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Introduction

This Guide has been produced by Leeds Tenants Federation and its Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) panel.

Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF) is an independent organisation whose aim is to help tenants and residents across Leeds, with particular focus on supporting local TARAs and their communities.

It is represented with other city-wide groups on a strategic tenant involvement strategic group – Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds (VITAL).

It is funded by Housing Leeds for work with local authority tenants and also seeks to ensure private tenants and residents are represented.

The TARA panel is a group within LTF, made up of representatives of TARAs across Leeds which meets monthly to advise, discuss and signpost issues that affect TARAs and their communities. It aims to promote best practice and share information across the TARA network.

Use of this Guide
This Guide was written to support local TARAs with information about their governance and operation and signpost help and assistance from other organisations so they can in turn, support, enhance and give a voice to their own communities.

I hope this Guide is useful and contains the information you need to run a successful group. If you feel that something is missing please let us know and we will be happy to provide additional updates. My thanks go to the representatives of the TARA panel and Housing Leeds who have helped to develop this Guide.

Andrea Purdy
Chair – Leeds Tenants Federation
July 2016
Why have a Tenants and Residents Association (TARA)?

Tenants and Residents Associations are at the heart of communities and can be the voice of local people. They can help empower tenants and residents to be as active as they would like to be and involve them in designing, delivering and reviewing services for their local area like improving the condition of their homes and the environment, improving local services – like the housing service or the street cleaning service or dealing with specific problems like speeding traffic or anti-social behaviour. Or they may just want to have a bigger say in the decisions that affect their lives.

They are at the centre of tenant involvement and in Leeds they feed into larger tenant involvement networks. These are detailed below.

The tenant involvement framework in Leeds

The current tenant involvement framework has been developed over the last 2 years, building on the work done in the three former Arm’s Length Management Organisations (ALMOs), who looked after local authority tenancies before the service was brought back into the council.

Local Authority

Leeds City Council manages its housing policies through the Housing Advisory Board (HAB), which is made up of local councillors and independent and tenant representatives.

The Leeds City Council department responsible for housing is called Environment and Housing, within which sits Housing Leeds. They look after around 56,000 council house properties in Leeds including collecting rents, carrying out repairs and engaging tenants and communities.
You can contact the Tenant and Community Involvement Team on 0113 3783330, email housinginvolvement@leeds.gov.uk or visit the Getting Involved webpages at www.leeds.gov.uk

**Voice of Involved Tenants in Leeds (VITAL)**

VITAL is the strategic tenant group which directs and oversees the overall Tenant Involvement Framework. Members of each of the main involvement groups are represented on VITAL, helping to ensure that all tenants have a voice and can influence housing services, no matter who they are or where they live. VITAL helps us to ensure that new policies are shaped with the involvement of those who are representing tenants with so many different needs. It is the role of this group to check that the many different involvement groups and forums are working well, that tenants are accessing the right training and support, and ultimately that they are making a difference.

**Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF)**

Leeds Tenants Federation are an independent organisation who represent all tenants and residents in Leeds, with specific focus on championing TARAs. They have 1500 individual members and over 100 organisation members.

**Equal Access Group**

The Equal Access Group represents tenants and leaseholders with disabilities, long term health conditions, and Carers. Made up of up to 12 tenants from across Leeds they meet every couple of months. They have opportunities to meet with housing teams and other Council departments to discuss what matters to the people they represent and raise awareness of disability issues.

**Leeds High Rise Advisory Group**

Leeds High Rise Advisory group represents tenants and leaseholders living in high rise multi-storey blocks. Meeting every couple of months they have opportunities to speak to housing teams to discuss what matters to the people they represent, about their homes, high-rise living and their communities.

**Housing Advisory Panels and Cross City Chairs Group**

Housing Advisory Panels (known as HAPs) are tenant led groups, who work with local housing and other Council teams to help review and monitor local services. They also use HAP funds to provide a range of environmental and community projects to support local communities and Council priorities, and they support
wider tenant engagement activity. Each panel is made of up to 12 Council tenants (one of which can be a Council leaseholder), and up to four Councillors who work together to improve housing services and fund projects that benefit tenants.

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all HAPs regularly meet at their Cross City Chairs Group (CCCG) to help develop how HAPs work, and share ideas and case studies of projects that have worked well that could also work in other parts of the city.

**LGB&T* Rainbow Roofs**
The Rainbow Roofs group represents Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender tenants and leaseholders. The group is involved in reviewing and developing policies to ensure that the needs of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities are met. They work hard to stamp out discrimination and raise awareness of LGB&T* living in Leeds.

**Repairs Group**
The Repairs Groups work with housing teams to ensure quality customer focussed services are delivered, such as repairs and maintenance, adaptations and improvements. There are currently three groups representing the East, West and South areas of Leeds. Each group is made up of up to 10 tenants and they meet every couple of months. They have opportunities to meet with housing teams and repairs contractors to discuss what matters to the people they represent, about their homes, communities and future investment.

**Voice of Older Tenants group (VOLT)**
The Voice of Older Leeds Tenants group, known as VOLT, represents older tenants, including those living in sheltered properties. Every couple of months they meet with housing teams to discuss and raise awareness of the priorities for older tenants. They also look at the support needs of tenants to help them stay in their own homes for as long as they want. They arrange local forums to consult and engage with communities.

**Young Adults getting involved (YAgI)**
The Young Adults group, known as YAgI, encourages and supports tenants and leaseholders aged 16 to 35 to help shape housing services and improve your neighbourhoods. In addition to other tenant and leaseholder groups, YAgI creates opportunities for young adults to meet with housing teams and discuss what matters about their homes and communities.
Service Improvement Volunteers
Service improvement volunteers help to build a partnership with tenants and leaseholders. Volunteering helps you to learn more skills that could lead to other opportunities for you. As a volunteer you can choose to take part in a variety of activities which suit you, in your area or in other areas of Leeds. These include: carrying out mystery shopping of services, responding to surveys, accompanying housing officers on estate walkabouts, spot checking and commenting on the standard of properties before they are let to new tenants, spot checking how accessible our office buildings and sheltered schemes are, checking the quality of repairs to properties and reading and commenting on new leaflets.

Other tenant involvement groups/organisations/forums

Leeds Tenants Federation – TARA Panel
LTF set up a panel in September 2015 made up of representatives from TARAs to discuss housing issues, policies and consultations affecting TARAs and feed up their views to VITAL and Housing Leeds.

Tenant Scrutiny Board
The Tenant Scrutiny Board has the support and power to make sure tenants and leaseholders are able to see how Housing Leeds perform and influence the quality of service given to tenants. The Board undertake inquiries into specific areas of the housing service and then make recommendations for improvement.

Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO)
BITMO manages local authority tenancies in the Belle Isle area of Leeds and looks after tenant involvement activities. It is a member of VITAL.

Private Sector and Housing Associations
There are several Housing Associations in Leeds and landlords who own one or more properties. Representatives of these, other tenant organisations and Leeds City Council come together at the Private Rented Sector Forum to discuss issues that impact the private housing sector.
This wheel shows the main groups involved with tenant involvement both within Housing Leeds and working in partnership with them, like Leeds Tenants Federation.

More information and resources

- Leeds Tenant Involvement Strategy
- Housing Leeds Service Offer
- [http://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/HSG-GettingInvolved.aspx](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/HSG-GettingInvolved.aspx)
Telling your community
Let the community know that you intend to start up a Tenant and Residents Association to represent your local area.

You can do a simple leaflet – see example below. Get support with this and printing from the Tenant and Community Involvement Team and put it through letter boxes. Stick it up in shop windows, doctors’ surgeries. Stop people in the street and tell them about the meeting.

Most groups hold their meetings on a weekday evening, but this is up to you. Think about all the people who live in your area and try to choose a place and a time that will suit the majority.

Open Meeting
To start a tenants and residents group

7.00pm in the Community Centre
on 17 May

Your local councillors and housing manager will be there to hear your issues

EVERYONE IS WELCOME
What should happen at the meeting

Welcome everyone, thank them for coming and introduce any guests (e.g. Tenant and Community Involvement Officer, Housing Officer, local councillor).

Explain the purpose of the meeting and why you think it’s a good idea to set up the group and what it can do for the community. Ask people if they are happy for you to start one up.

Elect a committee including a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and committee members.

Ask people what the main issues are – you will get a lot of individual complaints, so it is good idea to ask the councillor or housing officer to take a note and talk to the people afterwards.

Arrange a date and time for the next open meeting.

The venue

Choose somewhere that people can easily get to. It should be accessible for people with disabilities.

You could hold it in a local community room or church hall. If you cannot find a place to hold your meeting, talk to your local Tenant and Community Involvement Officer who may be able to suggest some other venues.

The agenda

The agenda is the list of things you want to talk about at the meeting. It helps you keep the meeting focused and orderly. An example of an agenda is shown below.

Each item on the agenda should be either:

- **For Information only** – so someone explains it and there is no need to discuss it.
• For Decision – someone explains the item and people are invited to give their views, the Chair should sum up and a decision should be taken.

Example agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A G E N D A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Welcome and introductions</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Apologies for absence</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Minutes of the last meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to agree as a correct record</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Matter arising from the minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to note action taken as a result of the meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Correspondence</td>
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<tr>
<td>- to note the information received</td>
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<tr>
<td>- to make any relevant decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Treasurers report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to note the report on payments and income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Main items – guest speakers, discussion of issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to discuss and make decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Reports from outside meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to note any useful meetings attended by committee members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Any other business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Date, time and place of next meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Any Other Business
Some people try to raise big issues under Any Other Business when no one is prepared for them. The Chair does not need to take Any Other Business. The Chair can postpone an item if it is new business raised at the last minute. Any new business should either have been raised before the meeting and be on the agenda or it should be raised next time. Items for Any Other Business should be small items that do not require decisions.

Electing officers

The committee is the team that leads the tenants and residents group.

People are elected to the committee once a year.

Committee members are responsible for making sure the tenants and residents group achieves its aim.

They also need to make sure they represent the views of everyone in the area and keep people in touch with what they are doing.

The committee needs at least three officers.

The Chair (or Chairperson)
The Chair usually has two main jobs:
- Chairing meetings of the tenants and residents group
- Giving leadership to the tenants and residents group

The Secretary
The Secretary usually has two main jobs:
- Preparing an agenda and keeping a record of meetings
- Receiving and answering correspondence on behalf of the group

The Treasurer
The Treasurer usually has two main jobs
- Managing the group’s money
- Paying expenses
You can also have a Vice Chair, a Publicity Officer or any other number of specific posts for people.

Don’t be put off by the official names and titles. If you can’t find anyone to join a committee – ask them if they want to be part of the team!

Some groups double up the jobs and some rotate the chair. What matters, is that you have enough people to share the workload and that it doesn’t all fall on the shoulders of one or two people.

You can see more information on the Committee roles in Section 3 on page 13.

**Taking minutes**

Every committee or public meeting should be minuted. Minutes are a written record of what was decided at the meeting.

**Taking Minutes**

- Ask everyone to sign an attendance sheet or signing-in book
- Record the decision or outcome rather than the discussion
- Write without using people’s names if possible except where people have specific actions e.g. “Fred to contact Housing Leeds to...”
- Write “it was noted that” and not “Jane and Fred said that.”
- Write “a discussion took place” rather than Jane said this but Fred said that and Stan said something else.
- If you do not have access to a word processor or typewriter, you can use a Minutes Book and write minutes by hand.
- The Chair and Secretary should look at the minutes in advance of the next meeting to see if there are any matters arising that need to be dealt with.

**Agreeing Minutes**

- Ideally, the minutes should be sent out with the agenda for the next meeting. One of the first agenda items at that meeting should be to “approve the minutes as a correct record”.
The Chair should ask the committee to agree that the minutes are correct. If there are any amendments they can be written by hand on the master copy of the minutes and signed by the Chair.

Minutes should be kept on file. In most constitutions, any member of the association has the right to ask to inspect the minutes by request in writing to the Secretary. The Secretary should make an appointment at their convenience to allow the minutes to be inspected.

An example of some minutes is shown below.

Example minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minutes of the Tenants and Residents Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date, time and venue</td>
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</table>

**Present** (Names of all committee members who attended)

**Also in attendance** (Names of officers, councillors – those people invited to come who are not members):

**Apologies**

(Record all apologies received but if someone is absent and hasn’t told you why, do not put them down.)

1. **Minutes of the Committee meeting on 20 April**

   The minutes were approved as a correct record

2. **Matters arising**

   (Include only matters that are not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda)

   2.1 It was noted that the garage site has now been cleared.

3. **Summer Gala**
It was agreed that the Gala will be held on 8 August on the Playing Fields.

Action: Jane to approach Fire Brigade and Police about displays, Omar to book Face Painting and Bouncy Castle, Fred to book Majorettes, Angie to prepare publicity posters for approval at next meeting.

4. **Date of next meeting**

20 June at 7.00pm at the Community Centre

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**Other guests and representatives**

You can invite representatives from other organisations and groups to your meeting. It’s a good idea to let them know that you intend to form a new TARA. These could include:

- Local councillors
- The Police
- Your local housing officer
- Your local tenant and community involvement officer
- Other local groups, like existing TARAs adjacent to your area

When your group is up and running you may want to discuss specific issues so other invitees could include representatives from:

- Planning
- Highways
- Parks and Gardens
- Environmental services
The committee is the team who lead your tenants and residents association.

On the team you need people who can:
- Chair your meetings
- Prepare agendas and plan meetings
- Book a meeting place
- Take notes and keep a written record of decisions
- Manage a bank account and keep a record of income and payments
- Negotiate with officers of Housing Leeds / Housing Association / landlords and council
- Get information and pass it on
- Attend meetings or go on estate walkabouts
- Design leaflets and newsletters
- Send out invitations
- Make people feel welcome
- Help people work well together

Everyone on the committee is part of a team. Everyone has something to offer. You don’t have to have a title like Chair or Secretary to help out. There are many jobs that can be shared.

The basic job of a committee member is to:
- Represent the views of their area, street or block
- Feedback what the committee is doing to people in their area, street or block
- Help the committee achieve its’ action plan – go to meetings and volunteer for tasks agreed by the committee.
The role of the Chair

The Chair usually has two main jobs:

- Chairing meetings of your group
- Giving leadership to the group

Chairing meetings
The role of the Chair is usually to:

- Make sure that meetings are useful, decisions are made and action is taken.
- Work with the Secretary to prepare the agenda for the meeting
- Welcome members and guests to the meeting
- Introduce each item on the agenda
- Make sure that everyone with something useful to contribute gets a chance to speak
- Managing time by making sure that people don’t ramble on or interrupt others
- Summarise discussions
- Ensure that decisions are made
- Agree the date / time of the next meeting
- Close the meeting with thanks to everyone for coming

Giving leadership to the group
The Chair would do this by:

- Encouraging the committee to work as a team
- Making sure that the team knows what they want to achieve
- Along with other members of the team, working with Housing Leeds / Housing Associations / landlords, the council and other agencies to achieve the group’s aims
- Representing the committee in a positive manner to outside organisations and at events
The role of the Vice Chair

The role of the Vice Chair is to take over the roles and responsibilities of the Chair when they are not available and provide additional support to the Committee.

The role of the Secretary

The Secretary usually has three main jobs:

- Preparing an agenda and keeping a record of meetings
- Receiving and answering correspondence / contacts on behalf of the group
- Being the main contact person for the group

The Secretary is usually asked to:

- Book the meeting place
- Work with the chair to prepare an agenda before the meeting
- Inform all members of the date and time of the meeting
- Provide the agenda and any minutes ahead of meetings
- Take notes during the meeting and minute decisions
- Make those minutes available to the committee
- Receive correspondence / queries on behalf of the group and report them to the meeting
- Between meetings, keep other committee members informed of correspondence / queries.
- When asked by the committee - write letters and make contact on behalf of the group
- Work with the chair to make sure the group is achieving its aims
The role of the Treasurer
The Treasurer usually has two main jobs

- Managing the group’s money
- Paying expenses

The Treasurer’s role includes:

Managing money
- Opening a bank account along with at least one other member of the group
- Keeping secure the cheque books and paying-in books and any petty cash
- Making sure that the proper financial controls are in place
- Keeping a written record of money going in and out of the account
- Keeping and checking bank statements
- Keeping receipts for all items
- Reporting to the committee regularly on the finances of the group
- Preparing a statement of accounts and reporting it to the Annual General Meeting
- Having the accounts checked by an independent person or an organisation like WYCAS

Paying expenses
- Working with the committee to agree an expenses policy
- Signing cheques on behalf of the group – along with at least one other member of the committee based on a Bank Mandate
- Paying bills and expenses and keeping a record of the payments
- Paying expenses to committee members on production of receipts

Additional help
See page 43 for doing an Expenses Policy; page 36 for Simple Book-Keeping and page 39 for preparing a Statement of Accounts
Your group needs to have some agreed standard documents and policies in place that set out how you will run it. This section details some of these and gives example of generic documents that you can adopt, or use to produce your own.

A constitution

A constitution is the set of rules for your group. It says:

- what the group is called,
- what area it represents,
- what it aims to do,
- how it is run and
- how it makes decisions.

The constitution needs to be agreed at an Open Meeting. Any changes to it can only be made at the Annual General Meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose.

The constitution is important. When you open a bank account or when you apply for a grant from Housing Leeds or any other grant-giving organisation, they will ask for a copy of your constitution. Your constitution is your rule book. If people complain about the way you have done things, they will look at your constitution to see if you’ve followed your own rules.

To help you agree your own constitution, we have produced a Model Constitution below. Every group has their own ways of working and this model constitution is to give you a framework to add on and change to help create your own rules for your group. Some things have to be in your constitution or your group will not be recognised as democratic and accountable.
Model Constitution

**Name**
The name of our association will be ......................... Tenants and Residents Association.

**Aims and objectives**
The aims and objectives of the Association will be:

- To seek to improve conditions for the residents of the area.
- To represent and to promote the interests of all the tenants and residents living in our area.
- To work for improvements to our homes; to the Housing Service and other services we receive; and to the local environment.
- To work in partnership with other agencies to achieve our aims.

This association supports no political party.

**Membership**
Membership of the Association shall be open to all tenants and residents living in the ......................... area *(include a list of streets and house numbers where necessary or include a map showing the boundaries of the area.*

All members shall have voting rights on all issues raised at meetings except: that on those issues specifically relating to Council House finance, only council tenants will have voting rights and on those issues specifically relating to Housing Association finance, only housing association tenants will have voting rights.

**Equal opportunities**
This association wants to involve everyone in the area and will try to overcome any obstacles to people giving their views or getting involved in meetings and events. The Association will try to make sure that everyone can feel welcome and safe at events organised by the Association. The Association will challenge any remarks or behaviour that cause offence and makes some people feel unwelcome. The Association will take positive action to reach those people that are under-represented at meetings and events and will ensure that all members have equal opportunities to attend and take part in the association and its events.
Management Committee
The Association will be run by a Management Committee elected at the Annual General Meeting.

The Committee will be made up of Officers, including a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and .... Ordinary members (*it is up to you to decide how many and what is a workable committee size*).

If vacancies occur among the officers between AGMs, the Committee shall have the power to fill those vacancies *except* where three or more vacancies occur at the same time in which case a Special General Meeting, advertised for that purpose, must be called.

Committee members who miss more than three consecutive meetings without giving reasonable apologies may be asked to resign their post. A member of the committee may be removed or suspended from their post if they bring the good name of the association into disrepute. A full meeting of the committee will be called to consider evidence from all sides and a majority vote will be necessary to remove or suspend.

The Committee will have power to co-opt members with skills and knowledge useful to the association who can advise and support the Association. Co-opted members of the Committee can take part but will have no voting rights at Committee meeting and should not hold officer posts or represent the association at meetings or events.

Annual General Meeting
Once a year (and no later than after 15 months) the Committee will call an Annual General meeting (AGM). Written notice of the meeting must be publicised in your area in advance and members should be made aware that they will have the opportunity to make nominations for election or stand for election themselves and to vote for the officers and committee at the meeting.

- The minutes of the previous AGM will be presented and approved.
- The existing committee will present a report of the association's activities.
• The existing treasurer will present independently audited accounts for the year.
• Any amendments to the constitution will be voted on.
• The existing committee will stand down.
• The officers and committee for the next year will be elected. Nominations for officers and committee will be accepted only if the person nominated is present at the Annual General Meeting or has put in writing that they want to stand.
• If there is nobody willing to stand, the committee will decide whether to start procedures to close the association down. Alternatively the committee can continue in office to try and redevelop the association for up to six months. It is the responsibility of the committee to recruit a new committee or formally dissolve the association within that period.

Special General Meeting
The Committee of the Association may, at any time, call a Special Meeting of the Association, to consider any matter that the Committee may decide should be referred to all members.

A Special Meeting of the Association can also be called by 10 or more members who request this in writing to the secretary stating their reason for wanting one. This could be in the form of a letter signed by 10 people from different addresses. The secretary will ensure that the meeting is held within 28 days and that all households are given prior notice.

Running your meetings
This association will be democratic and open. The committee will hold at least quarterly meetings or events and will publicise general meetings and public events to all households on the estate in order to involve all members and hear their views.

At least_______(put in a number you think right) members of the committee have to be present to take a decision on behalf of the association. All members of the committee should be consulted on the dates and venues of meetings. The committee will try to work by general agreement but where this is not possible decisions will be taken by majority vote.
Minutes will be kept of all meetings of the association. The minutes will be presented to the next meeting to be approved. The minutes should be made available to any member of the association on request.

All members of the association will be expected to treat each other with respect and act in a reasonable manner at association events. The Chair may ask members to leave if their behaviour is disruptive or offensive.

**Finance**
The committee can raise money on behalf of the association as they see fit, as long as they spend it in line with the aims and objectives of the association.

The treasurer shall keep proper account of the finances of the Association and shall open a bank account in the name of the Association. The committee will nominate at least three people who can sign cheques. These people must not live in the same household or be close family members.

The accounts will be audited or independently checked at least once a year and the audited accounts presented to the Annual General Meeting and copies sent to the Tenant and Community Involvement Officer if you get funding from Housing Leeds.

The committee are responsible for the proper use of money raised through grants according to the guidelines issued by the funding body.

The Treasurer should keep receipts for all money paid out in expenses to committee members for duties carried out on behalf of the group.

**Alterations to the Constitution**
This constitution may only be amended at an Annual General Meeting or at a Special General Meeting. Any proposal to alter the Constitution should be sent to the Secretary at least 14 days before the meeting. Notice of the proposal to alter the constitution should be included in the publicity for the meeting. Any alteration to this constitution requires a two-thirds majority of those present and voting.
Dissolution

Whilst it is hoped that this clause is never used, provision should be made to dissolve the Association.

The association may only be dissolved at a public meeting called for that purpose and publicised to all households. All members have to be informed that a decision about the future of the association will be on the agenda.

A proposal to dissolve the association will only be carried if agreed by two thirds of the members present or if the association is unable to form a committee. All outstanding bills will be paid and the balance of any grants from funding bodies will be returned. Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of proper debts and liabilities will be applied towards the charitable benefit of the residents of the area as the Committee may decide subject to the approval of the meeting to dissolve the Association.

All records of the association, including all financial records, will be handed to the Tenant and Community Involvement Officer, if they are registered with Housing Leeds.

The Constitution was adopted as the Constitution of the ……………………….. 
Association at a General Meeting of its members held at . . . . . . on . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Signed Chairperson

Signed Secretary

This Constitution should be kept on file and made available to members on request.
Group policies
Your group should have some agreed polices that set out the principles which your members will abide by.

Code of conduct
It’s a good idea for the committee to agree a Code of Conduct. This can stop people falling out. If the worst happens, a Code of Conduct will help you deal with conflict.

Here is a model Code of Conduct you can adapt to suit your needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code of Conduct for a Tenants &amp; Residents Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibilities of the Committee</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To work as a team with other committee members and to present a united front – accepting the committee’s decisions even if they are not your own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Members should represent the Tenants &amp; Residents Association in a positive light and champion its views to outside organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Members should actively seek to represent the views of the community without discrimination or prejudice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conduct of members</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No member should speak or write on behalf of the group without the prior agreement of the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The committee must approve any press releases, TV/Radio interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All members must treat each other with respect, be courteous to each other and allow each other to speak.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No member should fail to attend three Management Committee meetings in a row without apology or good reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflicts of Interest</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Members should disclose any interest, whether personal or on behalf of any group they represent, that they consider may affect or influence their approach to any matter under discussion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Political affiliation

- Individual members may be affiliated to/or be members of a political party and as residents of the area they are entitled to be on the Committee and have a vote. However, they may not represent a political party in their role as a Committee member.

Confidentiality

- Members should respect all individual tenants/residents confidentiality. Information about individual tenants and residents will not be discussed at meetings.
- No member should share contact details of other members with a third party individual or organisation unless this is agreed beforehand or permission is given.

Breaches of Code of Conduct

- If a member of the committee or group does not abide by the Code of Conduct, they will be warned that if they break the Code again they may be asked to leave the meeting, or removed from office.
- The person concerned may be given two further warnings (a maximum of three warnings in any one meeting and/or three consecutive meetings.)
- If a person continues to ignore these rules and refuses to leave the meeting after being warned by the Chair, then the Chair has the power to close the meeting.
- A Committee Member who continues to ignore these rules can be suspended, or removed from office or from the committee, subject to ratification at the next General Meeting.

Declaration

I have received and have read a copy of the Code of Conduct and I accept that any breach of the Code may result in my ceasing to be a Committee member of the Tenants & Residents Association.

I agree to abide by this Code of Conduct

Signed..........................................

Date .............................................
Health and safety
Your group is responsible for the health and safety of its members and those who come into contact with you at meetings and events you hold.

When you carry out any activity it is best practice to assess the risk to any person involved. This is called a risk assessment.

When you carry out a risk assessment you should consider five things:

- Identify the hazards, for example: your venue, any equipment or materials and what it is about it that means you need to do something about it or just be aware of its potential to be harmful.
- Decide who might be harmed and how. For example; your members, visitors, contractors or members of the public.
- Consider the risks and decide on what precautions you need to take. Decide whether existing controls are adequate or whether you need to consider others.
- Record the findings and implement them. You can use a risk assessment template to record what you have found (see example below).
- Review the assessment when you do the activity again and update it if anything has significantly changed i.e. there is reason to suspect it is no longer valid, or if an injury occurs which highlights that something needs to be done differently. If none of these, the assessment should be reviewed after a maximum of 12 months.

Blank Risk Assessment Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE:</th>
<th>LOCATION:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITY:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Manager</td>
<td>Signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment by</td>
<td>Signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the hazards?</td>
<td>Who might be harmed and how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Equal opportunities and diversity
Your group should not discriminate against any members or people it interacts with for any reason so it is important that you have an equal opportunities / diversity policy. You should make all welcome and encourage under-represented groups to attend.

A sample statement is shown below.

Statement on Equal Opportunities
This Tenants and Residents Association is committed to implementing and promoting equal opportunities in its activities, services and practice. It realises that discrimination exists in society (whether protected by law or not), and believes that this prevents potential and ability from being realised in young people and others.

We will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of:
• Race
• Colour
• Gender
• Sexual orientation or identity
• Ethnic or national origin
• Disability
• Partnership status or home responsibility
• HIV or AIDS status
• Age
• Political or religious belief
• Trade union activity
• Socio-economic background
• Refugee or asylum seeker status

As a provider of a service to the community, we accept the responsibility to promote equal opportunities and challenge discrimination wherever it occurs. This document sets out the main consequences of this commitment and the action to be taken in order to achieve equal opportunities.

We recognise that some users of our services may, because of their past or present distress or illness, say or do things which would otherwise be unacceptable and incompatible with this Equal Opportunities Policy. We will do all we can to challenge such behaviour. In cases where intervention is possible a gentle approach will be adopted which aims to alter attitudes and behaviour while maintaining support for the distressed client.
We reserve the right to open our membership to any organisation who supports our aims and objectives. However, we will exclude from membership those organisations that actively work against the development of an equal opportunities policy over time, despite encouragement from us.

We realise that a genuine commitment to equal opportunities must operate on all levels:

- We will prevent unfavourable treatment, directly or indirectly, upon individuals from any group facing discrimination in its recruitment and deployment of human resources. Where discrimination does occur, it will be dealt with through the agreed procedures. This will be achieved by following this Equal Opportunities Policy.
- We will seek to prevent discrimination and ensure equal representation in the services we provide, the structures that we facilitate and the practice through which we carry out our work. This involves the development of greater diversity in the management committee, networks and membership, to ensure a genuinely wide representation.

**Responsibility**

The Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. However, all members have a duty as part of their involvement with this group to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice. Those responsible for recruiting members of the community to work on group projects are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of our Equal Opportunities Policy and adhere to it while working as our volunteers.

We will bring to the attention of all members the existence of this policy, and will provide such training as is necessary to ensure that the policy is effective and that everyone is aware of it.

If any member feels that they have been, or are being discriminated against, in any way, they are entitled to pursue the matter with the committee.

All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously. Complaints or allegations of an unfounded or malicious nature will also be treated as serious.

**Disabled Access**

We will endeavour to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all the premises we use have disabled access. When considering new premises, every effort will be made to ensure such premises are fully accessible.

**Use of Language**

Members should avoid and challenge the use of language which, in any way, belittles anyone.

Where the language used has a personal impact on others, and it has been made clear to the person concerned that their use of such language is unwelcome and/or offensive, disciplinary action may be taken if they persist with it.

All materials used or developed by the group will be judged in the light of the promotion of
equal opportunities, and those considered to be discriminatory will not be used.

**Sexual Harassment**
No member should be subject to sexual harassment.

This is interpreted as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature including:
- verbal sexual abuse
- physical contact
- repeated remarks which an individual finds offensive

If it has been made clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is unwelcome and they persist with it, then the service user or volunteer who is the recipient of the behaviour will be entitled to make a formal complaint.

**Monitoring and Review**
The Policy will be constantly reviewed by the management committee to ensure that no member of the group is put to a disadvantage either, directly or indirectly. This monitoring will apply to the practices of staff and volunteers, the member organisation, the composition of the Committees and the provision of services.

It is the responsibility of every individual to eliminate discrimination and to ensure the practical application of this Policy.

The committee of will review this policy every [X] years.

**Safeguarding**
Your group may come into contact with children and vulnerable adults and should know about the requirements around safeguarding them. It is a good idea to have a safeguarding policy so everyone is aware of their responsibilities.

A safeguarding policy is a statement that makes it clear to all group members and the children, people and families that you come into contact with about your commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Your policy should include what your group will do to protect the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults in your care and what people should do if they have any concerns.
If you need further help or advice you can contact

**Leeds Safeguarding Children Board** on 0113 3950297 or leedslscb@leeds.gov.uk

**Adult Social Care** on 0113 222 4401 (Out of hours: 07712 106 378)

---

**Example safeguarding policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenants and Residents Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Tenants and Resident Group is committed to ensuring that children and vulnerable people who use our services are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse. The committee and members have a duty to identify abuse and report it.

**This policy covers:**

- Children under 18 years old

- Vulnerable adults who are people over 18 years of age and are getting or may need help and services to live in the community. Vulnerable adults may be unable to take care of themselves and unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people.

**Abuse can include:**

- Physical
- Financial
- Material
- Sexual
- Psychological
- Discriminatory
- Emotional
- Neglect

Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be perpetuated by anyone.

**Rights & Responsibilities**

Responsibilities of the Tenants and Residents Association committee

- To ensure members are aware of the child’s or vulnerable adult’s need for protection
- To notify the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected.
- To support and where possible secure the safety of individuals and ensure that all referrals to services have full information in relation to identified risk and vulnerability.
To Criminal Records Board (CRB) check volunteers that have access to or work with children and vulnerable adults.

**Responsibilities of** the Tenants and Residents Association members:

- To be familiar with the child and vulnerable adult protection policy.
- To take appropriate action in line with the policy of the Tenant and Residents Association.
- To declare any existing or subsequent convictions.

**Support for those who report abuse**

All those making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern, whether they are Committee and/or general members, service users and/or carers and/or members of the general public should be reassured that:

- They will be taken seriously.
- Their comments will usually be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared with the appropriate authorities if they or others are at significant risk.

**The child or vulnerable adult (and carer, parent or guardian where appropriate) has the right:**

- To be made aware of this policy
- To have alleged incidents recognised and taken seriously
- To receive fair and respectful treatment throughout
- To be involved in any process as appropriate
- To receive information about the outcome

We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Chairman’s Signature: _________________________________

Adopted on: _________________________________

Reviewed date: _________________________________

**Resolving conflict**

When working in the community with other local people on a volunteer basis, it seems like it should make sense that conflict and disruption within the group won’t be a problem. After all, you’re all working together to improve your local area and make life better for local people.
However, while some groups never experience conflict, some do. When conflict occurs, it is tempting to ignore behaviour, turn to side meetings, or using informal means to exclude the offending member(s) by not advertising meetings to all.

These are all normal reactions but ignoring or side-stepping disruptive behaviour within a community group can result in wasted time, unnecessary stress and diversion of your energy from doing good things (why people got involved in the first place!) to avoiding the conflict.

In extreme cases, unaddressed conflict can lead to the breakdown of your group, and at the very least it can poison what should be a fun, positive and rewarding voluntary experience.

**Common issues**
There are often some common behaviours or issues in every group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A member who is overly domineering and intimidates others (often not realizing what impact they are having), those who use the meeting to carry on personal feuds or in extreme cases, people actively sabotaging your efforts and carrying out illegal activity.</td>
<td>Your group should have constitution that sets out what you expect from your members in respect of their behaviour as well as a Code of Conduct statement, which sets out what action will happen if anyone contravenes it. Make sure everyone knows about it (or remind them).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings and are trying to be tactful when dealing with any conflict between members.</td>
<td>The potential of hurting someone’s feelings is almost always less than the magnitude of damage that person’s disruptive behaviour could do to your group, your reputation, your ability to attract and retain members and to get things done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The behaviour has become completely disruptive and is having a serious impact on your group.</td>
<td>Make it formal: if a member or members repeatedly ignore attempts to keep the meeting on track, the chair may need to take more assertive measures from speaking with the person privately after the meeting to removing from the committee (if applicable) to membership termination (last resort).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top tips for dealing with conflict in your group

- **Make it about the group**
  Appeal to everyone’s mutual dedication to the group’s aims and what you are trying to achieve wherever possible. Try to shift the conflict from being about ‘you’ and ‘I’ to one that’s about the group and your mutual dedication to the group’s aims.

- **Be transparent, open and fair**
  Conflict often escalates whenever people feel unfair decisions have been made, especially if there is secrecy or perceived secrecy. Any important decision but especially one about termination of membership should be done in a formal setting such as a committee meeting and be minuted.

- **Identify disruptive behaviour early**
  Be quicker to identify what is a genuine difference of opinion or productive disagreement and what is disruptive behaviour. Know the red flags to look for: hijacking the agenda, unwilling to follow chair’s leadership, etc. Don’t be afraid to challenge individuals who are being disruptive.

- **Document issues or behaviour in writing**
  This helps help build a case or see patterns, and to have evidence if stronger steps need to be taken.

- **Use your constitution and/or code of conduct**
  As this clearly sets out the consequences for bad behaviour, explain what will happen if it persists.

- **Take action**
  Accept that sometimes people are not suitable to be part of a committee or to work with your group. Remove them from their position or from membership of your group.

**Other sources of help and advice**
It often helps to get advice from outside your group. This could include:

- Your local tenant and community involvement service / officer
  They can offer advice on next steps and can signpost you to restorative practice training (on how to work together).

- Other Tenant and Residents Associations

- Legal advice (via other voluntary groups like Citizens Advice Bureau)

- Police (in serious situations)
**Accessing training**

In consultation with VITAL, Housing Leeds have put together a training offer for involved tenants, including TARAs. LTF’s specific role on VITAL is to monitor the effectiveness of the training offered.

The training offered includes:

- The tenant and community involvement structure
- Committee roles (chair, secretary, treasurer)
- Leadership
- Chairing meetings and minute taking
- Money management, budgeting and book-keeping
- Health and safety
- Code of conduct
- Equality and diversity
- Safeguarding
- Computer skills and IT
- Presentation skills
- Communication and engagement
- Restorative practice (working together)
- Delivering a community project

Contact Tenant and Community Involvement in Housing Leeds to find out more.
Getting a grant from Housing Leeds
Housing Leeds offer support for tenants and residents groups which includes funding if they meet the following criteria:

**Has a constitution that represents council tenants**
The aims or objectives of the group’s constitution should make reference to improving council housing and environmental conditions.
Housing Leeds are unable to fund two groups representing the same Council properties.

**Has an equalities policy**
Housing Leeds recommends that groups develop a separate equalities policy however; a commitment to equalities could be included within the main constitution

**A group must have a bank account in the name of the group**
Further advice is available in this chapter about how to set up a bank account.

**Can provide evidence of holding a fair and open Annual General Meeting (AGM)**
Evidence would normally include a written record (minutes) of an AGM at which the Committee was elected and accounts presented.
Plus evidence of publicity used to advertise the AGM and that tenants are encouraged to join the Committee

**Has its accounts checked by West Yorkshire Community Accounting Service (WYCAS)**
This free annual service is provided by a qualified community accountant from the charity West Yorkshire Community Accounting Services (WYCAS).
Housing Leeds require this as part of their support. It shows that the Association is being run in an open and accountable manner and it helps the management committee plan for future expenditure and if there is a need to raise funds.

It shows other potential funders that you can manage money effectively and they may well wish to see a copy of your accounts when considering an application.

Your constitution should state that records will be kept and annual accounts will be produced and this is one of the conditions of receiving the grant.

**Can evidence that it has openly promoted public meetings and the work of the group**
For example a newsletter/leaflet or social media posts.

**Can evidence that they have been active (holding meetings/events)**
Minutes of meetings or publicity such as photographs/reports, or invitations.

**Can evidence that they are achieving positive outcomes for council tenants and can evidence how it meets the diverse needs of its area**
Has completed an Annual Support Review with a Housing Leeds officer and has set a small number of local priorities for the coming year.

**The Annual Support Grant**
Grants are based broadly on the number of Council properties represented. However, Housing Leeds recognise that a small number of groups incur much higher running costs due to running a building, for example. There is an option for officers to provide an enhanced sum to cover these costs, up to the value of but no more than the basic grant.

For example if a group receives a grant of £100 based on the number of properties it represents, it could potentially receive up to an additional £100 if it were able to evidence need due to running costs incurred.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of properties</th>
<th>Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-99</td>
<td>£100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-199</td>
<td>£200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-299</td>
<td>£300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-399</td>
<td>£400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400+</td>
<td>£450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Opening a bank account**

The group will need to open a bank account in its name to manage any money paid to it like grants, money from fundraising or from bids to other funding organisation and pay for any services, purchases or expenses.

To ensure proper financial governance any withdrawal or payment made from the account should require 3 separate signatories. The Treasurer must be one of these; others may include any of the other Committee roles or ordinary members of the group. Normally these would not be people who live in the same household nor are close family members.

**Simple Book-keeping**

An important role for the Treasurer is keeping a record of what money the group has, what it spends and what it receives.

**Keeping payment records**

The Treasurer should keep accurate records of any payments and keep all receipts. You can use a manual system, a ready-made bank (or cash) book with columns from a stationery shop or a simple exercise book; or a spreadsheet based application on a PC or laptop – which one you choose will entirely depend on the skills of the Treasurer. Either is perfectly acceptable.

Any payments should be reconciled with the group’s bank statements.
Below is an example of what records might look like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/6/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/7/17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/6/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/6/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/6/17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Making Payments**
If you receive payments in cash, always pay them into the bank. You can make payments by cheque but for routine payments you may wish to consider setting up a direct debit or standing order.

**Petty Cash**
It’s good practice to only get the amount of petty cash out of the bank you need plus a small float, so you don’t have large amounts of money to keep track off.

Keep separate records of petty cash paid out – either in a separate spreadsheet or petty cash book.

An example record is shown below:
### Income Payments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>From Bank</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Receipt</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30/6/07</td>
<td>£25</td>
<td>1/7/07</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Tea &amp; Coffee</td>
<td>£6.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keep all receipts together – bus tickets, till receipts etc. Number each one and enter the number in your Petty Cash book or record.

**Top tip - do not pay cash from fundraising (like raffles or tombola) into your Petty cash box – otherwise your accounts will get completely confused. Pay it into the bank!**

### Purchasing goods and services

If you need to buy something for your group or pay for another organisation to provide a service, its good practice to get at least 3 quotes/prices so that you can demonstrate you are getting value for money.

Keep all the documents/files relating to the purchases so that you can use them as supporting evidence when you get your end of year accounts checked.

### Insurance

Your group will be holding meetings and may be holding events or going on trips where members of your group or the public attend so you will need **Public Liability Insurance.**

This will cover your group and any members for your legal liability to meet claims for accidental injury to your own members and any third parties and their property where you, your group or your members are at fault.

You must fully disclose details of your group and the activities you plan to undertake as not doing this may mean any claim may not be paid and your group would be liable.

You can approach any insurance company and enquire about the costs for public liability insurance for your group.
Voluntary Action Leeds gives some good advice about this topic, see https://doinggoodleeds.org.uk/insurance-ga.html

Preparation of a Statement of Accounts

To receive a grant from Housing Leeds, and from other funders, you will need to present an independently checked Statement of Accounts every year.

This sets out clearly all the money paid in and paid out over the year. This Statement of Accounts must be presented at the Annual General Meeting. Here is a sample Statement of Accounts.

Statement of Accounts 16/17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Payments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance in Bank</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£52.66</td>
<td>£42.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>Postage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£300</td>
<td>£6.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Interest</td>
<td>Stationery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£1.30</td>
<td>£53.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room Hire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel to meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£19.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coach Hire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£16.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total payments</td>
<td>Total payments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£353.96</td>
<td>£280.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Petty cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£12.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cash in bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£60.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total | £353.96 | Total | £353.96

Checked by: Housing Manager
Signed: Housing Manager
Date: 1 April 2017
Getting the accounts checked
You must get your accounts checked by an independent assessor – if you get a grant from Housing Leeds you must use WYCAS. You will need to give them this Statement of Accounts, plus the cheque Book, Bank Statements, the Bank Book, Petty Cash Book and your file of receipts.

The Accounts checklist
WYCAS recommend using an accounts checklist so that you provide all the information they need to verify your annual accounts.

The checklist includes such details as your group’s name, who should be contacted if there are any questions relating to the books, the financial year the accounts relate to and what date you require the completed accounts by. WYCAS also need to know if the group permits the accounts to be shared with Housing Leeds.

The following information should be provided:

- All accounting books and records covering the full financial year. If you have used a spreadsheet you can send a copy by e-mail or on a memory stick.
- All your invoices and receipts for the financial year.
- If you have any grant income they need to know the funders, how much each grant is for and if for a specific purpose what the grant is to be used for.
- All bank books, cheque books and paying-in books covering the whole financial year.
- Statements for all bank accounts covering both the start and end of the financial year.
- If you have a petty cash float you should make a note of the balance in hand at year-end and include this on the form.
- If you have received any cheques prior to year-end but didn’t bank them we will need to know details.
- If they do not already have a copy of the rules of your organisation or constitution please include one and if WYCAS didn’t prepare your previous years accounts a copy of those also.
Submitting your information

When you have collected all this information together and completed the checklist you should then contact WYCAS to send the records in or drop it into their offices.

Once WYCAS has your records you can normally expect that the accounts will be completed within six weeks. If there are any problems or questions they will contact you directly.

When the job is completed the accounts will be posted directly to the contact named on the checklist. With the accounts they also send a management letter addressed to your committee. This usually includes comments regarding how the records have been kept, any corrections needed and other help and advice as appropriate.

If you are happy for Housing Leeds to receive a copy of the accounts, please indicate this on the checklist. They are your group’s accounts and so WYCAS will not share them unless you give them specific permission to do so.

The accounting records can be collected or posted back to you.

WYCAS Contact details:
Stringer House, 34 Lupton Street, Leeds, LS10 2QW
Telephone: (0113) 270 6291
E-mail: info@wycas.org.uk
### Sample Accounts Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation's Name</th>
<th>Contact Details (in case there are any queries with regard to the accounts, books and records etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postcode</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is your financial year end date? ________________________________

Date accounts are required by? ________________________________

Are you happy for Housing Leeds to receive a copy of your accounts? Y / N

### Books and records required:

1. All accounting books and records covering the full financial year *(if you utilised a spreadsheet please provide a copy on disk or by e-mail)*
2. All invoices and receipts for the whole financial year
3. Do you have grant income?
   
   If so, please provide documentation relating to each grant stating the amount of the grant and, if for a specific purpose, details of what the grant is to be used for.
4. All cheque books and paying in books covering the whole financial year
5. Statements for all bank accounts covering both the start and end of the financial year
6. If you have cash holdings what was the amount held at the year end? £___________
7. Did you have any unbanked cheques at the year end? If so please give details below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cheque Details</th>
<th>Amount £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. A copy of the rules of your organisation if available
9. A copy of your previous year’s accounts if prior year accounts not previous done by WYCAS *(needed for opening bank balances and prior year comparisons in this year’s accounts)*
Expenses Policy

An expenses policy is an agreement on how the committee will make financial decisions. The policy also lets committee members know what expenses they are entitled to, how much they will be paid and how to go about claiming their money.

Housing Leeds agrees standard expense rates every year for involved tenants. You can use these in your expense policy or refer to them. Remember that these are likely to be reviewed annually.

An example expenses policy is shown below that you can adapt for your group.

Expenses policy of the Tenants and Residents Association

- A Bank Account will be opened in the name of the Association
- Two members of the association must sign all cheques
- A Debit card will not be used
- No two signatories for cheques will live in the same household or be immediate family relations
- No blank cheques will be signed at any time
- Cheque stubs will always be filled out with details of the payment
- Petty cash will be kept in a secure cash box
- No more than £50 will be kept in Petty Cash
- All cash income will be banked as soon as possible
- All payments over £25 must be approved at a Committee Meeting
- The Treasurer will have authority to pay all expenses under £25 based on the following policy:

Travel costs

The Association will pay transport costs for members attending meetings and events on behalf of the group. Bus and train fares will be paid on production of tickets. Car use will be paid at 45p per mile on production of mileage records. Taxis will only be paid for in exceptional circumstances where disability or personal safety are an issue.
Telephone Costs
A nominated committee member should be responsible for making all telephone calls made on behalf of the association. Calls should be paid on production of an itemised bill.

Stationery and Postage
A nominated committee member (usually the Secretary) will be responsible for buying stationery as required and expenses will be paid on production of receipts.

This Expenses Policy was adopted by the Tenants & Residents Association on 1 March 2016

Accessing other funding
The money you receive from Housing Leeds as a support grant is intended for general running costs for your group. This money along with any funds you might acquire through your own efforts such as fundraising and other community events are considered ‘Unrestricted’ or ‘General’ funds.

However you may apply to other funders, (for example the Community Fund, Grassroots Grants etc.) for a grant to run a specific project or event. You will submit your application to them and if successful you will receive the grant. This is considered as ‘Restricted’ income as funds have been given for a certain purpose and may not be used for anything else. It is ‘ring fenced’ and has to be accounted for separately from your general funds.

Making a funding bid to your local Housing Advisory Panel (HAP)
The 11 Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) in Leeds are local tenant led groups. They review the delivery of local housing services and monitor local performance.

Each panel has a budget, allowing them to give grant funding for projects that benefit tenants and the local community. Applications for funding can come from tenants and resident groups, individuals or any other voluntary or community group. HAPs will review each application on its own merits. However, panels will need to see how the project will benefit tenants as the funding comes from tenants rent.
Your bid is also more likely to be accepted if you can get some ‘match” funding. This is funding of equal value from a different provider.

You can access a form and some guidance from the following links:

Form:
http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Housing%20Advisory%20Panel%20Funding%20Application%20Form.doc

Guidance:

If you have no access to the internet your local tenant and community involvement officer can get you hard copies and help you complete your bid.

**Local funding**
Your local councilors have access to some money from the council which can be used for community projects. It is called the Members Improvements in the Community and the Environment (MICE) scheme. Please contact one of your local councilors to find out when the scheme opens.

**External funding**
You can access information on available funding from a whole range of organisations via the internet.

*Community Funding portal*
You can access a Community Funding portal via the Housing Leeds website at http://www.idoxopen4community.co.uk/lcc/.
You will need to register and use these details to log into the site.

You need to give details about the following:

- Your organization type
- Your area of work and who you may be working with
- What you want the money for e.g. environmental work, community trips, activities for young people etc.
• What costs do you want the money to cover e.g. equipment, labour, travel etc.

Based on your answers the portal will show you details of funding organizations that could help you. You can also print out a report. If you do not have access to the internet your local tenant involvement officer can help you with this.

**Other websites**

Using an internet browser like Google you can find other websites that can give you information about funding available – some are listed below but there are many more.

Government [https://www.gov.uk/apply-funding-community-project](https://www.gov.uk/apply-funding-community-project)


Voluntary Action Leeds [https://doinggoodleeds.org.uk/current-funding-opportunities/](https://doinggoodleeds.org.uk/current-funding-opportunities/)


Lottery funding: [https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/Awards-For-All](https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/Awards-For-All)

The Round Table [http://www.roundtable.co.uk/](http://www.roundtable.co.uk/)


Being contactable
It is important that your organisation is able to be contacted by members of your association or the community you represent.

It’s a good idea to set up a generic e-mail address for correspondence or queries. This should be looked after by the Secretary but should be accessible by all the elected officers.

You should have an address for post (this could be the Secretary’s address).

It is up to Committee members if they want to make their telephone numbers available – it may be useful for the Committee to have a dedicated phone line (mobile) that is monitored by a member of the Committee.

You can use social media (a Facebook page and Twitter account) to promote your group and let the community know what you are doing and to advertise meetings and events and receive comments and feedback.

You may want to set up your own web-site.

Newsletters
You should look at doing regular newsletters or leaflets to let people in the area know what you are about.

These could be printed hard copy or be available online on a web-site or via Facebook.

A newsletter should inform your local community about what you are doing and any local issues that you may want to get support for/receive feedback about e.g. proposed new pedestrian crossing on a busy road. It should also give some details on how to contact your group and of any forthcoming meetings or events.
You can get hard copy newsletters copied for free at your local housing office.

**Holding an event**
If your group decides that it wants to hold an event/activity or organise a trip out for its members and the community there are several things to consider.

- You may need to bid specifically for some funds to cover the costs of the set up and running of the event.
- You will need some public liability insurance in case of accident or injury to your group or others.
- You need to consider health and safety and do the appropriate risk assessments (see section 4).
- You may want to get other local organisations involved to support you.
- You need to ensure any third party organisations who may be organising an activity for you are appropriately covered for insurance and that you are aware of their health and safety provisions.
- If you plan to serve hot food the person in charge of it needs to have a Food Hygiene Certificate. The Council can help you get access to the training.

**A venue**
- You should consider where you are holding the activity (is it easy to get to) or do you need to organise transport and/or make provision for parking.
- Is it big enough for the amount of people you are expecting e.g. meets fire safety rules for indoor events and has adequate escape routes.
- Decide if your event should be held indoors or outdoors and what contingency you should make for inclement weather.
- You should consider how accessible it is for those with disabilities e.g. wheelchair access for the physically disabled, a hearing loop for the deaf.
- Do you need any kitchen facilities (to serve food or refreshments)?
- There should be adequate toilet facilities for the number of people you are expecting.
Advertising
People won’t attend an event unless you tell them. It’s important that you give enough notice to your community and make sure any advertising is prominent in the local area.

You could put posters up or signpost events on social media. Some free local papers will let you advertise your events at no cost.

Attending local events and fundraising
Another way of promoting your group and your plans for the community is to attend other local events, like fairs, galas and festivals.

You may want to target members where you know you are under-represented e.g. running a parent and toddler group for younger residents.

You can usually get a stall at local events for free or for a nominal charge. You will need some volunteers from your membership to man the stall and some equipment like a table and chairs and some kind of covering to protect you from the elements. It’s important that you have public liability insurance to cover members if they have an accident and to do the appropriate risk assessments.

You may want to run some activities that will raise funds for your group like a tombola or selling craft items/ donated goods.

You may want to provide free merchandise that has your groups name on like pens or trolley coins (you would need to budget for these).

You may want to produce a banner or sign that tells people about your group.
As part of being an officially recognised TARA and receiving your grant from Housing Leeds, your group needs to hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) every year.

Your constitution should refer to this and the timeframe in which you need to hold it, which is usually within 12-15 months from the start of the financial year.

**Why you need to hold an AGM**

The Annual General Meeting is a public meeting where the committee reports back on the work done by the group over the year, presents the independently checked accounts, and then stands down. A new committee is then elected for the coming year.

**Who should be invited**

All members – everyone who lives in the area your group represents – must be invited to the Annual General Meeting. You must tell them that they have a right to vote and that they can stand for election.

It’s a good idea to ask anyone who wants to stand for a Committee position to provide information about themselves and why they think people should vote for them before the AGM, and provide this at the meeting.

**Meeting format**

This meeting is different from your general, regular TARA meetings. You need to elect a new Committee and present your annual accounts for approval by your TARA so these should be specific items on the agenda.
Sample Agenda

Annual General Meeting of the Tenants & Residents Association
on 1 June 2016 in the Community Centre

AGENDA

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of last year’s Annual General Meeting
4. Matters arising from the minutes
5. Report on the year’s activities – presented by the Chair and the Secretary
6. Presentation of independently checked accounts – report by the Treasurer
7. Committee stands down
8. Election of officers and the new Committee
9. Date, time and place of next meeting

Other meetings

Special General Meeting
A Special General Meeting is a public meeting called to change the constitution or
to sort out a particular issue or a meeting called by the membership if they have a
problem with the committee.

Public meetings
Public meetings let the committee report back to the people who elected them
and give information to the public by inviting officers of Housing Leeds / Housing
Association, council, or of other agencies and councillors to speak. Public
meetings must be advertised to all members – either through social media, by a
door-to-door leaflet, or by posters in public places.
8 Useful information

Acronyms explained
This Guide hopefully explains any acronyms used in each of the sections, but we’ve put them all in one place to help you.

AGM Annual General Meeting
ALMO Arm’s Length Management Organisation
BITMO Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation
CCCG Cross City Chairs Group
HAB Housing Advisory Board
HAP Housing Advisory Panel
IT Information Technology
LGBT Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LTF Leeds Tenants Federation
MICE Members Improvements in the Community and the Environment
PC Personal Computer
TARA Tenants and Residents Association
VITAL Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds
VOLT Voice of Older Leeds Tenants
WYCAS West Yorkshire Community Accountancy Services
YAgi Young Adults Getting Involved

Leeds Tenants Federation
Contact us for help and advice at:
Unit 0, 3rd Floor, Westminster, Buildings, 31 New York Street, Leeds,
West Yorkshire, LS2 7DT
Telephone: 0800 138 4142
E-mail: admin@leedstenants.org.uk
Housing Leeds
Website: http://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Housing.aspx
Telephone: 0800 188 4000
E-mail: housingenquiries@leeds.gov.uk
Local areas and contacts website: http://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Your-local-area.aspx

Other housing providers http://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Private-tenants.aspx

Other council departments http://www.leeds.gov.uk/pages/contactus.aspx

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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Social Care</td>
<td>0113 222 4401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Social Behaviour</td>
<td>0113 222 4402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births, Deaths and Marriages</td>
<td>0113 222 4408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Safety</td>
<td>0113 222 4403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax</td>
<td>0113 222 4404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections</td>
<td>0113 222 4405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental services (bins)</td>
<td>0113 222 4406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>0113 395 0050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>0113 222 4409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads and Pavements</td>
<td>0113 222 4407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>0113 222 4414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emergency Services

Police
Telephone **101** for non-immediate danger or **999** for immediate danger to life or wellbeing.

Fire Service
Telephone **999** for any fire emergencies.

Medical emergencies
Telephone **111** for non-emergencies and **999** for emergencies
Other household emergencies
Gas – contact the National Grid, telephone 0800 111 999 if you smell gas
Water and drains – contact Yorkshire Water, telephone 0845 124 24 23
Electricity – contact Northern Power Grid, telephone 0800 375 675 if you have a power cut

Local Councillors
To find out who your local councillors are:
http://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1&lccnavid=100004|200033|358

Other TARAs
Names of other TARAs in Leeds:
http://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/HSG-TenantResidentAssociations.aspx

More advice

BITMO www.leeds.gov.uk/bitmo
Telephone 0800 389 5503 or 0113 3782188 (0113 376 0499 for emergencies)

Citizens Advice Bureau
https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/leeds/
Telephone 0113 223 4400

Green Doctor
http://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/leeds/pages/green-doctor-leeds
Telephone 0113 238 0601

Money Advice Service
https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en
Telephone 0800 138 7777

Money Buddies
http://leedsmoneybuddies.weebly.com/
Telephone 0113 235 0276
Safer Leeds
http://www.leeds.gov.uk/c/Pages/saferleeds/default.aspx
Telephone 0113 395 0830

Voluntary Action Leeds
http://www.val.org.uk/
Telephone 0113 297 7920