

A toolkit for setting up a Residents' Association

August 2022



Introduction

At whg our customers are at the heart of everything that we do. We are committed to improving our services.

To help us achieve this, we need to know that our customers' expectations are being met. Communicating with our customers helps us to understand how residents feel about the services we provide and how we can improve them. Creating or joining a Residents' Association or Group is a great way to achieve this and it can also be an opportunity to get to know your neighbours and connect with others.

This toolkit has been put together to help you understand what a Residents' Association is and give helpful guidance on creating and running one successfully.



What is a Residents' Association?

A Residents' Association is a formal group of residents living in the same neighbourhood who come together to represent the shared interests of those who live in a local area or community. Anyone can join, members may be tenants, leaseholders or shared owners.



Why set up a Residents' Association?

A Residents' Association can make a real difference where you live.

As a collective it can work to resolve local issues facing the community and provide a 'voice' for residents within the local area. This may be of benefit when liaising with your landlord, local authorities and other organisations.

A Residents' Association might also:

- help create a better sense of community in your area
- keep residents informed about issues that affect their local area.
- discuss service improvements and priorities
- campaign for something positive, e.g. a better play area
- organise neighbourhood events and activities

Setting up a Residents' Association

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. Put a sign up in the communal areas using a designated email address for residents so they can contact you. Post on existing forums such as neighbourhood WhatsApp or Facebook Groups.

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

Arrange an initial 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. Please consider cultural differences when planning your meeting and make provision for people with disabilities.

A member of the Customer Voice Team can advise you where to hold your meetings. You can email them at Customervoice@whgrp.co.uk

Step 3

Make sure everyone knows about the meeting

Create a clear leaflet advertising the meeting. Tell people what it is for and the date, time and place where it is going to be held. Make sure that the leaflet mentions the issues that concern people the most in your area and that these will be discussed at the meeting. 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 4

Holding the first meeting

The first meeting is a chance to talk about the issues residents are concerned about, explain what setting up a Residents' Association involves and agree the aims of the Association.

If the residents agree to set up a Residents' Association, there are several things that you need to do at the next few meetings in order 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
- committee members including a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer
- the key aims that you hope to achieve on a constitution for the Group



The roles of the committee

The Committee

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

The Chair

Ensures that the meeting runs smoothly and efficiently, and that:

- all business is discussed
- everyone's views are heard
- clear decisions are reached
- the Residents' Association keeps to its aims
- 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.

The Secretary

The 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.

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:

- paying bills and keeping accurate records of money received and spent
- keeping an account book of all money going in and out of the organisation
- work with the committee to carry out financial planning for the year
- 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.

What is a 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.

To be formally recognised and funded by whg, we'd ask you to sign up to whg's sample constitution. By having a constitution, you are also able to apply for community funding from other organisations.

Contact our Customer Voice Team on **Customervoice@whgrp.co.uk** to let us know of your intention to form a Residents' Association and request our sample constitution.

Examples of possible aims:

- to promote the interests of all residents in the area and maintain good relations within the community
- to promote all Residents rights and the maintenance and improvement of housing conditions
- to work towards eliminating all forms of discrimination within the community by encouraging all members to join the Residents' Association
- to work with whg and other organisations for the benefit of all residents
- the Residents' Association shall be non-political.



Meetings

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

- your constitution should state when and how this meeting will be held and how members will be informed of it
- at the AGM the committee will report on the activities of the RA over the previous year, 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
- the Secretary will notify all members of the date of the meeting not less than 21 days before the AGM.

General Meetings

- each year the Association will hold at least four General Meetings (including the AGM) which can be open to the general membership
- all members of the Association shall receive seven days' notice of General Meetings.

Quorum

- the quorum is the minimum number of members required at any meeting to make the proceedings of that meeting valid
- no General Meeting or Annual General Meeting should take place if less than one third of members, or

less than six members are present at the meeting (whichever is the less). This may vary according to each Residents' Association depending on its size of members.

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.

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.

How will whg support the Residents' Association?

As a collection of individuals who choose the goals and actions of the Residents' Association, whg are unable to be involved in the day to day business of your Association.

However, we can support you in some ways:

Training

You may wish to undertake training to build your skills, such as:

Digital skills

Treasurer skills

Minute taking

Chairing skills

Meeting & committee skills

Confidence in presenting

We can provide in-house training and fund various training schemes through numerous external sources if appropriate. Please contact the Customer Voice Team

Customervoice@whgrp.co.uk

Funding

A bank account should be set up by the Treasurer of the association and must have minimum two signatories. Having a bank account is essential

for the Residents' Association to receive funding. We are able to write a supporting statement letter to your bank if requested. Every Residents' Association will receive a start-up fund of £200.

We will provide you with funding once we receive a signed copy of a constitution. Funding will be paid into the Residents' Association's bank account. Please pay particular attention to documents when establishing your Residents' Association bank account to confirm that this is an unincorporated association. This means you are not required to pay tax.

You can also apply for grants and funding from external organisations and your local authority or you could hold a fundraiser.

Accountability

whg colleagues can attend your meetings if you have a specific issue you want them to attend to.

Practical support

The Customer Voice Team can advise you on how to promote the Association to your neighbours and local community.

Other ways to get involved



Setting up or joining a Residents' Association is just one way to shape what we do.

There are multiple ways you can join our community of involved customers, whatever your lifestyle or availability.

If you feel that a Residents' Association is too much commitment, you may wish to start a Residents' Group which offers more flexibility.

To find out more and the many ways to get involved, please visit **whg.uk.com** or contact the Customer Voice Team on **Customervoice@whgrp.co.uk**

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shape what we do**







If you have any questions about anything
in this guide, please get in touch.

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