

An Interactive Guide: Is There a Seat at the Table? Ethnic Minority Voices in Tenant Engagement

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(Vol. 4 as at February 2025)

WHY THIS REPORT?



Kai Jackson, (report author), was elected as a scrutiny panel chair in 2021, and quickly noticed the absence of ethnic minority tenants in engagement spaces. Often the only tenant of colour at sector events, she saw this as a sector-wide issue.

Kai believes tenant participation is crucial—not just for tenants to shape decisions about their homes and communities, but for landlords to benefit from diverse lived experiences. Without inclusive engagement, landlords miss key insights that could improve services and strengthen relationships. Fair representation is essential for meaningful change.



Recognising these barriers, **Tpas England** was keen to support this research. As a national tenant engagement organisation, they see the challenges ethnic minority tenants face and know that better inclusion leads to better housing services for all.



For the **UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence**, (CaCHE), this project addresses a critical gap in research. They acknowledge there is still much to do to ensure tenant voices shape housing policy and hope this report drives real, lasting change.

TPAS

Tpas, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, is England's leading tenant engagement expert, promoting and supporting tenant involvement in social housing since 1988.

CaCHE

The **UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE)** is a multidisciplinary partnership between academia, housing policy, and practice, providing evidence to tackle the UK's housing challenges.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The **report**, a collaboration between Tpas and the CaCHE, explores why ethnic minority tenants are underrepresented in formal engagement within the UK social housing sector and identifies ways to improve participation.

Many tenants are unaware of engagement opportunities, distrust landlords, or feel their voices are ignored. Past negative experiences and perceptions of selective participation further discourage involvement.

Landlords face challenges in reaching diverse communities, including a lack of resident data, unclear Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategies, and limited resources. Staff often feel unsure how to engage tenants from different cultural backgrounds effectively.

Residents want more direct, grassroots engagement—door-knocking, welfare calls, and visible housing officers—rather than broad, impersonal initiatives.

The **report** recommends better communication, stronger trust, more inclusive engagement approaches, staff training on engaging diverse communities, improved data collection, and community-led initiatives to ensure all tenants have a voice in shaping services.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

TENANTS

- Not aware of opportunities or how to get involved.
- Don't feel as though it would make a difference / Issues discussed aren't relevant to what they want to talk about.
- Bad past experiences.
- Feel landlords are selective as to who can get involved.



Responses were received from landlords and tenants across England. 2/3 of respondents were from Housing Associations.

LANDLORDS

- Staff are unsure how to approach and engage with ethnic minority tenants (cultural competence)
- Data Gaps. Landlords do not have complete resident profiles & still don't know who's there.
- Lack of well-defined EDI strategies.
- Lack of finance and resources.

WHAT TENANTS WANT



Tenants are asking for more visibility from their landlord in the form of door knocking, making welfare calls, knowing who their housing officer is and feedback time responses. The grassroots approach on an authentic scale, rather than a large approach which seems disingenuous was a shared concern from tenants during the focus group sessions.



RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve engagement, the report recommends:

BETTER COMMUNICATION & AWARENESS – Clearer promotion of engagement opportunities, using inclusive and accessible formats.

BUILD TRUST & RESPECT – Meaningful, action-oriented engagement that values tenant input.

IMPROVE ACCESS – Provide more flexible and informal ways for tenants to get involved.

IMPROVING CULTURAL COMPETENCY – Invest in staff training and knowledge-building to better engage diverse communities.

STRENGTHEN DATA & INSIGHT – More robust data collection to shape targeted support.

COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES – Empower tenants to lead and shape engagement efforts.

T.A.B.L.E. PRINCIPLES

Adopt the T.A.B.L.E. framework to guide tenant engagement

- T: Tailored Training.
- A: Actively Engage Communities.
- B: Bring Everyone into the Conversation.
- L: Listening to Voices.
- E: Ethnic Minorities.