

# TO ENGAGE? FIND - SUPPORT - GROW

## Our Process



### What we wanted to find out:

- What encourages people to engage with organisations that provide them with a service, and co-produce their activities and support?
- In the housing sector, women do get involved but they tend to be mainly older, often retired, white women.
- We wanted to find out what fosters diversity in tenant participation (including BAME, disabilities, and young people).



### What we thought we would find:

- Good practices that create diverse female tenant engagement across the housing / RSL (registered social landlords) sector.
- Ideas and innovations that have worked to attract a diverse mix of tenants to engage with organisations.



### What we did:

- We took a collaborative approach: one of the partner organisations hosted in their diner. 7 partner RSLs contributed 1-2 tenants each + some members of staff.
- Participants were women who were already involved in some kind of engagement (e.g. tenant panels).
- Using an appreciative inquiry approach, we looked for positive stories and experiences. We aimed to learn from them why they got involved, and what they got out of it that kept them engaged.
- We sought insights that would translate into actionable practices for other organisations, sectors & user groups.



### How we did it:

- An informal and relaxed gathering: "a party, not a meeting!" with food and refreshments
- No agenda or pieces of paper: free flowing (but running order and outline planned)
- Followed principles of asset based community development
- Children welcome: craft activities available during the session
- 2 hours, on a weekday evening (4-6pm)
- Tenant travel expenses covered



12 women | tenants of housing associations in SE Wales | ages 19 to 72 | actively involved in various tenant groups and activities | a mix of demographics including disability and ethnicity

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### Stories shared - how they got involved

**Growing Together Project**



Courses to build confidence  
"Bonding with my daughter"

**The Big Lunch Event**



Food, drink, raffle, time credits  
"Everyone mucks in!"

**Never Too Old Group**



Tenant-led day trip for 50+ years old, with financial support from RSL

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### Assets and attributes - what qualities they bring

making connections

thoughtful

determined

kind

caring

creative

friendly

passion

3

### The enablers - what helps them to act

**CARING** - feel worth something | build trust & respect | satisfaction

**PASSION (CONTAGIOUS!)** - sense of pride, for you & for your community | drive to do things for yourself | more connections & friendships

**SUPPORT (WHERE NEEDED)** - e.g. childcare, transport, funding: independence more choice & options | engage consistently | togetherness!

*"I care about people"*

(A common denominator)

"I'm interested in other people"

"Helping others to make a change"

"I enjoy helping people"

"Passionate about people's voices"

## Our Findings



### We learnt that if you want to foster greater and more diverse engagement...

FIRST

From within as diverse an audience as possible, locate the people who bring their personal qualities of caring, determination, grit, and hands-on approach to making positive change happen, especially for others. (They will already be doing this).

*"I love helping people, I get things done!"*

THEN

Nurture and support their endeavours. (But don't take over!) Find out what's a challenge or obstacle in what they're trying to achieve, and help with that. Be aware of obstacles related to gender, disability, race, sexuality issues etc.

*"I asked if they could sponsor, I wanted to look after these people."*

REMEMBER

Invest the time and care. Don't wait for people to come to you, go and find them where they are already active. When you begin, they might need to interact with you in small ways. With support they will grow in confidence and scope. In time they will be ready and willing to actively engage with your organisation.



### Some additional insights from the session...

*"It was a great way to do tenant engagement (as a consortium of local RSLs). We should be doing more of this. It was both cost effective and time effective."*

*Tenants learnt about events and activities from other organisations' tenants, and there was useful cross-pollination of ideas (e.g. the Big Lunch).*

*It was enjoyable and fun! "The table I sat at with those ladies, it was fabulous, I loved it. It was lovely."*

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