



# Ethnic Minority Voices in Tenant Engagement Case Study





# Case Study

**BME** LONDON  
LANDLORDS

## Empowering Ethnic Minority Tenant Voices through the BMELL Tenants Forum.

### Overview

- **Purpose:** This case study explores how the BME London Landlords (BMELL) Tenants Forum improves tenant participation, strengthens engagement, and amplifies ethnic minority voices in social housing.
- **Organisation/Community:** BME London Landlords (BMELL) Tenants Forum – representing tenants from 13 BME-led housing organisations managing over 6,300 homes across London.
- **Location:** London
- **Date/Duration:** Established in November 2021, with ongoing meetings and activities through 2022–2025.

### Background and Context

The BMELL Tenants Forum was created in response to long-standing concerns that tenants – particularly from ethnic minority backgrounds – were not being adequately heard or engaged by housing providers.

Key challenges included:

- Low tenant participation and engagement in decision-making
- Perceptions that landlords prioritised rent over tenant wellbeing
- Reports of poor housing conditions and slow repairs
- Feelings of marginalisation and lack of accountability



Tenants expressed frustrations such as:

- “Social landlords just want their rent... and don’t care if the roof is leaking”
- Concerns about systemic inequality and lack of representation in housing leadership

Additionally, broader issues such as underfunding of social housing over decades were highlighted as structural barriers to improving services.

### Objectives

- Increase participation of ethnic minority tenants in engagement activities
- Strengthen tenant voice and influence in housing decision-making
- Improve communication and relationships between tenants and landlords
- Build tenant confidence, knowledge, and leadership capacity
- Promote accountability and transparency in housing services

# Approach and Activities

## Tenant-Centred Engagement Model

The Forum was designed to be tenant-led, ensuring agendas and discussions reflect tenant priorities rather than landlord-driven narratives.

## Key Activities

Key challenges included:

- Regular tenant forum meetings bringing together representatives across organisations
- Participation in national consultations (e.g., Tenant Satisfaction Measures, Consumer Standards)
- Peer learning and sharing of lived experiences across communities
- Encouraging tenants to engage directly with Chief Executives

## Advocacy and Influence

- Contributions to policy consultations and sector reviews
- Engagement with initiatives such as 'Together with Tenants' and the Better Social Housing Review and Four Million Homes

## Application of T.A.B.L.E. Principles

### T Tailored Training

- Building tenant understanding of housing systems and rights

### A Actively Engaging Communities

- Outreach through forums and estate-level engagement

### B Bringing Everyone Into the Conversation

- Inclusive discussions across diverse tenant groups

### L Listening to Voices

- Prioritising lived experiences in discussions

### E Ethnic Minorities

- Explicit focus on underrepresented tenant voices





# Outcomes and Impact

## Increased Tenant Voice and Confidence

Tenants reported feeling empowered and able to influence their landlords:

- Participation led to direct meetings with senior housing leaders
- Tenants gained confidence to challenge poor services

## Improved Landlord Engagement

- Some housing associations significantly improved communication and responsiveness with BMELL collaboration Chief Executives attending meetings
- **Example:** tenants reported a “complete turnaround” in landlord relationships after collective action

## Policy and Sector Influence

- Contributions to national consultations and regulatory discussions
- Raised awareness of inequalities and service gaps affecting ethnic minority tenants

## Community Building

- Forum created a “family-like” support network among tenants
- Shared learning helped tenants contextualise and address their own housing issues

## Example Tenant Voice

“Having a voice... is actually brilliant... you get to hold landlords to account.”



# Lessons Learned

## What Worked Well

- ✓ Creating a safe, inclusive space for tenants to share experiences
- ✓ Peer support and collective learning
- ✓ Direct access to decision-makers increased impact
- ✓ Tenant-led structure improved relevance and engagement

## Challenges

- Initial uncertainty among tenants about their role
- Engagement barriers due to time, confidence, and awareness
- Structural issues such as funding constraints and systemic inequality
- Variability in landlord responsiveness

## Key Enablers

- Strong facilitation and leadership, with direct follow up with BMELL Member orgs
- Clear purpose centred on tenant voice
- Alignment with national policy agendas

## Next Steps / Sustainability

- ✓ Continue regular forum meetings and expand participation
- ✓ Strengthen links with policymakers and regulators
- ✓ Develop structured engagement frameworks across member organisations
- ✓ Measure long-term impact through Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)
- ✓ Share best practices across the housing sector

## Qualitative Evidence

- ✓ Tenant testimonials showing increased confidence and engagement
- ✓ Documented improvements in landlord-tenant relationships
- ✓ Meeting records highlighting key issues (e.g. repairs, complaints, discrimination)

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