

Tenants & Residents Group Starter Pack



HouseProud
Pledge Pioneer



**YOUR
VIEW**


ROYAL *borough of*
GREENWICH

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What is a Tenants & Residents Group?

A Tenants & Residents group is:

A formally constituted group of people who have joined together from an area, estate, block or community. Together, the group raises issues that prioritise the needs of Council Tenants and Leaseholders.

What are the benefits of a Tenants & Residents group?

- working together to shape services and get better results
- socialise and meet new people in your neighbourhood
- develop new skills and gain confidence

Funding for Tenants & Resident groups:

Our funding comes from the Housing Revenue Accounts (income which is generated from tenants rents) we therefore need to ensure that groups prioritise the needs of tenants and leaseholders in the area.

In order to be a recognised group, you must have the following in place:

- have a written constitution signed off by the Chair, Secretary and/or Treasurer
- a bank account registered in the group's name. The group must hold regular meetings
- Public Liability Insurance
- correct management arrangements for any community rooms/assets (complies with Tenancy Agreement)

What are the alternatives?

We understand that setting up a formal tenants & residents group may not always be the best option for you or your group. Here are some great alternative ways that residents can get involved to improve their community:

- social media-based residents groups facilitated by Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram
- neighbourhood watch groups
- community garden groups
- local voluntary groups
- coffee mornings/ drop in sessions
- community litter picking



How to Start a Tenants & Residents Group



Step 1: Talk to your neighbours

Door knocking is a great way of getting to know your neighbours on your block, road or estate. You can find out what their issues and concerns are and work together to tackle these issues. You can ask the key questions such as “Would you like to be involved?” “Do you want to be a part of a Tenants and Resident Group?” Consider creating a handy promotional leaflet.



Step 2: Arrange an initial meeting

Now that you have some ideas of the concerns in your area, the next step would be to have a meeting to discuss them and to agree to form a group. This could be held online.

Here are a few points to consider when planning a meeting:

date & time of meeting - arrange a date & time when most people are likely to be able to come

place of meeting – this could be in a residents meeting room, community centre, school or church hall. It should be easy for people to get to and as local as possible

accessibility – Consider each of your neighbour's individual needs and try to ensure that you remove any barriers to attending

You could consider using social media to advertise your meeting, on a local Facebook page for example.



Step 3 – Holding the first meeting

The first meeting is a chance for everyone to meet and share their concerns and issues. Try to prioritise these and think about the issues that will give you quick wins.

You will need to nominate someone to chair the meeting and to take minutes. Please note, that a Community Participation Officer will be available to help with the running of the first meeting, they can help explain what setting up a tenants group involves and answer any questions you may have. Our commissioned provider for Community, Voluntary Sector support Metrogavs can also provide support.



Step 4 – The Launch

If you decide to set up a group there are a few things that you will need to do:

- agree a name for your tenants group
- elect committee members including a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Please see our guide to committee roles on page 8
- agree a constitution for the group. Please see our model constitution template on page 10
- agree to a code of conduct for the group. Please see our code of conduct template on page 12
- agree to promote equal opportunities as a group. For your group to be successful you need to be as inclusive as possible
- agree priorities and create an action plan for the coming year – be realistic! Please see our action plan template on page 14
- start to plan future meeting dates and consider whom you may want to invite (Ward Councillors & relevant Council Officers for example)

How to Run a Successful Group

Action Plans

As a group, there may be many issues on your estate or community that you feel need addressing. The best way to approach things is to have an action plan; this is a list of things your group need to achieve in a given period of time. You can use our Action Plan Template on page 14 which will help you to prioritise issues and help you keep track of their progress including keeping a record of your successes and achievements.

Training

The Community Participation & Diversity Team frequently run YourView members training sessions which we would encourage all interested tenants and leaseholders to take part in. If you haven't signed up to be a YourView member already please sign up via royalgreenwich.gov.uk/help-shape-our-housing-services

Our commissioned provider MetroGavs (greenwich-cvs.org.uk) can also provide a wealth of one to one support and training for your tenants group for example around fundraising or accounts management.

The Tenant Participation Advice Service (TPAS) (tpas.org.uk) is a not-for-profit organisation that champions tenant engagement. Royal Borough of Greenwich have an annual membership to TPAS which can provide opportunities for tenants groups to access training workshops & webinars, networking events and a wide range of online literature. Contact the Community Participation & Diversity team for login details.

The National Community Groups website (ncvo.org.uk) also has lots of practical guidance and advice on how to set up and run a voluntary group.

Public Liability Insurance

We would encourage all community groups that deal with members of the public (including tenants & leaseholders) to take out Public Liability Insurance. This can provide protection against any claims of accident, damage or injury which may occur as a result from activities carried out by the group. This could be, for example, if someone was to trip over a loose wire at a fundraising event.

Tenants & residents groups that wish to receive funding from the Royal Borough of Greenwich will need to submit evidence of current & valid Public Liability Insurance. Even newly established groups will need to submit evidence of seeking out Public Liability Insurance forwarding any quotes received. The Charity Commission (government/organisations/charity-commission) for England & Wales have produced a guidance document on insurance which you may find useful.

MetroGavs can provide a comprehensive list of insurance companies which specialise in providing cover for charitable and voluntary organisations. If your group is struggling with any aspects of Public Liability Insurance MetroGavs can be contacted by email at gavs@metrocharity.org.uk or by telephone on **020 8305 5000**.

Policies & Procedures

It would be advisable for groups to develop a set of their own policies and procedures which will help provide a road map of how the group should operate and how to manage any issues or incidents that may arise. As a minimum, a group should have a Health & Safety Policy & Finance Procedure in place. MetroGavs will also be able to offer support with developing policies and procedures.

Signposting

As a group you might become aware of neighbours and other residents in your community who may need to access additional support or services. The Greenwich Community Directory (greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk) will be able to advise on services that help people to live well in the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Finance

As a fully constituted tenants & residents group, the Council will provide an annual grant to assist with the running of the group. Please download the Annual Grant Application Form via royalgreenwich.gov.uk/grant-application-forms

Completed forms should be sent via email to community.participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

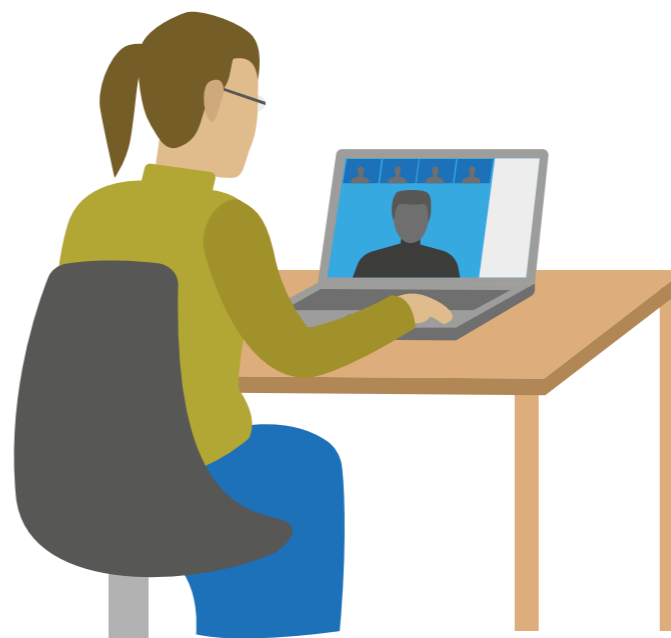
GrantFinder (grantfinder.co.uk) is a free resource with information on hundreds of grant funders, including who they fund, how much they give, and how to apply.

The Community Participation Team will try to circulate any relevant grant funding opportunities from external bodies to registered tenants and residents groups as and when they become apparent.

If you become a member of MetroGavs (Membership is free) you will receive a weekly E-bulletin which contains possible funding sources and other local information. You can also access one-to-one support on funding applications.

Another way to generate income for your group could be through fundraising events and activities such as quiz nights, car boot sales & coffee mornings. Please contact your Tenancy Enforcement Officer if you would like to undertake any fundraising activities or events on your estate. They will be able to provide you with an event permission form (page 16).

You could also contact local businesses to see if they would consider sponsoring your group. Your audience appeal will be similar, and they could benefit from this. A simple phone call or email could be sent and any leads followed up in person.



Where can I find more information?

Further information about this pack and any advice on setting up or running a group can be obtained from the Community Participation and Diversity Team.

If you have any questions or issues, please contact the Community Participation & Diversity Team at community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or call **020 8921 5149**

Winding Up Your Group

If your group achieves its key aims and objectives, or the group has run its natural course, it could be time to consider formally winding up the group.

The process of winding up should start with a meeting to discuss bringing your group to an end which should be attended by as many of the committee and members as is practically possible. At this meeting key decisions will need to be discussed and voted upon including:

- At least two thirds of the group agree to the proposal to dissolve the group
- What should happen to any remaining assets (financial or otherwise) after the payment of any debts or liabilities that the group are responsible for

Once decisions have been made, actions can be taken to dissolve the assets of the group accordingly. It would be advisable to download a final copy of the group's accounts and save these somewhere secure.

Please notify the Community Participation & Diversity Team once the process of winding up has commenced so that Council records can be updated.



Committee Members

Roles Guidance

You will have to make some decisions on how to organise your group to ensure that it works effectively and fairly.

The committee is elected by members of the group to carry out the work. The committee organises general meetings of all the members and the group's annual general meeting and must carry out decisions made at these meetings. The committee will probably also make decisions where general members are not present but would need to report back to the members.

The chair's role should include:

- guiding the group to achieve its aims
- chairing the meetings of the group
- being aware of all activities carried out by the group
- ensuring other officers are carrying out their tasks

The secretary's role should include:

- letting people know the date and time of meetings and what the meeting is about
- helping to prepare the agenda with the chair
- taking minutes of meetings
- writing and receiving letters on behalf of the group
- keeping members informed of what correspondence has been received or sent out

The treasurer's role should include:

- opening a bank account in the name of the group
- paying money received into the bank, keeping record of money received and issuing receipts
- paying bills and keeping a record of money spent
- keeping petty cash and petty cash account book for day-to-day expenditure



Model Constitution

This model is to help groups construct or amend their constitutions. Many of the items are for guidance and there are optional clauses that groups may wish to leave out or include. There are some sections that must be included if the group wishes to be funded by the Council, these are marked with an asterisk (*). Essential sections are: Equalities, Annual General Meeting and Finance.

1 Name

The name of the Tenant Group shall be:

2 Aims

The aims of the Group shall be to:

- to promote the exercise of residents' rights and the maintenance and improvement of their housing conditions, amenities, environment and improving quality of living standards
- to represent the interest of residents in consultation with the local authority and other bodies
- to improve social cohesion within the community by eliminating all forms of discrimination including racism

3 *Equal Opportunities Commitment

The Group shall proactively promote equal opportunities within the community and within its membership, work for the abolition of discrimination against persons based on race, gender, age, sexuality, disability, or religion.

4 Membership

Membership shall be open to all residents in the community.

Membership shall be free.

All members will have an equal vote.

Members must adhere to the code of conduct for the Group.

5 Management

A Committee elected at the Annual General Meeting will manage the Group.

The Committee shall consist of a Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer & Secretary and any other such officers will be elected as deemed necessary.

The Committee shall have the authority to co-opt any member to fill any vacancy occurring amongst their number.

Elected councillors of the landlord authority shall not be eligible for election as officers of the Group, nor shall they represent the Group in its dealings with the council or any other body.

Council Officers employed by the housing department shall not be eligible for election as committee members of the Group, nor shall they represent the Group in its dealings with the council or any other body.

No two or more officers shall be elected from the same household.

No officer shall hold office for more than three consecutive years.

The election or removal of officers or committee members may only be carried out by a public meeting of the Group.

6 Meetings

The Committee shall meet as necessary.

Public meetings of the Group shall take place not less than 4 times in each year. The decisions of public meetings shall be binding on the Committee.

All decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of residents present and voting.

All residents shall be given not less than 7 days' notice of any public meeting.

7 *Annual general meeting

The Committee shall call an Annual General Meeting of the Group each year.

Not less than 14 days' notice shall be given to all residents for this meeting.

At this meeting:

- the Committee shall present an annual report of the Group
- the Committee shall present audited accounts of the Group for the previous year
- the Group shall select the Committee for the next year

8 Quorum

The quorum for Committee Meetings of the Group shall be one-third of its elected membership or 4 members, whichever is the greater.

The quorum for all public meetings shall be one-third of the membership or 8 members whichever is the less.

9 *Finance

All monies raised by and on behalf of the Group shall be applied to further the aims of the Group and for no other purpose.

The Treasurer shall open and maintain an account in the name of the Group. The Treasurer and one of two other Committee members nominated by the Committee as signatories shall sign all cheques/withdrawals.

A qualified accountant or a non-member of the Group shall audit the Accounts once a year.

10 Alterations to the constitution

Any proposal to alter this constitution must be submitted to the Secretary at least 21 days before the meeting at which it is to be discussed. Not less than 7 days' notice shall be given of such a meeting, together with the wording of the proposed alteration.

Any alteration shall require the approval of a simple majority of those present and voting at the meeting.

11 Dissolution

If the Committee (or if the Committee no longer exists, any 10 members of the Group) decide that the Group should be dissolved, they shall call a public meeting of all residents giving them at least 14 days notice and stating the terms of the resolution to be proposed at the meeting.

For the sole purpose of dissolution, a quorum need not apply and the Group may be dissolved by a simple majority of those present.

The assets, financial and otherwise, remaining when the Group has satisfied its liabilities, shall be applied for such purpose of benefit to the community, as the meeting shall decide.

Any monies awarded by RBG need to be returned to the organisation.

Constitution agreed on:

Chair

Secretary

Code of Conduct

A Guide to Working Together for Tenant Groups

Introduction

The Code of Conduct is a list of agreed rules covering how members of the group are expected to behave. Its aim is to build positive and constructive working relationships with the wider community.

Taking part in meetings

During meetings the Chair will:

1. clarify the ground rules (standards of behaviour) at the beginning of the meeting
2. be responsible for ensuring that all members get a fair opportunity to contribute
3. have discretion to ask speakers to bring their contribution to an end
4. ensure that the agreed rules are kept to
5. Offensive or disruptive behaviour, discrimination or prejudice will not be accepted at any time.

During meetings all participants will abide by the following:

1. request their slot to speak via the Chair
2. follow the guidance of the Chair in the conduct of the meeting
3. be courteous to each other
4. allow each other the opportunity to speak
5. respect each other's view
6. refrain from making personal remarks and comment
7. always keep language and tone of voice moderate (avoid shouting)
8. follow the Agenda
9. remember the purpose of the meeting
10. refrain from using the meeting to resolve issues of a personal nature
11. work in partnership with residents and the Council to achieve the best possible result
12. operate within the rules of the Constitution
13. not to expect favourable treatment e.g. repairs, allocation from staff, because of membership of the group
14. to use normal agreed procedures when taking up individual issues (e.g. reporting repairs, complaints)
15. to actively participate in training, briefings, and issues around Equal Opportunities

Declarations of Interest

1. In the case of a private interest in any issue (e.g. family, business or financial), or an interest in a particular estate, block or road, group members, including the Chair, must declare this at the meeting.
2. If a conflict of interest is clear and substantial, the member should:
 - a. offer to withdraw from the meeting
 - b. refrain from voting if invited to remain
 - c. not take part when that particular item is discussed unless invited to do so

Confidentiality

1. Members of groups may receive information that has not been made public and is still confidential.
2. Confidential information may only be used for the purpose of the meeting and must not be passed on to anyone who is not a member of the group.
3. If you are not clear about whether information can be passed on please seek advice from the Chair or a council officer.

Political affiliation

For group members who are also members of a local political party organisation, it is important to distance these two roles to avoid confusion about motives and interests. Group members may not represent a political party in their role as a member of the group.

Monies raised by the group and financial procedures

Monies raised by the group will only be used to benefit the group. The treasurer or any other member of the group will not use said monies for their own financial gain.

All financial transactions, including money transfers, payments and sources of income, require to be agreed by the group in advance of any transaction.

Transactions must also be recorded by the Treasurer and evidenced via receipt or invoice.

Any transactions must also be announced at full public meetings and recorded within the minutes for future reference.

Accounts must be available for inspection upon request.

The group must have a minimum of 3 signatories held responsible for the depositing and withdrawal of funds.

Breaches of The Code Of Conduct

1. If the meeting gets heated, a five-minute time out can be called for at the discretion of the Chair.
2. If a member of the committee, or group, or a visitor, fails to abide by the Code the Chair may warn them that if they break the Code again, they may be asked to leave the meeting.
3. If, despite a warning, they continue to breach this Code, the Chair may request that they leave the meeting.
4. In the event of serious breaches, they may be excluded by the Chair from future meetings, subject to a vote by the group.
5. If the behaviour continues, or in more serious breaches, a member can be suspended from meetings or expelled from the group by the Chair of the meeting or the Committee.

Signing the Code of Conduct

As a member of the group named below I have read, understood and agree to abide by the terms stipulated in this Code of Conduct.

Signed.....

Date.....

Print Name

Name of Group

Action Plan Template

Action plan for (group name)

Issue	Priority (1 - 10)	Achievability (1 - 10)	Contacts	Action	Result	Date Completed
e.g. getting the grass cut	1 (if it's your top priority)	3 (if you think it's easy to achieve)	Grounds Maintenance	Secretary to phone the Grounds Maintenance Manager	Grass cut!	

Event Permission Form

Please complete the table below and return via email to your Tenancy Enforcement Officer
 tenancy-enforcement-teams@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Are you a Resident/Organisation/ Councillor? (Please circle as appropriate)	Resident Organisation Councillor
If Organisation, Contact Name/ Details	
Name	
Address	
Post Code	
Contact Number	
Email Address	
Type of Event	
Location of Land or Venue you wish for event to take place (if possible, please provide pictures or a map)	
Are any other residents in favour of this event? (please provide details)	
When will the event run? (Start and finish times to be specified please)	
Will the event block any access? If so, where?	Give dates
Event Description (including a list of activities that will take place)	
Do you have current and valid Public Liability Insurance to cover this event? (Please circle as appropriate)	Yes/ No

For Office to complete

Will this event clash with another event	Yes/No
Has an Equalities Form been completed?	Yes/No
TTL / Ops Manager approval?	Yes/No







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