

A guide to setting up and running a Residents' Association



Introduction

This guide has been put together to help you understand what a Residents' Association is, and includes useful advice on how you set up and run a successful Residents' Association.



What is a Residents' Association?

A Residents' Association is a group of people living in an area, street or building, who join together to raise issues of concern in relation to their homes, community and the general environment. It is also a good way to give everyone in your community the opportunity to get involved in social activities.

LiveWest can support and help you to get your Residents' Association started (unless you wish to be totally independent from us).

Why start a Residents' Association?

Residents' Associations are one of the best ways of making your voice heard. By being part of a Residents' Association you gain a greater voice than you would as an individual when talking to your landlord, or Council, about issues affecting your community.

It also helps to be part of a Residents' Association to:

- Campaign for better housing/repairs service
- Campaign against the closure of local facilities
- Arrange social events including events in your community and day trips
- Gain a sense of community by meeting and helping other people
- Keep people in the area informed of the issues that affect them

Setting up a Resident Association

- how to get started

Step 1

Talk to your neighbours

The first step is to talk to your neighbours to see if there is enough interest in setting up a Residents' Association and whether others would like to be involved. Chat to your neighbours in different places, over the fence, in communal gardens, shops and community centres.

You'll need to find out:

- Whether the issues affecting others are the same ones that you are concerned about
- If others agree that it would be a good idea to set up a Residents Association
- If others are willing to attend the first meeting (a minimum of six)
- If others are interested in knowing the outcome of the meeting if they are unable to attend

Step 2

Contact us

Call: 0300 123 8080
(our lines are open 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday) and ask to speak to your Housing Officer.

Your Housing Officer will be able to give you further advice, guidance and support.





Step 3

Plan the first public meeting

Once you have talked to everyone in your community and enough people have said they are willing to attend, you can plan your first meeting.

Try to arrange the meeting for a date and time that suits most people. Arrange a convenient meeting place – local community centres and schools are ideal. Remember the venue must be easy to get to and cater for people with disabilities.



Step 4

Make sure everyone knows about the meeting

Create a clear leaflet advertising the meeting. Tell people what it is for, the date, time and place where it is going to be held. Include who to contact if they are interested in finding out more or getting involved. Post the leaflets through letterboxes, put them onto noticeboards or share them on social media.

Make sure that you give everyone enough notice of when and where the meeting will be held, we recommend a minimum of 10 days.



Step 5

Holding your public meeting

The first meeting is a chance to talk about the issues residents are concerned about, agree the aims of the Residents' Association and decide on whether the Association should have a formal constitution.

If you decide against a formal constitution you will be unable to apply for grant funding from either LiveWest or other bodies. It will also mean that LiveWest will not formally recognise the Association.

The meeting will need an agenda, a chairperson and someone to take notes of the main decisions made and who has agreed to do what. If the public meeting agrees to set up a Association, your next step is to get yourself properly organised.

Running a Residents' Association

Now that you have agreed to set up an Association you need to agree:

- A name for the group
- Whether to have a formal constitution
- Committee members including a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer
- The key things that you hope to achieve

Constitution

A constitution is a list of rules for your Residents' Association. It sets out the aims of your group and how you will work towards those aims. You can find a copy of a draft constitution below, however constitutions can be changed to suit each Residents' Association as long as all members agree.

Making your Residents' Association formally constituted will open up a wide range of grant funding opportunities to you.

The Committee

The Committee is made up of the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, who are all elected, for a fixed term, by vote at the Annual General Meeting.

Chair

The role of the Chair is to ensure that the meeting runs smoothly and efficiently, and that:

- All business is discussed
- Everyone's views are heard
- Clear decisions are reached
- The meeting starts and finishes on time.

They also normally act as spokesperson or leader of the group. It is also useful to elect a Vice Chair who can fill in when the Chair is unavailable.

Secretary

The Secretary's main duties include:

- Taking the minutes of meetings
- Letting people know when and where the next meeting is
- Preparing agendas for meetings, with the help from the Chair
- Writing and receiving letters on behalf of the Residents' Association
- Keeping members informed of what correspondence has been sent out and received
- Keeping a record of membership, important phone numbers etc.

Treasurer

The Treasurer is the person with overall responsibility for the Residents' Association's finances, (although the bank account must have three signatories) their duties include:

- Opening the bank account
- Paying money received into the bank account, and keeping a record of money received and issuing receipts
- Paying bills and keeping a record of money spent
- Keeping petty cash and a petty cash account book for the day to day expenditure
- Keeping an account book of all money going in and out of the organisation
- Prepare statements to the Committee for the Annual General Meeting

The committee will also be made up of general members. The number of general members will be agreed by each individual Residents' Association.



Meetings

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Your constitution should state in which month the AGM will take place.

At the AGM the Committee will report on its work, and present its accounts.

Normally the Committee will resign at each AGM, and the new Committee can then be elected. Members will still be allowed to put themselves up for re-election.

General Meetings

Your constitution will also state how many other meetings will be held per year. These will include general meetings which are open to all members of the Residents' Association, and special general meetings which can be held if requested by a certain number of members (which will again be stated in the constitution).

Setting the agenda

The Secretary and Chair should set the agenda for each meeting, with committee members able to put forward items for discussion.

A copy of the agenda and the minutes of the previous meeting should be sent to all committee members at least 10 days before the meeting

The agenda should include:

- The name of the Association
- The date, time and place of the meeting
- Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising
- A list of items to be discussed
- Any other business (AOB)
- Date and time of the next meeting

Including timings will help people keep to the agenda and the Chair to keep the meeting time.


Minutes of the meeting

It is really important that minutes are kept of each meeting as a record of the decisions that are made and actions that have been taken.

Frequently asked questions

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How do we set up a bank account?

Many banks offer Treasurers' accounts/bank accounts for community groups (these are the kind of accounts that are suitable for voluntary or community groups and Residents' Associations).

However, it is worth shopping around to see who has the lowest charges. Also, if you think your Association will have a large amount of money, it may be worth having a deposit and current account so that you can earn interest. Make sure you've decided what type of bank account you want, then the authorised signatories should go to the bank along with the following documents:

- Minutes of the last meeting and a record of a discussion that has taken place around opening an account and a maximum amount that can be drawn by cheque, as well as names of the authorised signatories
- A letter from LiveWest confirming that the Residents' Association has been set up, and the names of committee members
- A copy of the signed constitution



How do we get funding for our Association?

We offer a small start-up grant for items such as photocopying and room hire. This fund only covers the first year of the Association's operation. If you'd like to access this fund and think you meet the eligibility criteria, please contact your Housing Officer.

We also offer small annual grants to support Residents' Associations, if you'd like more information on these grants then please contact your Housing Officer.

Frequently asked questions

Is our Association insured to hold events?

No, your Association will need to get its own public liability insurance.

Is there a limit to the number of members a group can have?

A group can be as small or as large as you want it to be. It is up to the community to decide the area they want the group to cover.

Can homeowners or other residents be members of the group?

Yes everyone living in the area the group covers are allowed to be members.



Draft Constitution

Name of group: (To be decided)

Aims:

- To promote the interests of all residents living in/on..... and to assist in maintaining good relations between all members of the community
- To raise funds for projects to improve the quality of life for all who live on/in.....
- The Association shall be non-political

Membership:

- Membership shall be open to all residents of/in
- All members shall have an equal vote – one vote per household
- All members should actively seek to represent the various needs of the estate and must not discriminate on the grounds of nationality, political opinion, race, religious opinion, sex, sexuality, disability or age
- Members shall at all times conduct themselves in a reasonable manner when attending meetings or any other function in connection with the Group
- Records will be kept of all meetings and made available to all members

The committee:

- A committee shall be elected to carry out the business of the Association
- The committee shall be made up of a Secretary, Chair, Treasurer and three general members
- The committee shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting
- Officers shall carry out the duties given to them by General Meetings
- The committee shall meet once a month and no less than 10 times a year
- Minutes of committee meetings shall be available to all members
- Vacancies arising during the year can be filled by an election at a general meeting. The committee may fill any vacancies arising amongst officers of the committee until the next Annual General Meeting

Finance:

- All money raised by or on behalf of the Association is to be used only to further the aims of the Association
- The Treasurer shall open a bank account in the name of the Association, and keep records of all money that the group spends and receives
- Cheque signatories will be nominated by the committee, one to be the Treasurer. There shall be three signatories, all of whom must represent different households

- All cheques and instructions to the Association's bankers shall require two of the agreed signatures. These should not be from the same household
- The Treasurer shall submit a copy of the accounts to LiveWest at the end of each financial year
- The accounts shall be made available to members at the AGM

Annual general meetings:

- There shall be an Annual General Meeting held every at which the committee shall report on its work, present a statement of accounts and resign
- The AGM shall elect the officers and committee for the next year
- The AGM shall vote on recommendations and any amendments to the constitution
- The secretary will notify all members of the date of the meeting not less than 14 days before the AGM

Other general meetings:

- There will be a general meeting open to all members every two months
- A Special General Meeting open to all members will be held if ten or more members submit a request for such a meeting to the Secretary. The Secretary shall arrange for the meeting to take place within 14 days
- The Secretary will publicise all general meetings at least five days in advance

Quorum:

- No General Meeting or Annual General Meeting shall take place if less than 10% of members are present
- No committee meeting shall take place if less than two thirds of the committee are present

Changes to the constitution:

- The constitution can only be altered at an Annual General Meeting or at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose
- Changes to the constitution must be agreed by two thirds of the members present at the meeting

Voting:

- Any member may make a proposal. In order for it to be voted on by other members it must be seconded, or supported, by another member
- Only members present at the meeting may vote
- Each household is only allowed one vote

- No member shall exercise more than one vote
- In the event of an equal vote, the Chair shall have the casting vote

Dissolution:

- The Association may only be dissolved at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose and must be advertised fourteen days before the meeting
- A proposal to dissolve the Association shall take effect only if agreed by two thirds of the members present at the meeting
- Any remaining grant funding shall be returned to the funding source
- Any assets (financial or otherwise) remaining after the payment of all debts and liabilities shall be given to charitable purposes according to the wishes of the members of the meeting

Signed: _____ (Chair) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Secretary) Date: _____