
What Tenants Want !

resource 2:
WHQS information guide



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Introduction

This information guide has been produced for the Welsh Assembly Government **i2i - inform to involve** heads of the valleys support project. It should also be seen as part of a wider Assembly objective to give all tenants the *Right to Know* how their local authority or registered social landlord will achieve and maintain WHQS – the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

i2i has been established to help ensure that tenants of heads of the valleys local authorities have access to clear, accurate and appropriate information about how their landlord will achieve WHQS. We also aim to share our learning with the wider Welsh housing community.

This guide is based largely on discussions with 95 tenants taking part in 12 focus groups held in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen, Valleys to Coast and Wrexham. Focus group participants included tenant representatives who were knowledgeable and experienced about WHQS and the implications for their Council, as well as tenants who have never been involved in tenant participation activities and who knew little or nothing about WHQS.

This is the second resource in the **i2i *What Tenants Want!*** series which as the title suggests sets out the key areas of information that tenants themselves want to know about the process of bringing their homes and communities up to standard and maintaining it afterwards. The other resources in the series are:

- **resource 1: information template**
- **resource 3: sources of good practice on information for tenants**

It is hoped that the resources will provide a useful framework for local authorities and tenants organisations who wish to provide information to tenants about WHQS. To ensure a consistent approach we have opted to use the term *registered social*

landlord throughout the template and guide to describe housing associations and community housing mutuals.

Because the process of providing information is on going we welcome feedback to help improve the current guide and other resources developed by the **i2i** project. We aim to make *What Tenants Want!* and other materials available as a web based resource that can be easily updated.

How to use this guide

The guide provides a comprehensive resource that can be used to help local authorities and tenants organisations engage tenants in the WHQS process and should be used in conjunction with the *What Tenants Want!* template. The guide has the following sections:

Section 1: providing information

This section includes suggestions from tenants taking part in the focus groups, on the most effective ways of providing information to ensure that it is accessible to the majority of tenants

Section 2: key areas of information

This section provides details of the areas of information that tenants want to know as set out in the *What Tenants Want!* template. A summary of the information required in each area is set out in shaded *action point* boxes.

It is important to recognise that tenants also have statutory rights to information that they might not have identified as a priority during this project. In addition as the process of achieving WHQS develops in different parts of Wales there will inevitably be new and equally relevant questions raised that did not materialise during this research. The template and guide should therefore not be seen as the absolute final word on the information needs of tenants but rather as useful framework to be adapted and developed locally.

To ensure a consistent approach we have opted to use the term *registered social landlord* throughout the template and guide to describe housing associations and community housing mutuals.

Although aimed at tenants we hope the template and guide will help develop thinking on the information requirements of other key stakeholders such as staff and elected members.

Section 1: providing information

1.1 The challenge of making sure information reaches all tenants

There are many challenges in making sure that information gets across effectively to all tenants. Common problems identified include:

- lack of interest and apathy, which makes people disinclined to read information or attend public meetings and other events;
- disbelief and lack of knowledge that the issue is of importance to tenants, and that any changes will actually happen;
- lack of confidence to attend meetings or ask questions in front of a lot of other people;
- lack of reading skills or being unused to reading long and complicated documents;
- lack of accessible information;
- disillusionment after previous attempts to provide information have been ineffective;
- confusion over the different options and which are actually available; and
- being bombarded with too much information.

Three key messages for successfully providing information to the majority of tenants are to:

- offer as much personal, face to face contact as is possible;

- concentrate on going to meet tenants where they are, rather than expecting them to attend special events; and
- offer a wide range of methods of getting information across including alternative formats.

1.2 Methods of providing information

In order to provide information most effectively to ensure that it reaches all tenants, experience from tenants taking part in the focus groups, and from other organisations in England and Scotland show that it is best to adopt a wide range of methods.

It is also essential to take into account the different needs of tenants as not only should everyone have the right to be informed and involved but ballots on options can be decided by small percentages either way. Particular needs include tenants:

- whose first language is not English;
- with literacy problems; and
- with sight problems or other disabilities.

Different ways of getting information across to tenants include:

One to one contact:

- door knocking;
- housing offices;
- surgeries; and
- freephone helpline.

It should also be borne in mind that communicating by telephone causes specific problems for people who are hard of hearing. One solution is to ensure that all communication is text phone compatible

Information for groups

- public meetings;

- tenant and resident group events;
- road shows and information caravans;
- targeting existing groups;
- posters in public places; and
- show homes and study visits.

Written information

- newsletters;
- information leaflets and posters; and
- individual letters.

It is important to focus on making written information to people with specific needs and a range of formats should be considered.

Free gifts which carry one or two key messages

- fridge magnets;
- pens; and
- key rings.

Using the media

- DVDs and videos;
- using community messages facilities in post offices;
- local radio and newspapers; and
- using networks for hard to reach groups such as *talking newspapers*.

1.3 One to one contact

Door knocking exercises

Door knocking of individual tenants by housing officers to explain issues often works well, as this gives tenants the chance to ask the questions that concern them, and to receive accurate answers and information.

Door knocking should always be advertised in advance by sending out letters to tenants telling them the date that someone will be calling and making it clear that the tenant can choose whether they accept the call or not. It is important to use print rather than handwriting as this will not be picked up by screen readers

Housing officers should be well briefed before they call, should carry ID that bare lasge enough to be seen clearly and carry Braille notation. Officers should also wearing suits or ties, or carrying clipboards as tenants say this can make them mistaken by some for debt collectors or other unwelcome officials.

Some older people may find door knocking intimidating, and it should be made clear that tenants do not have to speak to a housing officer if they do not wish to.

It is important that any officers visiting tenants are seen only as impartial providers of information. They should not canvas tenants on how they intend to vote in a ballot, or attempt to influence tenants in any way. They should also be given the opportunity to have a friend or relative present.

Key message carriers

The staff that tenants see most often in their homes and are therefore most likely to trust and listen to include:

- direct labour repairs staff;
- sheltered housing wardens;
- home helps;
- care or support workers; and
- workers from voluntary organisations visiting tenants such as Age Concern, the Red Cross etc.

It is crucial that staff are kept well informed and well briefed about the key messages and information that tenants have the Right to Know as well as clear means of getting more detailed information that tenants ask for. Failure to do this will result in

problems with misinformation leading to rumours and unnecessary concerns among tenants.

It is important to stress that staff should not be asked to try to persuade tenants to vote one way or another but should simply provide impartial information to help tenants make an informed choice

Housing offices

It may be useful to have a designated housing officer available in reception of each housing office at known busy times, ready to answer tenants' questions when they come in to pay their rent or report repairs.

Surgeries

Regular information surgeries may be held in local council offices or community centres, with a housing officer and a local tenant representative present to answer questions.

Freephone helpline for enquiries

The phone line provided by ITAs for tenants to ring to get information should be widely advertised to all tenants.

1.4 Information for groups

Public meetings

Most tenants and housing staff would agree that generally public meetings are not the most effective ways of getting information across to all tenants. This is because the majority of tenants are unwilling to attend a public meeting, and if they do attend, many are reluctant to ask the questions that concern them in front of a lot of other people.

It is suggested that if public meetings are held:

- they are held in the evenings for those who work, and in school hours for those who do not or who have school age children;

- a free raffle is offered with a really good prize, eg a microwave;
- presentations are kept short and simple;
- checks are made beforehand to make sure that equipment works;
- not too much or too complicated information is provided;
- those making presentations use plain language with no jargon or abbreviations;
- participants are provided with a form at the beginning, so that they can submit a written question in advance if they don't like asking questions in public;
- meetings should be held in fully accessible venues taking into account wheelchair users and sensory loss;
- presentations should be in an accessible formats including if appropriate digital information for use with speech software; and
- using translators should be considered – and these will need to be booked well in advance.

Tenants and residents association events

Tenants and residents associations have an important role in providing accurate and up to date information to their members. It is therefore important that tenants' organisations are kept up to date and fully informed by the Council, to enable them to provide effective information to their members. Well informed associations can:

- organise local information events;
- produce newsletters, fliers and posters for members;
- organise showings of any DVDs or videos; and
- answer queries from tenants

Roadshows and information caravans

Although, like public meetings, many people are generally reluctant to attend road shows, bringing information to specific areas or estates is likely to attract more people than at a large public meeting. Displays or exhibitions providing information and examples of work that will be done to homes and estates can be included.

The Council may also wish to have an information caravan which it takes round to existing local events attended by tenants, for example local fetes, fun days and festivals.

Targeting existing groups

An effective way of getting information across to those who are reluctant to attend meetings is to go and see them at places where they gather for other reasons. For example LAs may ask if an officer could attend part of an existing group such as mother and toddler groups, pension clubs, canteens of large work places etc.

Information coffee mornings could be held for participants in existing groups too, with free biscuits, tea and coffee provided.

Posters in public places

Posters giving information which can be regularly updated or changed, could be displayed on:

- notice boards of district housing offices;
- in pubs and betting shops;
- in local newsagent windows; and
- in local libraries, health clinics and doctors' surgeries.

Copies should be sent to voluntary groups and clubs within the community who work with hard to reach groups.

Show homes and study visits

The Council may develop show homes of different house and flat types which have already been brought up to the WHQS, so that tenants can see for themselves what these would be like. Opportunities for tenants to view the homes can be widely advertised, and trips arranged for groups of tenants from each area or estate.

Tenant representatives can also be offered the chance to go on study visits to visit show homes and meet tenants in other authorities to see the standard of homes in different areas.

Special arrangements may need to be considered for tenants with specific needs. This could include accommodation of an assistance dog, support worker or specialist support technology.

1.5 Written information

Common pitfalls in producing information

Tenants taking part in the focus groups were shown a range of information leaflets and asked to comment on them.

Common pitfalls identified in providing written information include:

- providing too much detailed and complicated information;
- providing information about too many different things at the same time;
- providing too much writing on one page so that it is too dense and daunting to read;
- providing information in print that is too small; and
- presenting information unattractively without pictures, short paragraphs and headings.

Newsletters, information leaflets and posters

Some tips for producing clear and effective written information include:

- using large print (a minimum of point 14 throughout);
- using RNIB *clear print* for people with sight problems
- use a pastel shaded paper;
- do not put coloured font on coloured paper or 'reverse colours' as this is difficult for many people to read;
- make information short and to the point;
- break down information into separate headings, in paragraphs of a maximum of 3 or 4 lines;
- use bullet points and tables for lists of information;
- use short sentences and plain language;
- do not include jargon, abbreviations or technical language;

- only include one idea in each sentence;
- put as much information as possible in question and answer format;
- break up the text with photos, cartoons or illustrations; and
- planning in advance for alternative formats and put a system in place for these to be produced within a reasonable timescale.

Individual letters

Tenants suggest that when the Council write individual letters to tenants, they preferably address them individually by name, or at least as *'Dear Sir or Madam'*. Tenants say that they do not like letters being addressed as *'Dear Tenant'*.

All letters concerning WHQS and stock options should be clearly marked on the envelope, for example *'this letter contains important information about the future of your home'*. This should help to ensure that the tenant opens the letter.

Letters requiring a response should take into account the needs of tenants. For example tenants with sight loss may need extra time to have support and advice and this should be built into timescales

Free gifts which carry one or two key messages

An effective way of getting one or two key messages across is to print them on a small free gift, for example:

- fridge magnets;
- pens; and
- key rings

A contact number to obtain further information can be included on the gift.

The gifts can be provided to all staff who come into contact with tenants and to tenants and residents organisations. They can be widely distributed at all events and to all tenants who staff and tenants groups come into contact with.

1.6 Using the media

DVDs, videos and audio tapes

Most tenants agree that producing a good DVD and video is an effective way of getting information across to tenants who may not be willing or able to read newsletters and leaflets. It is important to produce both, as many older people will not have access to a DVD player. Audio tapes are popular with people with sight loss.

Care needs to be taken to make sure that distribution of DVDs and videos is carried out effectively and consistently, as experience has shown that previous distribution in some authorities was patchy, resulting in not all tenants receiving their copies.

The DVD can be played by the council and by tenant representatives at tenants meetings, in community centres, youth clubs, sheltered housing complexes, mother and toddler clubs etc. and used to encourage people to ask questions afterwards.

Tenants have the following advice for Councils who are thinking of producing a DVD:

Do

- keep it simple;
- make sure that all the information given is in plain language, concise and contains no technical terms, jargon or abbreviations;
- include local tenant representatives and let them speak from the heart;
- include housing staff in the video;
- use audio descriptive techniques for those with sight loss and subtitles for the hard of hearing;
- keep it unbiased, just giving the facts; and
- include subtitles.

Don't

- put words into tenant representative's mouths;
- have a boring chief executive just reading from a screen; or
- include famous people who are just acting, not involved.

Local radio and newspapers

Local radio for example Valleys Radio, and local papers, can be used to get information across to tenants, tell them about meetings and events, and explain that the issues are important and affect the future of their homes.

Some tenants suggest that local councillors or housing officials could be interviewed on radio, and take part in a phone in to answer tenants' questions.

However, experience shows that the media must be treated with caution, as unfortunately they can sometimes be biased either for or against transfer, and may sometimes twist the facts in order to make the issues more exciting.

Section 2: key areas of information

2.1 Stock Options Appraisal

Over the past two years, the majority of local authorities have produced information for tenants on the WHQS and the work they are doing to achieve this. However, many tenants are still unaware of or unclear about what the WHQS is, and how their authority will achieve the Standard.

Action Point 1

It is important that tenants are regularly provided with up to date information setting out:

- what the WHQS is;
- what the Council has done/is doing to enable them to decide;
- whether they can reach the Standard;
- whether the Council can afford to meet and maintain the Standard from its own resources; and
- the options the Council will consider if it cannot afford to reach the Standard.

WAG have made it clear to local authorities in Wales that if they cannot afford to meet the Standard they have only one option. This is to ballot tenants to see whether they wish to transfer the stock to a Registered Social Landlord, which could be either a housing association or a community mutual organisation.

WAG have made it plain that the options of setting up Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs) or Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) have been ruled out in Wales.

Feedback from tenants indicates that they have found it confusing and frustrating when presented with options which are not available to local authorities and tenants in Wales.

Action Point 2

Local authorities should only provide information to tenants on the options available to authorities in Wales, i.e.

- to retain the stock; or
- to transfer the stock to an RSL who is either
 - a housing association or
 - a community mutual organisation.

Local authorities should explain clearly to tenants that WAG has made it plain that the options of setting up PFIs and ALMOs have been ruled out in Wales.

Many tenants are unclear about what funding is available directly to their Council and why they cannot be given a grant or loan by the Welsh Assembly Government to enable them to meet the WHQS if they are unable to afford to do this from their own funds.

Action Point 3

Clear information should be provided to all tenants at an early stage, explaining what funding local authorities can access.

If the funding is likely to be insufficient to meet WHQS, tenants should receive information explaining:

- why the council cannot receive additional grants or loans from the Welsh Assembly Government; and
- why the council cannot borrow by other means to enable them to meet the WHQS.

2.2 Stock Retention

If the local authority decides that it can achieve and maintain the WHQS it is important that it explains clearly to tenants where the money will come from, so that tenants are reassured that the council will not introduce major increases in rents in order to fund the work.

Tenants will also want to be reassured that a council which decides to retain its stock, is committed to achieving the WHQS and does not seek to dilute the standard to make the work more cost effective.

As in the case for transfer organisations, arrangements need setting out for independent monitoring of the Council's progress towards achieving the Standard. Tenants would also like information from WAG on what action will be taken if homes are not brought up to the Standard by 2012.

Other concerns raised by tenants also seek reassurance that other services provided by the council, in particular the day to day repairs service, would not be reduced in order to release money to fund improvement works.

Action Point 4

Information needs to set out clear information on the effect that stock retention will have on:

- rent levels to fund improvement works;
- the day to day repairs service;
- other services provided by the council; and
- progress to achieve the WHQS by 2012

Information should also be provided about:

- what independent monitoring there will be, to ensure that WHQS is achieved by 2012;
- what action will be taken by WAG if councils who have opted to retain; and
- their stock fail to achieve WHQS by 2012

2.3 Pre Ballot

Pros and cons of voting 'yes' or 'no'

Our work confirmed that the majority of tenants feel safe with the Council and that many, in particular older tenants, are frightened and worried about any proposals for changes to the ownership of their homes. Many tenants feel that they do not have enough information or knowledge to make such an important and fundamental decision about their future.

The most frequent request by tenants was for balanced and clear information setting out the pro's and con's of voting 'yes' or 'no' to stock transfer. There is a strong view that most current information provided to tenants by local authorities places strong

emphasis on explaining what would happen if there was a 'yes' vote, but that little or no information is provided about what would happen if there was a 'no' vote.

This results in many thinking that the choice is to vote 'yes' for change, or 'no' for their service to remain the same. In practice, in authorities where tenants have voted 'no' to transfer, experience has shown that there are major implications for the service post ballot.

Tenants agree that if they are to be asked to choose between their homes staying in the ownership of the Council or being transferred to a new organisation, that they should have information clearly setting out the implications of each scenario.

Action Point 5

All information provided at pre-ballot stage needs to set out the answers applicable for both a 'yes' and a 'no' vote scenario as set out in the information template.

Rents

One of the major areas of concern to tenants is the effect on rents of stock transfer or retention. Housing associations are perceived by many as charging much higher rents than Council tenants.

Action Point 6

Information needs to be provided showing how much tenants' rents are likely to increase in the short term (up to five years) and over a longer period for each scenario.

Information also needs to be provided about the levels of rent that new tenants will be charged post transfer.

Rights

Another major concern among tenants is how a transfer to a new organisation would affect their tenancy rights, particularly the Right to Buy.

Experience has shown that pre ballot, Council tenants are targeted by companies offering mortgages, often at unfavourable rates, and encouraging tenants to buy their home 'before it is too late'. Many council tenants believe that they will no longer have the Right to Buy under a new organisation.

Action Point 7

Information needs to explain that existing tenants would have the Right to Buy under both scenarios, and setting out any differences there might be, both for existing tenants and for new tenants, if the stock were to be transferred to a new organisation.

The naming of the 'secure' and 'assured' tenancy is also a source of anxiety to tenants, many of whom assume that if a tenancy is not called 'secure', then it does not provide permanent security of tenure.

Action Point 8

Information needs to explain any differences between an assured and secure tenancy and address any concerns that tenants may have about security of tenure and other rights issues .

Repairs

Many tenants are concerned about whether they would receive a good quality and responsive repairs service from a new landlord, and whether they would still be entitled to the same repairs as under the Council. Some tenants are of the opinion that local housing associations do not provide as good a repairs service as the Council.

Action Point 9

Information needs to clarify what tenants can expect of a repairs service under both scenarios.

Housing Management

There are concerns about how a new organisation would manage and let its homes. Some tenants have the perception that RSLs are more likely to let to people who do

not live locally who may bring problems into the area such as drugs. Two other major concerns are about whether an RSL would deal with anti social behaviour effectively, and how effective they might be at carrying out adaptations for older or disabled tenants who may need these.

Other concerns are about whether an RSL may impose more restrictions on tenants than do local authorities, how rents would be collected and how an RSL would meet the needs of homeless people.

There is also some confusion as to where the responsibility for non-housing functions carried out by the Council would lie. This includes maintenance of pathways, fences, grass cutting, car parking spaces, road repairs and rubbish collection.

Action Point 10

Information needs to briefly set out a summary of policies for both scenarios on:

- allocations
- adaptations
- anti social behaviour; and
- rent collection

Information needs to clarify the areas of responsibility for maintenance that a new organisation would have, and the areas of responsibility that would remain with the Council, for example upkeep of roads and refuse collection.

Other Charges

Some tenants are concerned about whether a change of landlord would mean new or increased service charges. There is also confusion over whether Council tax would be affected by a change of landlord.

Action Point 11

Information needs to set out any implications for existing service charges both within the short term (between 3 and 5 years) and over a longer period for each scenario.

Information also needs to provide details of any new service charges that may be introduced

Benefits

Many tenants are concerned about whether a change of landlord would affect not only their housing benefits, but any other benefits they may receive.

Action Point 12

Information needs to reassure tenants that none of their benefits would be affected if their homes were to be transferred to a new organisation.

Tenant Participation

Some tenants who are already involved in tenant participation structures want to know whether they will have the same rights and opportunities to participate after a ballot.

Action Point 13

Information needs to reassure tenants that their rights to be consulted and to participate and receive information will remain the same.

Registered Social Landlords

The majority of tenants are not clear that housing associations and community mutual organisations are social landlords. Particular concerns are:

- whether these organisations are private for-profit organisations;
- how they are managed; and
- to whom they are accountable.

It was found that the majority of tenants preferred the use of the term Registered Social Landlord as they felt this most accurately describes the nature of a social housing organisation.

It is suggested that when providing information about RSLs, this is provided for both housing associations and community mutuals scenarios as set out in the template.

Action Point 14

It is suggested that the proposed new organisation is referred to as a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) in all information.

Information needs to be provided that clarifies that:

- local authorities and housing associations are social landlords;
- registered social landlords are not-for-profit organisations which are regulated by WAG and inspected by the Audit Commission; and
- RSLs can either be housing associations or community mutuals.

Explanations need to be provided setting out:

- the differences between housing associations and community mutuals; and
- their management structures and their accountability.

Tenants also have concerns about how RSLs receive their funding and how stable and safe the organisation is. There are worries that rents will be raised significantly in order to fund the paying back of loans, and also concerned about whether their homes would be sold off should the housing association run into financial difficulties.

Action Point 15

Information needs to explain how housing associations and community mutuals receive their funding and how they pay back any loans.

Information needs to provide reassurance about the financial stability of the proposed new organisation and what would happen to tenants' homes in the event of an organisation experiencing financial difficulties.

Tenants want to know what will happen to existing staff of the Council, should the stock transfer to an RSL.

Action Point 16

Information needs to explain who will be working for the RSL, and whether current officers will still be employed, for example:

- senior managers;
- housing officers;
- repairs and maintenance staff;
- sheltered housing wardens; and
- other support staff

Achieving WHQS

The template sets out arrangements for achieving the WHQS in two separate sections.

Section A: is only applicable to Local Authorities who have decided to retain their stock.

Section B: is only applicable to Local Authorities which have decided to ballot tenants on whether they would like to transfer the stock to an RSL.

Both sections set out exactly the same requirements for providing information. However, **Section B** requires that information is provided for both a 'yes' and a 'no' vote scenario.

Improvements to the inside and outside of tenants homes, the environment and local community

The general feeling among tenants taking part in the focus groups is that WHQS is currently rather vague and non specific, and that this could lead to different interpretation of the standard by different authorities.

Tenants would like clear information about exactly what work is to be carried out to individual homes. There is confusion as to whether the Standard includes external improvements, for example to pathways and boundary fences or walls. Most tenants are unclear about whether improvements will also involve the environment surrounding their homes and local community facilities.

Action Point 17

Information needs to be provided to tenants setting out what improvements will be done to:

- the inside of their homes;
- the outside of their homes;
- the environment and communal areas surrounding their homes; and
- local community facilities

Non traditional homes

Many tenants are concerned about how non traditional homes can be brought up to the WHQS, particularly as kitchens, bathrooms and storage facilities are not up to modern day standards.

Action Point 18

Information needs to be provided to explain exactly what will happen to non traditional homes.

Timescales for carrying out improvements

One of the most frequent requests from tenants is that they are provided with clear timescales and a programme for when and what improvements will be carried out in each area.

Action Point 19

Information needs to be provided at an early stage at local levels, to explain timescales for carrying out the work in each area, and details of the work that will be undertaken.

Disturbance and compensation

Tenants will need information about whether they will have to move out of their Homes while work is carried out. If they are asked to move, tenants' main concerns are:

- the length of time people will be asked to live in temporary accommodation;
- the location of the accommodation that will be provided; and
- details of any compensation and disturbance payments

If tenants are able to stay put during the work, main concerns are about the length of time the work will take to carry out, and whether tenants will be without kitchens or bathrooms during the work. Of particular concern is how work will affect those living in sheltered accommodation and what arrangements will be put in place to support older people to manage while the work is being carried out.

Action Point 20

Information needs to be provided at an early stage at local levels, to explain:

- whether tenants will have to move out of their homes;
- if so, how long they will be in temporary accommodation;
- the location of the temporary accommodation; and
- what disturbance/compensation payments will be paid.

If people are able to stay in their homes, whether they will be able to:

- use their kitchens and bathrooms;
- how long the work will take; and
- what help and support older tenants will get and from whom.

Choices for tenants

Many tenants say that they are not interested in having new kitchens and bathrooms as they have already spent a great deal of money installing their own. Tenants are concerned that they may be forced to have a new kitchen in particular, which may not be to the standard of their current one.

Tenants who are happy to have a new kitchen and bathroom would like reassurance that these will be of good quality, and that they will have a choice of units and colours.

Action Point 21

Information is needed at an early stage, explaining the circumstances and areas where tenants have a right to refuse to have improvements carried out, and choices tenants will have in choosing new kitchens and bathrooms.

Standards of work

Tenants are concerned that improvement work and new installations will be carried out to a good standard, and that contractors will not be chosen purely on the basis of cost.

Action Point 22

Information is needed which sets out standards for the work.

Contractors

Many tenants are concerned that the improvement works should be carried out by local contractors and/or staff employed directly by the landlord, and that apprenticeship and other training schemes should be developed to ensure that local people and communities can benefit from the increase in work and employment.

Action Point 23

Information is needed which sets out:

- how the work will be advertised;
- the criteria for awarding contracts;
- who will be involved in choosing contractors; and
- what local apprenticeship and training schemes will be put in place.

Code of conduct

Tenants are concerned that a code of conduct should be developed to ensure that contractors cause minimum disruption and distress when working in tenants' homes.

Action Point 24

Tenants should be provided with details of the code of conduct which should be developed in consultation with tenant representatives before the work commences.

Liaison

Tenants are anxious that adequate liaison arrangements are put in place during the work, so that people are able to get in touch if something goes wrong.

Action Point 25

Information should be provided setting out the liaison arrangements for tenants during the work, including contact details for any responsible officers, clerk of works and local tenant representatives

Inspection

Tenants are concerned that there will be adequate inspection of completed works both by a representative from the landlord organisation and by tenant inspectors.

Action Point 26

Information should be provided setting out arrangements for inspecting the works after completion, who will be carrying out the inspections, timescales for when inspections will be carried out and what arrangements will be made to notify tenants of when an inspector will call.

Complaints procedure

Tenants will want to know how they can complain if they are not happy with the work, both during and after improvements to their home.

Action Point 27

Information needs to be provided setting out the complaints procedure, what will be done to put right any complaint made, and who the tenant complains to if they are not happy with the response.