

London Tenants Federation

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Grenfell fire proves tenants' voices must be heard

London Tenants Federation is calling for policy changes around the way that tenants are involved in decisions made about their homes, following the Grenfell tower blaze. Current practices have left social-tenants increasingly isolated and have made it harder for them to get their collective voices heard. In the instance of Grenfell tower this has clearly had horrendous consequences.

LTF highlights that, in the past, it was generally agreed that good management of social housing depended on having active local tenant associations. Elected tenant representatives would come together to negotiate with their landlords on issues that tenants felt were important. Over a number of years, however, policy and practice has instead focused on the monitoring of landlord targets. At the same time, social tenants have been stereotyped in an increasingly negative way and their organisations seen as a hindrance to their landlords.

In practice, most social housing landlords, often supported by highly paid consultants, promote what they see as more 'fit for purpose' tenant involvement. This generally entails landlord selection and training of individual tenants to be involved in forums, panels and boards to support landlords' management needs.

LTF representative, Ron Hollis, from Lambeth Tenants Council, says "Most social housing tenants in London live collectively in blocks of flats or estates. Without wider representative input, we are much weaker and more vulnerable as the Grenfell tower example demonstrates.

"Since our rents and service charges pay for whatever our landlords do in terms of 'tenant involvement', it is important that this is determined by tenants. We want to see changes in policy to reflect this and an end to landlords dissolving independent tenants' organisations. We also want commitments from Government, the Mayor's office and social landlords to involve social-housing tenant representatives in any reviews of fire risk issues."

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