. Increased engagement has led to range of positive improvements for the community including directing investing into the sites and ensuring services meet their needs. Key achievements delivered under Tommy's leadership include:

- Empowering residents to report accommodation issues directly to the council, such as repairs or maintenance issues that previously would have been left.
- Supporting those in need to access financial advice and talk about money issues, breaking down the stigma that is associated with this.
- Significantly raising the Gypsy/Traveller communities' profile with all levels of elected members, including facilitating Councillor and MP surgeries on the site to allow residents to talk about issues they may be facing.

Despite the positive impact he made, Tommy continued to strive for more and recognised that older male residents were still reluctant to become involved in the association. To combat this, Tommy explored innovative new ways to improve engagement with them, focussing on their cultural traditions and areas that would potentially interest them. This included hosting more informal evening meetings with a reduced agenda, leading to significant number of men from the community attending sessions on housing and planning issues, discussing with the council on how services could be improved.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, there was concern from across public services on the impact this would have on the Gypsy/Traveller community, given their nomadic lifestyle and interlinked living arrangements. Tommy was at the forefront of the community's response to the pandemic, ensuring council and health services were aware of specific circumstances of those who were most vulnerable and ensuring they had access to the right services and information. Tommy's leadership

A strong advocate for improving awareness about the challenges and disadvantages that continue to be faced by the Gypsy/Traveller community, Tommy has taken the opportunity to raise these at

the most senior levels, including the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Government and as a speaker at last year's TIS National Housing Conference. Through doing so Tommy has effected real change in the policy approach to housing, health and planning for Gypsy/Travellers across Scotland.

Through Tommy's involvement, South Lanarkshire Council have been recognised nationally for their work in improving outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers, including at the 2022 COSLA Awards and 2022 MJ Awards, at both of which Tommy continued to make the case for equality for all.

## Outcomes

Please outline positive outcomes the individual has achieved as a result of their commitment to empowering tenants, residents, and communities.

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 other tenants, residents, and communities.
- How others can learn from the individual's good practice now and in the future.

As Chair of the Tenants and Residents Association, Tommy led on the engagement with South Lanarkshire Council to co-develop site investment masterplans. These plans were an opportunity for residents to have their say on the investment projects they wished to see on the two council run Gypsy/Traveller sites in South Lanarkshire. Since their development, over £2million of transformative projects have been delivered in conjunction with residents, including a new tenant run community facility, children's play area and accommodation facilities.

Even after agreement was reached on projects to be prioritised, Tommy continued to ensure residents had ongoing engagement around the designs, highlighting what's important to those who will be using them, as well as his work in supporting the council to successfully acquire external funding.

Tommy also has a strong link with local young people and has consistently been a voice for them across housing and education issues. This includes working with the local schools to ensure Gypsy/Traveller traditions and culture is recognised, as well as arranging for youth services to attend the site and provide activities for young people with the aim of reducing anti-social behaviour during the school holidays. As part of the delivery of the new play area, Tommy co-ordinated the attendance of children and young people from across the community to special sessions for them to have their say on how they play.

A key trait of Tommy's is his ability to empathise and connect with not only those across the Gypsy/Traveller community, but also mainstream tenants and residents who may be facing hardship. In early 2023 he led a community campaign to providing a local family with a terminally ill tenant at his son's school with donations and toys, encouraging residents and businesses to

donate what they could as well as raising the issue with local services to ensure they could access the right support.

Tommy's leadership has also led to real improvements in housing and health services for Gypsy/Travellers across Scotland. A key contributor to the development and refreshing of the Scottish Governments approach to improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers, Tommy formalised his involvement in this area in 2023 as a community engagement officer within the third sector organisation, MECOPP. Through this role he has refined his skills and ability to make change happen to a broader range of communities, with positive feedback received from local authorities where he has worked.

Tommy is recognised as a role model across the Gypsy/Traveller community, demonstrating that an individual can effect systematic change and empower those around them to make improvements for themselves. His ability to discuss the most sensitive or difficult issues whilst remaining respectful is admired by community members, officials and elected members across Scotland and other parts of the UK.

Hetty Foy, current Chair of Shawlands Crescent Residents Association said:

'Tommy is a leader in our community and has done so much good work. Through helping everyone to understand their rights, to making sure we receive the best from our council and the Government.'

Sharon Egan, Head of Housing Services, South Lanarkshire Council said:

'Tommy has been instrumental in developing our award winning approach for services to Gypsy/Travellers. The work we have achieved to date would not have been possible without his drive and determination to make sure we delivered what the community needed.'

## What makes this nominee stand out from the rest?


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

Tommy has made a real difference to improving not only the lives of tenants and residents in South Lanarkshire, but across Scotland and beyond. His enthusiasm and dedication are an inspiration to not only those within the Gypsy/Traveller community, but to those who he has worked with and supported.

Tommy's outstanding approach to tenant engagement and ability to empower others to right the wrongs of the past are worthy of acknowledgement and South Lanarkshire Council and the tenants and residents of Shawlands Crescent are proud to nominate him for this year's TIS Excellence Awards.

## 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.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Jonathan Read</b>
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>25 July 2024</b>

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](mailto: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.