



Residents' Association Information Pack – June 2018

This pack is designed to assist and guide residents wishing to start residents' associations.

This pack contains information offering guidance on:

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1 Having your say through a local residents' association

Lambeth strongly supports residents wishing to set up associations to represent those living in the different areas we manage.

We offer associations:

- Consultation on how we manage the estate or area on a wide range of issues from parking schemes to the design of estate improvements.
- Walkabouts with association representatives and local councillors with the estate housing officer to review service standards and discuss priorities for the improvement plan.
- A representative at many of your meetings in order to receive quick feedback from you on any estate management issues. The representative would normally be the dedicated estate housing officer with senior managers attending on request.
- Occasional newsletters in response to your concerns.
- Amending local service in line with local needs and preferences.
- Invitations for your representatives to the area board. Nominees from all the local associations monitor how the housing service in your area perform and work with officers to review services.
- help in developing a plan for your estate so that major works and community regeneration initiatives can be planned on a long-term basis.
- Grants to help organise or commission activities for residents.

2 How to set-up and register a residents' association

Why have a residents' association?

A residents' association (RA) is a group of residents who have come together from an area, estate or block because they want to raise issues that affect them. Residents' associations are concerned about:

- Dog nuisance
- Repairs
- Rents
- Noise nuisance
- Crime on the estate
- Anti-social behaviour
- Area housing office performance
- Vandalism
- Car parking
- Future improvements
- Youth issues
- Play facilities
- Increasing a sense of community

Why start an association?

- An RA that is democratically elected and has more voice and influence in getting things changed, than one individual voice.
- An RA can influence housing policies, via the area boards and Resident Assembly.
- Tenant groups and the council work together to select the right targets, concentrate on the real problems and find the best solutions.
- You can meet people from your area and organise social events.
- You will be building up the community spirit of your area.
- It enables people on the same area to share experiences, skills and knowledge.
- You can lobby for improvements to your area by talking directly with Housing staff involved in proposed schemes to change the local area.
- It gives people on an estate the information from which to progress to other forms of tenant involvement such as tenant management organisations.
- RAs can become the main local body for consultation when the council undertakes major projects.

How to form an RA

1. You get a group together and contact your resident participation officer
2. Knock on everyone's door or deliver a leaflet to every resident and organise an initial meeting
3. A steering group agrees to form a residents' association
4. The steering group agrees a constitution for the association
5. You hold a launch meeting and elect a committee and formally adopt a constitution
6. Then you have a residents' association

Why register your RA?

- Registration gives voting rights at area boards which can influence policy.
- A one-off grant (£120 currently) is payable for administration and publicity purposes after the registration process for new associations.
- An administration grant is payable annually to registered RAs at £2 per property of secure tenants only.
- On-going support and development will be provided by your resident participation officer (e.g. newsletters, leaflet drops, general advice, IT).
- Provide training, with expertise in secretarial skills, budgeting, accounting, housing law and other training needs which RAs might identify.
- Your resident participation officer can help you network with other RAs.
- Help with funding activities you want to organise or commission for residents through the Getting involved programme including food growing and IT training.
- Access to free accredited training for committee members through our Learning Works community leaders programme.

Getting involved questionnaire

I think the setting up of an RA is a good idea Yes No

I would be interested in joining an RA Yes No

I am interested in the following positions:

Chair Secretary Treasurer Committee member Youth rep

The issues that concern me most about our estate are:

Ground maintenance Communal lighting
 Communal window cleaning Communal repairs
 Bulk refuse collection Graffiti removal
 Removal of abandoned vehicles

Other:

Are there any skills that you can offer to your RA (e.g. producing or delivering leaflets, minute-taking, basic accounting, language translation, word-processing, child-minding, etc.)? Please list below:

1.
2.
3.

I would be interested in becoming a block champion for my block (or a defined number of properties) Yes No

Please let us know your name, address, telephone number and email:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone: _____

email: _____

This information will not given out without your permission, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

3 The role of committee members in a residents' association

Introduction

The committee

- This is the group that manages the day to day business of your association and is elected by all members at your launch meeting
- The committee is elected for one year, and the positions come up for re-election at every annual general meeting.
- The committee is accountable to the membership of the association.
- They should be accessible to all tenants and conduct themselves in line with the constitution and decisions made at general meetings.
- The committee should take a strong line against discrimination and harassment, and should actively strive to increase ethnic minority membership and show strong commitment to diversity in order to be more fully representative (see Diversity section in the constitution).
- All committee members have a duty to actively further the aims of the Association.
- Minutes of all meetings (AGM, general, and committee) should be available to all members, and the Committee should meet at least four times a year.

A Committee usually comprises:

1. Chair
2. Vice-chair
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer
5. Other committee members, including block representatives, depending on the size of the residents' association's area.

Duties of the committee

Chair

- Guides the association to achieve its objectives.
- Chairs meetings and is the spokesperson for the association.
- Prepares agendas with other committee members
- Ensures that the other committee members carry out their allotted tasks.
- Informs committee members and association members of meetings with councillors, council and Lambeth staff and other residents' associations.

Vice-chair

Shares the workload with the chair, deputises for the chair in his or her absence.

Secretary

- Takes minutes of meetings and circulates afterwards.
- Arranges the meeting room or hall
- Informs all members of the time, date and place of meetings.
- Writes and receives all correspondence, raises issues during meetings.
- Keeps a membership list, telephone numbers etc.
- Produces a newsletter, with the help of other committee members.

Treasurer

- Opens a bank account, sharing responsibility for agreeing payments with at least one other committee member.
- Deals with money in and out of bank accounts and keeps receipts, uses an account book.
- Keeps committee and general meetings informed of financial situation.
- Draws up annual accounts for AGM and arranges independent check of the accounts in liaison with the RPO.
- Also see the separate section called Financial Records for Treasurers

Other committee members

- Give support to the executive committee members, as agreed at committee meetings.
- Accepts responsibility for some of the duties outlined above, perform their tasks and report back to the committee as and when required.

Association officers

You **may not** hold office in an association if:

- You have a County Court Judgement against you for possession of your home
- You have a County Court Judgement against you for money for rent arrears

However you **may** hold office if:

- You have a **suspended** possession order against you and you have arranged to pay the current rent plus a portion of the arrears **and you have kept to the arrangement**
- You are in arrears and have made an arrangement with the Council to pay off the arrears **and you have kept to the arrangement**

You do not have to have any experience in being an officer or you are unsure about and want more information please contact your resident participation officer.

If you think that you would like to be chair, vice chair, treasurer or secretary, and don't think you are qualified enough to do the job, we can offer you training in running meetings, keeping accounts, taking and writing up minutes and newsletters etc. You only have to ask and we will do our best to accommodate you. If you are a brand new association and you are not sure about how to run your meetings, we can offer training in committee skills for the whole committee at one time!

Types of meeting

Annual general meeting (AGM)

Each year the association holds its AGM in order to:

- Elect the committee to represent the RA for the next twelve months;
- Present an annual report of the association - the 'Action Plan';
- Present the accounts of the association for the previous year;
- Consider any resolutions put forward in writing to the secretary;
- Sub-committees, if formed, shall present a report and account of their activities

Committee meetings

These are where the normal business of the association is conducted. There should be a minimum of four committee meetings each year, and many associations choose to meet more frequently (e.g. monthly).

All RA meetings should be public meetings, and open to everyone to attend. However at committee meetings only committee members can vote.

General meetings

These are public meetings to which all residents must be invited and there should be at least three such meetings each year in addition to the AGM. General meetings deal with issues that affect all the membership and general meeting decisions are binding on the committee.

Special general meetings

These are infrequent public meetings, on one topic only – by petition – and can be known as emergency general meetings. A special procedure has to be followed in order to call such a meeting (see the ' Model Constitution' for details) and would be deemed necessary if an urgent matter had arisen that could not wait until the next scheduled general meeting.

Sub committees

The Committee may appoint such sub-committees as may be required to carry out the activities of the Association. These could be hall committees, youth clubs or gardening clubs. Such sub-committee shall be directly accountable to the Committee.

After the AGM

The plan

- The committee will need to develop a forward plan which will detail the main issues of concern for the members of the association, for example: repair, crime, vandalism, noise, nuisance etc. This may have been discussed previously with your resident participation officer during the steering group phase.
- The work of the association and the plan should be shared between the committee, forming specific sub-committees where necessary.
- It is important to involve everyone in the area in the various activities of the association in order to develop community spirit. Community spirit comes from feeling involved and owning or accepting responsibility.
- It is the responsibility of all committee members to ensure that people work together and avoid having one person deciding or doing everything.

A responsible committee member

- Attends meetings or sends their apologies and does a fair share of the work.
- Turns up on time with any information needed.
- Respects others' opinions.
- Carries out decisions decided by the association.
- Listens as well as contributes at meetings.
- Challenges all form of discrimination.
- Is committed to the association to the benefit of its members.

Committee meetings

- At the end of each committee meeting, ensure that an action list is drawn up showing which committee members are responsible for which tasks.
- Committee members should be willing to help each other with their allocated tasks, and each committee member should have responsibility for a particular task.

4 Advice on handling money

- 4.1 At least two committee members will be authorised to make payments on behalf of the committee. All payments require two authorised signatures. The signature holders cannot be related to each other or dwell in the same property. The committee may authorise further committee members to be signatories as appropriate.
- 4.2 We would encourage TRAs to open internet bank accounts as makes receiving payments and paying invoices much easier as well as keeping a regular record of all balances up to date. If cheques are used, blank cheques should never be signed. All Council payments are made direct to the bank account and not by cheque.
- 4.3 Any invoices paid by cheque should be marked 'paid' and have the cheque number, date and initials of the person signing the cheque. The person who makes out the cheque must, at the same time, complete the cheque stub, date, amount, payee and brief description. Cheque stubs should always be kept in a safe place.
- 4.4 All accounts, including the cash book, petty cash book etc. should be kept up to date and made available for inspection at each committee meeting.
- 4.5 Record of accounts should be kept for a minimum of three years.
- 4.6 A sub-committee can be created to support the treasurer in their work.

Petty cash

- 4.7 A float of up to £50 can be kept but is not encouraged. It must be kept secure.
- 4.8 Petty cash should only be used for small items (e.g. costing up to £15). Anything more should be paid online.
- 4.9 Petty cash payments should be made on petty cash vouchers accompanied by a detailed explanation and receipt.
- 4.10 All receipts should be stapled to the completed petty cash voucher and kept in the petty cash box together with the cash balance of the float.
- 4.11 All monies drawn for petty cash purposes should be authorised by the treasurer.

Paying-in money or cheques

- 4.12 All cash received should be banked. A receipt should be issued for all items of cash received.
- 4.13 A record of all payments into the bank account should be kept with the date, amount, payee, description, and type of income or transaction. The bank paying-in book could be used for this purpose.

Payments

- 4.14 All payments over £50 should have prior consent of the committee.
- 4.15 Payments should only be made if supported by a proper invoice or receipt.
- 4.16 Committee members should inform the chair of any conflicts of interest.

Reports

- 4.17 A simple report on income and expenditure must be produced annually and presented at the AGM.
- 4.18 An independent person should check this report before the AGM to verify correct.
- 4.19 At each AGM the account books, petty cash books and receipts should be made available for inspection if required by members.

Assets

An inventory of any assets should be presented at the AGM. Any changes from year to year should be made in a report to the AGM. The report should include location, condition and any explanation of change.

5 Model agenda and minutes for an annual general meeting

Agendas, why bother?

An agenda is a list of items to be discussed at a meeting. It should be given to members at least a week in advance so that they can think about the issues beforehand.

It is a useful tool to assist with chairing meetings and it can be used to help structure note taking (i.e. the minutes).

The example overleaf contains items that specifically relate to an annual general meeting (AGM), however it may be amended to suit either committee meetings or ordinary general meetings.

What are minutes?

Minutes are written notes, and are records of what happened at meetings.

They should show:

- Where and when the meeting took place.
- Who attended the meeting and anyone who apologised for absence
- Follow the agenda order, minutes should show the decisions that were taken as well as who was going to carry out the proposals.

If you do not have access to a computer, ask other committee members, or simply write them clearly by hand.

The example minutes for an AGM may again be used for guidance by both the chair and secretary of an association, and may be amended to suit any meeting.

Example agenda

Your RA's Annual General Meeting

1 April 2012

To be held at the RA Hall

From 7pm

Agenda

1. Opening, welcome and introduction
2. Apologies for absence
3. Previous AGM minutes and matters arising
4. Reports
 - a. Chair
 - b. Treasurer
5. Election of officers and committee
6. Guest speaker(s)
7. Any Other Business

Date and time of next meeting

Example

Your Residents' Association Annual General Meeting Minutes

1 April 2012

Held at the Residents Association Hall at 7pm

1. Attendees

25 Local tenants and residents (full names should be listed)

Councillor Smith	Lambeth Town Hall
Councillor Cox	Lambeth Town Hall
Mrs X, Team Leader	Area Housing Office
Mr Y	Resident Participation Officer
WPC Ann Croft	Brixton Police Station

2. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

3. Introduction

The meeting was declared opened by the chair of the RA, at 7pm. They introduced committee members, councillors, the team leader, the resident participation officer, and the local police officer to the group.

An attendance list was circulated for all to sign (to be submitted as part of registration).

The minutes of the last AGM were made available, read and accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Chair's Report

Review plan. List other progress and achievements made throughout the year and any thank-you's.

5. Treasurer's Report

The group was informed that the association's account contains £XXX plus interest. The accounts of the association were read and approved - see attached accounts.

It is anticipated that funds may increase due to the proposed fund-raising activities for this year.

6. Election of committee

Chair thanked members of the existing committee for their involvement with the association over the past year.

The RPO spoke of the procedures necessary for the election of officers onto the committee. They asked the group to encourage other tenants and residents to become involved with the association.

NB. It is essential to find an independent person who can chair the nomination for election of officers, if you want your association to be registered with Lambeth Living (e.g. your RPO, or your housing officer).

The following officer positions were opened for nominations:

1. Chair
2. Vice Chair
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer
5. General committee members

Nominations were formally taken and seconded, the results are:

Position	Name	Nominated by	Seconded by
Chair	Mr A	Re-elected	
Vice Chair	Mrs B	New	
Secretary	Mr C	Re-elected	
Treasurer	Ms D	Re-elected	
Committee Member	Mr E	Re-elected	
Committee Member	Mr F	New	
Committee Member	Mr G	New	
Committee Member	Mr H	Re-elected	

7. Guest speakers

8. The plan

The chair spoke of the need for the association to develop a plan to prioritise the activities of the association for the coming year. The group was asked to suggest general estate-wide issues to be included within the plan.

Issues included: graffiti, vandalism, noise nuisance, parking problems, youth activities etc.

It was suggested that the association could conduct a survey on the area to see what improvements the residents would like the association to work towards.

9. Any other business

Individual Reports:

1. Ms. D - smashed window. *Area Housing Office to contact.*
2. Mrs J - unable to lock back door. *Area Housing Office to contact.*

It was noted that the refuse collection for the estate is now improving.

The chair thanked all present for attending the meeting. The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

10. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of committee members is to be held on 15 June 2012 at 7pm in the RA Hall.

6 Guide to your constitution

What is a constitution?

A constitution is a written statement of the aims and rules of an unincorporated association. It states:

- The area your association covers (catchment area)
- Its membership
- Roles of the committee
- Rules governing meetings.

A formal constitution is necessary in order that your association is taken seriously by the residents that you want to represent and Lambeth Council.

A constitution will also help you clarify three things:

- Who you represent
- What your group is about
- How your group is run.

Lambeth Council requires associations to have a constitution before it is willing to recognise and register an association as representative of an area. The constitution should form the basis of your organisation and be issued by the secretary to all committee members and any member who requests a copy.

Main parts of a constitution

The council has a ready-made constitution known as a model constitution that we recommend your association adopt. Contact your RPO for a copy or you can download it from www.lambethcouncilhousingmanagement.org.uk under getting involved.

If, however, your association would like to add to the model constitution, it can do but should be discussed with the RPO first. Amendments to the quorum requirements to reflect the size of the estate are possible but the majority of clauses must be retained.

Name of the organisation

This simply says what you are going to call your organisation.

Aims of the organisation

Lists what your group wants to do.

Membership fee

Some groups have a weekly or monthly subscription fee. It is stated in your constitution what the subscription, if any, should be. You do not have to charge a fee.

The committee

This group manages the day-to-day affairs of your association and is elected at the AGM. The constitution states the minimum size of the committee, what their duties are, how often they are elected, and how often they should meet. For details refer to the 'Role of committee members' section.

Annual general meeting (AGM)

This is the meeting where the committee reports on the activities of the previous year, then stands down. You will have to decide whether, and for how long, existing committee members and officers may hold office. You may wish to include a clause in the constitution where a position cannot be held for more than three years, for example.

Other committee meetings and general meetings

Apart from the AGM you will need your members to meet at other times throughout the year - this section will detail how these meetings will be organised.

Quorum

This states the minimum number of members required for the meeting to go ahead and make decisions. This will ensure that one or two people cannot make all the decisions. The usual is five per cent or ten individuals, whichever is greater.

Code of conduct

This explains the behaviour expected from people who attend meetings. It also states the action that may be taken to exclude those who breach these rules. It is recommended that all associations adopt a Code of Conduct for meetings.

Duties of the officers

This is where the duties of officers such as the chair, vice chair, secretary, and treasurer are outlined. It should state what each officer is responsible for and the duties they should carry out on behalf of the association.

Committee members who represent the association should conduct the business of the association in accordance with the rules of the association, and report back to the committee at the relevant meeting.

Changes to the constitution

This section deals with the procedure for altering the constitution, for example:

1. Any suggested changes to the constitution must be handed to the secretary fourteen days before the AGM or general meeting at which it is to be discussed.
2. Changes to the constitution must be agreed by two thirds of the members present at the meeting.
3. Any changes to the constitution need to be sent to your RPO for approval. This is needed so that your RA can still qualify for registration.

7 Getting people involved in your RA



What your residents' association can do

A residents' association (RA) is a group of tenants and residents who have come together from an area, estate or block because they want to raise issues that affect them.

- Your RA should make every effort to inform all residents about your association and how to join.
- Make links with other community groups: women's groups, disabled groups, play groups, black and other minority ethnic groups.
- Some people are afraid to come to meetings alone, particularly at night. Offer a service to accompany people to meetings and home again at the end, and advertise this service in leaflets or newsletters.
- Have meetings at a time when parents can come. Try to provide child-care arrangements or somewhere children can play. Encourage people to tell you if they are unable to attend meetings. You may need to change the time or meeting place.
- Wherever possible, ensure venues are accessible for all wheelchair users. Avoid the need to climb stairs where possible. Information should also be in large print.
- Inform people in the area of RA activities and progress, using newsletters and leaflets. Illustrate success stories of RA involvement. Review what the RA achieved over past year etc.
- Organise local activities or events to encourage people to get involved. See the 'Money, Money, Money' section for ideas.
- Take a clear public stand against harassment. Do not allow discriminatory remarks or actions. Support campaigns raising harassment issues.
- Your RA should be seen and be known by everyone for its commitment to diversity. Your constitution should have an diversity statement so it is clear that discrimination will not be tolerated.
- If your RA is struggling - make a quick telephone call to your RPO for further advice.

Types of Publicity

Your association should always be trying to get more people involved in the association and its activities. People need to be informed of activities and events that might be taking place or local issues that concern residents in order to maintain interest.

There are various ways you can publicise and inform people of events and issues.

Leaflets

Usually a single sheet of paper informing people of, or advertising a specific event or meeting, (e.g. a public meeting, jumble sale). Committee members or block representatives usually distribute these to individual homes.

Posters

Similar to leaflets and usually bigger. These are used to reach a wider group of people, displayed usually in prominent places, (e.g. area housing office, entrance to flats, public notice boards etc.). You can always use your leaflets to put up as posters around the estate.

Newsletters

An association newsletter should try to highlight success stories. It is important that issues such as walkabouts, updates on association activities (e.g. social events) are included in the newsletter. A good newsletter should include important telephone numbers. It can also include association representative contact names and telephone numbers.

Word of mouth

Members need to get about and talk to local residents. Always try to focus any publicity on the major local issues on the estate to encourage people to become involved. Use the example leaflets to help with design ideas to promote your association. Study them carefully and discuss your approach with other association members.

An example of a leaflet to advertise an initial meeting

The purpose of this leaflet is to advertise and encourage residents on an estate to attend a meeting to discuss issues about starting your own RA.

Come and join us!

Are you fed up with dumped and abandoned cars?

Are you tired of complaining and getting nothing done on the estate?

Do you want to see better cleaning,
better grounds maintenance
and better refuse collections?

Join us and make a difference!

Let's form a residents association for
Clapham Road Estate

Come to:

St Johns Church
312 Clapham Road

At 7pm on Tuesday 6 March 2012

An example of a leaflet to advertise a launch meeting

The purpose of this leaflet is to notify all residents on an estate, about a meeting where RA committee members and officers are to be elected.

**CLAPHAM ROAD ESTATE
RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

**Come to the launch meeting of
Clapham Road Estate Residents'
Association**

**Vote for the people you want to lead
the new association for
its first year!**

Be on the committee

Above all, make a difference

Meet at 7.00 pm

**St John's Church
Clapham Road**

Tuesday 24 April 2012

Example of a leaflet advertising an annual general meeting (AGM)

The purpose of this leaflet is to notify all residents in your area of the AGM. At the AGM, the election of RA committee members and officers for the forthcoming year is carried out. The existing committee members stand down and their positions are opened up for election.

**DO YOU CARE
ABOUT OUR ESTATE?**

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

Come and see what we can do
at the
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
NOTRE DAME TENANTS & RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

On Thursday 19th April 2012
At 6.30 pm

In the Notre Dame Hall
Worsopp Drive

COME ALONG AND HAVE YOUR SAY!

DON'T FORGET!

8 Money, Money, Money!

Once your association is up and running you will want to raise some money. Money may be needed to cover administration costs, outings, photocopying leaflets, hiring a hall, etc.

Applying for a residents' association administration grant

The administration grant is available to help your association with its administration costs, i.e. photocopying, cost of stamps, hiring halls for meetings, stationery etc. The amount is based on £2 per property in the catchment area of the association. This covers tenants but not homeowners.

To apply for an administration grant your association will need to register with your RPO. The grant is payable to associations' when they register each year. If you received an administration grant last year, you will need to submit financial accounts showing what the money has been used for and how much, if any, is left. This information should be submitted when re-registering. Grants are also available to cover public liability insurance if you run a community facility as well as hall hire if you don't.

In addition, newly formed RAs qualify for a one-off **start-up grant**. The amount payable is again dependent upon the number of properties within the catchment area of the association, ranging from £100 to £350. This start-up grant is to assist with publicity and promotion of new associations.

Subscription or tenant levy

Some associations charge members a subscription or levy each week, month or year. It is up to your association at its AGM, whether it makes a set membership fee. It should not though deter residents from participating.

Fund-raising activities

Raising money through local events can be hard work, but it has many advantages:

- It can be fun and it is a good way of involving other local residents.
- It is an opportunity for people to be creative and use skills that otherwise might not be used.
- To be seen to be doing things yourself may help when applying to others for grants.

Organising an event

When organising an event, you need to consider:

1. **Venue – Where is your event going to be held?**
2. **Publicity – Getting the information to the residents!**
3. **Organisers – Who is doing what?**
4. **Public liability insurance or obtain any necessary license**

Try to prepare everything well in advance and tell people about it beforehand. A good way of involving new people in your association is by giving them small tasks such as leafleting. Have an idea of a target, for example, how much money you think you will make, and have an evaluation afterwards to see how successful you were.

Activity grants

Grants are available to TRAs to either organise or commission activities on behalf of their residents. The activities can be anything that gets residents involved including:

- After school clubs
- sports activities for range of young people including martial arts, football, table tennis
- arts classes
- IT classes
- Fun days
- Theatre groups
- Sewing classes
- Cookery workshops linked into the Edible Living projects
- Music workshops
- Tai chi classes

Social events

Social events can be fun and make life friendlier on the estate. They can improve relationships between different sections of the community. Fun day events, big lunches, BBQs can all be organised.