

Standards for Tenant and Resident Groups (TRGs)

Northwards Housing recognises the value of resident involvement in delivering an effective service. As part of Northwards Housing strategy to achieve sustainable communities, it aims to help develop and support active and responsible tenant and resident groups that are involved in their communities and have constructive relationships with local staff, agencies and elected members.

The agreed standards below are in accordance with the core standards for tenant and resident groups set out in the *National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts*. They apply to groups who wish to play an active role in developing and monitoring Northwards Housing's policies and procedures and to groups seeking grant funding. These standards are intended to make sure that groups have a mandate to get involved and are accountable.

In order to gain full recognition groups must meet the standards set out below:

1. **Adopt a constitution** that complies with the minimum standards set out in the model *Constitution for tenant & resident groups registered with Northwards Housing*
2. **Comply with Northwards Single Equality Policy** by encouraging the membership of tenants and residents from all sections of the community and being aware of and responsive to their needs.
3. **Hold regular meetings**, including an Annual General Meeting (AGM). Meetings require a minimum attendance before decisions can be made and should always be minuted.
4. **Membership is open** to everyone living in the area covered by the group.
5. **Communicate regularly with all members** through leaflets, posters, newsletters and notices. Groups should report their achievements and give good notice of public meetings and events so as to encourage maximum participation.
6. **Keep open financial records** and annual accounts, which must be presented at an AGM and be independently audited
7. **Sign the Funding Agreement** at the inaugural meeting, and at each AGM thereafter. Also for TRG funding applications from Northwards Housing
8. **Comply with the Tenancy Agreement**, members that breach the tenancy agreement may be ineligible to stand for committee. For clarification, seek advice from Northwards Housing.

In addition to the above points Northwards expects tenant and resident groups to:

1. **Show a positive attitude** towards working with Northwards Housing, to achieve the common aims and objectives set out in the Resident Involvement Agreement and ensure that you strive to represent the whole of the area in which your TRG covers
2. **Play a positive role** in responding to local estate issues and problems.
3. **Take advantage of opportunities for consultation** and involvement locally and citywide. Establish regular meetings with local housing staff and other service providers and contribute to agendas for the area.
4. **Take advantage of training opportunities** to gain knowledge and an understanding of the housing service, to enable meaningful involvement in the setting of targets and monitoring of performance.
5. **Attend conferences, seminars and training** arranged by Northwards Housing to further groups' knowledge and to enable increased involvement in their communities.
6. **Develop good working relationships with local services staff** and be aware that the local office may not be able to resolve all problems.

Key steps towards formal recognition

There are several stages for new groups to go through en route to full recognition. These stages are outlined below as a guideline to help tenant and resident groups achieve this status.

1. **Make contact with Northwards Housing for initial advice** and information on tenant and resident groups. This is to help tenants and residents decide whether they want to set up a group.
2. **Meet with the Resident Involvement Team and local Housing Services staff** to discuss local issues of common concern, e.g. empty properties, the environment and repairs and help groups identify their own aims and objectives and to establish a local working relationship.
3. **Form an acting committee** to consider adopting a constitution and make arrangements for an inaugural public meeting.
4. **Hold an Inaugural Public Meeting** to recruit members and to democratically elect the first committee of the new group.
5. **Arrange to open a bank account** to enable groups to receive grants and to manage money obtained through fundraising efforts.

6. **Make arrangements for regular liaison meetings** with Northwards Housing to discuss estate issues, set priorities, and agree local spending priorities.

Community involvement

Tenant and resident groups can have a positive effect in their area by developing their own aims and objectives, working with local agencies and involving themselves in existing initiatives. Some opportunities which groups could consider involvement in are:

1. **Setting up garden tool hire schemes** to help tenants and residents maintain their gardens and improve the appearance of their estates. Northwards can assist with guidance and the provision of funding for tools.
2. **Involvement in consultation** to develop plans and strategic initiatives, such as home improvement schemes and transport issues.
3. **Involvement in area forums and alliances** which have a say in local decision making, allocation of resources, the setting of priorities and monitoring of targets for the area.