

# How to set up a tenant and resident group

**Northwards Housing advises and helps tenants and residents to set up tenant and residents groups.**

## Criteria

To form a tenant and resident group certain criteria have to be met. Criteria include:

- ✓ holding an inaugural meeting attended by a **minimum** of eight residents
- ✓ democratically electing a committee of at least six people
- ✓ adopting a constitution
- ✓ naming the group and defining boundaries for the group, which must contain a **majority** of Northwards Housing tenancies
- ✓ complying with Northwards Housing Comprehensive Equality Policy

## Who can get involved?

- All Northwards Housing tenants, former tenants who have exercised the right to buy their council home and residents who live within the group's boundaries.
- Local ward councillors (elected members) cannot be committee members and any existing committee member standing as a candidate in local government elections must resign from the committee.
- Employees and their immediate family who work for Housing Services on the estate where they live. For example: resident caretakers cannot hold officer positions in a group (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer). However they are expected to support the aims of the group through their work and are able to participate as ordinary members of the group and be elected as committee members.

## Getting started

If a number of tenants and residents want to set up a tenant and resident group they should try to find out about the interests of people living in their area. This can be done quite easily, by chatting to people in shops, outside schools, etc. If there is a general feeling that a group would be beneficial, those interested can move to the next step: to hold a meeting.

Contact Northwards Housing for help at this point, and inform local housing staff of your plans.

## Inaugural meeting

A public meeting must take place to formally set up the group. This initial meeting is known as the inaugural meeting (see guidance note 6: **Public Meetings**).

Everyone living in the area the group intends to cover must be invited to attend. The best way to do this is by a leaflet delivered through the letterbox of each home. Northwards can produce the leaflets for you (see guidance note 8: **Publicity**) and an officer from the unit will usually attend to help to carry out the necessary business. As with all meetings there should be an agenda for that must include the following items:

- ① Election of Committee
- ② Boundaries of Group
- ③ Name of Group
- ④ Adoption of Constitution

**Please note:** It is important that minutes of the meeting are taken, as your group will need these to apply for a starter grant (see guidance note 4: **Funding**).

## Election of committee

A committee of at least six people should be elected and the group's officers - chair, secretary and treasurer – should be chosen.

Nominations for the committee will be taken from the floor and each nomination will need to be seconded. If there is only one nomination for a position an actual vote is not necessary however there should be a show of hands and the meeting should be asked if there are any objections. If there is more than one nomination for a position it will be necessary to count votes.

Officer positions should be elected first followed by ordinary committee members.

## Boundaries of group

It is important that the boundaries of the group are set at the meeting. Usually there are clear boundaries separating one estate from another so it is easy to agree on them, however a vote must be taken if there is more than one suggestion. It is recommended that a group should aim to represent no more than 500 properties - anything greater can be difficult to manage. Once the boundaries have been decided, photocopy the relevant page of a Manchester A - Z and highlight the defined boundaries of the group.

## Name of group

The group needs a name and proposals should be taken from the floor. Often a group will call themselves the name of their estate (e.g. Old Moat Estate Tenants Association). Any proposal should be seconded. It is likely that there will be more than one suggestion in which case a vote will be necessary.

## Constitution

A constitution is basically a set of rules that will help to clarify whom the group represents, the aims of the group and how the group is run. A group must adopt and sign a constitution at the inaugural meeting. Housing Services' **model constitution** can be obtained from the Northwards Housing. The constitution provides guidance to the committee on how the group should carry out its business.

## Aims of the group

It is a good idea to let the meeting know what the group's aims are. These may even be decided at the meeting. This way everyone knows why the group has been set up and what it is setting out to achieve. Most groups have common aims and these include:

- ✓ to improve the local environment
- ✓ to improve housing conditions
- ✓ to create a community spirit
- ✓ to campaign for money to make improvements
- ✓ to have a say in how the authority spends local budgets

## Membership of the group

Everyone living within the boundaries of the group is automatically a member. Members of the group who are not on the committee are known as ordinary members. All members should be represented by the group and receive copies of leaflets and newsletters sent out by the group (see guidance note 8: **Publicity**).

## Recognition

Once the inaugural meeting has been held and the criteria have been met, the group becomes fully recognised and will be added to the Northwards Housing database and will start to receive regular information. The group will be eligible for funding, training and continued support from Northwards Housing.