

Our Service Offer

How we can support:

**Tenants and Residents Associations
Small local community groups
and Area Representatives**



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Introduction

Leeds Tenants Federation (LTF) plays a leading role in supporting and guiding Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs) and Area Representatives (AR). LTF will drive the importance of TARAs and AR, helping them to become stronger and better equipped to making a huge difference in local communities and estates.

This is a new focus for LTF and to do this effectively they are looking to set up a citywide forum, made up of representatives from a wide range of TARAs.

Housing Leeds Tenant and Community Involvement Service will be working closely with LTF and this new citywide TARA forum to develop and enhance our overall approach to TARA involvement during 2015/16.

LTF will:

- Share good practice amongst different TARAs and ARs by leading on networking events, conferences and encouraging and supporting them to communicate with each other;
- Guiding TARAs and ARs in response to changing or emerging issues which may affect tenants and residents living in their neighbourhoods; and
- Identify resources for community projects by making TARAs and ARs aware of potential funding opportunities for environmental or community projects.

Housing Leeds Tenant and Community involvement Service will work on a more local lever to support TARAs and ARs as follows:

A. Setting up a new group

When tenants tell us they are interested in setting up a new group we will offer the following support.

1. Initial advice

- Help to identify what the main concerns or aims of tenants are.
- Tell tenants about the support available such as local venues that could be used for meetings and the training available
- Give examples of where other tenants have made a difference.
- Outline the basic steps involved in setting up a Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) or other group.
- Signpost to other organisations as appropriate, for example Leeds Tenants Federation, Tenant Participation Advisory Service, Voluntary Action Leeds.
- Provide written guidance on setting up a new group.
- Offer to give an overview of the service so tenants know what we and other Council services do.

2. Helping the group develop

We will meet with the group to provide support and advice, including:

- Explaining what is involved in running a group e.g. Committee roles etc;
- Helping the group to develop their own governing documents for example having a Constitution and Code of Conduct;
- Advice on safeguarding issues and model safeguarding policies;
- Advice on opening a bank account and setting up a group's accounts
- Raising local equality issues so the group are aware of the differences in their local community;
- Helping the group make links with relevant housing staff, Ward Members, Policing Teams and other key Council and voluntary organisations.
- Introduce the group to other active tenant's groups/individuals as appropriate.
- Advice on using social media and other publicity.

3. Help organising a public meeting.

We can support the group in the following ways:

- Producing a leaflet/poster for groups to advertise their meeting.
- Arranging and providing room hire for initial meeting(s).
- Promoting the new group using appropriate Facebook and twitter accounts.

- Providing advice and contact details to enable the group to invite appropriate Housing Leeds staff, Ward Members, Council teams and other organisations.
- Help setting the agenda and advice on the process to follow, for example agreeing the constitution, electing the Committee and keeping a written record of the meeting (minutes).
- Chairing all or part of the meeting, or assistance with minutes by agreement.

A vertical poster for a public meeting. At the top, it says "Micklefield Tenants and Residents Association" in red. Below that is the title "Public Meeting" in large blue font. The date and time are "Tuesday 17 February - 2.30 to 3.30pm" and the location is "at Churchville House - ALL WELCOME". Three ovals contain the following text: "Refreshments available.", "Free raffle to win a £25 voucher.", and "Children welcome. Meet new people." At the bottom, it says "Come along and have your say about your community." and "See inside for more information ...". The footer includes the Leeds City Council logo, social media icons for Facebook and Twitter, and the website "www.leeds.gov.uk".

Micklefield Tenants and Residents Association

Public Meeting

Tuesday 17 February - 2.30 to 3.30pm
at Churchville House - ALL WELCOME

Refreshments available.

Free raffle to win a £25 voucher.

Children welcome.
Meet new people.

Come along and have your say about your community.

See inside for more information ...

 Leeds CITY COUNCIL

 www.leeds.gov.uk
For updates find us on Housing Leeds Facebook and Twitter

B. Supporting an existing tenants and residents association (TARA)

A tenants and residents association (TARA) recognised by Housing Leeds will be offered the following support:

1. An annual support grant (see E. Annual Support Grant)

- Paid to groups after their Annual General Meeting, providing they continue to meet the criteria (see D Criteria)
- The support grant is intended as a contribution towards annual running costs. Running costs include, but are not limited to, stationery, printing, phone, travel, internet, room hire, refreshments and public liability insurance.
- To receive a grant groups will be asked to sign a funding agreement.
- All grants to groups will be communicated widely.

2. A free annual accounts check

- This free annual service is provided by a qualified community accountant from the charity West Yorkshire Community Accounting Services (WYCAS).
- After the accounts have been checked the Committee will be sent an annual summary statement of their accounts with any recommendations.
- Additional advice, support and training is available from WYCAS subject to agreement.
- To be funded by Housing Leeds a TARA must have their annual accounts prepared by WYCAS.

3. Consultation and involvement in local housing decisions

- Where appropriate, consultation could also involve Leeds Tenants Federation.
- This only applies to work or activities funded or provided by Housing Leeds.

4. Housing Leeds staff to attend TARA meetings

- A TARA must make an invitation on each separate occasion when attendance by a Housing Leeds staff member is requested.
- The TARA should give at least one week's advance notice, and as far as possible, the agenda item(s) or reason why staff member is being invited. This is to give us chance to gather information and arrange for the most appropriate person to attend.
- Please note that it may be more difficult for staff to attend meetings held on Friday evening and weekends.
- In addition to TARA meetings, Housing Leeds will offer regular (monthly) meetings with members of the TARA to share news, issues and build local relationships with local housing management staff.

5. Annual Support Review

- Support with producing and reviewing governing documents e.g. Constitution.
- Advice and information on project ideas and available funding.
- Information and advice on skills sharing and learning opportunities.
- Help with goal-setting: short, medium and long term.
- Housing Leeds will update all tenants of which annual support reviews have taken place.
- TARAs will have the opportunity to evaluate and give feedback on the tenant and community involvement service.

6. Training and group development activities

- Support for individual committee members to participate in learning sessions to develop skills and knowledge relevant to their role.
- Support for a TARA to access learning opportunities to benefit tenants and the community e.g. visiting successful projects and networking with successful organisations.
- Explore with groups their level of online and computer skills, where online access is available and how groups can get online to help them achieve their aims.

7. Help with Housing Advisory Panel (HAP) funding

- Advice on initial ideas for schemes or projects and assistance with applications for funding.
- Plus advice on other sources of funding and community resources.

8. Publicity Support

- Free photocopying of group's newsletters, flyers, posters etc. by arrangement (subject to reasonable and appropriate content).
- Help with the design or branding of a groups' material.
- The creation of standard templates provided electronically or in hard copies. Examples include posters, leaflets, agendas and minutes, policies, risk assessments etc.
- Advice on using social media and other publicity.

9. Service providers information

- Provide public contact details of services, organisations and people to help with tenants general enquiries
- For specific project work, share direct contact details for teams and staff relevant to the aims of the project.
- Help you to find information online and show you how you can report problems to the Council using the Council website.

10. Free membership of the following...

- Leeds Tenants Federation is an independent organisation representing tenants across Leeds and on a regional and national basis.

- Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) are a national organisation offering telephone support, advice, good practice guides, training, networking etc.

C. Support for other community groups

Examples of other community groups are: Tenant and Residents Associations not funded by Housing Leeds or groups whose aims and activities do not relate directly to the improvement of council housing and environmental conditions but will benefit our tenants and communities in other ways. This support will also be provided to Area Representatives.

1. Signposting to accessible venues

For example use one of our buildings for meetings

2. Assistance with publicity templates

Templates provided for posters/leaflets

3. Advice on a range of ways of getting involved

Leeds Tenants Federation, community committees, local forums and community events etc.

4. Signposting to other organisations

Provide public contact details of relevant organisations and people such as Voluntary Action Leeds, Local Councillors and training providers etc.

5. Letting you know about a range of involvement activities

6. Assistance with applying for funding from the Housing Advisory Panel (HAP)

Relevant local officer support with completion of forms and guidance

7. Telephone support

From your local Tenant and Community Involvement Officer.

8. Share information

For example add to mailing list for Housing Leeds newsletter

D. Criteria for being recognised and funded by Housing Leeds

Housing Leeds will not differentiate between recognising and funding a group. For the purpose of this note, this will be referred to as being **supported** by Housing Leeds.

Groups that meet the following criteria are eligible for support from Housing Leeds:

- 1. 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.
 - Please note that we are unable to fund two groups for representing the same Council properties.
- 2. Has an equalities policy**
 - We recommend that groups develop a separate equalities policy however; a commitment to equalities could be included within the main constitution
- 3. A group must have a bank account in the name of the group**
 - We can advise on the process to follow.
- 4. 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
- 5. 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).
- 6. Can evidence that it has openly promoted public meetings and the work of the group;**
 - For example a newsletter/leaflet, Facebook posts.
- 7. Can evidence that they have been active (meetings/events);**

- Minutes of meetings or publicity such as photographs/reports, or invitations.
- 8. 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.

E. Annual Support Grant

As detailed in Section D above, TARAs may be eligible to receive an Annual Support Grant from Housing Leeds. These grants are based broadly on the number of Council properties represented. However, we 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.

No. of Properties	Grant
0-99	£100
100-199	£200
200 -299	£300
300-399	£400
400+	£450

F. Area Representatives

1. What is an Area Representative?

- An Area Representative (AR) is (usually) a local tenant or leaseholder who has volunteered to represent their community in dealing with Housing Leeds and other organisations who provide services to Council tenants
- There cannot be an AR where there is already a recognised Tenants and Residents Association, or where there is interest in one being formed.
- Whilst ARs are volunteering for their community Housing Leeds recognises AR's as being representatives of the community.
- Area Representatives can be involved in any other Housing Leeds involvement forum or panel.

2. Role of an Area Representative

- ARs agree to work together with Housing Leeds and other organisations for the benefit of the neighbourhood they represent.
- ARs provide advice to residents but would not normally act as advocates for individual tenants and leaseholders e.g. with repair enquiries. Any additional personal support an AR provides to a tenant is carried out as a friend or neighbour and not in their role as AR.
- ARs will be recognised as Housing Leeds point of contact for general housing and related issues affecting the area and will therefore be contacted regularly by their local housing office.
- ARs will be invited and encouraged to take part in local involvement activity such as estate standards, consultation or developing community projects.

3. How are Area Representatives chosen?

- An Area Representative has to prove they have the support from the community they wish to represent.
- Housing Leeds will write to all Council properties in the proposed area with the name of a person volunteering to be an Area Representative. Residents will be asked to contact the Tenant and Community Involvement Service either via telephone or in writing **if they have any objections.**

- Every three years Housing Leeds will write to all residents asking if any one else wishes to take on the role of AR. Where there is more than one volunteer for the role of AR, a postal ballot will take place.
- An AR would have to step down if a recognised Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) were formed for their area. Where a recognised TRA proposes to extend their area to one covered by an existing AR, there should be consultation with residents to determine which form of representation they prefer.

4. What support will Housing Leeds give to AR's?

- AR's will be contacted on a regular basis by their local housing office. This provides an opportunity to discuss any general housing and related issues.
- AR's will be provided with a copy of an Information Pack for Tenants & Residents Associations and Area Representatives containing useful information and advice.
- AR's will be invited to attend free training sessions to learn skills and improve knowledge relevant to the role. Training could include:
 - a) The role of an Area Representative
 - b) How to write and produce a newsletter.
- Like Tenants and Residents Associations, AR's will be regularly consulted and encouraged to share ideas and good practice.
- By agreement Housing Leeds will provide free photocopying for newsletters and other relevant material.
- AR's will receive regular information about training and funding opportunities.
- Although there is no payment for being an AR Housing Leeds will meet out of pocket expenses incurred in carrying out the role, such as reimbursement of travel costs to a meeting.

5. What Housing Leeds ask of Area Representatives

- AR's have to agree a simple Code of Conduct, which covers things like Equal Opportunities and confidentiality.
- AR's will produce a simple annual newsletter which is distributed to all residents and displayed in appropriate community facilities outlining how they have represented their community.
- Where Housing Leeds is undertaking consultation with local residents we would ask the help of AR to gather the views of residents. This could include helping to collect questionnaires or feedback or help publicising and supporting a public meeting.
- Area Representatives will be encouraged to keep up to date by taking part in appropriate training and by attending meetings.

Contact Details

Leeds Tenants Federation

FREEPHONE 0800 138 4142
0113 3783007

Housing Leeds Tenant and Community involvement Team

0113 3783330
Email housinginvolvement@leeds.gov.uk

HAPS

0113 3783330
Email housingadvisorypanel@leeds.gov.uk

If you wish to contact an officer responsible for the High Rise Advisory Group, Repairs Focus Group, Equal Access Group or Rainbow Roofs you can also call 0113 3783330.