

Better
Housing
Briefing

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**Black and
minority
ethnic user
participation
in housing**

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Key messages

- 1 Housing providers need to be clear about what they mean by resident or tenant involvement
- 2 There are good reasons for involving tenants beyond direct housing needs
- 3 Providers should start by looking at how to reach black and minority ethnic tenants and not assume they are hard to reach
- 4 Residents may need appropriate support in order to be involved
- 5 Guidance on user involvement is part of the process; monitoring and follow-up are essential
- 6 To make involvement meaningful to tenants, they need to be shown how their participation can influence the services provided.

Introduction

Involving service users in the development and delivery of services is expected good practice for every organisation. The emphasis on user involvement, resident involvement (which includes tenants and leaseholders), or tenant participation in the housing sector has grown in the past few years, driven by a number of policy initiatives.

The Decent Homes Standard (see DETR, 2000b; ODPM, 2000) requires all social landlords to make improvements to their stock to meet the standard by 2010. Each authority was required to consider, by 2005, three options for ways in which they would meet the standard and bring in new investment. At the heart of this is a requirement for housing authorities not only to consult widely, but also to demonstrate that residents/tenants have played an active part in the decisions made.

The Community Cohesion Strategy is another driver. The Cattle Report (Home Office, 2001), into the Bradford, Burnley and Oldham disturbances, highlighted the pivotal role of housing in community cohesion. It urged housing services to implement tenant and resident involvement practices and engage black and minority ethnic (BME) people in order to encourage integration and tackle cross-cultural/community issues, such as poverty, through regeneration initiatives.

African, Asian and African Caribbean tenants have limited participation in councils and housing associations, which suggests that they have been excluded from being involved (Harrison *et al.*, 2003), or that in guidance, cursory attention is drawn to their participation (Audit Commission, 2004a).

Involvement of BME communities in housing is of particular concern given that these communities experience poor housing conditions (Harrison *et al.*, 2003; Housing Corporation, 2003) and overcrowding. Racism and racial harassment also impact on housing experiences (Chahal, 2000, 2007). Some BME communities have specific housing needs arising from larger family sizes and from cultural practices; for example, when members of an extended family live together in the same house, providing support and contributing to family life. There are also fears both of a growing homelessness crisis among BME communities, as a consequence of their social and economic experiences (Shelter, 2004), and of segregated housing, because of where these communities tend to live. These factors will have an impact on the ability of housing providers to meet their commitment to ensure the participation of BME tenants in the planning, management and delivery of housing services.

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) recommends that housing organisations have a strategy for involving BME residents and tenants over and above the duty they have to involve tenants (CRE, 2006). Essentially, the CRE is pushing to ensure that African, Asian and African Caribbean residents and tenants have the opportunity to be involved in housing decisions and services. Yet, in order to ensure race equality, engaging with BME people is more likely to be effective if involving this group of people is included in, rather than separate from, other consultation and participatory activities (Audit Commission, 2004a).

Tenant participation continues to be a policy area in housing, as noted in the proposed work of the new housing agency, Communities England, which will oversee the delivery of housing and regeneration services (DCLG, 2007a). Additionally, the current consultation on Tenant Empowerment (DCLG, 2007b) is a means by which organisations can highlight particular issues concerning tenant participation for particular communities. Investigations are also being carried out into the right to manage through neighbourhood studies. Here, the Housing Corporation (see www.housingcorp.gov.uk) is exploring opportunities for residents to take greater responsibility for decisions relating to the management of their homes and neighbourhoods, and to identify any barriers that may hinder progress.

However, evidence still shows that housing providers involve BME tenants in limited ways, despite the availability of funding (such as Tenant Empowerment programmes), guidance (via the Housing Corporation and various toolkits: Audit Commission, 2004b; ODPM, 2004), and advice and support (such as the Tenant Participation Advisory Services and InSTEP).

What does tenant involvement mean?

1

User involvement is interpreted in many ways, from minimal engagement of users, to more formalised practices within an organisation's structure. As with other participation practices, there is no blueprint or template for user involvement.

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) describes tenant participation as a two-way process involving both tenants and their landlords in the sharing of ideas, enabling tenants to influence decisions regarding the management of their homes (see www.tpas.org.uk). The Housing Corporation identifies three levels of involvement: providing information (which enables involvement in decisions about local services), consultation (which enables involvement in overall management decisions) and correcting service failures (which is involvement in deciding management structures) (Housing Corporation, 2004).

Tenant participation strategies include a number of ways to involve tenants and residents, ranging from newsletters, customer service panels and customer satisfaction surveys to tenant auditing services, the

Resources 1

BMEspark

www.BMEspark.org.uk

A website that provides knowledge and resources for health and housing practitioners.

Department for Communities and Local Government

www.communities.gov.uk

Provides information and guidance for all tenants, and some specific to BME tenants, on housing and tenant participation. Also provides guidance on the right to manage, which includes a number of guides specifically aimed at tenants' right to manage.

The Housing Corporation

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

Provides information on resident participation projects funded by the Innovation and Good Practice Fund.

Innovation into Action Programme

www.innovationintoaction.org

Provides good practice examples from projects that were funded by the Chartered Institute for Housing to develop new ways to enable local authority tenants to manage their own homes.

development of tenant/resident associations and tenant representatives on housing association management boards.

Research evidence suggests that residents from black and minority ethnic communities are not as involved as they should be. A survey of customer satisfaction has shown that although tenants from all ethnic groups are satisfied that they are treated fairly and respectfully by their landlords, there is more dissatisfaction over participation issues. The Quality Housing Services survey (2006) of 12,000 tenants found that 16 per cent of tenants overall were dissatisfied with their opportunities for participation in management and decision making. For BME tenants the figures for dissatisfaction were higher, at 18 per cent of Asian tenants and 26 per cent of black British/other. The implication is that although there is evidence of some good practice, there is still some way to go.

Since 1994, tenant participation has changed rapidly to include schemes that give tenants greater influence over the ways in which they receive housing services, and the quality of those services (see DCLG, 2007c). The right to manage has given the opportunity for tenants to take responsibility for providing housing management services on behalf of the local council. These include day-to-day management, such as cleaning or caretaking services. Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation, for example, manages 1900 parking spaces and garages in the borough, renting to residents, non-residents and businesses. Housing association stock can also be managed by tenant management organisations.

An alternative is for local authorities to separate the management and improvement of housing stock from the day-to-day housing management role by setting up Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) or by partnering with Private Finance Initiatives. Tenants have to be included both in the consultation to establish an ALMO and in the management of the organisation. There is limited information on participation of BME people in such schemes. However, some organisations provide opportunities to involve specific tenants, such as the BME surgeries run by Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation.

In order to achieve meaningful resident involvement, an organisation needs to have a clear understanding of its residents and communities.

The Newcastle BME housing project used different research methods to find out the future needs and aspirations of BME communities living in Newcastle. The project identified a need for these communities to be involved in the future housing design and layout of new builds, ensuring that these are specific to their needs. For example, there was a demand for larger homes with four to six bedrooms; there was a preference for affordable owner-occupier homes; and, with the recognition that BME communities tend to live in unfit properties, it was acknowledged that grants are needed to improve homes within the private sector.

(Adapted from Newcastle City Council, 2004)

Black and minority ethnic groups have indicated that public services do not appear to learn from or respond to what they have said (Audit Commission, 2004a). Hence, the key principle is that involvement must be effective to the extent that tenants' views, concerns and ideas have an impact on the services they receive, and that feedback is provided to the service user on these effects as a result of their participation.

Good reasons for tenant involvement

2

As recipients of services, tenants should be able to comment and give feedback on what services are provided, how they are managed and whether they are of good value. The arguments for involving tenants or residents often centre on a business case as a means of:

- ¥ making the providers of services more accountable to the users of services;
- ¥ improving services through feedback from those in receipt of the services;
- ¥ building social capital.

Involving tenants will have an impact on a housing provider's performance, lead to better services and enhance the provider's accountability to their users. For example, involving residents in refurbishing estates may help reduce void levels and tenancy turnover.

The definition of involvement of local residents and tenants in housing now includes not only housing services but also regeneration and building capacity within local communities. This focus on social capital has seen housing providers actively engaging tenants in community development projects, but the impact of such activities is not easy to measure. An estate fun day organised by a housing association may have a social impact for tenants meeting each other on the day, but the long-term impact aimed at developing community cohesion may not be clear. Nevertheless, evidence does show (Audit Commission, 2004b; Harrison *et al.*, 2003) that involving residents in order to improve services not only works but can provide value for money.

There are wider benefits arising from the involvement of black and minority ethnic communities in housing services. Involving tenants in decision making can enable them to feel that they are contributing to a better community and environment - enhancing social capital. Their involvement in housing development programmes will allow input of their needs and ways to cater for them. Housing providers can respond to racial harassment concerns, and participatory and involvement strategies can help to review or support the involvement of specific groups, such as refugees. Thus through tenant participation, local community involvement as a whole may be improved (Audit Commission, 2004b). The benefits may also be individual in that tenants develop skills, as well as becoming better informed customers. Importantly, integration and empowerment of BME tenants in housing developments is achievable if work is carried out with and for the whole community, involving existing and new residents (Hawtin *et al.*, 1999).

As part of the Housing Associations Charitable Trust *Accommodate* refugee housing partnership project, the Canopy Housing Project in Leeds is working with refugees and the local community to refurbish houses. The scheme will provide accommodation for the refugee who is the potential tenant of the refurbished property and forge close community relations with those in the neighbourhood. The housing partners are developing a toolkit and making a film to share their experiences and promote positive images on ways in which new and long-term resident communities can work together to revive deprived neighbourhoods.

(www.hact.org.uk)

Resources 2

InSTEP

www.instepservices.co.uk

A national resource funded by the Tenant Empowerment Programme. It provides a range of services to help tenants and landlords work together and to inform, empower and encourage tenant participation. In addition to resources, there is also a telephone helpline.

London Borough of Newham

www.languageshop.org.uk

Provides profiles on local BME communities, which may be useful; also an interpreting and translation service for the borough.

Shaping Our Lives

www.shapingourlives.org.uk

Provides information on user involvement.

Tenant Empowerment Programme

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

Enables local authority tenants to access advice, information and training on various aspects of tenant participation and the right to manage.

Tenant Participation Advisory Service

www.tpas.org.uk

Provides information, advice, guidance and worksheets on tenant participation, and a specific reading list for engaging BME tenants.

A high number of housing associations provide a range of housing plus and tenant involvement activities (Housing Corporation, 2001). These housing plus activities link tenants to community development opportunities as well as participating in housing services. The Croydon People's Housing Association has provided parenting and family support initiatives, as well as facilitating the use of premises for local community groups, including such use by another housing association to deliver a tenant participation training course.

Housing providers are seen to play a pivotal role in reducing gaps that exist between different communities, and in enhancing community cohesion. But only a small number of ALMOs and Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Schemes (LSVTS) have developed policies to tackle issues of ethnic segregation in their housing stock (ODPM, 2004).

Although the government has emphasised residents' involvement to aid community cohesion through regeneration initiatives, there is little information about the extent of awareness and understanding of these initiatives among BME communities. The intention behind the guidance issued by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR, 2000a) is that involving BME people in the New Deal for Communities programme will 'help to avoid creating a selective and excluding regeneration process' (p. 10). However, BME communities are not always involved in the planning and implementation of urban regeneration and renewal programmes, even when one of the benefits of a particular programme is specifically aimed at these communities (Brownill and Drake, 1998; Harrison *et al.*, 2003).

Moreover, regeneration targeted at housing estates does not take into consideration the area of most deprivation for BME people; that is, among mixed housing tenure. For example, although most Pakistani families live in owner-occupied households, much of the housing is of poor quality (Chahal, 2000). The evidence shows that regeneration benefits are not long lasting for these communities and that participation of BME groups as equal partners in renewal developments has been limited (DETR, 2000b).

The 2007 CRE investigation into the implementation of the race equality duty in physical regeneration includes all agencies and individuals delivering regeneration, such as the Housing Corporation and housing providers. Within the theme of community participation, the evidence so far has indicated tokenistic consultation of BME communities and organisations (CRE, 2007).

Arguably, several factors can limit or challenge the level of resident involvement undertaken by a housing provider. Resident involvement is not necessarily perceived as a core housing service. Some activities are more resource intensive than others and may influence the level of commitment within the organisation. Consultative panels and focus groups were cited by landlords as more resource intensive than producing newsletters (Audit Commission, 2004a). Costs can increase for involvement of some ethnic groups, but there are solutions to resourcing issues. A housing association providing a minor repairs service to a local BME organisation, in exchange for assistance with translation, is one example.

Black and minority ethnic tenants are not 'hard to reach'

3

There is a tendency to view some communities and particular groups as being 'hard to reach', primarily because they may have little involvement in certain aspects of service management.

Nearly half of public organisations have reported making little progress in engaging BME communities, partly due to assumptions made about how to contact these communities, and the fact that they do not easily engage with existing participatory systems (Audit Commission, 2004c). The notion of 'hard to reach' often results from the inability to look beyond formal methods of involvement and ways to reach BME people (ODPM, 2004). It is important also to recognise the diversity among these communities, and differences between new and longer established communities. In order to engage all these communities, their particular housing needs may require different participatory strategies.

A number of factors may help explain why some BME communities are defined as 'hard to reach'. These include language barriers, racism and harassment, as well as mistrust of an organisation. All tenants can be said to be hard to reach, but BME tenants face specific barriers that can make them seem harder to reach than most (ODPM, 2004).

Quite often, information is translated into community languages for different minority ethnic groups, but the effectiveness of this relies on the literacy skills of tenants and the promotion of the materials. Flexibility in interpreting services, and the use of a range of materials, are necessary (Mir, 2007). The focus should be not only on the translation of languages, but also on enabling the reader to understand the subject matter. Explaining what tenant participation means and how it works is essential when trying to engage tenants.

For many BME tenants, racism and racial harassment are major factors in their everyday life. Most racist incidents occur in and around the home and comprise abuse, intimidation and threats (Chahal, 2007). Given the impact that racism has on the lives of victims, it is not surprising that when certain areas are associated with racial incidents, BME tenants are likely to feel that their participation in housing issues will have little impact on their lives. Racial harassment can restrict choices about housing and lifestyle as it limits people from going to certain places and moving into certain areas (Chahal, 2000). One project aimed to reduce this effect by encouraging BME tenants to move into two new housing schemes in traditionally white working-class areas, and to participate in the development of these schemes. The housing agencies experienced difficulties in persuading BME tenants to move into areas not stereotypical of their ethnic background and economic circumstances, primarily as one of the new housing developments was at the edge of an estate which had a reputation for being racist (Hawtin *et al.*, 1999).

Community organisations and networks are a means by which to engage BME tenants and residents, and some housing providers have used these to access communities. A third of large scale voluntary transfer schemes and half of the housing schemes surveyed used community networks to access and engage BME communities. However, it has been shown that the paternalistic relationship between some organisations and the communities with which they work, can sometimes prevent wider dissemination of information and participation in housing activities (ODPM, 2004).

In areas with small BME populations, isolation, limited community networks, racial harassment and poor transport services are barriers to people participating in housing services, other than for necessity. Evidence highlights the difficulties in promoting the development of sustainable communities across regions in rural areas (Monk *et al.*, 2006). For some housing providers, the issue is one of engagement where there is a small African, Asian or African Caribbean community. One authority with a BME population of 2.67 per cent experienced difficulties in encouraging members of this population to attend housing focus group meetings, despite paying for tenant transportation and offering £10 gift vouchers for participating.

Resources 3

Tenant participation examples

Croydon People's Housing Association
www.cpha.org.uk

Housing Action Charitable Trust: Accommodate Project
www.hact.org.uk

Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation
www.kctmo.org.uk

Manchester Methodist Housing Association
www.greatplaces.org.uk

Tung Sing Housing Association – Merseyside Community Voice Project
www.tungsing.co.uk
Tel: 0161 234 0260.

Yorkshire Housing Group – Equality and Diversity Strategy
www.yorkshirehousing.org.uk

The way in which a situation is approached can aid in the solution. Yorkshire Housing Group used a particular approach to engage with tenants. They built up a profile of local populations and community organisations in one locality. This information was used to develop a strategy to encourage involvement in tenant conferences, and saw an increase in participation of Asian tenants, from 0 per cent to 40 per cent within two years.

New communities, such as refugees, who may have fewer formal networks, may require a lot of emotional and practical support in order to engage with housing structures. This might involve working with community-based organisations, or directly with the various communities in a locality.

4

Appropriate support for involvement

Whether or not a tenant participates is an individual decision. There are many reasons why tenants may not wish to be involved - lack of time, perceived relevant skills, mistrust from past experiences, racism, or that the organisation's staff make-up does not reflect the community it serves. Service users may feel that their knowledge is not valued or taken seriously by professionals. Limited resources may restrict their capacity to develop and share their knowledge, or some may feel that funding for a particular service may be put at risk if they do not agree with what they think service providers want to hear (Branfield *et al.*, 2006).

The provision of training and development by service providers, a commitment to change and to ensure that the diversity of service users is recognised in the drive for user participation, are some of the factors identified that would strengthen service user knowledge and participation (Robson *et al.*, 2003).

The current Tenant Empowerment Programme (administered through the Housing Corporation) is aimed at local authority tenants and provides them with the means to challenge and influence the way in which housing services are delivered to their communities. The training and capacity-building activities help tenants develop skills and raise their confidence in participating in decisions about how their homes are managed.

Black and minority ethnic housing associations are known to be successful in enabling BME people to participate in housing policy and implementation. The representation within these associations is one indicator. Evidence shows staffing and board members of BME associations to be 85 per cent from BME groups compared to 12.5 per cent of all registered social landlord (RSL) staff and 9.4 per cent of board members (Harrison *et al.*, 2003). The services they provide are also more competent, partly because they pay particular attention and sensitivity to the needs of BME communities. For example, these associations tend to have housing stock with larger bedrooms, reflecting larger families.

However, it is not just that BME housing associations provide the services BME tenants require. For some tenants it is irrelevant who runs the housing services: what matters is that they receive good-quality services (IPPR, 2003). Being listened to is also important and BME tenants have indicated that even BME housing associations do not always meet this expectation.

The evidence does not suggest that only BME housing associations provide effective user involvement and participatory practices. Mainstream housing associations with predominant BME communities also tailor their services to meet the needs of the local community. Evidence does suggest, however, that BME housing associations are more likely to be perceived by tenants as willing to listen to, and value, their views and input because these associations were established to meet the needs of their communities (IPPR, 2003). They are also more likely to provide support, such as language support or community link workers, to encourage BME tenants to be involved and to participate in housing association meetings.

Some providers give incentives, such as training residents to facilitate consultation forums (Newcastle City Council, 2004), or financial incentives. Merseyside Community Voice pays residents to participate in projects, and Manchester Methodist Housing Association has used prize draws (see also Beckles *et al.*, 2006).

Monitoring and evaluation are essential

5

Every registered social landlord must work with tenants to determine the best ways to involve them in the development and management of housing services. For housing associations the systems they develop to enable this involvement are guided by various Housing Corporation policies. The Housing Corporation's BME housing policy has a commitment to tenant participation and aims to gather evidence on good practice. There is also an expectation for registered social landlords to review their existing practice of tenant participation (Housing Corporation, 1998). However, a review of this policy noted that more needs to be done to focus on the involvement of BME tenants. In particular, housing associations were found to be weak in this area and did not appear to be monitoring the ethnic make-up of tenant organisations (Housing Corporation, 2005b).

The recently published *People First* policy (Housing Corporation, 2007a) outlines the Housing Corporation's requirement for landlords to involve tenants in the development and delivery of housing services. This includes publishing a resident involvement statement, which demonstrates how residents have been involved and how they have influenced services. An impact assessment is to be used to evidence resident involvement and measure the degree to which services have been improved (Housing Corporation, 2007b). The basic building blocks of effective involvement include ensuring equal opportunity for under-represented and vulnerable groups, as well as the use of a range of active involvement methods with residents and communities to '*allow people to be involved on their terms*' (Housing Corporation, 2007a, p. 11). Time will tell how effective these requirements are in practice.

The Best Value frameworks are a means by which the Housing Corporation is committed to resident participation and in particular to the best value approach aimed to strengthen the role of service users in defining and influencing services they receive from their landlords (Housing Corporation, 1998). Additionally, the BME action plan (Housing Corporation, 2005a) outlines the vision for race and housing, including community engagement and the engagement of BME people as suppliers and contractors in housing services.

The Housing Corporation assessment of housing association performance will include looking at the way in which tenants are involved in an association. Specifically, there is a commitment to '*Gather evidence of good practice in the participation and empowerment of BME tenants, and investigate possible improvements. We expect RSLs to review existing mechanisms and pursue good practice*' (Housing Corporation, 2005a, p. 7).

Registered social landlords need to ensure that their mechanisms do not discriminate against BME communities involvement, and that where resident organisations exist, they are representative and reflect the interests of BME communities. Yet because housing associations have been found to be very weak in monitoring the ethnic make-up of tenant organisations (Housing Corporation, 2005a), much more than guidance is needed to ensure that policy becomes practice.

Housing providers may still find it difficult to engage BME tenants. If so, any monitoring should look at the extent to which guidance, practical resources (such as the Housing Corporation's Innovation and Good Practice Fund) and financial support (including the Tenant Empowerment Fund) are accessible and understood by housing providers as sources for developing ways of involving BME tenants.

6 Make involvement meaningful

Black and minority ethnic people are reluctant to participate when it is not clear what has resulted from their involvement, where no credit is given to their participation or where there has been little feedback (Butt and Box, 1999; Audit Commission, 2004c; ODPM, 2004). Organisations can show the value they place on user involvement through the way in which they engage tenants and at what stage of a project tenants are involved. This engagement can show where due regard has been given to the needs and circumstances of particular groups of tenants.

Beckles *et al.* (2006), using a bottom-up approach to encourage tenant involvement, were particularly successful in obtaining the views of small, under-represented groups and unengaged communities, such as refugees or women from some minority ethnic groups. Community owned performance indicators were found to be a successful tool for resident involvement.

This process encourages tenant involvement because the issues are owned by tenants. The process involves training a small group of residents within a community to organise and run a focus group. They produce a report of the issues raised, which are turned into performance indicators and used to measure service delivery. An example is concern about dirty lifts on an estate, and the community owned performance indicators may be the cleanliness of the lifts and how often they are cleaned. The target delivery of housing services is that cleaning takes place five out of seven days per week and this is measured through checks at different times of the day.

The study suggests that community owned performance indicators should matter to social landlords. The skills the resident focus group leader develops is one way of informing local communities about the way in which housing services work, and enables local authorities to build on this dialogue with local communities. More specifically, by engaging in a more inclusive way with the

local community, it is likely that their needs and aspirations will be recognised and used by the local authority to develop services tailored to the range of communities in that locality. The development of a network of BME residents, who are available to be consulted and involved and to participate in housing services, is an effective way of tailoring services to meet needs. The Merseyside Community Voice, a citizens panel supported and managed by Tung Sing Housing Association, is a consultative panel of over 600 members. These members are located in the Liverpool and Merseyside area and across housing tenure. The panel is engaged and consulted on a range of issues, and practical support, such as language interpreters, is provided. In addition to feedback, tenants are paid for their participation.

Finding means of overcoming barriers to involvement can show to some communities the value housing providers are placing on their participation. There are suggestions on how to overcome these barriers (ODPM, 2004), but sometimes addressing barriers can bring forth other problems requiring solutions.

What works in involvement?

Key to encouraging and supporting BME tenant involvement is a strategy that recognises that:

- ¥ Community development takes time and adequate groundwork needs to be undertaken in order to encourage tenants to manage estates.
- ¥ There needs to be ongoing commitment from all agencies to tenant participation and empowerment, and agreed support for participation approaches.
- ¥ Effective communication strategies are required to enable residents to voice their needs and concerns.
- ¥ Staff encouraging resident involvement need to have the appropriate experience and skills.
- ¥ The cultural expertise and knowledge of BME staff should be utilised.
- ¥ Participation can bring forth issues and problems; the means to resolve these are therefore needed.
- ¥ Allocating resources, particularly staff time, shows a commitment to involving users.
- ¥ The monitoring and evaluating of user involvement systems is important.

Practical suggestions to engage tenants:

- ¥ different methods for engagement: estate fun days, word of mouth, door knocking, contact with religious venues, publicity where BME communities go, such as barber shops and ethnic food outlets;
- ¥ relevant publicity for all tenants agencies are trying to engage;
- ¥ incentives;
- ¥ flexible approaches and working with local businesses;
- ¥ making resident involvement fun;
- ¥ training and support for staff and tenants.

(Adapted from Robson *et al.*, 2003)

Conclusion

The willingness to involve BME tenants in the planning, development and delivery of housing services is evident in housing policy. In practice, much more needs to be done to engage and ensure meaningful participation; in particular, sharing the learning from good participatory examples. More importantly, housing providers need to make effective use of the available support to encourage tenant participation. In terms of race equality, tighter measures need to be in place to ensure that housing providers are implementing necessary action for the involvement of BME people at all levels of housing services. Also importantly, tenants need to be empowered to develop the knowledge and skills to be actively involved and make a difference in services.

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We welcome feedback on this paper and on all aspects of our work. Please email briefings@racefound.org.uk

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