

Nomination Form

Housing Organisation 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 **Housing Organisation of the Year** award recognises an outstanding housing organisation who has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation.

Submissions must **evidence how the organisation is dedicated to going above and beyond, to ensure tenants' rights are at the forefront,** have a meaningful say, and are pivotal in influencing housing policies, services, and standards. The organisation must promote quality and recognise that tenants are at the heart.

Who you can nominate

This award is open to housing organisations operating across the Scottish social housing sector.

About you

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

Name	Jodie Fullerton
Position	Service Development Officer
Organisation	West Lothian Council
Email address	jodie.fullerton@westlothian.gov.uk
Telephone number	01506 281848

About the nominee

Please note information about the housing organisation you are nominating:

Organisation	West Lothian Council – Housing, Customer and Building Services
Email address	Jodie.fullerton@westlothian.gov.uk
Telephone number	01506 281848

Background

Maximum 250 words

Please outline background information about the housing organisation that you are nominating.

For example, detail:

- The background of the organisation, including: total number of homes, total number of employees, and the geographical areas the organisation covers, etc.
- A brief background of their tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider engagement practices.

Housing, Customer, and Building Services (HCBS) is a vital service within West Lothian Council, focused on delivering top-notch housing and related services to the community. HCBS manages council housing, supports tenants, maintains properties, and ensures high levels of customer satisfaction.

West Lothian Council covers approximately 165 square miles in central Scotland, including both urban and rural areas with major towns such as Livingston, Bathgate, Linlithgow, and Broxburn. The council oversees around 13,000 homes and serves about 14,000 tenants, supported by over 700 staff members.

Tenant participation is a cornerstone of HCBS's approach. The council engages tenants through a Tenant Participation Strategy, which includes regular consultations, tenant-led inspections, and focus groups. A dedicated Tenant Participation Team organises events and facilitates communication, while tenant networks like the Tenants' Panel and our digital comms platforms ensure ongoing dialogue.

A specialised Customer Experience sub-team works with tenants to gather insights into their experiences, which are reviewed by the Tenants Panel. HCBS upholds high customer service standards, actively seeks feedback through surveys and online platforms, and has a robust complaint handling system. Investments in digital services, such as online portals for repairs and rent payments, capital repairs look up enhance accessibility and convenience for tenants.

Overall, HCBS at West Lothian Council is committed to excellent housing management and customer service, with a strong emphasis on tenant involvement and continuous improvement to meet the needs of the community.

Actions

Maximum 500 words

Please outline specific actions the housing organisation has taken to make an exceptional commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation.

For example, outline:

- How the organisation has gone above and beyond to ensure tenant rights are at the forefront.
- How the organisation has made a real difference to the lives of tenants.
- How the organisation promotes equality and recognise that tenants are at the heart.
- How the organisation has explored innovative new ways to get people involved.
- The work involved and their overall aim.

West Lothian Council demonstrates an exceptional commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation through various innovative practices and strategic initiatives. These efforts ensure that tenant rights are at the forefront, promote equality, and recognise tenants as central to the service improvement process.

Commitment to Tenant Rights and Service Improvement

The establishment of the Housing, Customer, and Building Services (HCBS) Customer Experience (CX) Team marked a significant step in prioritising tenant rights and enhancing service quality. The CX Team's mission is to gather information on the HCBS customer experience journey by directly engaging with tenants, customers, and staff. This team uses real lived experiences to shape services, aiming for proactive rather than reactive responses to customer needs. Each month, the team contacts around 600 customers, focusing on priority areas such as affordability, anti-social behaviour, repairs, and more.

Impact on Tenant Lives

The CX Team's approach has led to tangible improvements in the lives of tenants. By directly incorporating tenant feedback into service enhancements, the team ensures that customer voices are heard and acted upon. Unique to their service, when a tenant recommends a service improvement that is implemented, they receive direct feedback and gratitude from the council. This transparency has significantly reduced complaints in areas with recurrent issues and has fostered a sense of trust and accountability between the council and its tenants.

Promoting Equality and Inclusion

West Lothian Council's commitment to equality is evident in its efforts to ensure that tenants are at the heart of decision-making processes. The council's Tenant Participation Strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to engaging tenants through regular consultations, tenant-led inspections, and focus groups. The CX Team further supports this by building a demographic profile of customers and identifying trends in each area, ensuring that diverse tenant voices are represented and considered in policy decisions.

Innovative Engagement Methods

To enhance tenant participation, the council has implemented various digital platforms, including a postcode lookup for capital repair programs, making it easier for tenants to access information and services. The CX Insight initiative extends the principles of customer experience beyond HCBS, supporting other council services to ensure a consistent, high-quality experience for all residents. Additionally, the CX inspect program invites tenants to use council services and provide detailed feedback on their experiences, driving continuous service improvement.

Overall Aim and Long-Term Commitment

The council's overall aim is to create a customer-centric service culture that values tenant input and continuously seeks to improve based on feedback. The improvement recommendations are categorised into "quick hits" and long-term projects, ensuring both immediate and sustained enhancements. Regular reporting to the tenant's panel ensures transparency and ongoing dialogue, allowing tenants to visualise the impact of their feedback and contribute further suggestions.

In summary, West Lothian Council's exceptional commitment to tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement is evident in its strategic initiatives and innovative practices. By prioritising tenant rights, promoting equality, and fostering an inclusive, proactive service culture, the council has made a significant difference in the lives of its tenants and continues to strive for excellence in service delivery.

Outcomes

Maximum 700 words

Please outline positive outcomes achieved as a result of the housing organisation's commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation

For example, detail the impact on:

- The delivery of housing services.
- The improvement of satisfaction levels.
- The strategic approach of the organisation.
- The culture of the organisation and its core values.
- Communication, strengthening relationships, and partnership working.
- The inclusion and lasting benefits of tenants, residents, and/or communities.
- The skills and knowledge of other tenants, residents, and/or communities.
- How others can learn from the organisation's good practice now and in the future.

West Lothian Council's HCB service has demonstrated a profound commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation. This commitment has resulted in numerous positive outcomes across various facets of the service.

Delivery of Housing Services

The creation of the CX Team has revolutionised the delivery of housing services. By directly engaging with tenants and incorporating their feedback, the council has implemented 75 specific service improvements. These range from streamlining repair services to enhancing anti-social behaviour response protocols. The postcode lookup for capital repair programs has made it significantly easier for tenants to access relevant information, leading to more efficient service delivery and higher tenant satisfaction.

Improvement of Satisfaction Levels

The CX Team's direct engagement approach, involving monthly contact with around 600 customers, has increased satisfaction levels in one year (by 2.65% which is 1.74% above our peers). Tenants appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback and see it result in concrete changes. Transparency in communication, such as providing direct feedback to tenants who suggest improvements, has fostered trust and reduced complaints. Tenant satisfaction surveys have shown marked improvement, reflecting the positive reception of these initiatives.

Strategic Approach of the Organisation

West Lothian Council's strategic approach now heavily incorporates tenant feedback, ensuring policies and decisions reflect tenant needs. Regular consultations, tenant-led inspections, and focus groups feed into the strategic planning process, making it more inclusive and responsive. The CX Team's thematic approach to gathering feedback highlights priority areas such as affordability and repairs, allowing the council to strategically address these issues in a focused manner.

Culture of the Organisation and Its Core Values

HCBS has evolved to be more tenant-centric, transparent, and proactive. Core values of inclusivity, responsiveness, and continuous improvement are now deeply embedded in the organisation's ethos. Regular updates and invites to attend scrutiny panels underscore the council's commitment to transparency and active tenant involvement. This cultural shift has improved service delivery and enhanced employee morale, as staff see the positive impacts of their work on the community.

Communication, Strengthening Relationships, and Partnership Working

Increased communication methods, including pop-up sessions, regular updates, and the creation of digital platforms, have significantly strengthened relationships between the council and its tenants. Pop-up sessions provide a direct and informal way for tenants to engage with council representatives, fostering stronger, more personal relationships. The CX Insight initiative, extending support beyond HCBS to other council services, has enhanced partnership working across departments, ensuring a holistic approach to service delivery.

Inclusion and Lasting Benefits for Tenants and Communities

HCBS's inclusive approach ensures diverse tenant voices are heard and considered, resulting in lasting benefits such as improved housing conditions, better access to services, and a stronger sense of community. Initiatives like the CX inspect program, where tenants provide detailed feedback on their service experiences, ensure that improvements are enduring. Communities now have a more direct impact on the services they receive, leading to sustained positive outcomes.

Skills and Knowledge of Other Tenants and Communities

Tenant involvement in scrutiny panels and focus groups has empowered them with valuable skills and knowledge. These opportunities allow tenants to gain insights into council operations, understand service delivery processes, and contribute meaningfully to improvements. This participatory approach has built a more informed and engaged tenant base, beneficial for the community as a whole.

Sharing Good Practice

West Lothian Council's practices provide valuable lessons for other organisations aiming to enhance tenant participation and service delivery. The success of the CX Team and tangible improvements achieved through direct tenant engagement serve as a model of good practice. Other councils and housing organisations can learn from West Lothian's proactive engagement, transparency, and strategic inclusivity. By documenting and sharing these practices through forums, conferences, and publications, the council ensures its positive outcomes benefit a wider audience now and in the future.

Conclusion

West Lothian Council's HCBS has made significant strides in embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and community engagement into its organisational culture. The resultant positive outcomes include improved service delivery, higher satisfaction levels, a more strategic and inclusive approach, and strengthened relationships. These efforts benefit tenants and communities directly and serve as an exemplary model for other organisations seeking to enhance their service delivery through meaningful tenant engagement.

What makes this nominee stand out from the rest?

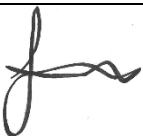
Maximum 100 words

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

West Lothian Council's Housing, Customer, and Building Services (HCBS) exemplifies outstanding commitment to tenant participation and community engagement, making it a worthy recipient of the Housing Organisation of the Year award. Through innovative initiatives like the Customer Experience Team, HCBS has transformed service delivery, implementing 75 tenant-driven improvements that have significantly enhanced satisfaction. By embedding inclusivity, transparency, and continuous improvement into its core values, West Lothian Council ensures tenants are pivotal in shaping policies and services. This tenant-centric approach, coupled with strategic foresight and strong community relationships, highlights the council's dedication to placing tenants at the heart of its mission.

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	Jodie Fullerton
Signature	
Date	08/08/2024

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.